

# Cheshire West and Chester

## Report to Cabinet

<b>Date</b>	15 November 2023
<b>Report Author</b>	Gemma Davies, Director of Economy and Housing
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Nathan Pardoe, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Regeneration and Digital Transformation
<b>Report Title:</b>	Lache Action Plan
<b>Is this a Key Decision?</b> [(one that affects finances over £1m or significantly affects two or more wards)]	No
<b>Exempt Report:</b>	No

### 1 What is the report about?

- 1.1 The Lache Action Plan, which consists of four projects (set out at section 4.4 of this report), to support community regeneration in Lache ward.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet endorses the Lache Action Plan set out at section 4.4 of this report.

### 3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 Cabinet endorsement of the Lache Action Plan is sought in order to provide clarity that this plan supersedes all previous draft ideas or considered options for the ward. This will then become the Council's agreed way forward to support community regeneration in Lache ward.
- 3.2 Cabinet's endorsement of the Lache Action Plan will support on-going engagement with external partners and potential funders to support delivery of individual projects.

### 4. Report Details

- 4.1 In September 2021, consultants were commissioned to identify options for potential projects to support improvements in Lache ward, one of the most deprived wards within Cheshire West and Chester. Their report, published in

April 2022, was based on consultation with over 500 people including engagement with children and youth groups, 'pop-ups', workshops and online surveys.

- 4.2 The Council sought feedback on the consultant's ideas over the following months from both internal Council teams and stakeholders together with additional community consultation. In October 2022, a series of public meetings commenced to share the findings of this initial review. Over the last twelve months a series of additional meetings and communications have taken place to engage with local residents on emerging ideas. This has included establishing an interactive webpage, an option to subscribe for updates, as well as letters sent to all households in the ward.
- 4.3 There is broad consensus in favour of all four Action Plan projects, with strong support for each project from key parts of the community. Other proposals scoped by the consultants did not have this broad consensus and these will not be progressed further as part of the Lache Action Plan. This includes the site known as 'The Sidings' - there is no proposal from the Council to build on or otherwise develop this site.
- 4.4 The four Action Plan projects are:
- **Lache Park (Sycamore Drive)** – invest in new children's play equipment, including inclusive play, to support improved facilities for children.
  - **Backies/LAPA Field** — proposal to improve 8-hectare former landfill area for wildlife and residents to enjoy as a green space amenity.
  - **Lache Community Centre** – proposal to refurbish the existing building to improve facilities for local residents and help improve its financial and environmental sustainability.
  - **Traffic/road improvements on Hawthorn Road and Poplar Place** – Consider options to better manage traffic, making it safer to walk or cycle, and improving the way the area looks and feels.
- 4.5 The four Action Plan projects will be supported in their development by the Council's Localities and Regeneration team, together with additional support from other Council services depending on the nature of the project. All decisions on funding and delivery of individual projects will be subject to their final business case. Opportunities to maximise funding from developer contributions and external funding will form a key consideration. Each project will have a local residents 'task and finish group', (a group of key partners and residents who work together on specific project over a short period) established to help shape the emerging scope of proposals and ensure residents voices are heard. In addition, public meetings will be held at least twice a year to update all residents on progress to deliver the action plan.

- 4.6 In the last twelve months, work has commenced to support the emerging Action Plan including:
- Sycamore Park - Extensive consultation with residents and children on options and emerging design has taken place. We have secured funding of £225,000 plus fees for project management from the Council's capital programme, section 106 developer contributions and several private trusts via a Spacehive campaign. A task and finish group has been established and works are currently being tendered for delivery in 2024.
  - Backies wildlife amenity – A biodiversity study has been undertaken, and initial sketch design has been developed. A task and finish group has been established.
  - Community Centre refurbishment - An extensive community consultation has been undertaken between June and September 2023; an energy and carbon reduction report has been completed and an application submitted to the Council's Climate change fund in line with this report's recommendations. A task and finish group has been being established.
  - Traffic/road improvements on Hawthorn Road and Poplar Place – Some initial traffic surveys were undertaken by traffic consultants led by the Council's Highways service, with some initial design options now being developed. A task and finish group is being established.

## **5 How does the decision contribute to the Council Plan?**

- 5.1 The Lache Action Plan is fully aligned with the Council Plan 2020-24 and proposals directly assist the Council in delivering its stated objectives, especially:
- Priority 5: Make our neighbourhoods even better places to call home:
  - Priority 4: Enable more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives: (through improved access to nature and services with Lache Community centre to support health and wellbeing).
  - Priority 3: Support children and young people to make the best start in life and achieve their full potential (all four projects are a result of consultation with children and their parents and aim to improve access to play, greenspace, local facilities and make it safer to walk and cycle to local schools and amenities in their neighbourhood).

## **6 What engagement has taken place with partners?**

- 6.1 The Action Plan is the result of extensive engagement with the public and partners over the last twelve months including internal Council teams and other public sector organisations and voluntary groups including:
- Council teams: Planning Policy, Total Environment (Open Spaces, Green infrastructure; Natural Environment), Highways, Housing Policy,

Estates, Climate Change team, Public Realm and Play, Environmental Services (Environmental Commissioning), Environmental Health (Contamination), Library Services, Poverty Truth team and localities representatives and Vivo Services

- Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (owners of health centre)
- Sanctuary Housing (principle owners of social housing stock)
- Friends of Lache (constituted community group)
- Lache Primary School
- St Claire's Catholic Primary School, Lache and St Claire's Catholic Parish
- Rage Fitness Company
- St Marks Church
- Friends of the Backies (Facebook community group)
- Chester Zoo

## **7 What are the financial implications?**

- 7.1 There are no financial implications at this time. Lache Action Plan will require funding to support project delivery, but further work is required to develop the scope of individual projects, undertake detailed cost assessment, and look at options to leverage external funding sources.
- 7.2 All projects requiring funding from the Council's capital budget will require a business case to be considered, in the context of budgets available and other commitments, once the proposals have been fully developed. No presumption of ring-fenced funding for delivery should be assumed at this point in time.

## **8 What are the legal implications?**

- 8.1 There are no legal implications of Cabinet endorsing the Lache Action Plan as the Council's approved regeneration plan for Lache ward.
- 8.2 During the implementation phase, legal input will be required from a procurement / contracting perspective which will need to be conducted in accordance with the public procurement legislation and the Council's Finance and Contract Procedure Rules. Further input will also be needed in relation to the proposed traffic/road improvements.

## **9 What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

- 9.1 The principle risk is retention of public support in Council's commitment to help improve the ward. The development of the Lache Action Plan was commenced in response to criticism about a lack of capital investment in the ward despite it being one of the most deprived in the borough. The Action Plan is a result of extensive engagement over the last two years, which at times has been controversial due to this perceived legacy of being 'left

behind', together with parts of the ward feeling excluded from the initial communication led by consultants, opposition to suggestions for housing development together with overarching concerns about loss of services to the community caused by the cost-of-living crisis.

9.2 While the four projects are broadly supported, it is important to continue to build trust and manage expectations of ward residents, especially around speed of delivery and funding available.

9.3 There are no other significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

## **10 How does the decision contribute to the “All Together Fairer” priorities?**

10.1 The Lache Action Plan is fully aligned with 'All Together Fairer', Cheshire and Merseyside's collaborative approach to reducing health inequalities in the sub-region and the proposals directly assist the Council in delivering its stated objectives, especially:

- Priority 2: Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives (through working with young people to hear their views about what is needed in local areas and delivering improved facilities as a result of this engagement).
- Priority 5: Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities (through working with local residents and partners to improve quality of existing green spaces in areas of higher deprivation and prioritise provision of new green spaces in areas of higher deprivation).

10.2 It is also worth noting that many of the aspirations to improve access to support for the most deprived communities in order to address health inequalities will be delivered in part through the Action Plan project to refurbish the Community Centre. As a key resource hub for one of the most deprived communities in the borough, it hosts much of the local service provision, has opportunity to increase or consolidate services to make them easier to access and offering people support in their own community or support signposting to services delivered by partners.

## **11 What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity issues?**

11.1 There are no direct implications of the recommendation in this report in relation to health inequalities and equality and diversity issues.

**12 What are the implications of the decision on climate change?**

- 12.1 The projects identified within the Lache Action Plan are fully aligned with the Council's declared climate emergency and all include a number of overarching positive climate measures including biodiversity and wildlife planting, energy reduction and carbon reduction as part of refurbishment proposals and improved pedestrian and cycle infrastructure to support transition to active travel. Individual projects will consider options to build in climate adaptations as part of their development.

**13 Are there any other options?**

- 13.1 An option is for Cabinet to not endorse the Lache Action Plan. This option is not recommended as it could undermine stakeholders' confidence in the Council's commitment to working to deliver the four improvement projects for the ward. This option is not recommended.

**For further information:**

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**Background Documents:**

None

**SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years):**

None