

# West Cheshire Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan 2021

Commissioned by Cheshire West and  
Chester Council and its partners on behalf  
of the borough of West Cheshire

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## Navigating this prospectus

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# Executive Summary: West Cheshire Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan Overview

Our strategy for an inclusive economy prioritises reducing poverty and inequality, combating the climate emergency, supporting community wellbeing, and enhancing the vibrancy of our Borough.

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## Our Challenge

We have a strong local economy in West Cheshire, but significant inequalities persist in our communities. Growth to date has not resulted in prosperity for all in our Borough.

## Our Vision

Our vision for West Cheshire is to achieve a thriving and inclusive economy which is greener, fairer and stronger – one that enables all our people, places, and enterprises to flourish.

## Our Strategy

Working together as a partnership of public, private, voluntary and community sectors, we have co-created an inclusive economy strategy that builds on our strengths but understands the barriers preventing prosperity for all.

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Inequality is increasing across the country, but in Cheshire West and Chester we believe that we can take local action so that all residents and businesses can benefit from growing a greener, fairer and stronger economy.



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**Foreword:**  
**Richard Beacham**

If we are successful, in ten years' time you will see a marked difference in the range and quality of employment opportunities in our borough, with young people aspiring to have good jobs with fair wages.

If we are successful, businesses in our borough will be playing their part to tackle the climate and poverty emergencies, they will have greater access to skills and training, public transport and cultural activity, and the economic growth of our borough will be linked with the health and wellbeing of our residents.

This is our ambition in developing an inclusive economy. An economy that works well for every resident, every place, every organisation and every business. Where the conditions are right for people to thrive, and no-one is left behind.

This Prospectus and Action Plan marks the start of a new approach to economic growth in West Cheshire, working in partnership to confront the challenges and inequalities that exist, and harness – and support - growth to bring greater levels of benefit locally.

In our Council Plan, Play Your Part to Thrive, we stated our desire to grow our local economy, whilst delivering good jobs with fair wages for our residents, and to enable everyone to play their part in creating greener, fairer and stronger communities. The Prospectus and Action Plan contributes towards this goal.

We recognise as a Council that we cannot do this alone. That's why this plan has been developed in collaboration with over 250 stakeholders, through public engagement, dedicated workshops and by convening over 100 representatives from all sectors at our Reimagining the West Cheshire Economy Conference.

Our plan is uniquely action-focused, aiming to make the greatest possible difference through strategic interventions. This Prospectus and Action Plan sets out a new vision for the West Cheshire economy, alongside 12 co-designed actions to help us get there.

The actions seek, amongst other things, to increase residents' access to well paid jobs and careers, decrease our overall carbon emissions, support new businesses to start and grow and make our existing businesses more resilient, all whilst supporting our residents to become healthier and happier in a lively, culturally vibrant, borough.

We have already made great progress towards some of these actions. Others may depend on outside investment, or be delivered through Government grants, but we will continue to seek new opportunities to kickstart these projects and work with partners to make them a reality.

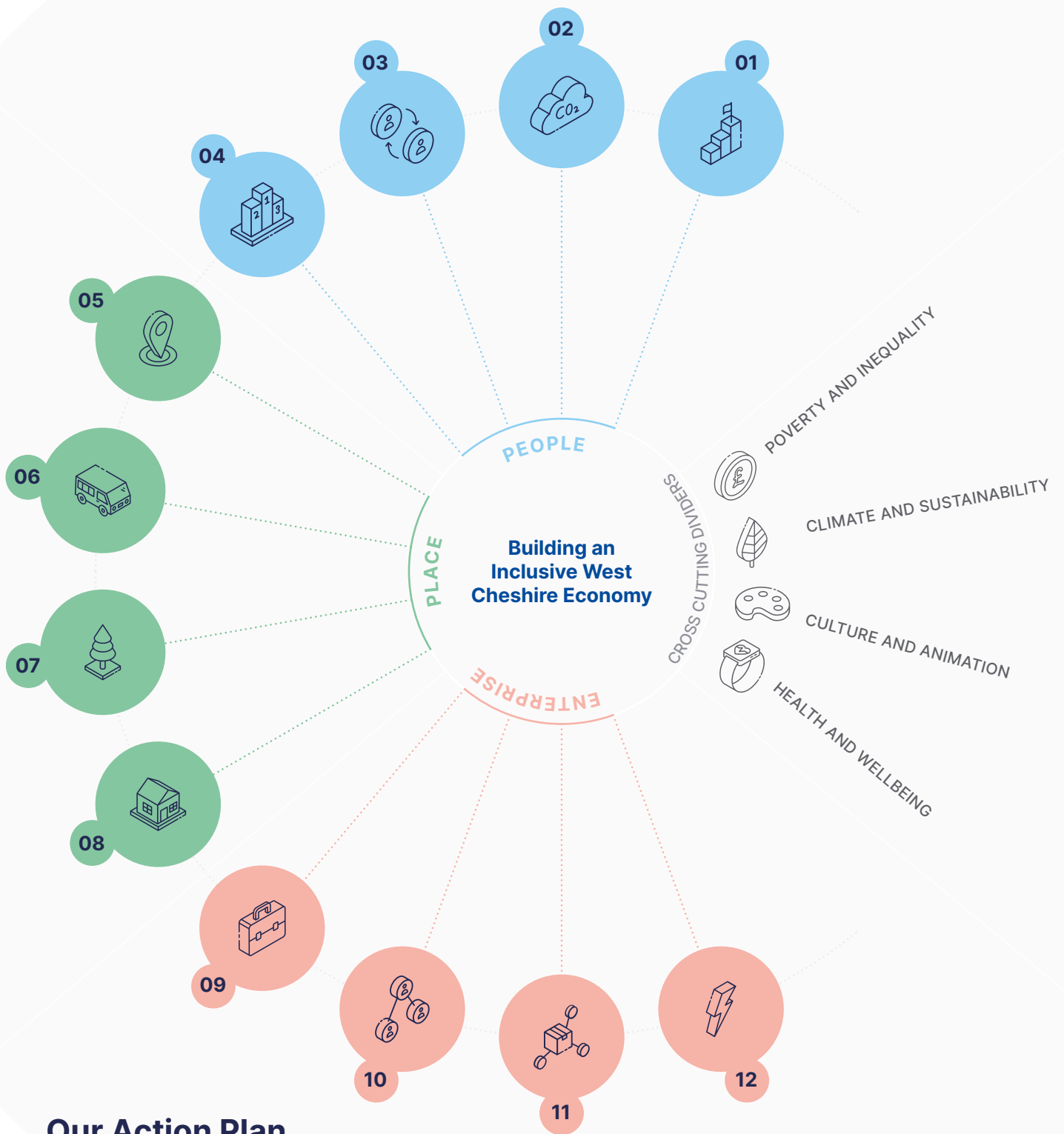
Our local economy is something which no single organisation can control, but there are opportunities for all our residents, businesses and communities to contribute to shaping its future. For that reason, we're looking for partners across the public, private and third sectors to play their part in building a thriving local economy that works for everyone in our borough.

Whether it's buying local, hiring local, paying fair wages, upskilling staff, inspiring young people, taking action on climate change, giving something back to your community or looking for new and exciting ways to collaborate or participate in change for our borough, everyone has a part to play.

Are you ready to play yours? Let's get started...

**Cllr Richard Beacham**

Cabinet Member for Inclusive Growth, Economy and Regeneration, Cheshire West and Chester Council



## Our Action Plan

In partnership with local stakeholders, we have identified an ambitious package of twelve priority actions, which, combined, provide the opportunity to achieve a step-change in creating a more Inclusive Economy for people, places, and enterprises across West Cheshire.

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## People

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**01. Implement skills escalators** that bring businesses and education providers together to develop joined up skills and career pathways for our key sectors and to promote local opportunity.

**02. Increase green skills and jobs** to help more people to upskill and access green jobs that support green business opportunities in our transition to a net zero economy.

**03. Expand digital inclusion**, ensuring access for all through enhancing digital connectivity, infrastructure, equipment, and skills.

**04. Nurture youth aspiration** in our targeted communities to be aware of local career opportunities, providing greater information and inspiration.

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## Place

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**05. Build stronger communities** through targeted regeneration efforts that improve the quality and sustainability of our urban and rural communities and deliver for our most deprived neighbourhoods.

**06. Improve transport access to job opportunities** with increased public and active travel links, increasing connectivity to break down key barriers that our communities face.

**07. Support sustainable food and agriculture, and increase natural capital**, through land management that enhances viability, cuts carbon emissions, increases flood resilience, access to local food and greenspace.

**08 Create a long-term plan for housing retrofit** that works in partnership to decarbonise our housing stock to help tackle the climate emergency and reduce fuel poverty.

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## Enterprise

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**09. Promote good employment and business best practice and other anchor institutions and their supply chains.** including paying the real living wage, supports health and wellbeing of workers, developing inclusive recruitment practices and drives innovation and productivity aligned to decarbonisation. and drives innovation, decarbonisation, and productivity.

**10. Establish an Anchor Network** of the key public and private institutions, service providers and employers that hold power to transform the inclusivity of our Borough.

**11. Strengthen local supply chains and social value** to capture greater social value from Council procurement and other anchor institution supply chains.

**12. Provide start-up and social enterprise support** that supports more enterprises to start, survive, and develop, including social and community enterprises and alternative business models

# 01

## Introduction

### Our Local Economy

West Cheshire's £10.5 billion economy is home to 14,000 businesses employing 180,000 people, earning higher average incomes than the national average.

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West Cheshire is a great place to live. Its diverse places are attractive and prosperous and afford residents a good quality of life – health, education, and incomes are all above average, crime is low, and the economy is productive and growing, with specialisms and assets that make it well placed to thrive into the future. The borough has strong economic performance overall, performing at or above national averages – and well above most of the North West – on many key indicators.





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## The Challenge

Good average performance masks persistent inequalities with a high degree of polarity between the best and worst-off people and places across West Cheshire.

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Recent years have seen slowing productivity coupled with rising levels of inequality – raising questions around the sustainability and fairness of a growth model that has failed to increase the living standards of all, and that has left many people behind. Pockets of intense disparities exist in opportunities and incomes, housing, and both digital and transport connectivity.

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## Key stats

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### 16 neighbourhoods

among the 10% most deprived in England, with 2 in the top 2%

### Amongst the worst 10%

for youth social mobility in England, an identified cold spot

### 50% higher

child poverty in some areas compared to others with high levels of in-work poverty

### £130 less per week

workplace average wage than resident average wage, suggesting high levels of out commuting

### 10 year gap

between highest and lowest life expectancy between wards

### £3k gender pay gap

in gross annual salary between those women and men in full time work

### 5th carbon emissions

of any local authority area in England, driven largely by high carbon industry

### 9.5 times median

annual earnings for average house prices, and 11% of households in fuel poverty

### 12% forecast rise in traffic

by 2026 and poor public transport.

### 46% expected increase

of people aged 65+ by 2035 - an ageing population.

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## Building an Inclusive Economy for West Cheshire

These disparities have been amplified by the impacts of COVID-19, prompting debate around what short-term recovery and longer-term resilience and renewal looks like.

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We have an opportunity to influence and shape our local economy and to build on positive impacts that we have observed in recent years – heightened community spirit, reinforced relationships with partners and with businesses, digital transformation, and a more collaborative culture.

West Cheshire is committed to creating an inclusive economy that enables all of its people, businesses, and places to thrive. This involves creating an economy with purpose – that enhances skills and productivity, delivers good jobs with fair wages, recognising the benefits of a diverse workforce and improvements to health, infrastructure and the environment that benefit everybody.

At the core of creating an inclusive economy for West Cheshire is the need to reduce the sizeable gaps that exist between our most prosperous communities, reduce the sizeable gaps that exist between different communities within our borough including a significant minority who are living in deprived areas, unemployed, or suffering from in-work poverty – 24,000 West Cheshire

residents are living in areas ranked among the top 10% most deprived in England. We seek community wealth building that creates greater ownership, influence and recirculation of money and resources locally, and social enterprise as important parts of the solution.

Throughout, we use ‘social enterprise’ as an umbrella term for organisations that build local wealth and have a social or environmental purpose, including community enterprises, community interest companies, co-operatives, social purpose businesses, third sector organisation trading arms, and community projects.

As the fifth highest emitting local authority area in the UK, while also being uniquely positioned at the heart of the UK’s hydrogen infrastructure development, we have a huge challenge, responsibility, and opportunity to ensure our inclusive economy is also a net zero economy.

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## Co-creating our Inclusive Economy

Achieving these ambitions will require action from all partners across West Cheshire's businesses, service providers and community organisations.

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### Initial engagement to guide prospectus development

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Engagement with over 20 public, private, and voluntary organisations in West Cheshire.

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Scoping calls and input from council officer groups and Boards

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Input from the new West Cheshire Anchor Network

The Council can play a lead role in developing, convening, and supporting delivery, but the Council cannot lead and deliver a more inclusive economy on its own. Partners across the public, private, voluntary sectors and wider communities have been involved in shaping this Prospectus and Action Plan and need to work collaboratively to realise the vision for an inclusive economy in West Cheshire.



### Engagement to co-develop priority areas for action

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Five action group workshops to understand ongoing activity and create ideas for change

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Engagement with groups and leads on four cross cutting drivers to support to embed these priorities across all proposed actions, including Poverty Truth Advisory Board and Councillor workshops

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Participate Now public engagement to gain input from residents

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Inclusive Economy Conference to learn from best practice elsewhere and test our proposals

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## Strategic Alignment and Connections

Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan does not exist in isolation. It has been developed in a way that draws on, aligns with, and complements our core priorities for the borough

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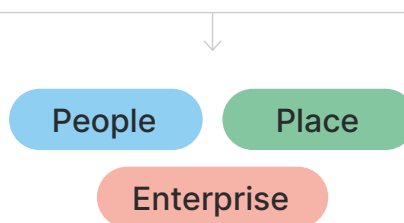


### Prospectus overview

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Poverty emergency and inequality  
Climate emergency and sustainability  
Culture and animation  
Health and wellbeing

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Responding to our declared Climate and Poverty Emergencies and our Fairer Futures and Stronger Futures Plans which set out how we will respond to the unprecedented external shocks of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also aligns to our Place Plan and plans for housing, transport, planning, digital and climate, as well as the Council's own corporate plan. At a place-based level, it has been developed with input from area development boards – Ellesmere Port, Chester, Mid Cheshire and Rural.

We have also looked beyond our administrative boundaries to connect with our near neighbours. For example, our Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan has strong alignment with the agenda of the wider Cheshire and

Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the LEP's Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission, and the priorities of the Mersey Dee Alliance (Cheshire West and Chester, Wirral, Flintshire and Wrexham) proposed Cross Border Recovery Deal and Financial Stimulus Package, such as on business support and skills, low carbon energy, digital connectivity, transport and town and city centre recovery, making links with local health plans and Marmot communities.

We will build on our strong spirit of partnership working and collaboration to deliver our Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan – within West Cheshire, and with our neighbours, including North Wales, Cheshire and Warrington, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, and the wider North West.

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West Cheshire  
Inclusive  
Economy  
Prospectus





Our vision for West Cheshire is to achieve a thriving and inclusive economy which is greener, fairer and stronger – one that enables all of its people, enterprises and places to flourish.”

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## Our Vision

West Cheshire is committed to creating an inclusive economy that enables all of its people, businesses, and places to thrive.

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## Our Guiding Principles

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**Greener** - through achieving transformation from being the 5th highest emitter of carbon emission in the UK to net zero by 2045, reducing our over-reliance on car travel, increasing natural capital, and producing a clean, healthy, and attractive built and natural environment.

**Stronger** - through supporting high and sustainable levels of productivity, innovation, and business growth, with more new and successful independent businesses and social enterprises, and world leading companies that benefit from their location here and contribute to our shared vision aligning with our Net Zero and Fairer aspirations.

**Fairer** - through reducing the inequalities in our borough where overall prosperity masks pockets of poverty and some of the most acute social mobility challenges in England. We will support all our communities to play an active part in the economy and society and to benefit from it through good jobs, and high levels of skills and employment.

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The way in which we do this will be in keeping with our values and vision and driven by a set of Guiding Principles. These apply for people, places and institutions:

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**Action focused** – words and principles must be translated into tangible action. Which means setting clear and deliverable priorities that are evidence based, command support and which make a real difference to achieving an inclusive economy.

**Rooted in place** – action will be tailored to our diverse places, including towns, rural areas, industrial centres, and the historic city of Chester. Working with local people and stakeholders, we will build on local assets and opportunities, address challenges and disadvantage, make all neighbourhoods even better places and build on local pride.

**Participative and collaborative** – every person, community, place, and organisation will be enabled and encouraged to shape change, play their part, and benefit from the rewards. We will capitalise on a strong culture of partnership across organisations in the public, private, and voluntary and community sectors; and help foster the social capital that helps people to have true influence.

**Resilient** – we will adopt well designed, high quality and long-term approaches and solutions that stand the test of time and enable us to withstand and bounce back from challenges.

**Dynamic and ambitious** – we will aim high, seize opportunities and rise to challenges quickly, and seek to be world class in key areas where our assets and vision align. A flexible and entrepreneurial approach will learn from experience, look ahead and adapt and respond rapidly when needed.

**Connected** – through integrating economic, health and wellbeing and environmental plans and goals, making creative links across issues and opportunities, and forging shared solutions with neighbouring areas such as in North Wales, Cheshire East, Warrington, Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester.

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## The Strategy

This Prospectus sets out a high-level strategy for how we will achieve this vision for our future economy.

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It is intended to provide a clear direction of travel, to set out the key strands of a way forward, and to summarise the evidence and rationale for our approach. This Prospectus is then followed by a clear Action Plan to kick-start the step-change to a more inclusive West Cheshire Economy.

Our Prospectus is based around three interconnected pillars of action: People, Place and Enterprise and four Cross Cutting Drivers integrated within them and including action in their own right.

## The Pillars

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The pillars of People, Place and Enterprise cover the core themes where action is needed to achieve our vision.

This Prospectus and Action Plan highlights areas for action within each of these pillars, turning challenges and opportunities into specific and tangible changes to transform our economy.

### People

the People pillar covers issues such as skills, employability, community and links to education and wellbeing.

### Place

the Place pillar covers infrastructure and the built and natural environment and includes issues such as housing, energy, connectivity, transport, and natural capital.

### Enterprise

the Enterprise pillar covers new and existing businesses and social enterprises, as well as other employers and 'anchor organisations' that can contribute to their place.



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## Cross Cutting Drivers

Some themes that are integral to our vision are best delivered across all three of the pillars because they are about how we do things as well as what we do.

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### Poverty and inequality

There is an unequivocal case for reducing inequalities, recognising that more equal societies are stronger, more resilient, and ultimately better for everyone. West Cheshire has declared a Poverty Emergency and its commitment to tackling poverty in all its forms and at its roots, placing this at the heart of a greener, fairer, stronger recovery.

Evidence, backed by work to listen to and understand the experience of people living in poverty, makes it clear that we must treat poverty as an equalities and fairness issue and that we must act. Action on poverty and inequality cuts across all of this Prospectus and Action Plan in terms of the practical action we take, and in terms of how we think about economic development and capitalise on alternative models that consider community ownership and wealth building as a way to stimulate an economy that better serves the needs and wellbeing of our communities and environment.

We have identified four Cross Cutting Drivers where this is the case and for each driver we have identified ways in which priority actions under each pillar need to be delivered or targeted to achieve our goals and reviewed the spread of actions to ensure there are no critical gaps in driving them forward. The rationale for each cross-cutting driver is:



### Climate and sustainability

West Cheshire has declared a Climate Emergency and set the target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2045. Given the concentration of energy intensive industry locally that is a highly ambitious target, and one that needs to be supported by every part of every strategy, plan, and programme of action in the borough.

This is especially the case for this Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan, given the very high proportion of emissions that are economically related. Hence, we have assessed how climate emergency response – and wider sustainability issues such as the nature crisis – can be supported in all three Pillars of this Prospectus, both through influencing the way in which action is delivered and adding specific new actions where required (e.g. on housing retrofit, green skills and natural capital). This will align with the Climate Emergency Response Plan, help to support a cleaner, greener, healthier borough, and advance long-term economic opportunity and resilience.



## Culture and animation

The best places to live and to run a business have thriving cultures that are rich with life, interaction, and character. In communities, culture can have a significant impact on skills and talent development, building confidence and ambition, creating strong social networks, civic pride and working together. Local cultural industries and networks deliver extensive benefit to people and places, and development of opportunities to support and retain local talent.

In business, greater culture and animation brings a spirit of entrepreneurship, independent businesses starting up, innovating, succeeding and building connections. In towns, cities, and villages, it includes the way in which art, culture and heritage, events, and pop-up independent shops and features can enliven places and inject a sense of buzz, adding to the identity and distinctiveness of West Cheshire and the local places within it. While it would be misplaced to try and achieve this sense of animation through planning and control, this Plan can play a role by creating a supportive and enabling environment.



## Health and well-being

Physical and mental health and quality of life are at the heart of an inclusive economy. West Cheshire fares well in these respects overall, but has sharp health inequalities. As part of the Cheshire and Merseyside Marmot Community, we will work across sectors to confront these by influencing determinants of health – such as incomes, environment, and access to meaningful work – in ways which benefit everybody, but with greatest focus on those facing poverty and disadvantage.

We will do this through targeting interventions towards key localities, and by including actions that help the economy and health together – for example promoting active travel, home energy improvements, and good employment which supports mental health and wellbeing. There are also opportunities to improve people's economic opportunities and delivery of health services together, e.g. through routes into work and progression in the health and care sector.

# People

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# 65%

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of the population have skills at Level 3 or above

## Assets and Challenges

We have strong foundations to build on. Overall, achievement amongst our young people from early years upwards is good and in line with or above English averages; our working age population is more qualified than is typical across England; and far fewer young people are classed as not in education, employment, or training. Our employment rate (80.6% compared to 75.4%) is above that in England and fewer people are unemployed. Our people are generally in good health, have higher incomes and enjoy a good quality of life.

- 65% of the population have skills at level 3 or above, and 45% have level 4 or above (compared to 61% and 43% in GB respectively)
- Residence based average (median) weekly earnings of £601, compared to £587 for GB
- Average life expectancy of 80.1 years compared to 79.8 years for England

However, there are challenges that we must tackle if we are to achieve our ambitions for an inclusive economy and a resilient recovery.

What is striking in West Cheshire is not the widespread scale of deprivation, but the presence of pockets where disadvantage is enduring and highly concentrated. There are big gaps between what we see in these places and what is otherwise a broadly positive and prosperous picture (*see key stats page 03*).

Closing and preventing further growth in disparities between people and places within our borough is a major priority. A focus on education, skills for work at all levels across our priority business sectors, connecting people furthest from the labour market to work, targeted community action, and improving health and wellbeing will help us achieve this. By having only pockets of deprivation, we do not attract large amounts of additional funding, therefore the situation has remained unchanged for a number of years.

## Existing Activities

There is extensive activity already being delivered to support skills, employability, community, links to education, health and wellbeing, culture and heritage in our communities across West Cheshire. Below is a summary of some of the

key existing initiatives delivered by partnerships of national, regional, and local government, wider public agencies, the private sector, and our non-profit voluntary and community sector organisations.

DWP Programmes - Kickstart, JETs, Restart and Work and Health Programme

ESF Programmes - Journey First, New Leaf, Springboard, Parents First and Skills Support for the Unemployed

Adult education budget sector-based work academy programmes and Family Learning.

Parents first employment support

Skills support for the unemployed

Supported Internships

Housing association support eg. New homes

Public health campaigns

Health improvement strategy

Natural Health Service

Primary and secondary schools mental health and wellbeing support(local transformation plan)

Early years transition support

The Pledge

Young Chamber

Apprenticeships

Job Centre Plus

Accelerate

T-Levels

ESFA - Lifetime skills guarantee

Adult education budget low pay trial

Advanced Learner Loans

Institute of Technology

Digital Curriculum via Work Zones/ College, private training providers

OPAL and Age UK digital support services

LEP and Libraries community digital learning hubs

Barclays digital eagles

Local Growth Fund Programmes

National Citizen Service

Cultural and arts organisations, creative and cultural volunteering programmes

**Routes into work**

**Workforce Skills**

**Higher Level Skills**

**Digital Skills**

**Building Youth Ambition**

**Early Years**

**Health and Wellbeing**

## Aims, Priorities and Further Opportunities

We want everyone in West Cheshire to have access to the education and skills they need to fulfil their potential, access to good quality, fairly paid jobs and the opportunity to progress in careers in all sectors across our wide business base. Likewise, we want our businesses to have ready access to a wide and diverse pool of well qualified, work-ready labour in order that they can thrive, grow and be competitive and resilient. There is clearly a wide array of existing action that supports inclusive economy goals.

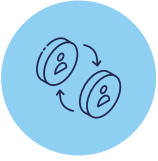
However, the fact that we are some way from our vision, and face major challenges in areas like inequalities and social mobility, demonstrate that existing action is not sufficient on its own. A combination of changes to the volume and targeting of existing action, and new ways of working will be required to deliver the change we seek. Key areas where evidence, stakeholder and community priorities, and the opportunity for impact all point towards action include:



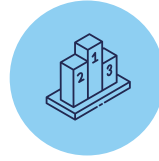
**Implementing skills escalators** – inclusive, resilient, and future-proofed economies need deep understanding of the skills required in prominent local sectors and industries backed by joined-up skills pathways that enable people to enter careers and progress through life-long learning.



**Increasing green skills and jobs** – transition to net zero carbon will demand considerable change in the type and nature of jobs and the skills needed to do them. New activity has the potential to help meet these skills and labour challenges; create good jobs that are accessible to local people – including those facing disadvantage; and support business growth and environmental and health benefits.



**Expanding digital inclusion** – digital connectivity is more critical than ever to households and business, but there is now a sharper and more impactful digital divide for those who remain left behind. We need to ensure West Cheshire has the digital connectivity, infrastructure, and skills to support inclusive economic development for all people, places and enterprises.



**Nurturing youth aspiration** – despite being a borough that performs strongly across many economic and social indicators, a relative lack of youth social mobility means that too many of our young people are disconnected from opportunity. We need to go further to build ambition and aspiration amongst our young people, build greater awareness of opportunities locally and connections to these.

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## Areas of opportunity

Further areas of opportunity that could be taken forward through existing activities (refined if required), influencing partners and investment, or in the longer term include:

- Greater integration and collaboration across the skills and employment support provision ecosystem.
- Routes into work for those excluded or furthest from the jobs market, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups such as children in care and care leavers, unpaid carers, refugees, asylum seekers and resettlement scheme families.
- Access to high quality apprenticeships at all levels and to high quality internships and work experience.
- Access to higher level learning and graduate retention.

# Place

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# 84%

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of people are already satisfied with their local area as a place to live

## Assets and Challenges

Our combination of one of England's finest historic cities, some of its most powerful and high value concentrations of industry, distinctive towns and sizeable rural areas is unique, it provides great assets on which to build in ensuring that quality of life is high and improving for all, and that more deprived areas are catching up with more prosperous ones.

Key challenges in improving the physical environment and connectivity of our places include re-purposing and planning our centres for success in a new, post-COVID-19 and greener future with changing living and working patterns and declining in-person retail. This includes ensuring our places are reinvigorated, vibrant and serve the current and future needs of communities; looking after and gaining full value from natural capital and our rural areas; enhancing housing and its affordability; and ensuring much improved digital and transport connectivity. For example, key challenges include:

- Poor public transport from deprived areas and rural areas to centres of employment, education and training
- Traffic forecast to rise by 12% by 2026
- Average house price is 9.5 times median annual earnings
- 11.3% of households in fuel poverty
- Natural capital significantly depleted during the 20th century

Additionally, as we have the 5th highest carbon emissions of any local authority area in England (the Ellesmere Port Industrial Estate alone consumes 5% of UK energy for industrial processes, heat and transport), moving to green energy and the transition to net zero is both a major challenge and a top priority. Our Climate Emergency Response plan sets out our systematic approach to transition to net zero by 2045, and this Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan complements the measures in that plan.

## Existing Activities

There is extensive activity already being delivered to develop places across our borough, deliver improvements to infrastructure and the built and natural environment, housing, energy, connectivity, and transport.

Presented here are some of the key existing initiatives delivered by partnerships of national, regional and local government, wider public agencies, the private sector, and our non-profit voluntary and community sector organisations.

HyNet low carbon cluster	Transition to low carbon waste fleet
Low carbon agriculture developments	Bus transport review and service improvement plan
Delamere and Mersey Forests land restoration, woodland and greenspace	Electric vehicles strategy
Millbrook Town Hall natural flood management scheme	E-scooter trials
Sandstone Ridge AONB	Chester One City plan
Chester Heritage Action Zone	Local plan conservation
Libraries and Museums	Ellesmere Port Town Centre improvement
Action Transport Theatre redevelopment	Winsford Town Centre Improvement
International street festival	Lache Master-plan
Commitment to Lead Artist	Northwich Town Centre improvement
New History Centre - Archives Project	Ellesmere Port Industrial area
Digital Bootcamps	Proactive Council-led housing development plan
CWLEP Digital Infrastructure Plan	Milton Green low-carbon housing
Hight Street Commission	Green homes solar PV

### Housing

### Natural Capital

### Culture and Tourism

### Decarbonisation and Energy

### Regeneration

### Planning

### Transport

### Digital Infrastructure



## Aims, Priorities and Further Opportunities

We want all of West Cheshire's diverse places to thrive and be great places both individually, and as an interconnected set of communities that work together and benefit from each other's strengths.

A combination of changes to the volume and targeting of existing action, and new action will be required to deliver the change we seek. Key areas where evidence, stakeholder and community priorities, and the opportunity for impact all point towards action include:



**Place making and regeneration** – there is potential for a new, integrated and sustainable approach to development in our urban centres and rural areas that enables culture and creativity, embeds environmental best practice, and which supports physical, social and economic regeneration in our most disadvantaged communities and links them to development and master-planning in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Northwich.



**Transport connections to jobs and opportunity** – too often, it is difficult for people without a car, including many unemployed people and young people, to access employment opportunities and apprenticeships in areas such as industrial estates and business parks, because of a lack of public transport services and good quality cycle routes and facilities. Better connections between areas with concentrations of unemployment and other areas with concentrations of jobs and training opportunities would help more people into work and help businesses to gain the staff they need.



**Food, farming, and natural capital** – innovative and sustainable agricultural practices can help farms to survive and flourish into the future, as well as shorten food miles and reduce costs of local produce, while sound land management can help wildlife to thrive, reduce flood risks and carbon emissions and enhance access to green space. Benefits include those for mental and physical health and wellbeing, new and good quality good jobs, and involving communities in growing and enjoying local food.



**Retrofitting housing** – presents one of the greatest opportunities to tackle the climate and poverty emergencies together and create green jobs in the process. The scale of the task demands an ambitious, long-term approach with access to new resources and collaboration across partners and presents major upskilling and business development opportunities.

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## Areas of opportunity

Further areas of opportunity that could be taken forward through existing activities (refined if required), influencing partners and investment, or in the longer term include:

- Major planned energy projects to drive transition to net zero.
- New and affordable housing (including in town/city centres).
- Making the case and lobbying for rail priorities and enhancements (e.g. Chester to Manchester via Northwich).
- Road infrastructure, car parking and electric vehicles.

# Enterprise

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# 173k

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People are employed by  
14,000 businesses

## Assets and Challenges

West Cheshire is already home to world leading businesses, including in key sectors such as energy and advanced manufacturing, and a diverse range of small, locally based businesses, including new starts and independents. This combination provides a great base on which to build:

- 14,000 businesses employ 173,000 people in West Cheshire
- 89% of our enterprises are micro-enterprises employing less than ten people.
- Productivity of £60,600 per worker, is just below UK average but well above North West levels
- 18% of GVA is from Manufacturing (UK average is 7%) while 13% is from Finance and insurance (UK average is 6%)
- Creative and cultural industries and the visitor economy also support many jobs and present opportunities

We benefit from dynamic social enterprises who are passionate about their places and communities, including

community interest companies, co-operatives, social purpose businesses and voluntary and community sector organisation trading arms, and from an array of 'anchor organisations' that have local roots and a big impact through the scale of their employment, spending, assets and services.

This Pillar is about the success of all our enterprises – whether businesses, social enterprises or anchors – and maximising the benefits they bring and the 'community wealth' that is locally owned and influenced. Achieving that will involve addressing a number of important challenges, for example:

- Levels of productivity growth have slowed in recent years which may be due to the fact that many skilled residents travel out of the area to access higher wages
- Around 23% of workers earn below the real living wage
- The new business start-up rate in West Cheshire is lower than regionally and nationally
- The voluntary & community sector is estimated to provide just 3% of the North West's regional employment

## Existing Activities

There is extensive activity ongoing supporting enterprise across West Cheshire, new and existing businesses, social enterprises, as well as key employers and Anchor Organisations.

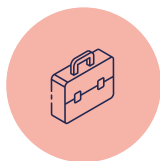
Below is a summary of some of the key opportunities for our industries and key existing initiatives delivered by partnerships of national, regional and local government, wider public agencies, the private sector and our non-profit voluntary and community sector organisations.

Start-up Club	Low carbon agriculture development	<p><b>Supply chains and social value</b></p> <p><b>Start-up, survival and growth</b></p> <p><b>Social enterprise, voluntary and community sector</b></p> <p><b>Digital</b></p> <p><b>Sector development opportunity</b></p> <p><b>Low carbon</b></p> <p><b>Healthy workplaces</b></p> <p><b>Business best practice</b></p> <p><b>Business support</b></p>
New Enterprise Allowance	Low carbon agriculture development	
COVID-19 and EU Exit business support	Energy Efficiency Grants	
Manufacturing Advisory Service	ERDF low carbon	
Innovation Funding	Active travel eg. cycle to work	
Good for Nothing Chester	Mental health and wellbeing seminars	
The Compact West Cheshire	Brio Leisure Workfit	
Cheshire West Voluntary Action	Emerging WeCAN West Cheshire anchors network	
Connecting Cheshire - skills for business	Supply chain links with major projects eg. Vinci construction	
Digital skills for business	Cheshire West and Cheshire social value policy	
Financial services, digital and cyber security	Business Improvement Districts	
Advanced manufacturing, automotive, food, packaging, instrumentation, energy	Business Growth Hub	
Retail, logistics, tourism, hospitality, social care	Local Living Wage	

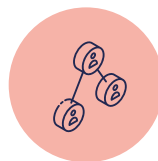
## Aims, Priorities and Further Opportunities

We want to increase the number of businesses and social enterprises that set up in West Cheshire, and the resilience and growth of existing ones, including seeing the many businesses that have been helped to survive the impacts of the pandemic going on to flourish in the future. We want to support businesses in our town centres to ensure they remain places to work, live and socialise. We also want to ensure that good levels of productivity and improving skills translate into good jobs

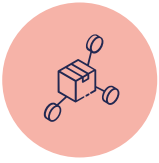
with fair pay for a fair day's work, and that anchor organisations play a full role in contributing to an inclusive economy through increased local spend and good quality employment to build greater community wealth. A combination of changes to the volume and targeting of existing action, and new action will be required to deliver the change we seek. Key areas where evidence, stakeholder and community priorities, and the opportunity for impact all point towards action include:



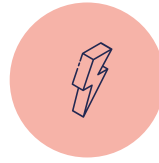
**Best practice in business** – organisations can reap dividends in terms of staff recruitment, retention and productivity by being good employers who recruit fairly and from diverse communities (e.g. people with disabilities and older workers), help staff from all backgrounds (eg recognising the wealth of talent available by proactively focusing recruitment and employment practice on creating the work environments in which neuro-diversity, differing physical ability, people with learning disabilities can thrive alongside an age/gender/ethnicity balance). We need to support mental health to progress, support health and wellbeing, and pay at least the real living wage. Forward looking practices in areas such as innovation, resource efficiency and climate action also help businesses and wider goals.



**Harnessing the full potential of anchor organisations** - for example through further strengthening their policies and actions on employment, the environment and procurement, and by building collaboration across these organisations and strong links to local communities.



**Local supply chains and social value** – through their procurement decisions, anchor organisations, businesses and others can provide opportunity for local enterprises to win contracts, seek greater social value from their suppliers, and gain from strong and responsive supplier relationships.



**New businesses and social and community enterprises** – helping more enterprises to start up and survive would support greater wealth creation and opportunity locally, and be underpinned by both practical support and creating an entrepreneurial culture, confidence and aspiration in all of our communities and contribute to community wealth building by keeping the West Cheshire pound local.

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## Areas of opportunity

- Developing clear inward investment strategies based on local sector strengths such as Energy, Advanced Manufacturing, Digital and Creative and Finance.
- Developing pathways into good jobs in sectors with growth potential, including Health and Social Care and the Cultural Sector
- Maximise the benefits from the visitor economy, including links to Sandstone Ridge

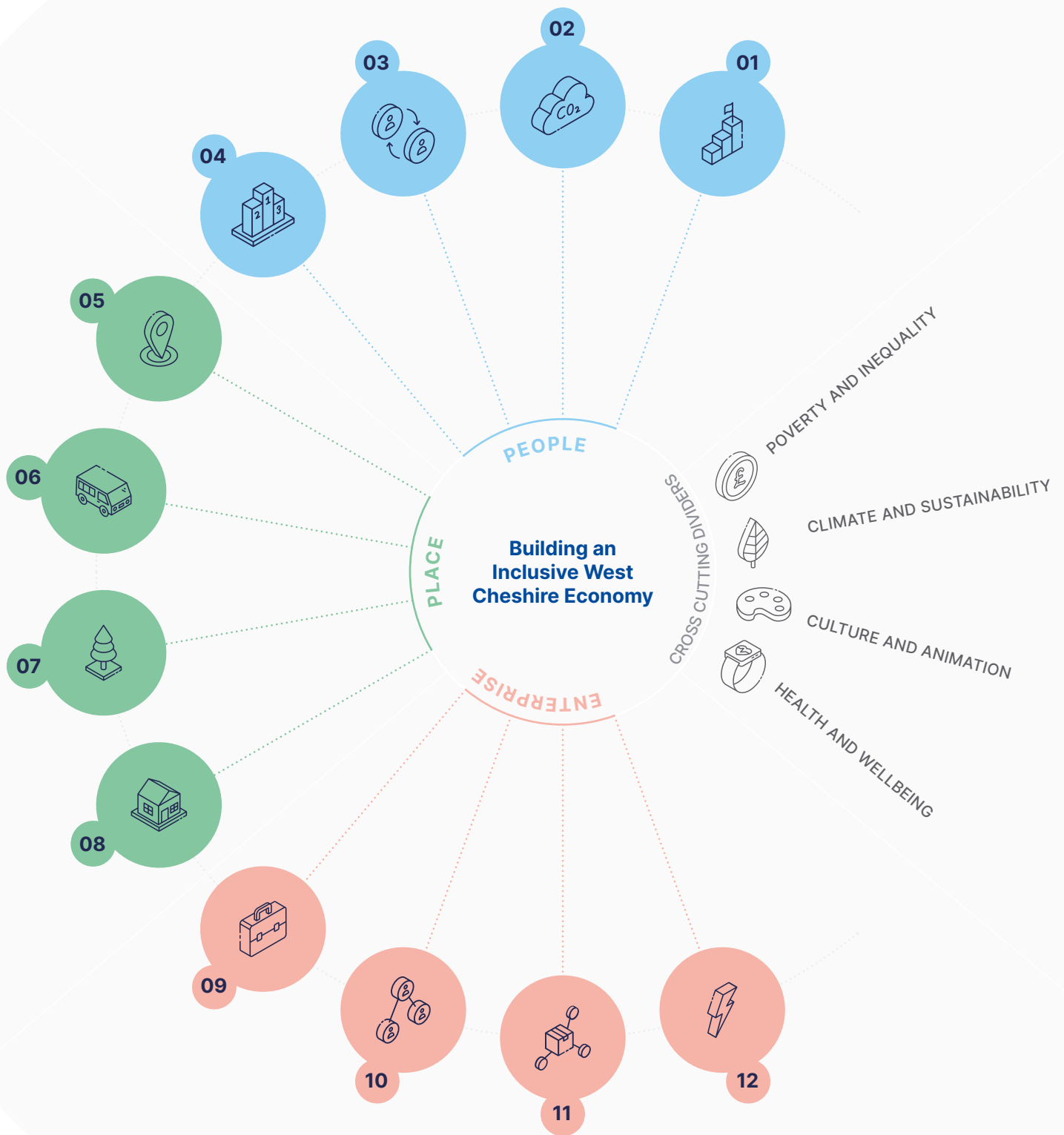
# 03

## West Cheshire Inclusive Economy Action Plan

To deliver the ambitions set out in our Inclusive Economy Prospectus, we are moving from the strategy to action, and have co-designed an Action Plan with input from stakeholders from public, private and voluntary and community sectors and wider communities.

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1. Implement skills escalators.
2. Increase Green skills and jobs.
3. Expand Digital inclusion.
4. Nurturing youth aspiration.
5. Building strong places.
6. Transport access to job opportunities.

7. Future food, agriculture and natural capital.
8. Homes Retro-fit.
9. Good jobs and business practice.
10. Establish anchors network and maximise local impact.
11. Strengthening local supply chains and social value.
12. Start-up and social enterprise support.



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## Moving from Strategy to Action

To deliver the ambitions set out in our Inclusive Economy Prospectus, we are moving from the strategy to action, and have co-designed an Action Plan with input from stakeholders from public, private and voluntary and community sectors and wider communities.

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In partnership with local stakeholders, we have developed an initial set of twelve headline actions to complement our existing and already planned activities.

This Action Plan represents a starting point for achieving our collective ambitions. It sets out the initial building blocks to achieve a more inclusive West Cheshire economy, providing an initial focus for partners to deliver to accelerate our borough toward achieving our vision of delivering for all our people, places and enterprises, and tackling our Poverty and Climate Emergencies.

Action Planning longer-term will be a dynamic process, there will be a continually evolving pipeline of activities required to transition to both an inclusive and sustainable local economy in West Cheshire.

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## **Actions for a More Inclusive West Cheshire Economy**

**There are strong interlinkages between the twelve Priority Actions and between the three Pillars – they are an integrated package, not siloed activities.**

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For example Housing Retrofit is one of the greatest opportunities to tackle poverty and climate emergency goals together and support health and wellbeing. It both depends, on and provides opportunities for, Green Jobs and Skills, and also offers great potential for New Start Businesses and Social Enterprise and for Strengthening Local Supply Chains and Social Value. Nurturing Youth Aspiration will help to ensure that those facing challenge and disadvantage are aware of and keen to train for and take up those jobs; while good Transport Access to Job Opportunities and increased connectivity in both the transport and digital senses is essential in order for them to do so in practice.

To support successful delivery of our Inclusive Economy ambitions, we will place strong emphasis on wider and better communication to businesses and social enterprises to raise awareness and uptake of the support available, as well as to celebrate successes. Enterprises need clear and straightforward messages about the available support that can help them to thrive, and about how they can contribute to creating an inclusive economy.

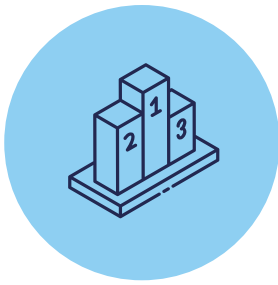
This focus on good communication is relevant to all actions, but is especially vital for Good Jobs and Best Business Practice and Start-ups and Social Enterprise Support and is woven into the fabric of these.

Our focus on places spans rural areas as well as our larger centres of population, and actions such as on Digital Inclusion, Future Food, Agriculture and Natural Capital, Transport Access to Job Opportunities and Green Skills and Jobs are examples of those that will bring benefits to those in rural areas.

## Overview of actions

How each action delivers against each pillar and how they contribute to our cross-cutting drivers.

PRIORITY ACTIONS	ASSOCIATED PILLARS	CROSS-CUTTING DRIVERS			
		POVERTY AND INEQUALITY	CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY	CULTURE AND ANIMATION	HEALTH AND WELLBEING
Homes retro-fit	●	✓	✓		✓
Building stronger places	● ● ●	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transport access, job opportunities	● ●	✓	✓	✓	✓
Future food, agriculture and natural capital	●	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nurturing youth aspiration	●	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital inclusion	● ●	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green skills and jobs	● ●	✓	✓		✓
Skills escalator	●	✓		✓	✓
Strengthening local supply chains and social value	●	✓	✓	✓	✓
Good jobs and business practices	● ●	✓	✓	✓	✓
Start-up and social enterprise support	●	✓		✓	
Establish anchors network and maximise local impact	●	✓	✓	✓	✓



## 01 PEOPLE Skills Escalators

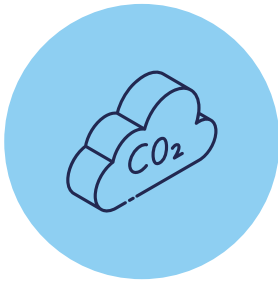
Develop an inclusive and resilient economy that understands the skills required by local industries and the routes to access these opportunities. This activity sets out to develop, implement and expand the ongoing project to produce Skills Escalators, which illustrate the joined-up skills pathways into, and to progress through, careers in our priority sectors, by:

1. Identifying the skills our economy needs and developing sector-specific Skills Escalators: Using labour market intelligence to investigate industry composition and careers within the borough, the skills required, entry points at all levels, and local skills provision.
2. Engagement and co-production: The development of Skills Escalators will be done in partnership with sector lead bodies. A series of task and finish groups will be established to implement these in partnership with employers, trade bodies and trade unions, training providers, voluntary and community sector organisations.
3. Using Skills Escalators to support the development of a more inclusive and future-proofed local economy: We will embed inclusion by targeting support to disadvantaged communities to access training and career

opportunities. We will take account of the current and future needs of our industries, and harder-to-fill vacancies, Green Economy, Retrofit, Arts and Digital Escalators.

We intend to deliver the following impacts through this activity:

- Establish partnerships with sectors and clarify sector progression routes. This could be done through a Local Skills Improvement Plan (when national pilot is rolled out).
- Aid curriculum planning and identification of gaps in local skills provision.
- Inform residents of local job opportunities and routes into employment.
- Increased rates of employment.
- Increase levels of training in workplaces and productivity levels.
- Fewer hard to fill vacancies and more residents progressing into key sectors.
- Greater levels of attraction and retention of graduates and higher-level skills.
- Increase social mobility for disadvantaged groups.



## 02 PEOPLE Green Skills and Jobs

Prepare for the new green skills and jobs required in response to the net zero transition. This project will exploit the opportunity to create good jobs accessible to local people by:

1. Researching specific green skills and labour needs within local employers and how courses/training meet them.
2. Creating new courses/training, or refining existing provision, to meet the needs identified.
3. Proactive work to enable people who are currently unemployed, in low skilled/paid jobs or at-risk roles; to take up training and routes into green jobs including through awareness raising and careers advice.

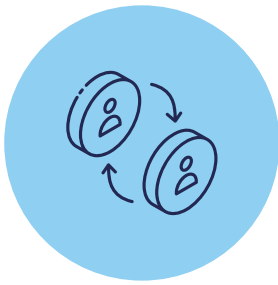
Work will involve ensuring that mainstream courses provide a foundation for green jobs (e.g. in engineering/construction/trades) and incorporate sustainable approaches; providing short courses that train up existing workforces in green approaches, and stimulating uptake. Focus areas will be:

- Housing, energy and construction – linked to new green housing and large scale retrofit and including supply chains (e.g. manufacturing).
- Sustainable food, agriculture and land management (including natural flood management).

- Transition to hydrogen, renewable energy and carbon capture and storage.

Activity will link to other relevant priority actions (e.g. on retrofit) and will embed circular economy thinking. Targeting will include disadvantaged communities, young people, females and BAME communities. Intended impacts will span:

- More people trained in green skills.
- More and better green jobs filled by local people.
- New and growing businesses and social enterprises.
- Increased capacity to deliver net zero transition and reduced carbon emissions.
- Wider environmental and health benefits.



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## 03 PEOPLE Digital Inclusion

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Ensure digital connectivity is a priority in supporting households, businesses and learning. Digital skills and access have improved over the course of the pandemic, but there is now a sharper digital divide for those who remain left behind.

We need to ensure West Cheshire has the digital connectivity, infrastructure and skills to support the needs of all people, places, current and future sectors. This proposed activity is focussed on raising levels of digital inclusion, building on existing activity, through:

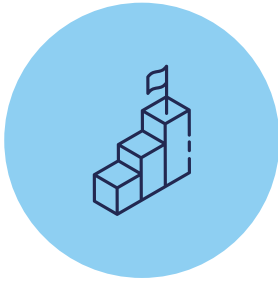
- Further interrogation of digital inclusion statistics – better understanding who is digitally excluded, and why, and what digital vacancies exist, and the skills required by employers.
- We have developed an evidence-based Digital Inclusion Action Plan led by the Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) Digital Inclusion Partnership, this will be supported by the emerging Digital Infrastructure Plan and a Digital Skills Escalator to boost digital skills within education and employment.
- Amplify the existing activity of public, private and voluntary and community sectors to improve digital inclusion across West Cheshire. This will include maximising the impact of assets already in place such as the extensive

libraries network which provides free IT access to devices and Wi-Fi alongside skilled staff who support inclusion, and the promotion and coordination of existing activities such as the Digital Skills Bootcamps, and work done by key partners such as CodeNation.

- Targeting of this activity will focus on supporting those who are currently facing digital exclusion, due to lack of infrastructure, equipment or skills, such as rural communities, residents facing poverty, and elderly residents.

The expected impacts of this activity include:

- Reduced digital exclusion rates.
- Increased wellbeing and community participation and cohesion.
- Increased access to job opportunities and employment rates as a result.
- Reduced inequalities in learning outcomes.
- Greater levels of enterprise start-ups, digitisation and competitiveness.



## 04 PEOPLE Nurturing Youth Aspiration

Build ambition and aspiration in all young people to ensure that they are aware of the local opportunities and how to access them. This proposed activity will build on The Cheshire and Warrington Pledge's work to enhance levels of aspiration and access to opportunities for young people, with a particular focus on raising the aspirations and opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and vulnerable groups to reduce inequalities. It is essential that all young people feel supported in their preparation to adulthood and we will work with young people to deliver activity including:

- Delivering action to help young people gain the confidence, understand their options and aim high – better connecting our businesses and anchor institutions to the education system; maximising interactions between young people and employers; using role models to help to re-engage and reinspire pupils; and leveraging opportunities for high quality, meaningful, and evenly accessed training opportunities.
- Further investigation into our Borough's youth social mobility challenge – getting beneath the data, the drivers, the barriers, the challenges, and engaging with young people with lived experience. And, supporting the Pledge's new Careers Hub

development working in partnership with the Careers Enterprise Company to provide additional support to schools and colleges supporting young people from our most deprived wards.

- Embedding arts, culture and sport in activity as a route to inspire and support building confidence amongst our young people and exploring reaching out to primary age children to begin building aspirations and reducing inequalities from an early age.
- Support to increase West Cheshire business engagement and participation in the Pledge's activity and Young Chamber through improved Council communications.

Impact created through this work aims to:

- Ensure young people will feel well prepared and ready to engage with education, employment and training opportunities, resulting in increased levels of aspiration.
- Increase connections to, and awareness of, career opportunities locally, greater take-up of training and increased retention of high-level skills.
- Increase levels of youth social mobility, reduce inequalities in rates of young people progressing to NVQ3+ qualifications with a specific focus on young people on free school meals transitioning to a positive destination at Key Stage 4, and youth employment across the borough.



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## 05 PLACE

# Building Stronger Places

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Continue to support all areas of the borough to thrive. Many of our communities are affluent, but 16 of our neighbourhoods are among the most deprived in the country. This proposed activity is to build better places throughout our borough, through:

- Embedding inclusion priorities and accessibility into our regeneration plans.
- Involving communities in the development of masterplans.
- Ensuring enabling infrastructure connects people to opportunity.
- Creating healthier and future-proofed places.
- Enhancing our culture offer, access to culture and building on local pride.

Building on existing regeneration activity we will deliver place programmes for our urban centres and rural communities, with a particular focus on delivering better outcomes for our deprived communities. Many actions in this plan flow from this.

Urban centre and market town regeneration will embed a forward-thinking approach that connects the physical, community and business aspects of places, putting more onus on an integrated offer including culture, leisure, green space, business and residential.

Rural community regeneration will support the creation of sustainable economies through widening opportunities for business and employment, improved connectivity and strengthening local supply chains, supporting low carbon farming and circular local food and waste systems.

Integrated improvement plans will ensure regeneration projects deliver for our most deprived communities, with connectivity improvements, more affordable and net zero housing, greater access to culture and community empowerment.

The intended impact of this action is for all of West Cheshire's diverse places to thrive individually, and as an interconnected set of communities that benefit from each other's strengths. Intended impacts of this activity will include:

- Increase community engagement in regeneration projects and masterplans design.
- Raise quality of places and quality of life.
- Increase footfall, dwell times and local spend.
- Greater economic resilience and sustainability.





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PLACE

## 06 Transport Access and Connectivity to Job Opportunities

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Develop better transport connections across the country to enable more residents to access local opportunities. Lack of public transport access prevents people accessing job opportunities whilst businesses struggle to fill vacancies, and one third of our residents live in rural areas where lack of connections also result in exclusion. This proposed action intends to improve connections between deprived areas and business parks and industrial hubs, and better connect excluded rural communities. We will:

1. Continue robust investigation into need, including through involving local communities and businesses to inform targeting of improvements. Including improving data collection on the performance of existing services, researching links between transport exclusion and deprivation and social isolation and assessing opportunities to expand connections to health and leisure activities.
2. Explore innovative approaches to develop new connections in the places and at times where required to enable greater inclusion. Including through:
  - Working with bus operators to provide services to employment hubs from deprived areas.
  - Review of parking policies to encourage use of public transport.
  - Expansion of cycling and walking infrastructure and exploring E-scooters trials.
  - Expanding current provision of free/ low-cost travel card ticketing for young people to reduce affordability barriers, this may also include across geographies, ie able to use in Liverpool City Region or North Wales.
  - Working together to raise confidence in using public transport and ensure accessibility, reliability and safety.
  - Raise awareness for businesses and residents of how Park and Ride services benefit them.
3. Monitor over time to assess impacts and continually improve. This activity aims to provide greater access to public transport and active travel to:
  - Increase employment where lack of connectivity is currently a barrier.
  - Help to fill current job vacancies.
  - Improve connections to leisure, culture and community assets.
  - Reduce traffic and emissions and improve health and wellbeing.



# 07

PLACE

## Future Food, Agriculture and Natural Capital

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Capitalise on opportunities for sustainable food and farming, along with effective land use. It will deliver benefit for landowners, farmers, workers and communities, support transition to net zero and support toward our ambitions to become a Sustainable Food Place.

The start point will be to identify a 'network of land opportunity' that can be adapted to improve long term environmental, social and economic benefits. This will involve engaging with landowners, farmers and others to identify target areas, change options and priority measures. For each area, a transition plan will be drawn up and delivered, utilising an expert resource to recommend practical action for specific sites.

Delivery will involve work and investment by landowners, farmers and public agencies, and input from community/ environmental groups, and measures could include:

- Innovative low carbon farming practices.
- Enhancing awareness of and access to green space/waterways, and utilising local food and our natural environment in promoting place identity.

- Supporting biodiversity, planting trees/ woodland and peat restoration.
- Natural flood management schemes.
- Reduced use of products with negative sustainability impacts.
- Renewable energy, waste reduction and circular economy solutions.

In addition, the project will promote the growing and consumption of local food and work with food banks, communities and others to enhance access to healthy, affordable food, especially for those in poverty.

Success measures will include:

- Increased number of farm/food businesses and good jobs within them.
- Reduced carbon emissions and waste.
- Greater tree planting and carbon sequestration.
- Flood risk reduction.
- Greater biodiversity, and air, water and soil quality.
- Health benefits from increased access to green space and healthy food.



## 08 PLACE Housing Retrofit

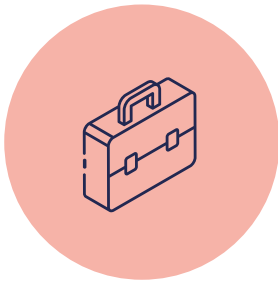
Decarbonise housing stock through effective and targeted retrofit activities and achieving net zero, but also in tackling our poverty emergency. By improving health and wellbeing; supporting local business growth; and creating green skills and good jobs accessible to local people.

The current short-term, funding-led approach to retrofit encourages ad-hoc and scatter-gun delivery and falls short of the scale required. We will bring the housing system together to build a long-term transformational retrofit plan that gives visibility and certainty to the pipeline and confidence to ramp up investment via a clear delivery model. Focussing on our least efficient social housing first, we will:

- Establish a Retrofit Delivery Partnership to provide leadership, set ambition and direction, agree standards, oversee progress, and advocate action and investment.
- Review the retrofit landscape to spot opportunities to scale/roll out or learn from best practice and establish an energy data baseline.
- Research the skills and supply chain baseline to spot opportunities and constraints.
- Establish a large-scale, preferably area-based, pipeline programme, using a centrally held database that identifies and phases opportunities. Partners should explore financial models to ensure costs for retrofit activities do not unfairly fall to social housing tenants.
- Incorporate programmes of education and behaviour change to encourage eg recycling and energy efficiency.
- Proactive support to enable the wider system to respond e.g. with skills providers; trade/representative organisations; master-planners; and the private rented sector.

We aspire to deliver the following impacts through this action:

- Additional disposable income from lower energy bills.
- Reduced carbon emissions.
- New investment (stimulated by a long-term plan).
- Wider environmental benefits e.g. reduced waste via circular economy.
- Health and wellbeing benefits from reduced fuel poverty and warmer homes.
- Increase in number and quality of 'green jobs' which are available and filled locally.
- Business growth enabled in existing local companies and new enterprises.



09

ENTERPRISE

## Good Jobs and Business Best Practice

Promote inclusive good employment. Forward looking employers are already doing this. We want many more to do so and to draw benefit from measures such as:

- Paying the real living wage, fair contracts, terms and conditions.
- Introduction of inclusive recruitment practices.
- Good training and progression routes and diverse recruitment that reaches all communities (e.g. including people with disabilities, BAME communities, older workers and unpaid carers of all ages).
- Supporting mental and physical health and wellbeing and promoting flexible working.
- Building of the good work of unions and their learning reps.

Good employment practice will be integrated with promotion of wider business best practice, including on carbon/environmental impacts and investing locally (e.g. via supply chains) and implementation will involve three main elements.

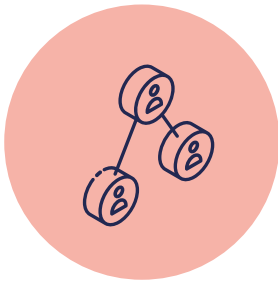
1. Reviewing existing business support and building in extra provision for good employment and wider best business practice including support for alternative business models. New activity to promote and support good employment/business best practice,

coupled with incentive/recognition measures.

2. Improving the communication of support for businesses/social enterprises to greatly increase its reach and impact. This will be about getting the messages and channels right, and intense and proactive work to communicate key messages and available support to employers.

Targeting will span employers of all sizes and make use of existing networks. We aim to deliver impacts including:

- More businesses paying the real living wage and improved workplace skills/ progression.
- Enhanced mental and physical health of workers, reduced sickness and absence rates, reduced carbon emissions and more local procurement.
- Improved staff recruitment/retention, productivity and attraction of customers and investment.



# 10

ENTERPRISE

## Establish Anchors Network and Maximise Local Impacts

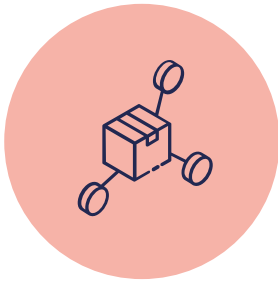
Ensure large local employers adopt inclusive employment practices and prioritise local spend through procurement activity such as healthcare, education, or public services. We have established the West Cheshire Anchor Network (WeCAN) comprising key local organisations and work collectively to maximise the difference anchors can make on local employment and incomes, circulation of wealth, and climate emergency and sustainability goals. This will include establishing effective mechanisms for:

- Bringing together senior anchor leaders to discuss and agree strategic priorities.
- Establishing specialist groups to practically take forward action.
- Baselining current action and setting ambitions and priorities for action individually and collectively via scaling up existing action or establishing new approaches.
- Developing metrics to measure progress and impact.
- Strengthening and widening communication with distinct audiences including anchor employees, local businesses and communities.

- Aligning work to strengthen local supply chains and community wealth building; good employment and place-based masterplanning to connect to communities.

The intended impacts of the project will be:

- More local employment opportunities for people and places typically underrepresented in anchor workforces.
- Better employment focused on progression, health and wellbeing, fair pay and conditions.
- More local spend via increased local contracting – leading to greater opportunities for local business growth, start-up and survival, local circulation of wealth and opportunities for more and better jobs.
- Increases in social value extracted from procurement – leading to positive impacts on employment, skills, communities and the environment.
- Reduced carbon emissions and wider environmental benefits. Leading by example. The aim is that non anchor institutions follow good practice policies after seeing the benefits of an inclusive approach.



# 11

## ENTERPRISE

### Strengthening Local Supply Chains and Social Value

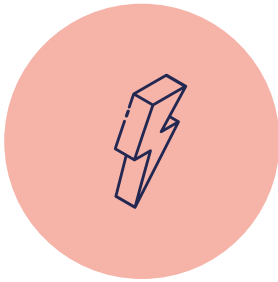
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Working with local businesses to become effective supply chains and respond to social value aspirations and build community wealth as money recirculates around the local economy rather than leaking out. We will:

- Work with the West Cheshire Anchors Network to harness anchor procurement power, building a spend data baseline to track progress and identify opportunities for more local spending.
- Encourage anchors to amend procurement policy and practice and work with their supply chains to make a practical difference, informed by engagement with local business and the voluntary and community sector.
- Develop social value policies that put weight on enhancing supplier contributions to local economic, social and environmental well-being.
- Identify gaps in local supply options and working with existing local SMEs and social enterprises or supporting them to work collaboratively to fill them or supporting the creation of new enterprises (including employee-owned businesses and cooperatives) to fill the gap and support local employment and community wealth building through doing so.
- Encouraging public sector organisations, businesses and voluntary and community sector organisations to support the local economy and recirculation of wealth by increasing their use of local suppliers and delivery of social value, linked to work on Good Employment and Business Best Practice.

Through this project we aspire to deliver the following impacts :

- More contracts awarded locally leading to greater opportunities for local business growth, start-up and survival.
- Greater opportunities for creation of more and better jobs.
- More money recirculating locally leading to enhanced community wealth.
- Increases in social value extracted from procurement leading to positive impacts on employment, skills and the environment.
- Reduced carbon emissions through shorter, localised supply chains.



# 12

## ENTERPRISE

### Supporting Start-Ups and Social Enterprises

Increase the number of business start ups and social enterprises, especially in areas of low growth and aspiration. Currently, start-up support is limited, so we will seek to both nurture a culture of enterprise across the borough, and to provide support that helps new enterprises to start and survive. We will communicate the offer clearly to reach and drive take-up amongst a far wider audience.

The Growth Hub and the Chamber offers assistance to new businesses on areas including business planning, regulation, access to funding, marketing and sales, product and service development, training and internationalisation.

We propose working with partners to extend this activity to include:

- Fostering awareness, aspirations, and confidence about setting up an enterprise, especially in areas with lower social mobility and fewer businesses, including entrepreneurial support for young people linked to schools.
- Reviewing and exploiting opportunities to improve support to new starts (e.g. via new funding bids), especially for those that bring social, health and environmental benefits.
- Ensuring support is just as strong for those starting a social enterprise as starting a business.

- Helping new enterprises to start where local supply chain gaps are identified.
- Adding advice on good employment practice (including health and wellbeing), local supply chains and environmental good practice into the support offer.
- Strengthening and widening the communication of support for businesses/social enterprises to greatly increase its reach and impact.

The intended impacts of this project will include:

- Raised aspiration, confidence and enterprise within local communities, and more young entrepreneurs.
- Increase in the number of businesses and social enterprises that start up.
- Achievement of above average survival rate for new starts.
- Reduced inequalities through enterprises and jobs in areas that need them most.
- Develop the capability and capacity of the voluntary sector workforce.

# 04

## Delivery, Monitoring and Continuing Community Engagement

This Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan requires leadership and action from all partners across West Cheshire's businesses, service providers, and community organisations.

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The Council can play a lead role in developing, convening, and supporting delivery, but the Council cannot lead and deliver an inclusive economy on its own.





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## Partnership and Governance

The Prospectus and Action Plan has been co-developed with partners in order to secure buy-in and ownership and to ensure it will be relevant and impactful for all.

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Moving forward, we need to formalise partnership arrangements for the continuing development and delivery of our Inclusive Economy. We will convene a partnership board with representation across public, private, and voluntary and community sector organisations, bringing together a balance of expertise, capabilities and perspectives required to lead and deliver our ambitious proposals.

The partnership board will ensure appropriate governance and accountability arrangements are in place to co-ordinate, prioritise and resource our collective actions and activities. It will comprise a passionate and high-profile chairperson alongside senior level representatives from a diverse range of stakeholder organisations.

Sub-boards will be established for each Pillar – People, Place and Enterprise – which will need to be supported by dedicated executive resource, likely to be provided by the Council in the first instance. We intend to embed inclusive economy principles across the Councils ways of working and decision-making processes. This will require strong leaderships, a shift in culture and alignment with existing Council priorities and processes.

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## Project Development and Delivery

To date, we have undertaken an initial phase of project identification and scoping, with extensive engagement from key partners and stakeholders, resulting in twelve headline actions, as outlined in the previous chapter.

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Building on this foundation, the Council will work closely with partners to support existing and identify new project champions from across sectors and work collaboratively to develop each action further.

Project development should be underpinned by logic model principles and will include: identifying leadership and delivery roles and responsibilities; refining objectives and rationale; defining required inputs, activities and resource requirements through preparation of implementation plans including consideration of interdependencies and risks; and clarifying anticipated outputs, outcomes and impacts. While some of the headline actions will require securing new funding streams, many actions can be delivered through co-ordination, greater collaboration, and adaptation of existing teams, organisations, and initiatives.

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## Community Engagement and Influence

Building on work to date to engage residents and businesses across the Borough in the development of this Inclusive Economy Prospectus and Action Plan, we intend to continue to raise and empower community voices to shape the further development and delivery of each of the Actions.

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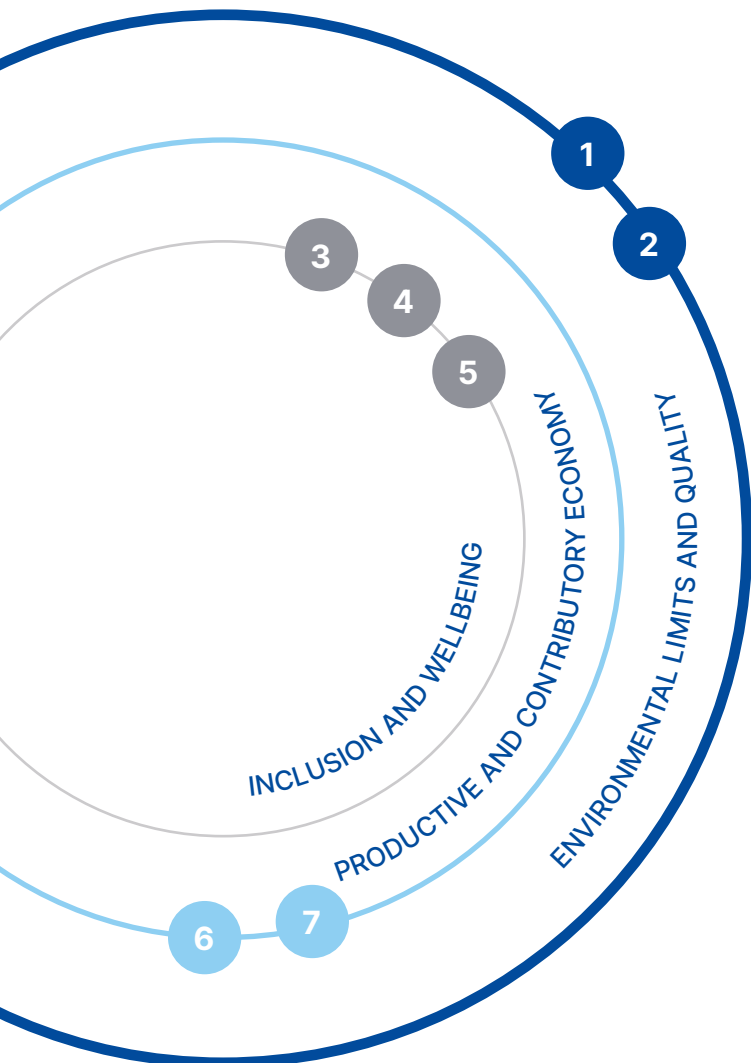
To ensure we achieve our ambition of a truly Inclusive West Cheshire Economy, we are committed to 'moving beyond the data' to understanding lived experiences and ensuring that we are meeting the real needs of our communities. This will include:

- **Bringing together community voices** to design the targeting of Inclusive Economy Actions to our more deprived areas and groups, accounting for the diverse nature of our communities and delivering for both urban and rural populations. Including through working closely with our Development Boards as vehicles for engaging local stakeholders, and with the Poverty Truth Advisory Board and Community Inspirers delivering the Fairer Futures Strategy to deliver the complementary aims of both strategies in tandem.
- **Working closely with our voluntary and community sector organisations** that are key service providers, and working with the vast network of volunteers, community groups, arts, culture and sports organisations, and social enterprises operating across all our communities
- **Improving our communications streams** to support raising awareness of initiatives and information, improving accessibility and targeting of information we share for our residents.

## Metrics for Measuring Our Success

The success of our local economy cannot be measured by economic growth alone. Despite strong performance of our economy, growth to date has not resulted in prosperity for all in our borough.

Success can also not be measured by comparing borough-wide averages, without assessment of indicators at the levels of localised geographies or demographic groups, due to the inequality between people and places masked by the averages. In line with our ambition to create a more inclusive economy, that is both greener, fairer and stronger, it is crucial that while strengthening the resilience and productivity of our local economy, we do so within our environmental limits, and ensure greater prosperity is experienced by all, reducing inequalities.



### Greener

1. Reduce emissions from industry, homes and transport
2. Increase natural capital and greenspace access

### Fairer

3. Reduce the numbers of our local neighbourhoods among the most deprived in the country
4. Reduce rates of in-work and out-of-work poverty
5. Reduce proportions of workers on low-incomes and improve levels of youth social mobility

### Stronger

6. Raise productivity rates fairly across the workforce.
7. Raise enterprise resilience and survival rates

## **Our Headline Inclusive Economy Metrics**

As such, our framework for measuring success is based on tracking central elements of our vision and the pillars and cross cutting drivers that will deliver it. We propose that a set of seven headline indicators is adopted and measured annually, with these broadly based around 'Doughnut Economics' thinking. The simplified version of this below places an inclusive social foundation at the heart of what the economy should deliver, operating within a perimeter of sustainable environmental limits. A productive and contributory economy should support these goals and deliver wealth, wellbeing, and opportunity. Following further partnership development of our actions, evidence-based, ambitious but achievable targets will be set against each of these headline indicators. Success will be rooted in closing the gaps on these key metrics, setting comparator benchmarks with other local authorities, regional and national levels.

## **Our Plan for Wider Inclusive Economy Monitoring and Evaluation**

Above we set out our headline metrics to measure our success against the ambitions laid out for a more inclusive economy. Underpinning these headline indicators is a larger range of quantitative and qualitative indicators which we propose to monitor on an ongoing basis to enable us to understand the wider story of inclusivity across our Borough. This Inclusive Economy monitoring will collate and analyse a longlist of quantitative indicators, including those presented overleaf, in an Inclusive Economy Monitoring Data Dashboard. We will align with indicators found in the

Marmot Region, Climate Emergency, and Fairer Futures Plans. Where the data allows, we will measure and monitor these indicators at a granular level, assessing indicators at both localised geographies and demographic groups to enable us to monitor the inequalities between places and people across the borough. This is crucial to monitor progress against our ambition to reduce inequalities that our strong average borough-wide performance often masks.

In parallel with quantitative indicators, we will use qualitative assessment and tailored local surveys to track progress against goals that cannot be measured easily in numbers alone – for example in relation to quality of life and place, culture, and the overall sense of ambition. Qualitative assessment will be designed to enable tracking over time (for example, are things perceived to be improving compared to the previous year) and to provide insight and understanding about the issues in question, how they are changing and why. Wherever possible, qualitative assessment will utilise existing mechanisms to ensure it is practicable and cost-effective. We will also look to enhance data and intelligence capabilities, including through partner collaboration, open data and the ability to undertake horizon scanning. To the right, an overview of potential qualitative indicators is presented. Monitoring and evaluation will be a central component to ensuring we achieve our vision for a more inclusive economy in West Cheshire.

## Examples of Potential Qualitative Indicators

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**An annual Poverty Truth Assessment**, which would consider the extent and depth of poverty, and how local opportunities and ambitions are changing, based on lived experience and local knowledge. This would feedback overall messages on the position and could use a straw poll after discussions to track progress on whether the position is improving, declining, or staying the same year on year.

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**Tailored town centre progress reports** – based on the questions above about quality of place and cultural vitality in each of the above places (as a resident or visitor) and annual surveys of shop vacancy rates, footfall, and the number of local independent businesses. The latter could be carried out by the council or through local groups (e.g. business organisations, town councils, those managing local Business Improvement Districts) given suitable resource.

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**Young People and Ambitions focus groups** – these would be held in deprived areas in each of the four main urban centres, plus a rural group and a comparator group. They would discuss and report on their ambitions, future intentions and opportunities and any barriers that prevent them achieving, and could potentially be complemented by use of surveys. Focus groups could be held biennially and target age ranges 15-17 and include representation from disadvantaged groups.

**Use the annual 'Our Place' residents survey** – including subsamples of people living in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich, Winsford, and in rural areas – to report on perceptions of quality of place, jobs and economy, environment, and inclusion in each of the above areas; as well as questions about ambition and social mobility, and citizen engagement and influence.

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**Use Key Account Management with major businesses** to discuss their expectations for future growth and employment, and perceptions of their local area and the wider borough/region as a place to do business. Also track retention rates for these key businesses.

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**Rural Areas Review** – based on Our Place resident survey questions and on inviting relevant Town and Parish councils to hold a biennial local meeting to discuss whether the position in their area is good, bad, or middling in terms of economy, inclusion, environmental issues, and quality of place overall, and whether it is getting better, worse or staying the same.

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**Partnership effectiveness review** – use an annual discussion at a forum bringing together public, private and voluntary and community sector partners (e.g. the Anchors Network) to discuss how well partnership and collaboration are working, and the state of the borough on economy, inclusion, culture and sustainability and whether it is improving.

## Quantitative Indicators

### People: Income and Poverty

Indicator	Definition	Geography	Source
Earnings of workers	Median gross weekly pay for all workers	Place of work, Local Authority District	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) workplace analysis
Earnings of residents	Median gross weekly pay for all residents	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) resident analysis
Out-of-work benefits	% of working-age population receiving out-of-work benefits	Place of residence, Local Authority District, Wards	DWP Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (benefit claimants – working-age client group)
In-work tax credits	% in-work households with and without children receiving and/or Working Tax	Place of residence, Local Authority District, LSOAs	HMRC Child and Working Tax Cred finalised award statistics
Low earnings	20th percentile of gross weekly earnings (% of full-time workers receiving earnings equal to or below this threshold)	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) resident analysis
Child Poverty Rate	% of children in poverty	Place of residence, Local Authority District, Parliamentary Constituencies	End Child Poverty Data, HMRC and DWP
Children living in low-income families	% of children (aged under 16) living in relative low-income families	Place of residence, Local Authority District, Parliamentary Constituencies, Wards	DWP Children living in low-income families

## People: Employment, Skills and Labour Market Exclusion

Indicator	Definition	Geography	Source
Unemployment	% of working age population not in employment but actively seeking work	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Annual Population Survey (APS)
Economic inactivity	% of working-age population who are economically inactive, including analysis by reason	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Annual Population Survey (APS)
Workless households	% of working-age households with no-one in work	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Annual Population Survey (APS)
Proportion of young NEET	% of young people (16-24) not in education, employment or training (NEET), including analysis by pupils on Free School Meals and SEND	Place of residence, Local Authority District	ONS Department for Education NEET estimates
Job density	Employee jobs by working age (16-64) population	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Business Register Employee Survey (BRES) and Annual Population Survey
People in employment	% of working-age population in employment (employment rate)	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Annual Population Survey (APS)
Higher level occupations	% workers in managerial, professional and technical/scientific occupations (SOCs 1,2 and 3)	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Annual Population Survey (APS)
Intermediate level skills	% of working-age population qualified to NVQ level 2 and above	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Annual Population Survey (APS)
Higher level skills	% of working-age population qualified to NVQ level 4 and above	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Annual Population Survey (APS)
Educational attainment	Average attainment 8 score, including analysis by pupils on Free School Meals and SEND	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Department for Education - KS4 statistics
Early years development	% of five-year-olds achieving a 'good level' of development	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Department for Education - Early years foundation stage profile results



## Place: Health, Wellbeing and Deprivation

Indicator	Definition	Geography	Source
Proportion of adults with long-term health condition	% of adults living with at least one long term condition	Place of residence, Local Authority District, Wards	Cheshire West Integrated Care Partnership Care Community Profile Data Pack
Healthy Life Expectancy	The number of years people are expected to spend in reported 'good health'	Place of residence, Local Authority District, LSOA/MSOAs	Public Health England
Prevalence of deprived neighbourhoods	Number of local areas in top 20% most deprived (IMD) in the UK	Place of residence, LSOA/MSOAs	MHCLG English Indices of Deprivation

## Place: Emissions

Indicator	Definition	Geography	Source
Emissions from Transport	Total CO2 emissions from transport uses (kt)	Local Authority District	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – UK local authority and regional carbon emissions
Emissions from Domestic	Total CO2 emissions from domestic uses (kt)	Local Authority District	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – UK local authority and regional carbon emissions
Emissions from Commercial/ Industry	Total CO2 emissions from commercial/industrial uses (kt)	Local Authority District	MHCLG English Indices of Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – UK local authority and regional carbon emissions

## Place: Living costs

Indicator	Definition	Geography	Source
Housing affordability	Ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings	Place of residence, Local Authority District	CLG Housing Statistics Table 576
Housing costs	Median monthly rents for private sector two-bedroom properties	Place of residence, Local Authority District	Valuation Office Agency PRS Market Statistics
Fuel poverty	% of households being classed as being 'fuel poor' (using Low Income-High Costs model)	Place of residence, Local Authority District, LSOAs	Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – Fuel Poverty Sub-Regional Statistics

## Place: Living costs

Indicator	Definition	Geography	Source
Town centre footfall and dwell times	Footfall count and average time spent, % increase/decrease month on month	Town centres	Cheshire West and Chester Council
High street spend	High streets recovery tracker spend index – sales made in town and city centres	Large towns and city centres	Centre for Cities High Streets Recovery Tracker
Community mobility	Movement trends across different categories of places e.g. retail, recreation, parks, work, residential	Local Authority District	Google Community Mobility Reports
Access to culture and arts	Active Lives Survey - % residents participating in arts, culture and heritage activities (spent time doing craft/theatre/music/art/dance, attended an event/library/museum/gallery)	Local Authority District	Arts Council England Active Lives Survey

## Enterprise: Business Environment

Indicator	Definition	Geography	Source
Private sector businesses	Number of private sector workplaces per 1,000 resident population	Place of work, Local Authority District, MSOAs	UK Business Counts – Local Units and Mid-year population estimates
Third sector businesses	Number of third sector workplaces per 1,000 resident population	Place of work, Local Authority District, MSOAs	UK Business Counts – Local Units and Mid-year population estimates
Anchor Institutions on the Network and % Local Spend	Total number of Anchor Institutes part of the Anchor Network and % of their spend within the local area	Local Authority District	Cheshire West and Chester Council and Anchor Spend Toolkits
Businesses paying the Living Wage	Total number of businesses signed up to the Local Living Wage charter	Local Authority District	Cheshire West and Chester Government Local Living Wage Website and Your West Cheshire
Business start-up rate	Total business births/total business stock	Place of work, Local Authority District	ONS Business Demography
5-year business survival rate	Total business births surviving 5 years	Place of work, Local Authority District	ONS Business Demography

## Enterprise: Output Growth

Indicator	Definition	Geography	Source
Output	Total Gross Value Added (in £ current prices)	Place of work, NUTS3	ONS Regional & Local Authority GVA
Productivity	Total Gross Value Added per worker (in £ current prices)	Place of work, NUTS3	ONS Regional & Local Authority GVA & Business Register Employee Survey (BRES)

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## Data Point Reference List

16 neighbourhoods among the 10% most deprived in England, with 2 in the top 2% (MHCLG English Indices of Deprivation, 2019)

A cold spot for youth social mobility, among the worst 10% in England (State of the Nation Social Mobility, 2017)

High levels of in-work poverty, child poverty in areas 50% higher than in others (Cheshire West and Chester Council End Child Poverty Data, 2021)

Workplace average wages in are £130 less per week than residents average wages – suggesting out-commuting provides access to higher earnings (ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2020)

There is a gap of 10 years between areas with the highest and lowest life expectancy and a gap of 15 years in healthy life expectancy (Public Health England, 2021)

There is a £3k gender pay gap in gross annual salary between those women and men in full time work (ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2020)

Carbon emissions are the 5th highest of any local authority area in England, driven largely by high carbon industry (Cheshire West and Chester Council Climate Emergency Response Plan, 2021)

An ageing population - the number of people aged 65+ is expected to increase by 46%

by 2035 (Cheshire West and Chester Council Borough Profile, 2021)

Average house prices 9.5 times median annual earnings (ONS Housing Affordability Ratio, 2020)

11% of households in fuel poverty (Cheshire West and Chester Council Borough Profile, 2021)

Traffic forecast to rise by 12% by 2026 (Cheshire West and Chester Council, Local Transport Plan 2011-26)

Natural capital depletion during 20th century (Natural Capital Committee, The State of Natural Capital: Restoring our Natural Assets, 2014)

14,000 businesses employ 173,000 people in West Cheshire (ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2019)

89% of our enterprises are micro-enterprises employing less than ten people. (ONS Business Demography, 2019)

Productivity of £60,600 per worker, is just below UK average but well above North West levels (ONS GVA (balanced at current prices), 2019 and ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 2019)

18% of GVA is from Manufacturing (UK average is 7%) while 13% is from Finance and insurance (UK average is 6%) (ONS GVA (balanced at current prices) by industry, 2019)

Levels of productivity growth have slowed in recent years (ONS GVA (balanced at current prices), 2019)

23% of workers earn below the real living wage (Cheshire West and Chester Inequalities Report, 2015)

The new business start-up rate in West Cheshire is lower than regionally and nationally (ONS Business Demography, 2019)

The voluntary and community sector is estimated to provide just 3% of the North West's regional employment (Community Foundation, 2020).

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