

Hello, Colleague

In this week's Team Voice:



- Marking Armistice Day
- Book your place at our Recognition Week event
- National recognition for Anne's work with data
- Watch a video with our care leavers
- Staff benefits: Vivup
- Seb's Lake District challenge

Thank you to all colleagues who have had to adapt their ways of working today during the global Microsoft outage. Thankfully, things seem to be getting back to normal now.

Main news

Marking Armistice Day



Interim Chief Executive Paul Walker lays a wreath during the service at Memorial Square in Crewe

This week, communities across Cheshire East came together to mark Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day, honouring the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth.

The council was represented by members of the Corporate Leadership Team, with wreaths being laid by Interim Chief Executive Paul Walker and Executive Director of Resources Ashley Hughes. The Mayor of Cheshire East, Cllr Judy Snowball, attended a number of ceremonies in her official role. We also held a special service of Remembrance at the war memorial outside Cledford EnviroHub, which welcomed staff and veterans to join together in reflection.

Thank you to all the staff who attended the commemorations, and to everybody who observed the two minutes' silence.

An update from our Corporate Leadership Team



Corporate Leadership Team members joined colleagues, members of the public and Armed Forces organisations at Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day services to remember the sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth in armed conflicts.

This month's Corporate Management Board (CMB) meeting followed the Armistice Day Service in Crewe on Wednesday (11 November).

CMB received an update on the Council's financial position, ahead of a quarterly report going to Cabinet later this month. Forecasting for second quarter of the financial year (Q2) shows a balanced position, which means we are doing what we said we would do, although this is still reliant on use of £24.995m in Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).

We are seeing additional pressures emerge during the year. For example, we are forecasting increased costs and demand for support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Our SEND Reform plan has recently been approved by government and sets out how we will address national reforms for SEND services and ensure that support for children and young people with SEND is sustainable for the future.

CMB also received a report on performance and the council's key performance indicators (KPIs), and discussed challenges shown by the KPIs – including areas like bin collections, complaints and FOI, and levels of staff sickness absence.

The agenda also included the Q2 risk update, which provides updates on the Strategic Risk Register and the draft Annual Governance Statement and Code of Corporate Governance which outline how the council makes decisions and how we and others hold the organisation to account.

CMB also heard about the Local Authority Research Practitioners programme which is funded by National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and places research practitioners in local authorities to increase research capacity and capability, and help develop a positive research culture. Emily Fay has joined our Public Health team through the programme. While primarily focused on public health and supporting prevention and early intervention priorities, the learning,

tools and resources developed through this work may have wider organisational value.

CMB also noted that the MJ Awards are now open for entries. Teams across Cheshire East deliver exceptional outcomes for residents, communities, businesses and partners every day. Recognition through awards provides an opportunity to celebrate innovation, dedication, leadership and the positive impact of our work. If you think you have an award-winning story to tell, search 'awards and recognition' on Centranet.

Recognition Week: Book your place now for our Celebrating Our Successes event!



Recognition Week is fast approaching, with celebrations taking place across the organisation from 7-11 December, culminating in a Celebrating Our Successes event on Thursday 10 December.

This is an opportunity for us all to take a moment to reflect on the achievements, dedication and positive impact that colleagues make every day. Whether it's delivering excellent services, supporting a teammate, overcoming challenges or achieving something new, Recognition Week is about celebrating people and accomplishments.

The event will showcase achievements from across the council and give colleagues the chance to come together and recognise what we've accomplished throughout the year. Places are limited, so make sure you book your place and don't miss out.

Book your place by searching 'Recognition' on Learning Lounge.

Don’t forget, you still have time to submit ‘What you’re most proud of this year’. Send a photo and a short sentence telling us what you're proud of to internalcomms@cheshireeast.gov.uk by Friday 27 November, quoting 'Proud' in the subject line.

Let's come together this Recognition Week to celebrate achievements, recognise one another and reflect on everything we've accomplished in 2026.

Embedding PDRs across our organisation



Nic Abbott, housing options manager, sees Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs) as the glue that holds her team together. “Through this process,” she says, “I get the stuff I need to do done, and they get what they need from me.”

This year, we’ve introduced a new approach to PDRs based on your feedback. Designed to be simpler and more meaningful, ‘A continuous conversation’ embeds goals, development planning, and feedback into regular 1-2-1 discussions with your line manager, making performance conversations a natural part of everyday work.

For Nic, PDRs don’t just benefit her direct reports – they’re a learning opportunity for everyone.

She explains: “We talk about their personal goals or interests to try to ensure they are getting what they need from work (and from me), but I also want to see that they are inspiring service development. That means asking questions like ‘what would you like to see change about the service’ or ‘what needs to be different for the job to work better for you’.

“It helps them to tell me what I need to do or what we might do together.”

The housing options team is a busy one, with residents always in need of their help and new cases coming in all the time. Still, her service will always make time to sit down together and talk through progress against their goals, with Nic describing them as a five-weekly staple. “It’s a recurring meeting that the team can rely on to have my undivided attention; if I have a clash I move it, but my time is booked out and we talk and pull up the PDR to check in on progress for bigger projects.”

The redesigned PDR process is already having a positive impact, she explains: “The new format has added some structure to the conversations, but left them free and open - which I think is a much freer-flowing way to work. I find it all very simple.

“They are a conversation and a catch-up, but also a good way of cascading service responsibilities and delegating targets. I have a strategy, targets and performance

drivers, which I pass on in bite-sized chunks for my team leaders to break down into individual tasks and activities for the front-line team."

For Nic, taking the time to complete a PDR with a staff member is never time wasted. "I have always seen 1-2-1s and PDRs as the day job," she explains. "I am a manager first and foremost, and if the team are working well, then the rest of my job is easier."

"I loved the meetings as a frontline manager, and I still love them now as a senior manager.

"My team are an extension of me. We don't always agree in our PDR meetings and they'll challenge my decision-making, but that just makes for more rounded service delivery and a more robust outcome."

You may already have had a mid-year check in with your manager to review progress against your goals. If not, please arrange some time together to discuss how things are going and whether any goals or development plans need updating.

Learn more by searching 'PDR' on Centranet.

More news

Still time to book for our men's wellbeing webinar



During the Men's Wellbeing Survey earlier this year, many of you told us you'd welcome more support and opportunities to improve your health and wellbeing.

In response, we're partnering with ChangingMen to deliver a dedicated session for male colleagues.

- **Date**: Thursday 19 November, International Men's Day
- **Time**: 11am-12.30pm
- **Where**: Online

The session will be led by Mark Spencer, founder of ChangingMen, who is passionate about helping men make realistic, sustainable changes to improve their health and wellbeing.

Book your place by scanning the QR code below, or go to https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/11d875c2-8bf8-4eaa-84a1-c7867333eedd@cdb92d10-23cb-4ac1-a9b3-34f4faaa2851

Office moves at Delamere House



Thank you to everyone who has supported the ongoing office moves at Delamere House. This has been a significant undertaking - the estates team is currently reviewing all outstanding issues and is working through them as quickly as possible.

If you are aware of any issues that have not yet been reported, please email Vicki.Godfrey@cheshireeast.gov.uk, who will ensure they are logged and reviewed. Please do not contact the building support officers regarding space reallocation issues at this stage.

We would also appreciate your support in ensuring any empty relocation crates are emptied and made available for collection and return to the hire company.

Highways team recognised for reducing carbon emissions



Cheshire East Highways has been recognised as one of the country's leading highway authorities for managing and reducing carbon emissions.

The service achieved an 'excellent' rating in the ADEPT Carbon Leadership Programme, which is funded by the Department for Transport. They scored 76 out of 100 – well above the average for similar councils and the highest score achieved nationally among participating authorities.

The assessment recognised strong leadership, partnership working and progress in reducing carbon across the highways service.

It also highlighted the main sources of highways emissions, including construction, premises and sites, and resurfacing, helping to identify where future improvements can make the biggest difference.

The achievement reflects the hard work and collaboration of teams across the council and the highways service, Ringway Jacobs and the wider supply chain.

Looking ahead, the focus will be on building on this success, including improving energy efficiency, making better use of fleet and plant, exploring alternative fuels and EV infrastructure, and continuing to make carbon reduction part of future planning and decision-making

Congratulations to all involved!

Temporary closure of the print unit



The print unit at Macclesfield Town Hall will be temporarily closed on Friday 13 and Monday 16 November to allow for the installation of new print devices and associated staff training.

If you have an urgent requirement or are concerned that the temporary closure may affect an existing print job, please contact paul.doorbar@cheshireeast.gov.uk to discuss your order.

Anne's innovative data project earns national award shortlist



Today, good data is more important than ever for guiding our decision-making. When budgets are tight and we're all focused on delivering the best possible services with limited resources, data helps us identify efficiencies, improve services and make informed decisions.

Senior Communications Officer Anne Grace has been recognised by the Local Government Chronicle as an 'Inspiring Woman in Local Government' for her innovative use of data.

She is shortlisted in the digital and data innovator of the year category, which celebrates the women using data to change the way local government works.

For the past seven months, Anne has been studying for an apprenticeship in data and insights for business decisions – it's part of the data academy that we announced at the start of the year. Alongside her day-to-day role, Anne has spent around six hours each week developing her skills by applying her learning to real projects using the team's communications and media data.

Transforming our media monitoring processes

"I recognised a challenge within our media monitoring and evaluation processes," she explains. Each day, the team manually logged the council's media coverage in a spreadsheet using information gathered from multiple Google Alerts searches. This created a risk of inconsistent data entry, while the volume of alert emails meant coverage could sometimes be duplicated or missed.

"The information was difficult to analyse consistently," Anne remembers, "and it was being used primarily as a record of coverage rather than a source of meaningful insight.

"Through my apprenticeship, I saw an opportunity to modernise the way we collect, manage and use media intelligence."

Anne worked closely with the council's media monitoring service, Orlo, to improve the data that was coming in – based on the team's needs rather than just the way things had always been done.

Once that data arrives each morning, her colleagues now have an automated process to transform a raw CSV file into usable data that's ready to be added to their larger reporting.

An interactive dashboard built in Power BI, Microsoft's data visualisation software, enables them to monitor media coverage, reach and sentiment in real time. They can identify trends and understand performance thanks to a user-friendly interface that works just as well for colleagues who are less comfortable with spreadsheets.

Today, communications business partners use the dashboard to provide timely media and communications updates directly to senior leaders, giving them a clearer picture of emerging issues, trends and public sentiment. Anne says: "This is a shift from simply collecting media coverage, to actively using data and insight to support communications planning, reputation management and organisational decision-making."

Learning valuable lessons

Anne's apprenticeship has given her new technical skills in data analysis and visualisation, but she says the biggest lessons have been around collaboration and leading change.

"A key part of the project's success has been bringing colleagues with me throughout the journey," Anne says. Collaboration was crucial, and Anne was careful to constantly demonstrate the practical benefits and to make the transition as simple as possible – and it paid off: "Even colleagues who were initially sceptical now recognise the process is quicker, easier and more useful."

For Anne, a greater understanding of data has proved massively useful in her role. However, it's a long way from the usual communications skillset: "One of the biggest challenges I faced was stepping outside my professional comfort zone and into a technical field beyond my traditional communications expertise.

"At 46, I challenged my own assumptions about apprenticeships and lifelong learning. Balancing a demanding role with a technical apprenticeship required resilience, commitment and a willingness to learn from mistakes."

Congratulations, Anne

Anne’s Anne’s line manager, Lauren Kelly, added:

"I'm so proud of Anne being shortlisted for this award because it is so well deserved. She's pushed herself to learn completely new skills, challenged some of the ways we've always done things and turned that learning into practical improvements that benefit not only our team, but the wider organisation too. The new processes are already saving time, helping us make better use of data and providing richer insights to support decision-making. Throughout it all, she's brought colleagues with her every step of the way."

It’s a huge achievement to be shortlisted for a national honour like this one. The winners will be revealed on Wednesday 2 December at a ceremony in London. Good luck, Anne!

Unit4 update: New contract ID field coming

A new contract ID field will be added to the Unit4 requisition form from next week. When raising a requisition against a contract that is recorded on the council's contract register (Atamis), please enter the relevant Atamis Contract ID in this field.

Capturing this information will help improve our reporting and understanding of spend against contracts, supporting more effective contract and procurement management.

Find out more by searching 'Unit4' on Centranet.

Celebrating our care leavers during National Care Leavers Month



Throughout November we're celebrating the successes of our care leavers and giving back with a series of fun and informative events.

To gain insight into their experiences, we spoke to care leaver ambassadors Cristal and Demi. They shared their proudest achievements, trials and successes, now that they've become apprentices in our youth support service.

Find out how you can offer work experience opportunities to our care leavers in next week's Team Voice.

To watch the videos, search 'care leavers' on Centranet.

Cheshire Pension Fund webinars

Safe Haven scheme recognised with national award



Louise Mitchell, pictured third left, holding award with colleagues from Derby City Council and representatives of the judging panel

Congratulations to colleagues involved in the safe haven pilot project, delivered in partnership with Derby City Council, which has received a Department for Transport Special Recognition Award. It aims to improve safety outside schools by tackling unsafe parking and encouraging better driver behaviour through targeted enforcement.

The award recognises the innovative partnership approach behind the project. Judges praised its role in 'rethinking the school run' by helping to create safer environments around school gates. An independent review found a significant reduction in contraventions across the pilot sites, helping to create safer environments for school communities.

This is a great achievement for everyone involved – particularly the parking team – and a fantastic example of partnership working making a real difference. Well done everyone!

Enabling Communities Grants Programme opens for 2026/27



We're pleased to announce the launch of the Enabling Communities Grants Programme 2026/27, providing funding opportunities for community organisations that are helping residents stay well, build resilience and thrive within their local neighbourhoods.

The programme forms part of our wider Healthy Neighbourhoods approach, strengthening community support and ensuring residents can access the right help, at the right time, in the right place.

This year's programme includes three funding opportunities:

Healthy Neighbourhoods: Stay Well, Live Well Fund

- Funded by the Better Care Fund, Integrated Care Board
- Providing grants of up to £10,000 supporting community-led projects that respond to local Care Community priorities, improve health and wellbeing, and help people remain independent for longer.

Healthy Neighbourhoods: Community Resilience Fund

- Funded by the UK Government Crisis Resilience Fund
- Providing grants of up to £20,000 supporting initiatives that help residents move from crisis to resilience through financial wellbeing, skills development, digital inclusion, and stronger community connections.

Healthy Neighbourhoods: Connected Communities Centres Fund

- Funded by the UK Government Crisis Resilience Fund
- Providing grants of £2,500 and £7,500 investing in trusted local venues providing access to information, advice, activities, and wider support opportunities.

Together, these funds will support a network of local organisations working to reduce inequalities, strengthen communities and improve outcomes for residents across Cheshire East.

The Enabling Communities Grants Programme builds on the success of previous community investment across Cheshire East. Through last year's grant programmes, local organisations have delivered a wide range of initiatives supporting residents to improve their wellbeing, reduce social isolation, access financial and practical support, develop new skills and strengthen connections within their communities.

The impact of these projects demonstrates the important role that community organisations play in helping residents stay well, remain independent and access support before challenges reach crisis point.

Take part in an evaluation panel

We're looking for colleagues from across the council who would be interested in supporting the grants programme by taking part in the evaluation panels.

Panel members will have the opportunity to review applications, contribute to funding recommendations discussions, and help ensure investment is targeted towards initiatives that will make the biggest difference to local communities.

Taking part is a great opportunity to:

- Learn more about community activity across Cheshire East

- Work alongside colleagues and partners from different services
- Support the delivery of our Healthy Neighbourhoods vision

No grants experience is required, and support and guidance will be provided.

If you would like to express an interest in joining a grant evaluation panel, please contact communitygrants2@cheshireeast.gov.uk

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Don't miss out on this staff benefit

Did you know there's a whole range of staff benefits available to help you save money, support your wellbeing and make the most of your employment with Cheshire East Council?

From discounts on everyday shopping and leisure activities to salary sacrifice schemes and wellbeing support, there are lots of benefits available through the Vivup staff benefits page. With Christmas approaching, now could be the perfect time to take a fresh look and see what's on offer.

One benefit that many colleagues tell us they're surprised to discover is Vivup Lifestyle Savings - a platform offering discounts on hundreds of popular retailers, supermarkets, restaurants, entertainment providers and more.

How it works

The process is simple.

- Sign in to Vivup and search for the retailer you want to shop with.
- Buy a discounted e-gift card or access an available discount code.
- Use it when shopping online or in store.
- Enjoy the savings.

Depending on the retailer and offer available, you could typically save up to 6% or more on your purchases. That might not sound much at first, but the savings can quickly add up when you're buying Christmas presents, food, decorations or treating the family to festive days out.

For example:

- Spend £100 at a retailer offering a 5% discount and you save £5.
- Spend £500 across Christmas shopping and a typical 5% saving could put £25 back in your pocket.
- Some supermarket offers can provide savings of between 4% and 7% on everyday grocery spending.

Lifestyle Savings isn't just for the festive season. The platform includes discounts on:

- Supermarkets
- High street and online retailers
- Eating in and dining out
- Entertainment and cinema tickets
- Health and fitness
- Travel and days out

There is no limit to the number of offers you can use, and purchases are made using your own payment card, so they do not affect any salary sacrifice arrangements you may already have in place.

Digital services (ICT) news and tips

Make every Copilot prompt count

To help you make the most of your Copilot prompts, we'll be sharing tips over the next few weeks.



Tip of the Week: Remember GCSE

🎯 **Goal:** What do you want Copilot to do?

💬 **Context:** Why do you need it and who is it for?

📎 **Source:** What information should Copilot use?

✅ **Expectation:** How would you like the answer presented?

Find out more by searching 'Copilot prompt' on Lighthouse.

Changes to Windows Run and Command Prompt



As part of ongoing security improvements, Windows Run (Windows key + R) and Command Prompt (CMD) are being disabled on council devices.

Most colleagues don't need to take any action and are unlikely to notice the change. If you currently use Windows Run or Command Prompt, visit Lighthouse to find out what alternatives are available. Search 'Windows Run'.

Other staff news

Volunteering experience inspires charity challenge for Seb



When Seb Delorme from our carbon team volunteered in Nepal in 2019, he made friendships that have stayed with him ever since. Now, after devastating floods swept through parts of the country, he is taking on a major fundraising challenge to help those affected.

In May, Seb and a group of friends will tackle the Lakes 3000 challenge, trekking 78km across the Lake District and climbing a combined 4,400 metres over the first May Bank Holiday weekend. They are raising money for the Britain-Nepal Charitable Trust, which is supporting survivors of the floods.

Seb recently held a charity bake sale at the council and would like to thank everyone who donated.

The fundraiser has a personal connection. During his time volunteering in Nepal, Seb worked alongside Nirajan Dangol, whose childhood village of Betrawati was one of dozens of settlements devastated by the floods.

The impact on local communities has been immense. Homes, schools and livelihoods were destroyed, with many families losing everything in a matter of minutes. Personal accounts from residents describe entire neighbourhoods being swept away and communities forced to rebuild from scratch.

Seb said: "I was lucky enough to spend time volunteering in Nepal in 2019 and made some great friends there. One of those friends, Nirajan, saw his childhood village devastated by the floods. Taking on this challenge is a small way of helping communities recover and supporting the important work being carried out by the Britain-Nepal Charitable Trust."

If you'd like to support Seb's fundraising efforts, donations can be made through his JustGiving page. Every contribution will help support people and communities affected by the disaster.

Seb would be extremely grateful for any contribution to help him reach his fundraising target. You can donate by scanning the QR code below or by going to https://www.justgiving.com/page/lakes3000-4-nepal

Celebrating Diwali with colleagues



On Monday, 9 November, HR Assistant Ruchira Sharma marked Diwali by coming to the office in traditional dress and sharing some delicious food.

Ruchira treated her colleagues to gulaab jamun with vanilla ice-cream, besan and motichoor laddoo (made of graham flour and dried fruits) and gram flour crackers made with fenugreek.

Diwali is the festival of lights, associated with the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. Diwali always falls sometime between October and November, but the exact date varies each year as the Hindu calendar is based on the Moon.

Thank you, Ruchira!

Get in touch

We'd love to hear from you!

If you have a story, any team news, or an update you'd like to share, we'd love to hear from you.

Email: internalcomms@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Was everything in this issue clear?

If you have any questions or if there's something we could explain better, just let us know.

Get in touch at: internalcomms@cheshireeast.gov.uk



Don't forget, you can also follow us on social media

Beyond your regular Team Voice newsletter, you can keep up to date with our news and updates on social media - particularly useful if you're also a Cheshire East resident.



You can follow us on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and TikTok.

We'll see you there!

Drive | Integrity | Respect | Collaboration

Enabling prosperity and wellbeing for all

Cheshire East Council