

PRESENT: Councillors Jean Flaherty, Louise Gittins, Michael Gorman, Hans Mundry, Nick Mannion and Karen Shore

Apologies for absence were received from Gemma Davies, Phillip Creswell, Kevin O'Keefe, Rob Polkinghorne, Steve Purdham and Sandra Rothwell

Visiting Members: Councillors Stewart Gardiner (Cheshire East Council), Paul Donovan, Carol Gahan, Lyn Gibbon, Charles Hardy and Ted Lush (Cheshire West and Chester Council), Mark Browne and Sharon Harris (Warrington Borough Council).

Officers in attendance:	Delyth Curtis	Chief Executive, Cheshire West and Chester Council
	Philip Cox	Chief Executive, Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington
	Melissa Crellin	Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington
	Andrea Stott	Business Advisory Board
	Steve Park	Chief Executive, Warrington Borough Council
	Peter Skates	Growth Director, Cheshire East Council
	Dan Price	Police and Crime Commissioner
	Damon Taylor	Chief Executive, Office of the PCC
	Adam Simpson	Monitoring Officer, Warrington Borough Council
	Elena Lloyd	Head of Communications, Cheshire West and Chester Council
	Laura Edwards	Senior Transformation Manager, Cheshire West and Chester Council
	Deborah Ridgeley	Democracy Business Manager, Cheshire West and Chester Council

1 MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Adam Simpson, Deputy Monitoring Officer, Warrington Borough Council, opened the inaugural meeting of the Combined Authority Shadow Board.

The Board members and all those present were invited to introduce themselves.

The circulated Terms of Reference were referred to, and the Board were asked to note this published document with the following amendment:-

- Paragraphs 5.1 and 6.2 which contain the reference to Vice-Chair be amended to read Deputy Chair.

The membership of the Board, previously recommended by the Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee and approved by the respective Council/Cabinet meetings of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Borough Council's was referred to. It was suggested that two, non-constituent (non-voting) members could be added to the Board, to represent the Business Advisory Board and the Police and Crime Commissioner, with further consideration to be given to a representative of the Workforce Engagement Workstream. This suggestion would be taken back to the Workstream by Councillor Hans Mundry (Chair of the Workstream) and an update would be provided to the Board in due course.

Visiting Members: Councillor Lynn Gibbon, Cheshire West and Chester Councillor, spoke in relation to this item. Councillor Gibbon queried the membership of the Board and requested that consideration should be given to a wider political representation on the Board, to include the largest opposition groups from each local authority.

Councillor Stewart Gardiner, Cheshire East Councillor, spoke in relation to this item. Councillor Gardiner confirmed he agreed with Councillor Gibbon's concerns about political representation on the Board and requested that this be given further consideration to reflect the political makeup of the authorities and across the Cheshire and Warrington area.

DECIDED: that

- (1) the published Membership and Terms of Reference report be noted, subject to the amendment set out above;
- (2) the comments expressed by the Visiting Members be noted;
- (3) the Police and Crime Commissioner and a representative from the Business Advisory Board be appointed as non-constituent (non-voting) members of the Board; and
- (4) the Workforce Engagement Workstream be requested to consider a representative as a further non-constituent member, to be considered at a meeting of the Board in due course.

2 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Adam Simpson, Deputy Monitoring Officer, Warrington Borough Council invited nominations for Chair of the Shadow Board.

Councillor Nick Mannion, Leader, Cheshire East Council moved, duly seconded by Councillor Hans Mundry, Leader, Warrington Borough Council that Councillor Louise Gittins, Leader, Cheshire West and Chester Council be appointed as Chair of the Shadow Board.

DECIDED: That Councillor Louise Gittins be appointed as Chair of the Shadow Board.

Councillor Louise Gittins in the Chair

On accepting the appointment, Councillor Gittins referred to the work and documents already completed and expressed her thanks on behalf of the Board for the continued support by all the organisations and stakeholders involved in reaching this important stage in the devolution process. The Chair continued, that this was an opportunity to not only build on a strong and varied economy but also an area where everyone would benefit, from improving skills, better housing and transport across both the urban and rural areas of the sub-region.

3 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR

The Chair invited nominations for Deputy Chair, and Councillor Nick Mannion was proposed by Councillor Karen Shore, duly seconded by Councillor Hans Mundry.

AGREED: That

Councillor Nick Mannion be appointed as Deputy Chair for the Shadow Board for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

On accepting his appointment, the Deputy Chair expressed his view that devolution was an opportunity for all across the sub-region and he was confident the Shadow Board would share his view that there was a commitment to leave no-one behind and all could share in the economic prosperity.

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted by Steve Purdham, Business Advisory Board, and Andrea Stott was in attendance in his place.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members did not declare any interests in items listed on the agenda.

6 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no requests to speak during Public Question Time.

The Chair reminded the Board that this item was an opportunity for any resident to address the Board on items listed on the agenda, and that the meetings would take place at different venues across the sub-region.

There was one member of the public in attendance, with 8 visiting members also present.

7 SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC STRATEGY (SIES) REPORT

Councillor Michael Gorman, Deputy Leader, Cheshire East Council, referred to the circulated report and appendices in relation to the Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (SIES). The Strategy had been developed over 3 years, which included an extensive consultation involving residents, the private sector, voluntary groups and the community across the sub-region. The Strategy would enable the delivery of the agreed Vision across urban and rural areas by 2045, with the next steps being to coproduce a clear road map for the next 5 to 10 years. The Strategy reflected more than the work of the local authorities, and Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington but involved the private sector, communities, further education, skills providers across the sub-region. This coproduction approach would continue and would be discussed and highlighted in the Conference to be

held in early 2026. The documents also contained indicators to enable progress to be tracked, which would be monitored and amended regularly.

Councillor Nick Mannion, Leader, Cheshire East Council, stated that the Strategy was ambitious, setting out the goal that Cheshire and Warrington should become the fastest growing economy in the North, drawing on the work already underway securing industrial opportunities in clean energy, life sciences and advanced manufacturing to deliver well paid jobs for all. Councillor Mannion also highlighted the £6bn being invested as part of the HyNet Carbon Capture and decarbonisation in Ellesmere Port, the £17bn being invested in Nuclear Power and support for Bentley in Cheshire East for high quality vehicle manufacturing as examples of investments that would bring new jobs and new opportunities to Cheshire and Warrington.

The Chair referred to a written comment submitted by Councillor Ted Lush, Cheshire West and Chester Council, and it was confirmed that a written response would be provided.

Visiting Member Councillor Stewart Gardiner spoke on this item. Whilst he welcomed the Strategy and overall he was in support of it, he expressed his concerns about the document restricting the new Combined Authority ability to react to changes following the Mayoral election and how essential it was to have all-party support to implement all aspects of the Strategy.

Councillor Karen Shore spoke in support of the Strategy, and commented that the Combined Authority would have the ability to amend and adapt the Strategy. There would be Scrutiny and Audit of the processes followed by the Board once it was formally created, and that as legislative requirement, a new Combined Authority had to have a Strategy.

Ms Andrea Stott, Business Advisory Board, welcomed the opportunity to address the Shadow Board, on the historic achievement of the inaugural meeting. The Business Advisory Board had 20 volunteer members who were fully in support of devolution and represented a wide range of business interests from across the sub-region. It was its view that the Strategy would provide the strong foundation for devolution which itself could be the catalyst for a better life for Cheshire and Warrington residents.

Mr Dan Price, Police and Crime Commissioner and non-constituent member of the Shadow Board, stated he was also in support of the Strategy. He could see the importance of having a strong local economy with the opportunities for fair employment. Crime and re-offending were linked with lack of employment opportunities, and the Fresh Start Programme funded by the PCC supported improvements in skills, access to training and helped give residents hope.

The Chair welcomed all the comments made and reminded everyone that as a living document it would be updated and amended. The importance of the Strategy was far-reaching and because of this, it was suggested that all future reports being considered by the Shadow Board should be referenced to the Strategy.

Councillor Michael Gorman moved the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Nick Mannion.

DECIDED: That

- (1) the feedback on the draft Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (SIES) as described in the Consultation Report, be noted;
- (2) the proposed Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy be noted;
- (3) the publication of the SIES, subject to making any final changes to reflect feedback from members of the Shadow Board, be agreed, and authority be delegated to Growth Directors to make those changes in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Shadow Board and the Chief Executive of Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington;
- (4) Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington's proposals to produce companion documents between now and Next March 2026 explaining the impact of the SIES on different communities in Cheshire and Warrington, in particular people living in rural and in urban areas be noted;
- (5) the SIES to be kept up to date as a "living document" and that once the Combined Authority was formally established in 2026 it should be invited to review an updated version of the SIES; and
- (6) every report considered by the Shadow Board to include the reference to the SIES and the report template to be amended.

8 MOVING TO THE TRANSITION PHASE OF THE CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON DEVOLUTION PROGRAMME

Councillor Karen Shore, Deputy Leader, Cheshire West and Chester Council, referred to the Transition Phase of the Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Programme report. It was stated that this would be first of many operational reports, with more details to be considered at future meetings.

The secondment opportunities set out in paragraph 3.4 were outlined, along with the ongoing discussions with Trade Union representatives and frequent FAQ's for employees across all four authorities. The estimated costs for the recruitment would be monitored and reported regularly, along with the 2026/2027 Business Plan. It was anticipated that for the 2 senior positions, a market testing exercise would be undertaken, which would include full HR support and Trade Union involvement.

Visting Member Councillor Stewart Gardiner spoke in relation to this item. Councillor Gardiner referred to the fixed term secondment opportunities and expressed concern that this could restrict the ability of the Elected Mayor to amend or vary the officer's structure once the new authority was operational.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Karen Shore and seconded by Councillor Jean Flaherty.

DECIDED: That

- (1) the update and early priorities for the work programme arrangements as outlined in the report be noted; and
- (2) the commencement of an interim recruitment process based on secondment and a limited external market test for the interim “day one” structure of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority as outlined in the report, be approved, and the Chief Executive of Cheshire West and Chester Council be delegated the authority to make any offers of interim or seconded employment on an “in principle” basis, to be confirmed as soon as possible for the Combined Authority.

9 BUDGET UPDATE

Councillor Hans Mundry, Leader, Warrington Borough Council, referred to the published report of the Devolution Steering Group which provided an update on the Budget.

Councillor Mundry stated that there was an anticipated underspend of just over £300k, which would be utilised to fund new commitments during 2026 as no additional funding would be available. Councillor Mundry outlined the statutory appointments that were required as part of the mobilisation to the new authority and the governance, systems and procedures that would be necessary. Regular budget reports would be provided to the Board.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Hans Mundry and seconded by Councillor Karen Shore.

DECIDED: That

- (1) the devolution programme to date has been delivered within approved budget (by £0.3m against its original scope) and is forecast to remain within budget for the remainder of the year be noted;
- (2) the scope of the programme be extended to include funding the initial costs of recruiting and employing key roles for the Combined Authority and necessary costs to mobilise the new body before April 2026, subject to costs remaining within the already approved £1.275m budget, be approved;
- (3) an amendment to the financial principles for the programme to allow partial reimbursement of the cost of in-kind staff support provided to the Combined Authority, subject to affordability within the approved £1.275m budgets after all other relevant costs are met, be approved; and
- (4) the appointment of Cheshire West and Chester Council as the accountable body for funding received on behalf of the Shadow Combined Authority (such as the Capacity Grant) be approved.

10 SHADOW BOARD FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Jean Flaherty referred to the circulated Forward Plan. As this was the first meeting of the Board, the Plan was only in an outline form but would evolve as the Board evolved, and would remain an important document to guide Board

members, residents, businesses and stakeholders on the journey to make a difference across Cheshire and Warrington.

AGREED: That the Forward Plan be noted.

Chairman

Date