

## APPENDIX B

### Comments from consultation survey, placed into Core Value (some issues overlap)

A Town to Live In	
	Making Neston safer by campaigning to reduce speeds on the most dangerous roads (i.e., the A540)
	Bring back a post office in Neston itself, the unused Sainsbury's cafe is a perfect venue. Don't lose sight of the surrounding villages Bring back local accessible post offices; not everyone can get to Little Neston.
	More Police presence. We need a post office.
	Suggest that expectations are way ahead of what the TC can deliver. 1. It gives out grants, 2. Runs the Town Hall and the Allotments and that is about it. Everything else had no substance and no funding to assist. Not on questionnaire- transport. Retain and improve the 488 and 22 bus serviced, and try and get better train coverage in terms of frequency of trains and a full timetable, Lobbying for maintenance of bus service from Ness and electrification of train to Liverpool.
	Would like to see rail links directly to Liverpool and Chester. This would help young people travelling to work etc and bring growth into the town. Have a bus service like Wirral, making Wirral more accessible. We have always gravitated towards Wirral rather than Cheshire for things.
	There really should be a post office in a town the size of Neston. The little Neston site is basically a retail shop with a post office counter and that is not good enough. I think many Newtonians feel the same
	No mention of our missing post office! Older residents are unable to walk for 1/2 hr to get to little Neston - many towns smaller than us still have post office services. I had a part time eBay business. I had to close through lack of these facilities.
	To improve public transport and social housing. Better transport links to Liverpool & Manchester
	A more visible Police presence, possibly in a more "traditional" uniform to help with our community spirit.
	Ensure good communication between the Council and residents. Follow through with plans.
	Connectivity - promote sustainable connectivity for Neston. Currently Neston is poorly served by public transport (compared with other communities nearby in CWaC and WBC) with an infrequent and unreliable train service and bus services which cease to operate evening and weekends.
	I do not see a policeman. I see the cars. What are they up to? What would be the cost of running the Law Court and Police Station that we had? You have saved a lot of money, but spent it on?
	<p>Speeding Traffic with no concern for Speed Limits. Irresponsible vehicle parking especially outside the Plumbers Merchants in Hinderton Road, Vehicle parking on footpaths with no regard for pedestrians and double yellow line parking restrictions.</p> <p>When will the concrete bollards be removed from outside the Elephant Bank - it will be a permanent fixture if no action taken.</p> <p>No more Coffee Shops.</p> <p>WE NEED A POST OFFICE. Sainsbury's have really 'messed up' Neston and finished off all the local 'produce' businesses. NO MORE RESTAURANTS OR EATERIES.</p> <p>KEEP Neston clean and tidy, the Pigeon poo on the pavement outside the Fish and Chip Shop, in the High Street, is a disgrace which in wet conditions gets 'walked' onto the shop floor.</p> <p>ENCOURAGE DRIVERS OF MOTOR VEHICLES TO USE THE CAR PARKS&gt; A GOOD DOSE OF PARKING TICKETING MIGHT GET THE MESSAGE HOME !!!!</p>
	Dangerous and obstruction car parking continues to grow. Why oh why can't local employment cater for parking enforcement operatives, whose salaries will be largely funded by the fines they impose!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
	Support enhancement of transport, especially the direct rail link to Liverpool
	Provide traffic calming rumble strips at key points through town centre and up to traffic lights on Liverpool Road at junction with Millfield. Especially at entrance to railway bridge (both directions) on Liverpool Road. Paint white lines across the 4 crossing points at the Cross junction. This will make traffic slow down and help pedestrians to cross safely.
	Improve transport links. Encourage new independent ent. businesses, support / add infrastructure e.g., GP Surgeries if adding housing.
	Work on a Community Led Housing Project and is working with partners to implement a Community Land Trust to, amongst other things, take forward the development of locally affordable housing. Both Neston Angels and Ellesmere Port and Neston Community Transport, along with others, deliver befriending and community transport solutions.

	As specialists already in this field collaborating with the council on this priority would be advantageous and could make best use of resource and expertise.
	<p>A parish council, such as the Town Council has no business interfering in law enforcement, other than to see that representations are made when there are failings on the part of the relevant authorities. Other than securing the Council's assets it is difficult to see what benefit it can give to the community.</p> <p>The Council has done nothing effective to ensure an adequate police presence in the town.</p> <p>The comment about connectivity between neighbourhoods is simple waffle. If they are neighbourhoods, they are self-evidently connected.</p> <p>It is no business of the Town Council to lecture people to "live a healthy lifestyle." This is a good example of the Nanny State at Work.</p> <p>A Town Emergency Plan should already be in existence and, in any event, is the duty of Cheshire West &amp; Chester Council. The Town Council is simply interfering in matters that should not concern it, possibly hindering those who are properly charged with this duty.</p>

<b>A Town to Work In</b>	
	Having a post office in one of the shops to replace the main post office after closure. Many business people cannot get to the post office in Little Neston. The roads need to be repaired, or re-surfaced, as it is difficult for disabled people to walk across a road which is full of holes. Attention to cleanliness in the centre of Neston. Also, all weeds and rubbish to be removed from the roads, in the centre of Neston.
	Build town centre to be more appealing inc filling empty shops/Getting rid of concrete planters would enhance centre/develop market with a more attractive appearance and more vendors to entice. No parking warden on a Friday
	I think it would be helpful if there was more focus, marketing and awareness of all the businesses on the Clayhill. So many people don't know what is on the estate and how many great local businesses there are that could really do with more support.
	The overall presentation of Neston as a brand is very weak indeed and there is little positive promotion of the town.
	You can work with university of business on apprenticeship opportunities at Leahurst campus. You can ask the uni for number of staff as a % who work at Leahurst with a ch64 postcode. Lots of staff live local. Lots of job vacancies at Leahurst e.g., technical and manual staff cleaners etc are hard to recruit to. You could partner with Leahurst for farm apprenticeships, technical and admin working with Neston high to give work experience and link in for career opportunities. Vet student numbers are increasing. Investment in the campus is in £M's planned capital investment.
	Britain in bloom Community sharing of surplus fruit and vegetable produce e.g., apples etc Use of market space for other events when not in use for the market.
	I have lived in Neston for 16 years and there are some shop fronts on the high street that need great improvement. What measures do the council take to improve the High Street or encourage new business? The only differing shop, John Evans (shoes) has now gone. There isn't much left to attract people to shop and spend in Neston Streets. Charity and coffee shops and hair / nail salons are all that seem to be left. Difficult I know under the current economic climate.
	Public transport for Neston and particularly Parkgate MUST be improved if we are going to reduce reliance on our own cars. It's impossible to go to theatre in the evening to Chester or Liverpool without driving to Hooton. The parking and speeding situation in Parkgate Parade must be enforced.
	I have found that both the multi car park and the Sainsbury 'Town Square' to be very poorly maintained and this can't give Neston a good impression.
	Engage with owners/landlords of empty business premises. Encourage appropriate use of empty shops.
	<p>Establishing a Visitor or Tourist Information Centre is one of the aims set out in both the Neighbourhood and Economic Plans authored, commissioned or owned by the Town Council but seems to have stalled more recently. As a priority stated by the community, NCYC continue to support this.</p> <p>Whilst the Economic Plan calls for the establishment of a governance structure to deliver on many of the outcomes. The ambition of having a Business Improvement District in Neston a huge undertaking. A Business Improvement District is funded by way of a Levy on Business Rate payers. Not only does there appear to be too few of these in the town, the idea that whilst dealing with Brexit, the impact of Covid-19, the current fuel, economic and geopolitical crises, that there is any appetite for this. Perhaps consulting with local businesses would be advantageous?</p>

	<p>We support the ambition of ensuring the development of Neston is planned and delivered in a strategic and holistic manner, we would add that we believe this should be community led, engaging local people in the decision making.</p>
	<p>The town centre is depressing. A walk around recently revealed twelve empty retail premises, plus the Lodestar public house, that has been vacant for a number of years. Some of the empty shops have similarly been empty for years. A shoe repairer has recently closed. There is no post office. The Town Council has supported for some years a "Neston Looking Better Group". It has been singularly unsuccessful.</p> <p>The Town Hall could accurately be described as "Neston's Bad Luck". It is a gloomy and ill maintained building with ferns and brambles growing from the gutters and brickwork. If it were to be demolished the space created could be added to the Market Square, much improving the environment. There is ample vacant space in Neston centre to accommodate the displaced businesses. The Town Council, if it is retained in its present form, could easily relocate to the former Lodestar. The police occupation of rooms in the Town Hall provides no particular benefit to the people of Neston.</p> <p>There is no empirical evidence of outsiders visiting Neston in any appreciable numbers for shopping. The approach to Neston by train is unpleasant for those using the subway at Neston Station. In a misguided decision some years ago the Town Council funded the painting of a mural on both sides. This is now affected by damp and is peeling away. Furthermore, the idea of a mural is to be able to stand back to get an overall view. This is impossible in such a confined space.</p> <p>It is wrong to claim that Neston is a town "on the up". The reverse is the case. As an example of this is the closure of the Post Office, formerly situated in the Town Hall itself. Despite the efforts of Mr Justin Madders MP and concerned local residents, including media appearances, it is clear now that the Post Office Corporation have no intention to re-open it. The Town Council's role in this has been minimal. It has not "proactively (worked) with partners to encourage inward investment" in this instant.</p> <p>The draft strategy makes no mention of the almost total withdrawal of banking services in the town. The Town Council's attempts to prevent this were totally ineffectual.</p> <p>It has failed to improve transport links with the town.</p> <p>Cheshire West &amp; Chester pay little heed to the views of the Town Council. Recently there have been installations into the street scene provided by CW&amp;C that can legitimately be described as useless eyesores, where there was no consultation at all by the Unitary Council of the Town Council.</p>

<b>A Town to Enjoy</b>	
	A Friday – not very encouraging to visit/clean streets – the market area is filthy
	When I visited I thought that the square in the centre was grubby and not welcoming and the town hall looked tired.
	I have found that both the multi car park and the Sainsbury 'Town Square' to be very poorly maintained and this can't give Neston a good impression.
	All the questions about heritage and history are important. Yet, we have temporary barriers and tarmac on curbs for a SINGLE business so they can use the public footpath for their own selfish needs whilst the historical cross looks like roadworks. The business was granted temporary use of the footpath for social distancing. Still, since the restrictions have been removed, they and councillors for Neston have been trying to keep the roadworks permanent. This is a conflict of interests if the council is looking to keep our heritage and history intact. It seems hypocritical of the council to push that agenda whilst overriding it for their mate's business. Restore the cross if you really want to keep heritage otherwise don't waste money on something you are not willing to back.
	In the environmental category there is a particular issue with the Neston sewage works spewing sewage into the river Dee – this has to stop!
	Ensuring continued access to green spaces, preserve public footpaths, Including the marsh/ estuary
	Ensuring that wherever there is proposed housing development, that there is sufficient infrastructure in place to support this
	I believe the listed Mostyn House school chapel is going to be converted to yet more housing, it's a shame there is no funding to preserve it or better still turn it in to an arts venue
	Ensure Parkgate Parade wall is kept weed free and growth cut back and removed to prevent it becoming straw and fire risk. Also allowing seeds to implant into wall and grow will damage wall. One side of Parkgate parade

	wall maintained better than the second part all the wall needs attention. Boat slip ways to cleared. Badly overgrown.
	Protect the vitally important local SSSI's and wildlife sites, don't allow building which will impact on our vital green spaces. South using/Cheshire is a wonderful green space, there is a huge danger that creeping development will leave only small islands of wild nature. This is so important for all our wellbeing and large corporations will push for building opportunities and succeed on the basis of saying they will provide local housing and work. Often the actual truth is that it's just a massive profit for them and a huge impact on our environment. There are many brown field sites which could be used first.
	You have pretty much covered most things. However, as a regular walker around Neston (and being so close to the unique marshland we have), I have noticed so much more litter being discarded now, including the odd fly tip. It's so sad watching a marsh harrier flying over discarded plastic and bottles by the Neston reedbeds. I know it's just the way it is now due to lack of education, ignorance and lack of respect, but I thought I would like to highlight this. I know there's no easy solution, but educating kids at the local primary schools could be a start (if they don't already). Thanks.
	Post office would be good, a heron freezer shop, a gusto Italian restaurant, a McDonald's restaurant, an ice rink+a lido swimming baths in Parkgate, +control of are side of river deep with boundary back in the middle of estuary, thanks
	With regard to planning permissions, a determined effort by all local Politian's to press for greater local powers to help development that will benefit our local community and not just that of property developers.
	<p>The Plan seriously undervalues the role of the council in promoting walking and cycling for local trips in our community. The fact it is listed as a leisure activity while free car parking is perceived as good for business is backwards and contrary to evidence seen across the country. Neston and Parkgate is a small community where most trips can be walked and cycled. The town council should work with CW&amp;C to strongly promote walking and cycling for everyday utility trips by actively looking to disincentive car travel in the town centre, through parking charges and restrictions to motor traffic. Failing to do this means the council will fail to deliver on aspirations to combat climate change, air quality, obesity/health, access to opportunities and services and improving the look and feel of our town.</p> <p>Walkers and cyclists tend to shop more locally, spend more money (by making more regular trips to shops) and don't cause road deaths, pollution and noise. Incentivise this over filling our town centre with ever more cars!</p>
	Support enhancements and extension of the footpath network.
	Need to build trust (I have none) Heritage: replace historic building with yellow cube. Wreck the High Street businesses and market square with Sainsbury's project. Squander money on ice sculptures.
	Greenfields Drive is not an ind. Estate, delivery cowboy companies with no safety in mind, Hermes DPD Amazon other vehicles with no details on Fast Food sorting parcels across drive. Teenagers Adults riding bikes on pavements – no consideration.
	<p>Promoting the improvement of the Public Spaces, addressing climate change issues and protecting the local environment and heritage. Improved leisure assets and development of arts and culture provision. However, the majority of this section of the strategy is devoted to a description of the natural assets in the area and little about the climate change challenges we face. There is a reference to air quality which is clearly an issue linked to climate change through for example traffic emissions from through traffic and congestion, this is then dismissed as an issue as there have been no exceedances of NO2and PM10 'from the one monitoring station' which is on the outskirts of the town.</p> <p><b><del>Proposed actions (Our comments are set out below any of the actions relevant to our group):</del></b>  <b>Actions: Contribute to the protection and enhancement our local environment and public spaces:</b></p> <p>Adopt an Environmental and Sustainability Policy to support locally the climate change initiative which is so important to our residents.</p> <p><i>How do you know climate change is important to residents, have you asked them? If you have you may find a range of views about what climate change is and what can be done about it? But it would give you a much stronger mandate.</i></p> <p>Work with our communities and local groups to develop progressive local solutions in response to the climate and ecological crisis.</p> <p><i>A number of groups already exist trying to affect change e.g.; Neston Earth Group and Fair-Trade Neston. It would be more effective to support these groups than to set up new ones.</i></p>

	<p>Improve our Town environment by ensuring the public spaces are clean, accessible and litter free, and to this end, introduce a Ranger service.</p> <p><i>We would like to hear more about this proposal not least how it will be funded and their scope of work.</i></p> <p>Work with partners to improve signage and interpretation. Seek to preserve and enhance the Town's biodiversity through supporting the retention, creation, and improvement of water and green infrastructure networks. Work with stakeholders to develop proposals for Environmental improvement corridors.</p> <p><i>These are huge undertakings, whom have you engaged with to develop these proposals?</i></p> <p>Act as an advocate and gateway to other agencies in order to resolve nuisance complaints. Undertake an Environmental Audit to determine the effect of the Council's activities and measure its carbon footprint as a simple benchmark against which to monitor future progress.</p> <p><i>Great idea</i></p> <p>Support the CWaC Local Plan Strategic Policies regarding retention of the existing Green Belt. Lobby to promote sustainable new development and conversions.</p> <p><i>Does the council have any powers or indeed influence over new developments and conversions?</i></p> <p><b>Protect and enhance our heritage:</b></p> <p>Support the continuance of significant public events.</p> <p>Work to ensure Neston's heritage is recorded and made accessible to all. Look to develop more online content on our website that captures the Town's look, memories, and history.</p> <p>Explore with partners the concept of a "virtual" museum for Neston. It could be in several linked locations, extending the Town trails. It would provide access to the natural, built, cultural and industrial heritage of the Town.</p> <p>Support reviews and maintenance of the conservation areas and both listed buildings and buildings on a local list and list on the website.</p> <p>Use the planning system to preserve green open spaces and sightlines to key features.</p> <p>A commitment to protecting nature and supporting natural regeneration would be helpful here Look to implement a local Blue Plaque Scheme for Neston.</p> <p>It doesn't give you an option to pick 2 in first question. It doesn't mention keeping grass areas etc tidy, either side of bridge in church Lane is over grown and will soon be a hazard, as with other areas. Improve tip opening times to prevent fly tipping. Have a facility to consult with members at the council for Orr planning instead of a fee being charged just to ask when a commercial property. Improve parking. Stop putting traffic wardens on a Friday when people are visiting the town, they end up with a ticket if outside the library. Consider a park and ride from Neston to Parkgate or consider a larger parking area at the bottom of parks field to alleviate traffic from Wood Lane and Parkgate front.</p> <p>Recognise the range of leisure and sporting assets and seek to add to them.</p> <p>Oppose new developments where recreation or sports facilities are lost unless equivalent provision is provided. Similar protection for natural resources such as trees would be helpful here.</p> <p>Support and promote the development of new sports and leisure facilities to meet the needs of the local and surrounding population. Work with partners and "friends of" groups to maintain and upgrade the various green-spaces in the town.</p> <p><i>Good idea</i></p> <p>Recognise the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and promote cycling and walking in the town, including helping to fund the updating of maps.</p>
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	<p><i>Good idea</i></p> <p>Support local sports and leisure organisations to expand and play a greater role in meeting the needs of the population. Work to maintain and enhance the provision of allotments in the Town.</p> <p><i>Good idea</i></p> <p>We hope these comments are helpful and look forward to seeing the revised strategy following your consultation.</p>
	<p>This first aim of ‘contributing to the protection and enhancement [sic] our local environment and public spaces’ would fit with the current work of the Town Council which we very much support. Regarding protecting and enhancing our heritage, we believe this is very important and warrants engagement with community providers. A number of the ideas are interesting, we would want to ensure they are representative of what people have already said they want.</p> <p>We would urge you to be more ambitious with ‘Developing Arts &amp; Culture’ continued support of significant public events speaks to sufficiency rather than ambition.</p> <p>At this consultation stage it is unclear what recognising the range of leisure and sporting assets means. We are curious to understand the rationale to develop Neston Cycle Town recognising that c. 6 years ago this was an aim, but wasn’t moved forward – understanding the change in position would be helpful.</p> <p>We fully support the Arts &amp; Culture statements and look forward to the wider consultation and funding agreement with providers to enable proper planning and opportunities for development and improved efficiency.</p>
	<p>Whilst Neston does have its attractions and green spaces within its boundaries, there is nothing that is particularly unique or special. The Parade at Parkgate has certain facilities, such as a fish and chip shop, ice-cream parlours, pubs and restaurants, the outlook across a large expanse of scrub land that has little aesthetic appeal. The traffic congestion and parking problems at busy times detract from the enjoyment of a visit.</p> <p>The pavements at Parkgate are frequently defiled by spilt drinks or ice-creams and fish and chip papers. The replacement of a cycle pump on the Parade was made by the.</p> <p>Town Council without making proper inquiries as to the need for such. This has led to a challenge to the Council's accounts. While the Council is gushingly supportive of the cycling lobby, it is less so of the needs of pedestrians. Little has been achieved to see that pavements are free of parked vehicles. It was only when prompted to deal with an egregious and dangerous repeated instance of this at Neston Cross did the Council take any action. Nothing was done about a similar blatant case over a lengthy period in Raby Road.</p>
	<p>I am very concerned about the climate emergency (global warming) and would like the Town Council to prioritise taking action to mitigate it please.</p>

<b>A Community with Pride</b>	
	<p>Actively seek to provide financial support/advice for families who might be affected by the current financial crises. Actively seek to promote/supplement out of school activities for children and young people, particularly from vulnerable families. Promote services for carers.</p>
	<p>Abandon following the Neighbourhood plan as it is now no longer relevant.</p>
	<p>Christmas lights in Parkgate which go lamppost to lamppost we had them for a few years and Christmas 2021, we didn't. Although we had a bigger tree - the Christmas lights on the lampposts look better. The infrastructure is there for them, please use them.</p>
	<p>The overall presentation of Neston as a brand is very weak indeed and there is little positive promotion of the town.</p>
	<p>Britain in bloom Community sharing of surplus fruit and vegetable produce e.g., apples etc Use of market space for other events when not in use for the market.</p>
	<p>The idea of a formal Neston Civic awards is not mentioned here and I feel we would benefit from such. To promote the amazing work that is undertaken in our range of voluntary (and paid) groups. Not ‘best kept allotment’ more ‘Civic Pride’ ‘Unsung hero’ or ‘inclusion champion’ and let the community vote, maybe online, in the town hall and our only community shop Some trophies (engraved glass) an evening in the Civic Hall for nominees, guests, dignitaries and press would keep our true community values shining bright at minimal cost. Please at least deliver some of your aims or the community will continue to think you ‘talk the talk’ but can’t ‘walk the walk’.</p>
	<p>Make links with local churches and encourage them to link-in with community events.</p>

	Promote what we already have, the market etc., as well as the historical events such as Ladies Day. And promote new 'days/weekends' for people to enjoy. Build the businesses back in the town centre including working with the post office to bring back that facility. MOST IMPORTANT = do everything we can to promote saving our environment and work against climate change. Encourage wildlife areas in garden, open spaces etc. Bring children, schools and organisations together, including the RSPB and Ness Gardens, as well as the local churches. We haven't much time! Look at short distance regular public transport to allow people not to take their cars into town - especially on market day. Important for older/disabled who can't walk as far. Think out of the box on environmental issues. Grants for insulation and air source heat pumps. Encourage regeneration to Passive haus standards for single or companies, not the poor standards the government sets. We live in one we built. We have no heating, we have cooling, 40 PVs. And the technology works. 5 years in the house has proven it! Keep on encouraging the excellent recycling. There is no room for laziness on the environment - and it can be a selling point - make it a biosphere town. So, improve housing for the poorest, encourage the community, and all the businesses to work together for the future. We absolutely love living in Neston. The facilities are so much better than in WBC where we used to live. CWAC is also miles better than WBC, as is the health provision here. The clinic and the GPs are wonderful. Keep doing what you are doing, but with a strong eye for future generations.
	What about the Neighbourhood plan? What has the council done to implement it? Could there be a cohesive development plan for the town centre? I mean the integrated design of landscape and urban features.
	Some of the things I would like to see in Neston include: # Random acts of kindness # Hub for the voluntary swapping of skills such as DIY, sewing, baking # Community fridge and other ways to share food including home prepared meals and garden produce # Some opportunities for young adults with disabilities to get supported work experience in the town, and then real jobs locally
	One of the most common things we hear said about Neston is about its community spirit and engagement. This seems to revolve around the delivery of community events, some of which you support. Whilst we support many of the ambitions laid out here, we look forward to the wider involvement of providers. There is already a community hub and therefore duplicating such in the Town Hall would provide conflict and competition rather than building upon each of our strengths which we're sure is unintended.
	The draft strategy is correct in saying that parts of Neston and Little Neston there are levels of deprivation. Local authority housing in certain parts has a neglected and unappealing appearance. The Town Council exhibits a feminist bias in the distribution of grant funding. It takes no account of its duties under the Equalities Act.

## Additional Comments

Jolly good luck chaps. Onwards and upwards...

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The drafting of these priorities is poor. We are asked to rate a vague priority: 'Lobby to become a truly "Digital Town"' against a specific one: Help keep our Town clean and introduce a Ranger service to support this. I'd prefer fewer and SMARTer priorities please.

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Stop using the latest buzz words and jargon.

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We would like to thank Neston Town Council for their concerted efforts to listen to local people's views in setting your future direction. We very - much appreciate that you have included us in this consultation.

We recognised that your request was for responses through a questionnaire, however we thought it would be more beneficial to provide a more meaningful response in this correspondence.

We were so pleased to see a consultation from the Council on a much more longer-term view of direction for Neston, and the openness of consultation you were setting out.

However, we were confused by the terminology of Corporate Strategy that was being used Neston Town Council is a public body, the terminology seemed to run contra to your ambition to be inclusive and accessible.

We are fully supportive of your ambitions to become more transparent, accountable, effective, collaborative, accessible, proactive, and robust. We support many of your headline goals but recognise there is still further development required to realise this ambition.

We would like:

- This to be a step in the development of your future strategy to enable more meaningful consultation by using a broader range of feedback methods. You may wish to consider such consultation to be ongoing rather than during the Summer holiday period.
- More detail on how outcomes will be delivered with the financial implications for households
- More detail on how you will collaborate with existing providers and any assessment made on local capability and capacity. Our belief is that the capacity and expertise to achieve many of your desired outcomes lies outside of the council
- We would also like to see a clear commitment to not increase the precept while local people are struggling with the cost of living.

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### **Vision, Mission and core values**

We are hopeful when you talk about an engaged community working together to bring about continuous and sustained improvement, but would query whether it is the role of the council to co-ordinate efforts. We are strong advocates for co-production within our community and therefore pose that co-ordination could come from a number of places within our community based on knowledge, skills and experience with the right people leading and others supporting.

We would expect the vision statement and core values to reference climate change and environmental sustainability.

There is little evidence of the Council currently providing "strong, fair, open leadership." My experience as someone who was a member for over two years is that matters are arranged by a leadership caucus that does not permit or consider input from those not part of that caucus. It has no success as an advocate and campaigning voice for town.

As examples of the above, it has done little to ensure that the Post Office in Neston re-opens, apart from attending to one meeting. I have asked what happened at this meeting but not been told.

Despite the Cheshire Police having premises in the Town Hall police officers are invisible in Neston. No foot patrols have been undertaken for a number of years. The Town Council has done nothing to remedy this situation.

The Town Council cannot show that its endeavours have produced one additional bus or train service since its inception. Transport for Wales repeatedly make promises about improvements for rail services in Neston, but nothing actually happens.

We are supportive of your mission of 'helping to create', but concerned the council see improving and increasing the range of locally run services, is through direct provision which is very different to co-ordination which would seem more fitting with your goal of being 'A Council in Transformation'. We feel it would be beneficial to take into consideration changes that have taken place since the source reports were written; the impact of the Pandemic or the likely impacts of the impending financial crisis.

We fully support the overarching mission of 'helping to create' and your strategic goal of 'a council in transformation' but would welcome a review of the detail to support how these will be delivered.

### **Strategic Priorities**

It is heart-warming to see alignment between the council and our charity in regard to Strategic Priorities and therefore our parallel direction of travel. As your strategy is in development we recognise you are not currently at the stage of making them SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely) which means it is very difficult to make a clear decision to support or not.

We would raise as an overarching query whether the council has reviewed if there is potential for any conflict/competition within the priorities with the delivery of other organisations within the community. Through wider collaboration we may be able to deliver more of the priorities through playing to the strengths of each organisation for the benefit of our community. We have included some examples below to assist with your next stage of development of your strategic priorities.



Key problems: unaffordable housing; lack of youth employment opportunities; ageing population. Solutions: promote skill development and inward investment; tackle housing costs and the fast-growing rentier culture

Neston cannot cope with any more housing developments. The road system will not cater for more housing and we don't need new roads either. Nothing about improving facilities for cyclists???? And not much about improving the mix of shops in the high street.

There are dedicated environment and sustainability groups within the Town Council who are keen for environmental matters to be included at a strategic level at the council. It was suggested that the group should complete the Town Council corporate strategy consultation to demonstrate that environmental issues are a high priority for our town.

Comments which represent our group's collective response to the consultation are submitted. Please note we have chosen to respond in this way as we have found the survey does not enable us to comment as we would like. We trust our comments will be included as part of the consultation.

### **Strategic goals**

We are pleased to see reference to climate change in strategic goal 3:

### **A Council in Transformation**

This is the ambition we would want to support more than any other, we look forward to a modern, ambitious, delivery focused council collaborating with the wider community in co-production and delivery.

There are concerns about the choice of language here. Building Workforce often means higher resource costs and in the current financial climate we could not support any increase in costs to residents. You also use interchangeable terms of residents, customers and consumers. We would like the council to stick with the terminology of residents recognising that residents have no choice about paying Council Tax, whereas customers have a choice about their purchasing.

We whole heartedly support development of performance based management to get it right first time. It is not clear how this mix of policy aims, intended outcomes and simple statements support performance-based management.

In terms of providing excellent communications and transparency, we would welcome transparency and engagement, current policies and procedures often prevent this.

The document talks about co-operation, partnership and collaboration but concludes that 'It will support all organisations and projects which take forward it's (presumably the council's) priorities. We would like to work with you and our partners in the community to develop what collaboration means in practice for delivery, recognising that support is not collaboration and coming to a common understanding and language would be useful for us all.

To conclude where we began, we are fully supportive of your ambitions to become more transparent, accountable, effective, collaborative, accessible, proactive and robust. We support many of your headline goals but recognise there is further development required to realise this ambition.

We would like:

- This to be a step in the development of your future strategy to enable more meaningful consultation by using a broader range of feedback methods. You may wish to consider such consultation to be ongoing rather than during the summer holiday period.
- More detail on how outcomes will be delivered, the financial implications on households and, where you are planning on delivering services, why you see this as the best use of resources
- More detail on how you will collaborate with existing providers and any assessment made on local capacity. Our belief is that the capacity to achieve many of your desired outcomes lies outside of the council – how will you enable it?

We would also like to see a clear commitment to not increase the precept while local people are struggling with the cost of living.

We thank you again for including us in your consultation and hope that you find our feedback helpful in the development of this strategy.

It is deeply depressing that the Town Council should indulging itself in preparing such a document expending excessive time and effort that could have been more properly used doing other things of greater relevance to the people of Neston. The Council should concentrate on its proper purpose of being the eyes, ears and voice of the people of Neston and refrain from indulging in pet prestige projects.

What has been produced is a document crammed with virtue signalling, management gobbledegook and platitude. It seems to contain every possible cliché other than "The End of the World is Nigh."

As this is a muddled and poorly organised document it is not possible within reasonable lengths to comment on each and every item in the draft strategy, but to highlight a number of glaring matters, and then to suggest solutions.

The basis for good rule and governance for small local authorities was set out by Lord Keane QC, then a Minister at the Ministry of Justice, namely:-

1. (It should have) sufficient capacity and access to the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to govern effectively.
2. Decisions should be made in a transparent way, based on objective advice.
3. (There should be) proper democratic accountability of the government to the people ... primarily through periodic contested elections.

This is something that should be at the heart of any activity on the part of the Council. In my judgment it fails on all three grounds. I have frequently drawn the attention of the Council to 1.3, but it appears to have had no effect.

Past performance is indicative of future performance. It is fatuous to imagine that simply by constructing a strategy in this regard will anything improve.

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It cannot be claimed that the Town Council works in partnership with CW&C, when the latter does not consult with it over street-scene issues. Having regard to the bicycle pump issue and contributions towards play equipment in parks, where no proper examination took place over the actual need for such expenditure. It cannot be said that it determines priorities on objective need, public choice and business risk assessments.

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The Council is dysfunctional. Decisions are taken by a small caucus of councillors some of whom have served on the Council for many years. They seem determined to have the last word and their own way on every issue. This is amply demonstrated by the manner in which the chairmanship of the then Places Committee was determined in 2019. This does seem to be a deterrent to those who offer themselves to fill casual vacancies. Recently three have resigned after only a few weeks as members.

My own experience is of relevance here

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### **A Sensible Strategy for the Town Council**

The Town Council currently has ideas above its station as a parish council and needs to re-examine what its purpose is and to retrench itself. Rather than indulging in grandiose notions that it is a second major authority, it should concentrate on its core functions, that is, running the market, the Town Hall and the allotments and, most importantly, being the eyes, ears and voice of the people of Neston. It should, for example, be making repeated noises about post office services in the town.

Any governing body in a democracy must derive its powers from the consent of the governed. That consent can only be obtained by elections. What the Town Council presently has is not consent, but indifference. Steps should be taken to ensure that elections are contested. That may involve political parties, but it certainly involves the creation of a council where all members are equally involved in decision making and too much power is not concentrated in any one quarter, and the remainder are ignored.

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There should be a limitation on the number of occasions upon which any one member can be elected as mayor, the number of committee chairmanships they can hold simultaneously and for how long and whether or after what time

interval, they can be selected as a committee chairman once they have ceased to be mayor. Standing Orders should be amended to accomplish this.

All decisions as to expenditure should only be taken when the Council is satisfied by empirical evidence that such expenditure is necessary.

The complaints procedure should be amended to ensure that it is not as currently, biased in favour of the Council and that there is an independent element to it.

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### **Conclusions**

The Town Council is in need of a radical re-appraisal of what it exists for. If this is not done the calls for its abolition will become louder.

At the very least it must become more in tune with the wishes of the whole population and not merely chosen few of like-minded people. It must concentrate on providing value for money.

In all its business the Town Council should act in accordance with the Nolan Principles and the matters enumerated by Lord Keane QC.