**STOKE & HURLESTON PARISH COUNCIL**

**www.stokeandhurleston-pc.gov.uk**

Minutes of Meeting held on 8th March 2021 @ 7.30pm

 **Virtual meeting Via Zoom .**

**Councillors Present**:, Mrs Valerie Pickford (**VP**) (Chair) Mike Kosh (**MK)** Robert Darlington (**RD**), Christine Bowen (**CB**) Mr Fred West (**FW**)**,** Mr Ken Hough (**KH**)Mrs Helen Exley (**The Clerk**)

|  **Point**  | **Agenda point** | **Raised By** | **Action** | **Due Date** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | **Apologies: -** Borough Councillor Sarah Pochin (**SP**) |  Chair | Clerk | 08/03/21 |
| 2. | **Declaration of Councillors Interests:**-There were no declarations registered from any Cllrs present. | The Clerk | The Clerk | 08/03/21 |
| 3. | **Matters arising from previous Minutes & Approval:** -The Minutes of 07/12/20 were signed and agreed as accurate by all Councillors present. Proposed by **RD** and 2nded by **CB****Matters arising:-** none |  Chair | N/A | 08/03/21 |
| 4. | **Open Forum:-**1 member of the public was present. No comments | General Public | The Clerk | 08/03/21 |
| 5. | **Borough Councillor:-**Update e mail attached as appendix but precises here to include:-* Enforcement and compliance
* CEC distributed more food and energy vouchers ahead of February half term. [https://www.gov.uk/.../new-winter-package-to-provide...](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-winter-package-to-provide-further-support-for-children-and-families?fbclid=IwAR1HqJhr6deviD-IMjq-7OJECtueCU-AbWJh_hUsZzYswlquqfcDmahqUxA)

[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/covidwintergrant](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/covidwintergrant?fbclid=IwAR2iShPFdoB_b1AzBaW7zp_KHXQkbTqLQg2CntqumD8dasii0WxKluUsGZM)* Royal Assent for HS2 Phase 2a
* Air Quality Action Plan Consultation
* Axis Academy [www.theaxisacademy.org](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.theaxisacademy.org%2F%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR3dniC6Hm3QSP-fVFQDcTdKxHOVQqCJnMwV8yaRcJST39-mHUomcIaXWuU&h=AT1u_2ocCGddpGZMNkCXLmAfqbAnJdwCW0Z__9DD2HurKjL8j1NDrO2BQNAOKYeH-26eJDmgZFR-9I78UaT3ETjvcNUvfSH0E71goyv5NNtBcaopKhoPEoyyyt4YeKtz63kq&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT1eBgnFcLbj9W55q1_KlstVbgX9TntGJiu4ltYwHgXgAytuyojlrotk6Pg1r7JZQSbcxCszFNkEas-Cwxk280RbPwvEEl28lOOTpy7FKnN-vpWdRaWfMy-jfQH5Orm9b2MOBj4YSeTI6i36atZVwPnyCXHoD7QwQyl7eJ9220nDQhugwSI)
* CEC’s budget and strategic priorities for the next four years have now been approved. CEC’s budget and strategic priorities for the next four years have now been approved.
* Ward Budgets
* Voting in elections this May

[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council\_and\_democracy/voting\_and\_elections/elections/elections.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/voting_and_elections/elections/elections.aspx) * US tech firm’s £50m investment in borough
* Census 2021 [census.gov.uk/contact-us](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CAN390F%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CJUONLV08%5Ccensus.gov.uk%5Ccontact-us)
* Community Governance Review of Town and Parish Council Governance.
* Cheshire East Council wants views on its plans for dealing with potentially contaminated land in the borough.

[http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/.../contaminated\_land.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment/environmental_health/contaminated_land/contaminated_land.aspx?fbclid=IwAR2dCUsKLHQ_zmmUMfsTXrSXfpDN3iRzUJTUkh1OQIz2b_XHbMxV5kwo9II)* Cheshire East Council is inviting applications to its Green Homes Grant scheme [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/helpwithheating](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/helpwithheating?fbclid=IwAR2COxQTcqYvP3MovemK26RQrkb009Eb557lfknt_yDonwwiHZd7JBrroqQ)
* Cheshire East Council highways maintenance funding.
* Road Repairs [https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/.../road-repair-and...](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/highways_and_roads/road-maintenance/road-repair-and-improvement-programme-2020-2021.aspx?fbclid=IwAR0VQFLKiRX9Kz2qGx3aZOtBuYijl03XufxB7QqjaavV6rP0ApZ7JfjlvAU)

[https://www.cheshireeasthighways.org/report-it-general.aspx](https://www.cheshireeasthighways.org/report-it-general.aspx?fbclid=IwAR24qzjqkU3_ttguQPffNUOE1Y1Z2PLR2zIU5JR18wf__-KD1kvIkb4EOxc),  | Chair | SP | 08/03/21 |
| 6. | **Highways Update**: -* Hedge at Old Chester road – Bridge 100 – CEC (Andrea Bickerton) have been informed again that this has not been attended to. Cutting season is now finished until the 1st Sept. Question raised with CEC whether we can get a private contractor to cut it still awaiting answer. Concerns remain that the visibility is very restrictive to those drivers pulling out and not being able to see oncoming traffic over the bridge and is proving a hazard.
* State of footpath and hedge outside Stoke Manor have been re - registered with photos with CEC after 1 attempt at improvement, but it is unsatisfactory and still a hazard. **MK** has visited the site with local resident and evidenced that CEC had hardly attempted the job. Suggestion that a working party tackle the issue. Recent local working party of residents had made improvements on the canal and verges in the village. **MK/CB** willing to undertake the work. Question of whether the cuttings and waste could be collected by ANSA. Clerk to check with CEC whether the hedge can be cut back as it is hazardous.
* Matrix signs – Waiting on 106 spend monies from Wardle development site. **SP** is liaising with Highways where the money will be spent. **MK** is still waiting to attend a meeting regarding this. It is a lengthy drawn out process. **MK** to ask **SP** for a further update. Alpraham & Calverley PC’s are reviewing what speed devices that they want in their areas. CEC are looking at producing a policy regarding SIDs and recommends that SHPC wait for this. It would mean that SHPC would have to purchase the SIDS Approx £6-8k.
* Traffic Survey A51 – For Alpraham & Calverley has been delayed. It is sheduled to be completed in March. **SP** to continue to push for this to happen.
 | ChairClerk | MK/Clerk/ChairClerk | ongoing |
| 7. | **Lengthsman duties:-*** Dog Fouling issues- a nationwide issue due to the increased number of walkers. The 2 bins are emptied weekly. Should there be more signs visible? Spray paint to be used to highlight the offending article? Recent litter pick evidenced that there was a lot of poo still not being collected. Concerns that signage would not be taken notice of. Bag dispenser units are available for purchase, dispensing 1 bag per pull. These could be sited by the bins. **MK** suggested that signs by Bridge 100 & 99 requesting that canal users/walkers use the bins in the appropriate manner. Perhaps an additional bin by Henhull bridge would help as it is a distance to the next bin.

Question raised by **CB** whether The Canal & River Trust have any litter notices that can be placed? Can the PC add notices in the area? Is there a policy in place?It was proposed by **VP** and seconded by **MK** that 2 Bag dispensers and spray paint to be purchased and sited by the current bins. A review of whether a 3rd bin is required by Henhull bridge to take place at the May meeting, once the impact of the new dispensers has been assessed.  | Clerk | Clerk | ongoing |
|  | * Comments that Peter Wilson does a good job of litter picking in the area but he only does 2 hours per week and covers the whole parish. A village group are keen to continue with litter picking and this is to be encouraged.
* Blackberry Farm – Local resident had contacted the Clerk stating that the litter issue (bottles) was significant now that the large bin has been removed. The Clerk has informed Peter Wilson to check this issue on his weekly rounds.
* Canal & River Trust (CRT) used to have a skip by the canal for the canal users to dump rubbish – no longer here. The Clerk to check with CRT about a replacement.
 | Clerk | Clerk | ongoing |
| 8. | **Appraisal, Disciplinary and Grievance procedures: -****VP**  - These documents distributed to the Councillors prior to the meeting  were approved by the PC, subject to addition of a note on *Appraisal Form* as to who would act as Appraiser.  To be placed in an *Employee Handbook* with any other supporting documents. Proposed by **MK,** 2nded by **VP.** | Chair | Chair | 08/03/21  |
| 9. | **Parish Council Noticeboard:-**Planning requirements needed for a board. Site has been identified and Clerk has approached CEC planning but due to COVID CEC Planning Dept are not dealing with no essential planning.A suitable board can still be identified with a view to purchasing when we have confirmation on the land ownership.Clerk stated that the Minutes and Agenda and PC correspondence will still be accessible on the website, but a noticeboard is still a requirement in the Parish. | Chair | Clerk | ongoing |
| 10. | **Clerk’s report:-*** E Mail sent to Clerk regarding local issues. The Agenda has covered a lot of the issues raised. Further questions raised include:- CHALC questionnaire – what happened to the information gained, payment of accounts – why does the PC pay for Zoom and not log off and not relog on to save the cost? The cost of the physical meeting is greater than the cost of Zoom meetings and it is a budgeted cost, which will continue. Christmas tree- why do we buy one? It has been a feature in the village since 2007. It is a budgeted cost, a resident pays for the electricity and it is erected by locals.
* Website security – This had been flagged that the PC site is not secure. Having taken advice from CHALC, it is not a requirement that Parish Council Websites need to be secure due to no sensitive information being held on the site. It was agreed by all Councillors that the cost of securing the site (£60+VAT) was not necessary.

It was agreed to respond to the resident via e mail answering the issues raised, alongside viewing the Minutes.* Census 21st March. Parish Councillors are expected to assist those local residents who request help.
 | The Clerk | The Clerk | 08/03/21 |
| 11. | **Planning Matters :-**Current:- *21/0580N – Park Farm, Chester Road Hurleston. (Snugburys). Use of existing goods access as overflow for vehicle exit. –* **VP** has responded on the planning portal regarding the local traffic issues associated with this facility with a single entrance. Past:-*20/4666N – Keepers Cottage, Cuckoo Lane – Change of use from Agriculture to equestrian use. Undecided.**20/2642N -Land at Chester Road, Hurleston – erection of Haybarn. – Approved with Conditions***RD** stated that a house at the Bluestone traffic lights has an additional entrance, does it have planning permission for this? Name of house is required. | The Chair | The Clerk | 08/03/21 |
| 12. | **Payment of accounts:-** Cheques issued:- * Helen Exley (clerks Fees) (538) £507.36
* Peter Wilson (537) £320.00
* Helen Exley Zoom meeting fees (539) £ 28.78
* JB Enterprises Ltd – Dog Bin dispensers (340)

**VP** proposed payments and **RD** seconded.   | The Clerk | The Clerk  | 08/03/21 |
| 13. | **Review Clerk’s and Lengthman’s payments:-**Deferred until May meeting | Chair | Chair | 17/05/21 |
| 14. | **AOB/ items for next agenda:-****RD** – questioned whether any Parishes will be amalgamated? Not as far as the PC is aware.**FW** – has offered his resignation as he has been an active Councillor for 37 Years and feels that someone more local would be better placed to serve on the Parish Council. Fellow Councillors thanked **FW** for his valuable contribution to the PC. Formal resignation to follow. | The Chair |  The ChairCBThe Clerk | 08/03/21 |
| 15. | **Dates for 2021 meetings :-****17th May to include annual meeting****6th September – 7.30pm****6th December – 7.30pm** | The Clerk | The Clerk | 08/03/21 |

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed @9.30 pm

-------------------------------------------------------------------------**Chairman** ------------------------------------------------------**Date**

**Bunbury Ward Councillor Report March**

**Enforcement and compliance**

The Council's regulatory teams have continued to work with businesses to monitor compliance with COVID-19 regulations and guidance.

Over the last few weeks, officers have directly monitored 942 businesses and seen a 97% compliance rate, with the remaining 3% with minor issues, which have been addressed through engagement and education.

There has been a good level of compliance by businesses and members of the public in Cheshire East

Cheshire Police have continued to enforce COVID regulations with 685 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued to people in Cheshire. Many of these fines relate to parties or gatherings involving people from more than one household. They include 126 fines issued in Crewe and 60 in Macclesfield.

**CEC distributed more food and energy vouchers ahead of February half term**

Cheshire East Council distributed more food and energy vouchers to vulnerable children and families ahead of the February half term.

With the help of schools, colleges, early years settings and other family support services, more than 11,000 vouchers have been distributed to date, funded from Cheshire East’s share of the government’s £170 million Covid Winter Grant Scheme, which launched in December last year.

[https://www.gov.uk/.../new-winter-package-to-provide...](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-winter-package-to-provide-further-support-for-children-and-families?fbclid=IwAR1HqJhr6deviD-IMjq-7OJECtueCU-AbWJh_hUsZzYswlquqfcDmahqUxA)

The fund, which ends on 31 March 2021, aims to support those most in need across England with the cost of food, energy, water bills and other essentials.

In addition to the vouchers, families in need are now also able to receive refurbished white goods such as cookers, fridges, washing machines and microwaves. The council recognises that for some families if, for example, their cooker stops working, they may not be able to afford to replace it.

More than 9,000 vulnerable children and young people were identified by the council, including those eligible for income-related free school meals. These families received their first batch of vouchers mid-December to cover the Christmas school holidays.

Children eligible for free school meals during term time have continued to be supported by schools, either by healthy food parcels or supermarket vouchers.

Vouchers were delivered, via schools and other children’s services the week before half term.

Any families in need are asked to speak to someone they are in touch with, with such as a GP, teacher, support worker or me, who can request the vouchers on their behalf.

For more information on the scheme, visit: [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/covidwintergrant](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/covidwintergrant?fbclid=IwAR2iShPFdoB_b1AzBaW7zp_KHXQkbTqLQg2CntqumD8dasii0WxKluUsGZM)

**Royal Assent for HS2 Phase 2a**

Cheshire East Council has welcomed a significant milestone in bringing HS2 to Crewe.

The HS2 Phase 2a Hybrid Bill was, on the 11th February, granted Royal Assent, which makes it law and gives the go ahead for the next part of the HS2 railway network to be built between Birmingham and Crewe (known as Phase 2a).

This is a hugely important milestone and brings with it the powers and government commitment to bring high speed rail to Crewe and move to the construction phase.

HS2 is a strategically important project and will drive increased business confidence to invest in Crewe.

It will create opportunities to not only enhance the town of Crewe, but also the wider borough through the jobs, services and improved opportunities it can provide.

The Bill’s passing comes as the council pushes forward with multiple projects to transform Crewe and the wider area and ensure it is ready for HS2’s arrival, including its proposals for Crewe Hub Station.

CEC is continuing to progress key projects – the North West Crewe Package will start this spring to improve the local road network around Leighton Hospital, while plans for the dualling of the A500 up to Junction 16 are also well underway.

CEC will also continue to work with HS2 Ltd on mitigation for those negatively affected by the HS2 scheme.

**Air Quality Action Plan Consultation**

Cheshire East Council has recently revoked seven Air Quality Management Areas from the borough as a result of falling pollution concentrations.

The Air Quality Management Areas were introduced in response to elevated pollutant levels within small ‘hotspots’ across the borough and to help provide a focus for air quality improvement measures. As a result, the Council is now reviewing its Air Quality Action Plan and to also include two new air quality management areas that were declared in 2019 (Lewin Street, Middlewich and Chelford Road, Knutsford).

CEC’s priorities are to tackle vehicular emissions by applying targeted measures for the remaining Air Quality Management Areas, as well as taking a holistic/integrated approach across the whole of Cheshire East. The measures are specifically aimed at NO2 reduction; however, they will also significantly and positively help in the reduction of Particulate Matter.  The Council intends to further develop this plan through consultation with members of the public, elected members and relevant stakeholders.

Consultation on the draft air quality action plan is now open and anyone interested in air quality across the borough is welcome to contribute. Details of the consultation can be found on the Council’s [website](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment/environmental_health/local_air_quality/local_air_quality.aspx).

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment/environmental\_health/local\_air\_quality/local\_air\_quality.aspx

Ideas and comments can be sent to airquality@cheshireeast.gov.uk **by** **5pm on the 12 March 2021** and where possible, these may be included in the final Action Plan.

**Axis Academy**

Cheshire East Council has announced that Axis Academy, which opened its doors in September, has now moved to a permanent location.

Axis Academy is a school which supports children with an Education Health Care Plan for Social Emotional and Mental Health. It offers places to children and young people, aged four to 16 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The school had been teaching children temporarily from The Stables on Warmingham Road in Crewe but has now moved to its permanent base at Lodgefields Drive, Crewe.

The need for more special schools in Cheshire East was established as part of a structured programme to increase places for children and young people with SEND. The detailed plan, agreed in 2017, recognised that many pupils with SEND had very long journeys to and from school, with one in five travelling more than 45 minutes each way and many educated outside of the borough.

The last four years has seen considerable capital investment in Cheshire East schools to increase both the number of places for children and young people with SEND, but also to improve support and resources in mainstream schools.

Axis Academy is run by the Youth Engagement Schools Trust opened on Tuesday 1 September, initially to 32 students, increasing to 48 by next year. The school will focus on providing education to young people with mental health needs, supporting all areas from personal wellbeing to academic success.

The school will provide opportunities for students out of education or those who are not coping within the mainstream setting. It has been launched with the aim to reconnect students who have become detached from their education, and in some cases, purpose in life.

More information on The Axis Academy can be found at [www.theaxisacademy.org](https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.theaxisacademy.org%2F%3Ffbclid%3DIwAR3dniC6Hm3QSP-fVFQDcTdKxHOVQqCJnMwV8yaRcJST39-mHUomcIaXWuU&h=AT1u_2ocCGddpGZMNkCXLmAfqbAnJdwCW0Z__9DD2HurKjL8j1NDrO2BQNAOKYeH-26eJDmgZFR-9I78UaT3ETjvcNUvfSH0E71goyv5NNtBcaopKhoPEoyyyt4YeKtz63kq&__tn__=-UK-R&c%5b0%5d=AT1eBgnFcLbj9W55q1_KlstVbgX9TntGJiu4ltYwHgXgAytuyojlrotk6Pg1r7JZQSbcxCszFNkEas-Cwxk280RbPwvEEl28lOOTpy7FKnN-vpWdRaWfMy-jfQH5Orm9b2MOBj4YSeTI6i36atZVwPnyCXHoD7QwQyl7eJ9220nDQhugwSI)

**CEC’s budget and strategic priorities for the next four years have now been approved.**The medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) and corporate plan for 2021-25 were approved at full council on Wednesday 17 February.

These key strategic documents set out the Council’s plans for spending and income, and the priorities for service delivery and investment over the next four years.

This is the first time that the council has set out and agreed a budget for a four-year period, matching the lifetime of its corporate plan.

Both documents were developed following extensive consultation with staff, public and stakeholders.

The new corporate plan sets out CEC’s new vision and priorities though it is rather short on measurable targets. It will shape the work the Council does and the changes it will make over the next four years.

The work programmes of committees under the new committee system of decision-making for the council, (set to come into force on 12 May,) will be shaped by the plan, as will its business plans.

**Ward Budgets**

A Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge at Cheshire East Council was undertaken early last year.

The review highlighted that consideration be given to setting-up devolved ward member budgets.

Amendment:

To start the initiative for devolved ward budgets it is recommended that:

a) The Council establish devolved ward member budgets of at least £4,200 per Ward Member for the financial year 2021/2022.

b) The proposals to be funded from the current allocation of Capital Grant funding to the Area Highway Groups of £350,000.

c) That the Committee System be asked to review achievements of the ward budgets scheme in 2021/22 with a view to widening the scheme in 2022/23 and beyond with a significant increase in the budget amount to be allocated to each Ward Member.

Background:

The allocation of funding to ward budgets in this way will provide members with capital funding to be spent on highways projects in 2021/22.

The requirement to maintain spending within the conditions attached to the grant funding would provide adequate financial controls for the spending of the ward budgets in 2021/22. Members would be provided with guidance on eligible areas of highways spending items and on the costs associated on likely schemes. Ward budgets could be merged, by agreement, to support spending on larger projects. Members could also use ward budgets to support, or to provide match funding, to other allowable projects. During 2021/22 the principle of establishing area budgets with a broader scope will be explored to inform proposals that could be included in the medium term financial strategy for 2022/23 onwards.

This was the only amendment to the budget that was approved and potentially is the seed that will enable councillors to get more done locally.

**Voting in elections this May**

Cheshire East residents will go to the polls on Thursday 6 May – to have their say on who represents them as the police and crime commissioner for Cheshire.

There will also be a small number of local council by-elections and neighbourhood planning referenda that take place on that day including Shavington’s.

Although the elections are not until May, Cheshire East Council is already making plans to help voters stay safe while casting their vote.

There are a number of ways to have a say in the May elections – you can vote in a polling station, by post or by appointing someone you trust to vote on your behalf, which is known as a proxy vote.

Returning Officer Lorraine O’Donnell said: “We’re planning for these elections now so that, however people choose to cast their vote in May, it can be done safely. We’re putting arrangements in place to help voters stay safe at the polling station, if they choose to vote in person.

“Voters can expect many of the measures they’ve become used to in shops and banks over recent months, such as hand sanitiser, floor markings and face masks. But they also have the option to apply to vote by post or by proxy, if this is their preference.”

If people are not already registered for a postal vote and they are thinking about voting by post, they can apply now. This will make sure an application is processed early and the postal vote can be sent out more quickly.

It’s easy to apply and anyone can find out how by visiting the Electoral Commission website.

You need to be registered to vote in order to have a say at the elections – and the easiest way to register is online at: [www.gov.uk/register-to-vote](http://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote)

For more information, visit the council’s website and search under voting and elections or visit: [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council\_and\_democracy/voting\_and\_elections/elections/elections.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/voting_and_elections/elections/elections.aspx)

**US tech firm’s £50m investment in borough**

Miami-based Brightstar is to invest £50m in its UK business operations with a new call centre in the borough, employing around 700 people.

The technology company, which specialises in device protection, trade-in, accessories, and technical support, is to open a new customer contact centre at Crewe Business Park, adding to its existing operations in the town.

The council’s economic development team has been working with the Department for International Trade and the Cheshire and Warrington local enterprise partnership to assist Brightstar to choose a new location in Crewe. The company has already announced the opening of a new facility on Jack Mills Way for handling mobile devices, accessories and support services.

The company, which operates in 50 countries, opted to expand in Crewe because of its connectivity, including road and rail links and because of the expertise of its local workforce. Crewe is the hub of its UK operations.

The council supported the company by engaging developers and planning officers to offer advice around the practicalities of their expansion plans.

Cheshire East Council’s economic development team has assisted many businesses to access grant support, suitable locations and other services which help them to expand, create investment opportunities and source employment resources.

**Census 2021**

Households across Cheshire East will be asked to take part in Census 2021 next month.

The census, run by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), is a once-in-a-decade survey that gives us the most accurate estimate of all the people and households in England and Wales. It has been carried out every ten years since 1801, with the exception of 1941.

Understanding the needs of the nation helps everyone from central government to organisations such as councils and health services plan and fund public services across England and Wales. Census outputs inform where public funding is spent in areas like transport, education and health – on cycle routes, schools and dental surgeries.

Information from the census is also important in helping lots of other people and organisations do their work.

Charities and voluntary organisations often use it as evidence to get funding. It helps businesses to understand their customers and, for example, decide where to open new shops. People doing research, like university students looking into their family history, use census data.

On a local level, our residents will also benefit. The census provides important information on population diversity, allowing local organisations such as the council to know whether they are meeting their responsibilities and triggering action where necessary.

Census Day will be on Sunday 21 March. People will soon be receiving postcards from the ONS advising them that it will be held on this date. The census will include questions about your sex, age, work, health, education, household size and ethnicity. And, for the first time, there will be a question asking whether people have served in the armed forces, as well as voluntary questions for those aged 16 and over on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Results will be available within 12 months, although personal records will be locked away for 100 years, kept safe for future generations.

For more information and advice on how to answer the questions, visit [census.gov.uk/contact-us](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CAN390F%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CJUONLV08%5Ccensus.gov.uk%5Ccontact-us). The ONS will be opening a free contact centre on Monday 1 March.

**Community Governance Review of Town and Parish Council Governance**

This long-term project has been underway now for over 2 years, the purpose of which being to review the governance arrangements of all of the Borough’s town and parish councils.

The Constitution Committee is responsible for this area of work, and appointed a Community Governance Review Sub-Committee to drive-forward the Review.  The Sub-Committee itself established informal workshop arrangements to consider the detail, and to make recommendations back to the Sub-Committee, prior to further detailed consideration by the Constitution Committee.

A pre-consultation survey was undertaken just over a year ago, in order to secure the views of stakeholders, upon town and parish council governance matters.  The purpose of this was to provide information which might inform the forthcoming formal consultation.  Nearly 300 responses were received, some of which being “no change please”; others were very detailed in nature.

The Council has now completed around 7 informal workshop sessions with members of the CGR Sub-Committee.  These sessions were arranged in order for Members to look at a range of issues:

* Electorate numbers taken from the 2019 electoral register;
* The number of councillor seats representing each ward;
* Wards where the respective town/parish council have requested a review within the last 2 years or so;
* Electorate growth forecasts up to 2025 (the period advised by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England);
* Pre-consultation survey submissions;
* Known concerns expressed by parishes;
* Wards with significant variances to the average population density and/or councillor ratios;
* Local plan developments;
* Known built-environment changes.

Over the course of the 7 workshops, detailed consultation proposals have been developed.  These are now being prepared, ready for formal presentation to the CGR Sub Committee on 26th February.  The Sub Committee will be asked to formally consider and agree those matters which have been worked-upon in the workshop sessions, and recommend these to the Constitution Committee for agreement prior to formal consultation commencing.

The meetings of the Sub-Committee and Constitution Committee will be public meetings.

The report to the Sub-Committee meeting will be available for view in the usual way on the Council’s website.

There is still a lot of work to be done on the CGR project.  Once the Constitution Committee has agreed the final draft recommendations of the Review for the purposes of consultation, there will follow a 12 week period for consultation responses to be submitted.  These will then need to be considered fully by the Sub-Committee, and the parent Committee before the final draft recommendations are submitted to Full Council for decision.

**Cheshire East Council wants views on its plans for dealing with potentially contaminated land in the borough.**

Following recent cabinet approval, the council is updating its five-year strategy for identifying and inspecting potentially contaminated sites. The strategy has been streamlined and reflects the authority’s priorities and objectives up to 2026.

Local authorities are asked to draw up a contaminated land strategy and to deal with land that could present unacceptable risks to human health, the environment or property. The responsibility given to councils falls under the Contaminated Land Statutory Guidance, issued by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Examples could include former landfill sites, tanneries or industrial sites.

The policy will meet one of the council’s core objectives to be a green borough and, while currently there is no evidence of any contamination posing a threat to human health, there are a number of sites which require further assessment, in line with the council’s obligations under the Environment Protection Act 1990.

A consultation process is now under way and residents and other interested parties are urged to take part.

The consultation is open until 5pm on 26 March 2021 and the council is urging any residents or interested parties to take part by visiting: [http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/.../contaminated\_land.aspx](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment/environmental_health/contaminated_land/contaminated_land.aspx?fbclid=IwAR2dCUsKLHQ_zmmUMfsTXrSXfpDN3iRzUJTUkh1OQIz2b_XHbMxV5kwo9II)

**Cheshire East Council is inviting applications to its Green Homes Grant scheme**.

The council has recently been awarded funding from the government in a bid to support Cheshire East residents to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes.

The Cheshire East Green Homes Grant scheme, which is supplementary to the government scheme of the same name, is open to both homeowners and residential landlords in the private or social rented sector and will cover:

● 100 per cent of the energy efficiency improvement costs, up to £10,000, for homeowners, and;

● Two thirds of the energy efficiency improvement costs, up to £5,000, for landlords.

The scheme offers support with a wide range of types of insulation, low carbon heat, windows and doors, and heating controls.

This will not only increase energy efficiency and potentially the home’s value but will also save money on household bills.

To qualify for help from Cheshire East’s Green Homes Grant scheme you must:

● Be a homeowner or residential landlord;

● Have an Energy Performance Rating of Band D, E, F or G on your home, and;

● Be in a low income household (either in receipt of welfare benefits, or less than £30,000 gross household income)

For more information and to apply, visit: [www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/helpwithheating](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/helpwithheating?fbclid=IwAR2COxQTcqYvP3MovemK26RQrkb009Eb557lfknt_yDonwwiHZd7JBrroqQ)

**Cheshire East Council highways maintenance funding**

Cheshire East Council has been allocated a total of £13 million from the government’s highways maintenance funding for next financial year, which includes £5.7 million for potholes.

This represents a drop of nearly £4 million, which is a 23% reduction compared with the current year. Furthermore, between 2016/17 and 2019/20 the level of funding was frozen at £12 million; the cumulative impact of that decision is now clear to everyone who uses the Cheshire East local road network.

Councillor Laura Crane, cabinet member for highways and waste said, “We work hard to maintain the roads in Cheshire East, but we can only do what is affordable based on available funding.

“This reduction in government money puts further pressure on the council’s budget and will limit next year’s maintenance programme, their announcement comes just six weeks ahead of the new financial year, so plans have already begun for works that we now find are unaffordable.

Using the online reporting tool (see link below), residents are encouraged to continue to let the council know about potholes and other road defects – that way we can prioritise the work that needs to be done. The more complaints the greater the number of points allocated and this will influence whether roads are to get level 2 or level 3 treatment.

Councillor Craig Browne, deputy leader of Cheshire East Council said: “An assessment by our strategic highways team has shown that we need to be investing £27 million each year, just to keep the roads in their current state. So, the outcome of the DfT’s announcement, at £13 million, will inevitably be the further decline of our highways network.”

“Our aim will always be to keep road users safe and we will always try to prioritise dangerous defects; however, until central government commits to provide an adequate level of funding, we will be unable to restore our road network to the condition that many residents reasonably expect.

”To report any road defects, including potholes, visit: [www.cheshireeasthighways.org/report-it-general.aspx](http://www.cheshireeasthighways.org/report-it-general.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1FaZ0i7MW9ZJgIgIhy9Caz68Lg7IlcgOW9ee-hbOeaW_Noew1h8s_gC9Y) or call 0300 123 5020

**Road Repairs**

Over recent weeks we have experienced a period of cold winter weather, with regular sharp frosts, a week of freezing conditions and periods of moderate snowfall. Storm Christoph generated prolonged periods of heavy rainfall together with strong winds at times. As a result of repeated freezing and thawing of water, we are now seeing an increased general deterioration of road surfaces and the formation of potholes across the road network. This is not unique to Cheshire East, and is being seen widely across the country. The combination of wet conditions, the freeze-thaw cycle and the use of road salt on the network will inevitably result in more potholes developing across all parts of the network during the winter months.

Many residents will be unaware of the Council’s three level approach to carriageway maintenance; it will continue.

You can view the Council’s programme of works online here.

[https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/.../road-repair-and...](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/highways_and_roads/road-maintenance/road-repair-and-improvement-programme-2020-2021.aspx?fbclid=IwAR0VQFLKiRX9Kz2qGx3aZOtBuYijl03XufxB7QqjaavV6rP0ApZ7JfjlvAU)

However, in order to ensure that the Council keeps the roads safe during this period, it has increased its resources to carry out any reactive (Level 1) repairs required; these repairs are normally focused on potholes/defects considered dangerous i.e. more than 50 mm in depth.

In addition to the Council’s programmed safety inspections, it will assess the condition of the resilient network and strategic routes, identifying, prioritising and programming areas for repair. All other reported issues and service requests will be considered in due course but timescales may be affected as part of this prioritisation.

I am encouraging residents to report defects to the Council as they provide valuable intelligence on the condition of Cheshire East’s roads, and are an important form of information alongside the regular inspections of the network. The more complaints the Council receives through its website the greater the likelihood of repair and that is why residents should take the trouble to report them.

The Highways team look after nearly 1,200 miles of footpath and nearly 1,700 miles of roads. Because they have limited financial resources, they have developed a responsive maintenance plan that takes into account the money they have available, the risk of injury/damage and action being taken against them, surface conditions and customer needs including "numbers of customers affected". The aim is to allocate their limited resources fairly across the whole network; even so, there will be dissatisfaction with the state of the roads across the Borough because everyone wants their road to be in good condition.

To be conspicuously fair and transparent all the roads will receive a technical assessment and that assessment is converted into points. The greater the deterioration of the road surface, the greater the number of points allocated. It is the highest scoring roads that are repaired not the ones put forward by the loudest Councillor. However, in addition to the technical assessment there are two, point scoring areas directly influenced just by residents; Complaints and Claims.

There is a very clear way that residents can influence the number of points the road scores. That would be through formally complaining through the highways complaints page, because more than 45 resident complaints would score 20 points, whereas 1-15 complaints accumulates only 5. Claims for damage also score points; 1 claim against the Council would score 5 points, more than 10 will score 20 points.

Residents do need to play their part. The following is the reporting link and it will easily take less than 10 minutes to make a report! Residents making a concerted effort to report road defects on-line can make the difference as to whether a road is included in the Level 2 or Level 3 programme, or not.

Any highways issues should be reported online at [https://www.cheshireeasthighways.org/report-it-general.aspx](https://www.cheshireeasthighways.org/report-it-general.aspx?fbclid=IwAR24qzjqkU3_ttguQPffNUOE1Y1Z2PLR2zIU5JR18wf__-KD1kvIkb4EOxc), or on 0300 123 5020.

27th Feb 2021