

Report Purpose:

To update Councillors on the progress of Cheshire East Council's Local Service Delivery Programme, the work of the Local Service Delivery Task & Finish Group, and opportunities for Macclesfield Town Council to participate in the phased transfer of local services and assets.

Author

Town Clerk

Background

Cheshire East Council has established a Local Service Delivery Task & Finish Group to develop a structured programme for the transfer of selected services and assets to town and parish councils. Its objectives are seeking to increase the role of local councils in delivering community services where this can improve local outcomes and provide better value for money.

The Task & Finish Group is a partnership comprising Cheshire East officers, elected Members, representatives from town and parish councils and the Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC). Its remit extends beyond identifying potential transfers and includes developing the governance, policies, resources and implementation arrangements required to make future transfers successful.

The Group has been tasked with considering:

- governance and stakeholder engagement;
- lessons learned from previous asset and service transfers;
- resource requirements for both Cheshire East Council and local councils;
- policy and procedural frameworks;
- annual transfer programmes aligned with budget setting;
- opportunities for early service and asset transfers during 2026/27;
- risks and best value considerations;
- collaborative delivery through consortia;
- business models led by larger town councils; and
- hybrid, phased and shared service delivery models.

A final set of recommendations will be produced for Cheshire East Council's Portfolio Holder(s) following completion of the Task & Finish Group.

Hybrid Delivery Model

During discussions within the Task & Finish Group, the Town Clerk has promoted the adoption of a hybrid delivery model. The inclusion of hybrid and phased delivery models within the formal objectives of the Task & Finish Group represents a positive development and provides greater flexibility.

Early Opportunities ("Quick Wins")

The Task & Finish Group is keen to demonstrate early progress by identifying projects that can be delivered during 2026/27.

Town and parish clerks were therefore invited to identify potential "quick win" opportunities within their areas.

Park Hub

Macclesfield Town Council has proposed the development of the Park Hub at South Park, a concept reported at last Full Council. A proposal has been submitted to Cheshire East Council and the Town Clerk has met with officers from Parks and Grounds, who have expressed strong support for the concept.

Consistent with previous reports to Council, the proposed delivery model would involve:

- Macclesfield Town Council funding the capital works;
- Cheshire East Council leading project delivery; and
- a joint project team being established from the outset, comprising Members and officers from both councils together with representatives from Parks, Assets, Legal and other relevant services.

This collaborative approach provides an opportunity to demonstrate how both authorities can work together to deliver improved local services through partnership.

Community Centre

Macclesfield Community Centre is currently operated by Cheshire East Council. We know that the Council has experienced ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining reliable staff to manage the day-to-day operation of the facility, which has affected its ability to maximise the use of this valuable community asset.

As a result, very preliminary discussions have taken place between Officers of Cheshire East Council and Macclesfield Town Council to explore whether the Town Council could support the operation of the Community Centre through a partnership arrangement.

At this early stage, the proposal would see Macclesfield Town Council undertaking the administrative and community-facing functions of the centre, including:

- Managing bookings and enquiries.
- Advertising and promoting the venue.
- Raising invoices and administering bookings.
- Developing greater community use of the facility.
- Supporting community groups and increasing engagement with the centre.

Cheshire East Council would continue to be responsible for the building itself, including facilities management, maintenance, repairs and statutory compliance.

In return, the Town Council could potentially secure office or operational space within the building, which may provide a suitable base for the Ranger Service and other Town Council activities. The arrangement would also present an opportunity for the Town Council to play a greater role in ensuring that this important community facility is well promoted, well used and better integrated into the life of the town.

At this stage, no detailed proposals have been agreed. Matters such as the allocation of income, operating costs, responsibilities, liabilities and the terms of any partnership agreement would need to be negotiated and brought back to Council for consideration before any commitment is made.

Outstanding Transfers

Historically these transfers are also outstanding from 2016

Brookfields Lane Allotments

- Transfer from CEC to MTC pending.
- No obstacles identified; awaiting action from CEC legal department.

South Park Allotments

- Initially transferred to Peaks and Plains by mistake.
- Need to be transferred back to CEC, then properly transferred to MTC.

Laburnum Road Allotments

- Transferred with 3 garages in 2016, which should not have been included.
- CEC was supposed to reverse garage transfer in 2021 but has not yet done so.
- CEC Assets and Legal Departments are aware.
- MTC has requested urgent action to ensure garages are correctly transferred in Feb 26.

Next Steps

The establishment of the Task & Finish Group demonstrates Cheshire East Council's commitment to developing a more structured approach to local service delivery.

Macclesfield Town Council is well positioned to play a leading role within this programme by bringing forward practical proposals that demonstrate how local services can be delivered effectively through partnership.

The Council's proactive approach, particularly through the promotion of hybrid delivery models and the South Park Parks Hub proposal, places it at the forefront of discussions across Cheshire East.

Further reports will be brought to Council as the Task & Finish Group develops its recommendations and individual projects progress.

Recommendations

Council is recommended to:

1. To note the progress of the Cheshire East Council Local Service Delivery Programme.
2. To endorse and support the continued development of the South Park, Park Hub as Macclesfield Town Council's identified early delivery project.
3. To authorise the Town Clerk to continue discussions with CEC to explore a potential partnership for the management of Macclesfield Community Centre.
4. To note the ongoing work regarding allotment transfers and other potential service transfer opportunities.