

WEST CHESHIRE TOGETHER WE CAN AIM HIGH

Sustainable Community Strategy 2010 - 2026

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FOREWORD

From the Chair of West Cheshire Together, Cllr Mike Jones

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1 INTRODUCTION

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To cover:

Why produce a Sustainable Community Strategy?

How has it been produced?

What people told us

Who is it intended for?

2 OUR VISION FOR ALL OUR FUTURES

By 2026 West Cheshire will be even more prosperous and attractive: a really great place to live, work, learn and visit. The borough will be integrated regionally, nationally and worldwide, fulfilling our changing responsibilities and benefiting from the opportunities in the twenty first century. More specifically, our communities will live well together and:

- our neighbourhoods, towns and villages will be harmonious, with our communities feeling respected, safe and secure
- we will have reduced our carbon footprint through our network of low carbon communities and our localised and integrated public transport system, by re-using and recycling materials locally and by supporting local markets.

You will benefit from the right services that are delivered in the right place at the right time:

- we will appreciate and meet the health and wellbeing needs of all our residents wherever they live, particularly those who have been socially excluded
- West Cheshire will be a great place for older people, we will value their contribution and respect their needs.

West Cheshire will be recognised as a world-class place to visit and to invest:

- we will have a thriving, strong and sustainable world class economy for the future, supported by highly skilled and motivated people and sustainable transport systems

- everybody will be proud of our varied and unique local distinctiveness, culture and heritage, with Chester being the jewel in a crown studded with pearls from across the borough.

3 WEST CHESHIRE TODAY: OUR CHALLENGES

We know that West Cheshire is a great place to live, work and visit for most people. However, for a minority, there are major issues of disadvantage which together we must address. We know that there are a range of opportunities to make our area even better for living, working and visiting which together we should embrace.

We also know that our population demographic is changing dramatically: more of our community is living longer and there will be a relative decrease in the number of young adults which will have a big impact on our working population and the need for key services. More of us are also aware of our responsibility to live more sustainability and reduce our impact on the planets scarce resources.

To do all of this we will work better together in partnership. The foundations are already laid through West Cheshire Together. We will build on this to raise our collective game, develop new and improved approaches, and work together to make a real difference.

Whilst this Strategy sets out the priority issues to address key challenges over the next 15 years, our priorities for the next couple of years include:

3.1 Our priority planned activities

We will work hard to:

- support businesses in order to increase the number of people in jobs and the number of young people in education, training or employment

- deliver our regeneration programmes in Chester, the Weaver Valley, Ellesmere Port and Rural Resurgence and providing a strong cultural infrastructure as a catalyst for community revitalisation
- increase the number of homes which meet the decent homes standard, particularly in Ellesmere Port
- reduce health inequalities, particularly focusing on older women located across the borough and also men living the most deprived areas
- reduce drug and alcohol related problems, particularly in relation to crime, anti-social behaviour and health inequalities
- work with older people to raise awareness of their needs and aspirations.

4 OUR COMMITMENTS

4.1 Living well together

Together we will promote community spirit and support communities to care for themselves and others and the environment in which they live.

To achieve this we will focus on:

- recognising, celebrating and engaging with our diverse communities (4.1.1)
- building and developing the role of the voluntary, community and faith sectors (4.1.2)
- increasing public confidence in the public services, enabling them to feel safe in their communities (4.1.3)
- promoting community cohesion and responsibility to address local issues (4.1.4)
- engaging with and supporting our communities to take positive action on climate change and sustainable living (4.1.5)

4.1.1 Recognising, celebrating and engaging with our diverse communities

The current situation:

We all recognise that the community of West Cheshire is becoming more complex and diverse, and that we need to work harder to understand the needs and aspirations of our disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. This includes those who are disadvantaged or discriminated against through race, gender and transgender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief. It also includes socially excluded and vulnerable groups such as offenders, people with learning disabilities and people with mental health issues.

The ambition:

Our communities will be cohesive, inclusive and active, providing equal life chances for all. Everyone will feel a sense of belonging and be able to participate actively in their community.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will work together to overcome the challenges faced by traditionally disadvantaged areas exacerbated by the economic downturn
- we will continue to consider the impact that race, gender and transgender, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief may have on the life chances of our communities
- we will work together to improve equality outcomes for all of these groups
- we will actively engage and involve all of you in our communities and neighbourhoods beyond simple consultation exercises
- we will tackle the potential for hate crimes, homophobia and racially motivated incidents, which is far greater in rural areas
- we will support and develop local events, festivals and celebrations.

4.1.2 Building and developing the role of the voluntary, community and faith sectors

The current situation:

Every community is strengthened by the activities of community, faith and voluntary groups; we call this the Third Sector. This sector helps to shape and provide services to meet identified local needs, and contributes to economic health and wellbeing through the provision of training, jobs and volunteering opportunities. The Third Sector is also at the heart of the effort to improve engagement with residents and communities to better respond to the needs of local communities.

A Third Sector Assembly was established by the sector in 2008 to actively represent the work of this diverse group and ensure it is able to take a full and active role in the development of partnership working in the new authority and the developing partnership. A revised formal agreement between the Third Sector and the local public sector (called The Compact) has been subject to extensive consultation and was launched on 3 November 2009. It sets out a framework for better working relationships through shared principles, undertakings and actions (available on www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk).

The ambition:

We will have a healthy and vibrant third sector, actively engaging and participating in partnership working across the area involved in delivering services which meet local needs. Everyone in all our communities will see, feel and know about the Third Sector groups that are active in their area.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will continue to provide support and encouragement for local voluntary and community activities

- we will provide strategic grants and support to local infrastructure bodies to help them deliver services to new and developing small groups in the area
- through the Third Sector Assembly we will support large and small organisations in the new service commissioning culture.

4.1.3 Increasing public confidence in the public services, enabling them to feel safe in their community

The current situation:

Whilst there is a lot of work already being done to address the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, our surveys show that for many people in our communities this is still a major issue.

The ambition:

Local people feel safe, secure and protected in their communities.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will work with you across our communities to increase your confidence, closing the gap between perceptions and what the statistics say, particularly by working with the local media
- we will work together to improve the coordination and consistency of response to community safety issues as they arise - this will include an inter-agency protocol clarifying areas of responsibility
- we will ensure that new development and infrastructure address public safety as a key requirement, with 'safer by design' initiatives improving personal safety and reducing the fear of crime.

4.1.4 Promoting community cohesion and involvement to address local issues

The current situation:

Whilst most parts of West Cheshire are safe and people in West Cheshire generally get on with each other, there are crime and disorder problems in some areas, particularly around domestic violence and alcohol and substance misuse. Elder abuse may be an emerging issue linked to our rising proportion of older people.

The ambition:

You, as our communities, will be empowered to address your local issues and levels of crime will be reduced. Reoffending rates will be substantially reduced.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will increase your confidence in the ability of local communities to influence community safety issues through Community Forums and 'Confidence Weeks'
- we will engage with you and local service providers to ensure that they understand the problems, issues and challenges facing communities if they are to address alcohol and substance misuse related harm
- we will develop a new West Cheshire Domestic Abuse Partnership Strategic Management Group which will take the lead on implementing a new multi-agency strategy for West Cheshire.

4.1.5 Engaging with and supporting our communities to take positive action on climate change and sustainable living

The current situation:

There is some evidence across West Cheshire communities that they are already committed to changing their behaviour and to live sustainably. However, acting upon these challenges requires demonstrable leadership in terms of acting responsibly, as well as facilitating and supporting others to take action.

The public sector is moving towards action, local business are being supported in their efforts and we have a number of community groups taking action collectively and encouraging individuals to alter their behaviour.

The ambition:

Our communities will have most of their needs provided locally, frequently with the involvement of local people; improved health and wellbeing through increased walking and cycling and improved air quality; increase in proportions of energy and food produced and consumed locally; reduction in waste and increased recycling; local organisations adopting sustainable procurement and transport policies.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will use high-level awareness campaigns and supporting activity to embed sustainable behaviour in our activities: this includes encouraging everyone to minimise waste and recycle both household and non-household waste; encouragement of sourcing and recycling locally and a reduction in non-recyclable products
- we will actively encourage and facilitate the use of no and low carbon forms of transport: walking, cycling and public transport - this includes the promotion of workplace, school and residential travel plans to minimise the impact of essential journeys

- we will support and encourage you in all our communities to grow your own food and also support local farmers' markets
- we will support local renewable energy schemes, improving the energy efficiency of existing housing stock and increasing energy education and control into homes and schools.

4.2 RIGHT SERVICES, RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Together we will appreciate and respond positively to the many and varied needs of our communities. We will provide accessible services in order to support thriving, involved and sustainable communities.

To achieve this we will focus on:

- developing and promoting appropriate and accessible ways to increase people's ability to influence decision-making (4.2.1)
- reducing health inequalities and encouraging people to live healthy and active lives (4.2.2)
- eliminating poverty and deprivation within our communities (4.2.3)
- anticipating and supporting the needs and aspirations of our aging population (4.2.4)
- improving access to good quality and affordable homes. (4.2.5)

4.2.1 Developing and promoting appropriate and accessible ways to increase people's ability to influence decision-making

The current situation:

There is active engagement activity taking place by many agencies but this not as consistent and coordinated as it could be. To address this, the partnership's Community Engagement Strategy aims to ensure that local engagement is cohesive. The strategy details how the agencies plan to work in a more coordinated way to engage with you across the borough's communities and provide clear details of the range of methods and mechanisms the partners will use to inform, consult and involve you as residents.

The ambition:

You, as residents, will feel that you can influence decisions locally and that you can take more responsibility for your collective wellbeing.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will undertake more work to find out how you want to be engaged with, focusing particularly on children and young people
- we will improve our channels of communication so that you are clear about how your involvement has made a difference.

4.2.2 Reducing health inequalities and encouraging everyone to live healthy and active lives

The current situation:

Cheshire West and Chester is a thriving community to live in. Some parts of the area are amongst the most affluent in England; however close to these there are also some of the poorest communities in the country. Health inequalities are stubborn, persistent and difficult to change. They are also widening and will

continue to do so unless we do things differently. This means addressing not only the short-term consequences of avoidable ill-health but also the longer-term causes.

Health inequalities are widening locally particularly amongst men. Both the most deprived and second most deprived quintiles of the population have significantly higher death rates compared to the national average. Coronary heart disease accounts for the largest share of the gap in death rates, with lung cancer death rates in these two quintiles also continuing to rise in men.

Death rates in women are similar to the national average but higher than our Office for National Statistics Cluster Group - Prospering Smaller Towns. Lung cancer rates are not showing a consistent downward trend, particularly amongst older women, and this reflects past smoking habits.

The ambition:

Our communities will be more active and healthy and everyone will have accessible healthcare provision. We will eliminate the gap in life expectancy between the affluent and poorer parts of our area.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will use the Cheshire West and Chester Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (www.wcheshirepct.nhs.uk/jsna) to access the latest data and information on health inequalities to ensure that interventions are targeted at the identified priority areas
- we will tackle the underlying causes of ill health, through improving educational attainment, housing, getting local people into jobs and creating a safe and healthy environment
- we will address coronary heart disease and lung cancer, which are particular problem areas, through action focusing on reducing smoking, obesity and raised blood pressure

- we will focus on the health of older women and ensure access to good preventative and treatment services such as flu immunisations and stroke services
- we will use health education and access to services and facilities to support earlier intervention and promote good health.

4.2.3 Eliminating poverty and deprivation within our communities

The current situation:

Overall life is good for most people living in West Cheshire. However some of our communities experience multiple disadvantages. This is mainly located in the urban areas but there are also pockets of rural deprivation.

The ambition:

Everyone in all our communities will be able to enjoy a good quality of life.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will support a wide range of community self-help and empowerment activities
- we will support measures to address low self esteem and low aspiration issues
- we will work to narrow the gap in attainment outcomes for young people across our area
- we will work to improve access to health care and other key services, jobs and training across the borough, focusing particularly on rural areas.

4.2.4 Anticipating and supporting the needs and aspirations of our aging population

The current situation:

We are experiencing a large sustained growth in the numbers of older people. The number of people in West Cheshire aged 65 or above will increase from 57,000 in 2007 to almost 88,000 in 2027.

We recognise that services and organisations dealing with the older population need to develop and be redesigned to effectively and efficiently deal with the challenges, and to make the most of the opportunities of the large and sustained growth in the older population.

Work is already underway to provide more personalised and flexible services based on the individual and to recognise the contribution that older people can make to their community with a wide range of skills, knowledge and experience.

The ambition:

People over 65 will be satisfied with both their home and neighbourhood. They will be active locally, making good use of their skills and experience, and they will receive the support they need to live independently at home.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we need to ensure that the proportion of public service spend reflects this demographic and that there is joined up approach to service delivery across all sectors and within all our policy planning
- we must know our communities and plan for their accommodation, service and market needs
- we must develop a diverse range of services that meet the individual needs and aspirations of older people and which challenge discrimination

- we should adopt a preventative approach, with a focus on providing a 'little bit of help' to enable older people to remain in the accommodation of their choice and able to make a contribution across all generations
- we will develop a 'whole person' approach, going beyond adult social care and health to promote wellbeing and independence and reflecting the diversity of the area and of the older population
- we should involve older people in the design, development and - wherever possible - the delivery of services
- we will support intergenerational work aiming to make a shift in the perception of ageing from one of dependency and decline into one of active citizenship, participation and independence.

4.2.5 Improving access to good quality and affordable homes

The current situation:

Current housing market conditions present a significant challenge both nationally and in Cheshire West and Chester. Affordability is a persistent problem, and the population of Cheshire West and Chester is projected to significantly increase by around 11% (an additional 36,500 residents) to 2031 (ONS 2009).

There will also be a considerable demographic shift with both the number and proportion of older people increasing. Other issues include meeting the housing and support needs of vulnerable residents; eliminating rough sleeping, preventing homelessness; giving local people more choice in the housing available to them by increasing the range of housing on offer; and tackling poor housing conditions.

Work to address these issues is well underway with new sub-regional partnership arrangements established to compete for resources efficiently and influence regional policy.

The ambition:

Housing provision will meet the needs of local people and all homes will meet the Decent Homes standard.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- new housing development will support planned economic growth and wider regeneration initiatives
- new housing will be sustainable both in terms of its location (to reduce travel and transport usage) and its design and build to have a minimal carbon footprint and affordable running costs for the occupants
- the role of existing housing to provide affordable homes will be better recognised and utilised to meet housing needs
- we will support social housing providers in leading the way by providing high quality, well managed and maintained housing
- we will promote the private rented housing stock as a tenure of choice for residents - it should provide choice and quality to residents to meet their housing needs and demands
- we will explore all options available to ensure an ongoing supply of affordable housing, including significant dialogue with the Homes and Communities Agency about future investment opportunities and working flexibly with a range of other investors and providers
- we will develop the range of home ownership products available to West Cheshire residents
- we will ensure that the most suitable land is identified for housing through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
- we will work to ensure that new housing developments contain the right mix of sizes, types and tenures to meet the needs of the community, making sure that, whilst affordable housing is provided, a plentiful supply of market housing is achieved to meet high demand and high quality design standards are achieved

- we will improve information, support and advice to help residents select the most appropriate housing option to meet their needs and aspirations
- we will ensure that the housing support and accommodation needs of vulnerable people are met by providing appropriate services and developing new accommodation as required.

4.3 SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

Together we will continue to work as the West Cheshire Together partnership, embracing a shared vision and sharing resources in order to grasp the existing and the new opportunities for West Cheshire.

To achieve this we will focus on:

- supporting the development of a sustainable and resilient economy, with thriving businesses (4.3.1)
- providing our workforce with access to locally relevant skills and training to achieve better paid employment (4.3.2)
- valuing and promoting West Cheshire's unique and diverse natural and built environments, and supporting the development of rich cultural opportunities (4.3.3)
- recognising and releasing the potential of young people to play a full and active part in the future of West Cheshire. (4.3.4)

4.3.1 Supporting the development of a sustainable and resilient economy, with thriving businesses

The current situation:

The economic downturn had an impact on many aspects of the economic vitality of West Cheshire and the surrounding sub-region in terms of business buoyancy, the visitor economy, employment levels, the housing market and the vitality of town centres.

A range of measures have been put into place to deal with the immediate impacts of the recession by the Council along with further and higher education institutions and other public sector organisations, looking at the impacts of the recession and the support needed around local business sustainability, safer communities, better health, housing support, supporting you as residents and preparing for recovery. We now need to think about restructuring the West Cheshire economy to ensure a resilient and sustainable base is laid for the future.

The ambition:

You live in, work in or visit a borough whose economy is sustainable and where businesses are thriving and resilient.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will focus on developing an integrated transport network locally, but also including wider connectivity to the sub-region and beyond
- we will focus new business development in the most accessible locations and support the development of energy efficient buildings
- we will support the provision of new communication technologies
- we will promote the local procurement of goods and services, prioritising the purchase of materials with low carbon footprints

- we will encourage businesses to invest in energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable resource practices
- we will support new business development in the low carbon technology field.

4.3.2 Providing our workforce with access to locally relevant skills and training to achieve better paid employment

The current situation:

The economic recession has had a major impact on employment rates which will continue to be felt for some time to come. Groups of concern include newly unemployed people who have lost jobs due to redundancy; highly qualified/experienced/professionals who have become unemployed; newly unemployed with very specific long term experience in shrinking/diminishing sectors, and the impact of highly skilled people moving into entry-level jobs. Although there are early signs of recovery from the recession, it is unlikely that unemployment figures will begin to pick up until 2011, and unemployment rates may even rise further in 2010. The area is also dealing with the fallout of the impact that the recession has had on specific sectors that have been key employers in the area, the Financial Services sector is a good example of this.

Because of the changing make-up of those people who are unemployed, a real challenge for the Partnership is that of getting the balance right – supporting those people who are newly unemployed, harnessing their enthusiasm and drive to move quickly back into employment, with the even more intensive needs of the long term unemployed who are at risk of becoming further marginalised from the world of work.

There is also the issue of job availability – as highly skilled people or those who have never faced unemployment, move into entry level or lower skilled jobs – often as a stop gap, when traditionally, these employment opportunities have

usually provided the first job opportunity on the ladder for long term unemployed or other groups who have difficulty in attaining and retaining employment.

The ambition:

Our workforce has relevant skills for our future economy.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will raise aspirations and participation in skills and training throughout West Cheshire with a particular focus on priority areas and target groups.
- we will support individuals from target groups and priority areas to develop skills which match growth sector employment opportunities
- we will support training and education in low carbon manufacturing and services such as energy efficient building, installation of renewables and waste reduction and recycling.

4.3.3 Valuing and promoting West Cheshire's unique and diverse natural and built environments, and supporting the development of rich cultural opportunities

The current situation:

It is widely recognised that cultural and recreational engagement and activity can make a significant contribution to peoples' quality of life, and support our visitor economy. Whilst we have a sound heritage/cultural basis in West Cheshire, we may not have embraced and celebrated this opportunity as much as we should.

The ambition:

West Cheshire will be thought of as a great place to live, work and visit, with Chester being a 'must see' visitor destination.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- we will review cultural assets, including sport/recreation, libraries and museums to ensure fitness for purpose, sustainability and equality of access
- we will look at all aspects of the customer journey from the visual presentation of information to the welcome visitors receive when they arrive in the area, with the aim of creating a positive image of the area and its high quality places
- we will seek to widen the benefits and impact of cultural and recreation activity by targeting activity on areas and communities with specific needs, and working with these communities to address their specific challenges
- we will work together to deliver our regeneration programmes including Chester Renaissance, Ellesmere Port, Weaver Valley and Rural Resurgence to realise the benefit of culture as a catalyst
- we will work together to look at the potential of Chester receiving Capital of Culture status in 2017.

4.3.4 Recognising and releasing the potential of young people to play a full and active part in the future of West Cheshire**The current situation:**

In Cheshire West and Chester we believe that all children and young people have the right to be healthy, happy and safe. We want them to feel loved, valued and respected and to have high aspirations for their future.

Many people and organisations contribute to these goals – families and other carers, communities and organisations in the public, voluntary, community and private sectors as well as children and young people themselves.

The ambition:

We are working towards much earlier identification of need and services being organised and delivered in an integrated way at a local level.

The route to achieving our ambition:

- children, families and carers will be able to access services close to their homes delivered in an integrated manner that makes sense to them, meaning that families only have to tell their stories once to get the support or guidance they need
- service providers will offer a proactive, personal and listening approach, shaping the offer as appropriate to need
- all settings delivering services to children will be of the highest quality and will build the capacity of families and children in their local area - they will know how to keep children safe
- children who need many services will be able to access high quality, appropriate specialist help.

5 MAKING IT LOCAL

[TO BE INSERTED]

How the vision will be reflected in APB areas

6 MAKING IT HAPPEN

[TO BE INSERTED]

How we will work together

	Safer Stronger Communities	Health and Wellbeing	Children and Young People	Environment and Sustainability	Business Enterprise and Culture
1. Promoting diversity	✓	✓			
2. Supporting the Third Sector	✓			✓	
3. Confidence that crime and ASB will be addressed	✓		✓		
4. Addressing community safety through community cohesion	✓	✓	✓		
5. Community action on climate change and sustainability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Community influence on decision making	✓		✓		
7. Health inequalities	✓	✓			
8. Reducing deprivation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9. The aging population	✓	✓			
10. Homes for all	✓				✓

11.Sustainable and thriving economy			✓	✓	✓
12. Skills and training			✓		✓
13.Cultural development			✓	✓	✓
14. Valuing young people	✓		✓	✓	✓

[TO BE INSERTED]

Our partnership structure

[TO BE INSERTED]

Include cross cutting challenges:

- *Improving the coordination and collaboration of partners services to reduce duplication*
- *Resource efficiency*

[TO BE INSERTED]

How we will measure success