

Join the Conversation, Insight & Intelligence,  
Cheshire West and Chester Council,  
The Portal,  
Wellington Road,  
Ellesmere Port,  
CH65 0BA.

Vice Presidents  
Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE  
Ali Miraj  
Branch Chair  
Jonathan Clarke

December 2024

Dear sir/madam

## **CW&C WORKING TOGETHER FOR A STRONGER FUTURE – Borough Plan consultation draft**

**CPRE, (formerly the Campaign to Protect Rural England), Cheshire Branch**, would like to make a contribution to the 'Working Together for a Stronger Future' conversation by answering the questions posed in the Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C) consultation.

### **OUR VISION**

#### **Q.1 Do you have any views on our proposed vision?**

**A.1** CW&C's stated aim in this document is for everyone to 'play their part' in building strong and sustainable communities. It is a laudable aim. We note that the initial 'Join the Feedback' conversation found that the three quality of life factors that people rated as most important to them were:

- The condition of roads, pavements and cycleways
- Being able to influence decisions that affect them and
- The level of crime

The first of these needs to feed into the emerging Local Transport Plan and the over-arching sustainability themes outlined at the start of it. The last factor, we note, is addressed in the last bullet under 'Thriving Communities' on page 5 of this consultation. That should feed into how new developments are designed and how the public realm can be improved. The middle 'quality of life' factor seems to be making the point that the average citizen does not currently feel they have sufficient 'say' over how they are governed. This would appear to indicate that the Citizen's Panel is not sufficiently representative and/or needs to be boosted to become more of a Citizen's Assembly. It is not known whether or not the existing panel includes representatives from all sections of the community, including from non-governmental organisations, and from Town and Parish Councils.

### **OUR POTENTIAL PRIORITIES**

#### **THRIVING COMMUNITIES**

#### **Q.2 To what extent, if at all, do you support the priorities for 'thriving communities'?**

**A.2** CPRE's support for the identified priorities is somewhat lukewarm simply because this document has not been 'rural proofed'. In other words, it fails to examine the issues discussed from the perspective of rural dwellers or the countryside. This is a different matter than simply tagging things as 'green'. For instance, in the first bullet of the section on page 5 – 'An economy that works for local people' – there is a reference to 'green businesses and green jobs'. However, these descriptions are normally used in relation to jobs which support energy production from sources not using fossil fuels or manufacturing operations which have factored in more sustainable processes. They are not 'green' because they are rural. There should be references to the agricultural economy, to providing local foods for local markets and to well managed tourism. The second bullet on 'Neighbourhoods' should reference villages and the need for them to be sustainable communities.

**Q.3 What do you think needs to happen to achieve the ‘thriving communities’ priorities? In particular, what do the Council and other organisations need to do/ how could your local community contribute?**

**A.3** In response to question 1, we enquire how well the Citizen’s Panel, established in 2020, is working and how genuinely representative it is. The Council needs to be more transparent about this body. (Typing ‘Citizen’s Panel’ into the Council’s search engine on its website does not bring up any results). Perhaps a full-blown Citizen’s Assembly with a more accessible reporting structure should be considered? There are now a number of Assemblies around the country. CW&C should investigate which have proven to be the most successful and what constitutes best practice. CPRE would be likely to support a Citizen’s Assembly by putting forward a delegate to serve on it.

## **CARING COMMUNITIES**

**Q.4 To what extent, if at all, do you support the priorities for ‘caring communities’?**

**A.4** We strongly support these priorities.

**Q.5 What do you think needs to happen to achieve the ‘caring communities’ priorities? In particular, what do the Council and other organisations need to do and how could your local community contribute?**

**A.5** CPRE engages with national and local government by trying to ensure that policies are well devised. Having the right policies in place is an essential starting point. In terms of ‘caring’, the policies that apply include those that cover air quality and other types of pollution that can affect health (mental and physical) and working and living conditions.

## **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

**Q.6 To what extent, if at all, do you support the priorities for ‘sustainable communities’?**

**A.6** We can support the actions flagged up but note that improved digital communications is missing from the list. It should be there. Digital communications actually top CPRE’s own transport hierarchy because of the extent to which they can reduce the need to travel.

**Q.7 What do you think needs to happen to achieve sustainable communities’ priorities? What do the Council and other organisations need to do and how could your local community contribute?**

**A.7** It is essential to achieve 100% coverage of excellent digital services and to retain as many local services as possible in order to reduce the need to travel. CPRE is part of the Rural Coalition which campaigns at the national level for improved digital services.

## **OUR POTENTIAL APPROACH**

### **HOW CAN WE WORK TOGETHER DIFFERENTLY?**

**Q.8 If you have any comments you would like to make about these approaches, please use the box below.**

**A.8** Town and Parish Councils are not mentioned in ‘The Vision’, in ‘Thriving Communities’, ‘Caring Communities’ or ‘Sustainable Communities’. The only reference to them is in the ‘About You’ section (question 10) where there is an option to tick a box to say that the respondent is from a Local Council. Town and Parish Councils could form a greater part of the principal authority’s governance and processes.

**Q.9 Are there any further comments you would like to make about the Borough Plan, in particular, any other priorities you feel need to be considered?**

**A.9** As we point out in response to question no. 2, there appears to be an issue around insufficient attention being given to examining issues from a rural perspective. This document has not been rural proofed.

**Q.10 How would you like to be able to describe the borough in 2028? Please add one word that you would like to use to describe the borough in 2028.**

**A.10 ClimateReady (NB The Met Office make this one word).**

### **ABOUT YOU**

**Q.11 How are you responding?**

**A.11 As 'Other' – ie. an environmental organisation**

**Q.12 If you are responding on behalf of a group or organisation, please state the name below. You do not need to complete the rest of the 'About you' section.**

**A.12 CPRE Cheshire**

CPRE would be obliged if these responses would be taken into account as part of 'the conversation' leading to the development of the Borough Plan for 2024-2028.

Yours faithfully

**JONATHAN CLARKE**

Branch Chair