

# **Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**

## **Agenda**

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**Date:** Tuesday, 5th July, 2011  
**Time:** 2.00 pm  
**Venue:** Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road,  
Sandbach CW11 1HZ

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The agenda is divided into 2 parts. Part 1 is taken in the presence of the public and press. Part 2 items will be considered in the absence of the public and press for the reasons indicated on the agenda and at the foot of each report.

### **PART 1 – MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS PRESENT**

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest/Whipping Declarations**

To provide an opportunity for Members and Officers to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests in any item on the agenda

3. **Public Speaking Time/ Open Session**

A total period of 15 minutes is allocated for members of the public to make a statement(s) on any matter that falls within the remit of the Committee.

Individual members of the public may speak for up to 5 minutes, but the Chairman will decide how the period of time allocated for public speaking will be apportioned, where there are a number of speakers

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2011.

5. **Cheshire East Housing Strategy**

To receive a presentation from the Head of Planning & Policy.

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For any apologies or requests for further information, or to give notice of a question to be asked by a member of the public

**Contact:** Mark Grimshaw

**Tel:** 01270 685680

**E-Mail:** mark.grimshaw@cheshireeast.gov.uk

6. **Allocations Policy** (Pages 5 - 8)

To consider a report of the Head of Planning and Policy.

7. **Home Improvement Agency**

To receive a presentation from the Head of Planning and Policy.

8. **Update on All Change For Crewe**

To receive a presentation from the Head of Regeneration.

9. **Options for Revised Public Transport Criteria**

The Chairman to give an oral progress report following the comments made by the Committee on the item regarding Options for Revised Public Transport Criteria at the meeting held on 21 June 2011.

10. **Work Programme Update** (Pages 9 - 14)

To give consideration to the work programme.

11. **Forward Plan - extracts** (Pages 15 - 18)

To give consideration to the extracts of the forward plan which fall within the remit of the Committee.

**CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**  
held on Tuesday, 21st June, 2011 at Meeting Room, Macclesfield Library,  
Jordangate, Macclesfield

**PRESENT**

Councillor L Gilbert (Chairman)  
Councillor G M Walton (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors A Barratt, G Barton, H Davenport, R Fletcher, M Grant, P Groves,  
P Hoyland and D Newton

**Apologies**

Councillors P Butterill and D Druce

**103 OFFICERS PRESENT**

Chris Williams – Transport manager  
Jenny Marston – Principal Transportation Officer  
Trevor Robinson Transport Co-ordinator  
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

**104 ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor D Stockton – Cabinet Support Member  
Councillor D Flude  
Councillor L Brown

**105 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

There were no declarations of interest.

**106 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2011 be approved  
as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**107 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/ OPEN SESSION**

There were no Members of the public present who wished to address the  
Committee.

**108 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item pursuant to Section 100(A)4 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

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## **OPTIONS FOR REVISED PUBLIC TRANSPORT CRITERIA**

Councillor D Flude attended the meeting and addressed the committee in respect of this matter and informed the Committee that through the Health and Adult Social Care Committee this Council had participated in a national study of rural health inequalities which had highlighted concerns about mental health and she requested the Committee to consider taking account of mental health issues in the transport criteria.

Councillor L Brown attended the meeting and asked for clarification about the figures contained in appendix 2 of the report concerning the difference between annual and cumulative support.

In response to the points made by visiting Members, Chris Williams Transport Manager explained that although the criteria could be amended to take account of mental health issues, at the moment the proposals were attempting to address public transport at a strategic level, and the suggestion regarding mental health was a matter of detail. Chris also explained that the cumulative column in appendix 2 of the document was merely a running total of the impact on schools

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director Places relating to proposals to introduce revised public transport support criteria to guide future investment in local bus, rail and community transport services subsidised by the Council. The Committee had discussed the matter at its previous meeting held on 7 June at which, the following additional information had been sought:

1. Revised criteria to take account of the specific needs of the elderly and young people;
2. More details of passenger profiles and specific information to identify which routes are heavily used by concessionary travellers;
3. An amendment to the rating of the Health/Medical/Welfare criteria contained in appendix 1, from 3 to 4;
4. Additional information on the detailed calculations that have been used to produce the final scores in appendix 1;
5. Analysis of the likely impact of the proposals on rural communities which are expected to be more severely affected than urban communities;
6. Further information on the wider issue of Community Transport with a view to the Committee considering setting up a Task and Finish group to review in detail that aspect of public transport.

In response to a question regarding the work that Children and Families Scrutiny Committee had recently been involved in concerning transport to schools, Chris Williams explained that that Committee was looking at proposals to reduce specific school bus facilities affecting two peer groups i.e. post 16 education and denomination schools.

The proposal before this committee however concerned public transport routes which included some routes specifically provided for children who did not attend the school nearest to their home. The two matters were distinct and separate.

The Committee specifically considered the merits of giving additional weight to scores affecting elderly and disabled people who lived in rural; areas on the grounds that public transport was the only option for many people in such circumstances.

### RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That the Transport Manager be requested to amend the weighting on accessibility to recognise access for older and disabled people, and details of the revised criteria be circulated to Members of this committee at the next meeting to be held on the 5 July 2011;
- (c) That an item be added to the Committee's work programme to consider setting up a Task and Finish Group to investigate Community Transport facilities.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.15 pm

Councillor L Gilbert (Chairman)

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## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

### **REPORT TO: Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 5<sup>th</sup> July 2011  
**Report of:** Strategic Housing Service  
**Subject/Title:** Cheshire Homechoice – Allocation Policy Review  
**Portfolio Holder:**

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#### **1.0 Report Summary**

- 1.1 Cheshire Homechoice (CHC) is the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Partnership between Cheshire East Council and the Registered providers that allocate Social Housing in Cheshire East. It uses a system of advertised properties and expressions of interest alongside the Allocation Policy to determine how social housing is allocated.
- 1.2 CHC has been operating effectively for 12 months. However there are some areas of the allocation policy that need improving or reviewing in the light of lessons learnt and proposed government changes through the Localism Bill.
- 1.3 A review of the Allocation policy is being undertaken by a policy review group set up by CHC which will take account of views of partners and customers.. The policy review is scheduled for completion by December 2011.

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 To consider the contents of this report

#### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 3.1 This report has been prepared to provide information on the reasoning behind the policy review

#### **4.0 Wards Affected**

- 4.1 All wards are affected

#### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

- 5.1 All ward members

#### **6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate Change - Health**

- 6.1 Health - There is a considerable amount of evidence which demonstrates the savings to health and social care of social housing being allocated to those most in need.

#### **7.0 Financial Implications**

7.1 None

## **8.0 Legal implications (authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

8.1 Under Part V1 of the Housing Act 1996 local authorities are required to have an allocations policy and procedure in place to allocate social housing and under Part V11 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Homelessness Act 2002) to make provision for homeless households.

## **9.0 Risk Management**

9.1 The review of the common allocations policy will ensure that there is a consistent approach to the allocation of social housing across the partnership.

## **10.0 Background**

10.1 **Lessons learnt report** – Recently Cheshire Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, Plus Dane Group, Wulvern Housing and Cheshire East Council Homechoice team were consulted on what has worked and what has not under Cheshire homechoice. They agreed what the main lessons learnt were.

### **10.2 What worked well –**

- the whole process has been quicker and easier for partners and the majority of clients
- increased ability for people to move from supported accommodation into independent living and a speeding up of this process
- those with high medical needs have been rehoused with high priority
- transparency and accessibility for clients
- one system for whole of Cheshire East
- the star system is easier to explain and understand

### **10.3 What hasn't worked as well and how we aim to address this**

- Allowing priority for housing to be awarded under the heading of medical or welfare without any guidance on how to assess the relative weight of the whole range of medical and welfare issues that are presented has given rise to confusion. We anticipate that providing examples and further clarification based on trends that have been identified throughout the last 12 months should address this.
- We will be addressing the issue whereby those whose high banding priority has enabled them to override others who it would be reasonable to expect would have a greater housing need by tightening up the current anomaly of cumulative banding. This is where an applicant who has more than one reason for being given priority accumulates a doubling up or tripling of weighting that leads to a relatively unfair priority. For example where there is a medical factor that gives rise to a welfare factor both are weighted and could enable the applicant to be given higher priority than someone with a more serious medical problem.
- Dealing with Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) can be difficult as there is no facility for taking account of different levels of seriousness. At present all serious



ASB leads to automatic suspension from the list but there are no sanctions available for less serious ASB. Introducing a reduced preference facility in such cases would be an improvement.

- There are lettings in certain areas within Cheshire East that stipulate tenants need to demonstrate a connection to the local area or the community which the property is in. The type of connection needing to be demonstrated is not clear enough at present and is causing difficulties in deciding between prospective tenants. For example, do we offer a property to someone who works in the area or to someone whose children go to school in the area?. Feedback from Parish Councils suggests we should include contributions in volunteering with voluntary sector and faith groups to the benefit of the community
- Certain types of property are in short supply and there is a high demand for them e.g. family homes. There can be single people or couples without dependant children who remain in these properties. There needs to be a facility to prioritise rehousing those tenants to free up properties and achieve the best use of housing stock. The banding system needs to be able to award the appropriate level of priority to enable the people in high demand properties to move to a property more appropriate to their needs.

11.0 **The Localism Bill** is currently going through the House of Lords. It is not expected that any significant changes will be made to it therefore the policy review will include making provision for compliance. Whilst the Bill impacts on a number of areas this report only covers those that relate to housing allocations policy. The Localism Bill Consultation document included:-

- Providing for a new form of flexible tenure for social housing tenants. This will be addressed in the Cheshire East Council Tenancy Strategy.
- Giving local authorities the power to limit who can apply for social housing within their areas. Although we acknowledge we have the power to limit applications for social housing there are several reasons why we don't want to restrict the Housing register.
  - ❖ The Strategic Housing Service is planning to utilise CHC as an enhanced housing options hub. The benefit of using CHC as a single point of contact means that people in housing need will be able to see all options available to them. We anticipate that this will include adaptations and support options to keep them in their current home as well as displaying a range of alternative accommodation types such as Extracare, affordable housing or property in the private rented sector. This will promote even greater choice and discourages dependency on social housing.
  - ❖ A further benefit of allowing people with lower levels of housing need to apply ensures social housing estates do not become areas of concentrated deprivation making these areas harder to manage and harder for residents to aspire to be socially mobile.
  - ❖ There have been concerns raised that not restricting the waiting list would raise the expectations of some applicants when it is clear that social housing would not be an option. Instead Cheshire Homechoice would become a housing options system with social rented/affordable rent being just one option and the system could generate a housing

options report for individuals which would state they are not eligible for social housing, but would be eligible to express interest in the other products. We would be able to collate a lot of useful information which would influence future development for other affordable housing products and provide a better service.

- Improving the ability of social tenants to move to different areas. There would be no change to policy required as there is an opportunity within the current policy to do this. A local connection or a medical or welfare need to move to a certain area can be cited as a reason for priority when applying to transfer.

### **12.0 The Housing Consultants report into Homechoice allocations policy.**

A housing consultant was asked to review the policy and suggested the following amendments to ensure the policy meets government requirements, is legally compliant and not open to challenge.

- Provide greater clarity on serious unacceptable behaviour that would warrant exclusion or reduced preference
- Introduce reduced preference because of a range of more minor factors including former arrears and no local connection
- Further clarification needed on how discretion applied
- Giving additional preference through a local lettings policy for those who bid with a specific community connection if applied to fairly large settlements of up to 3000 residents could lead to a large proportion of overall lettings going to applicants not owed reasonable preference which could be challenged.

### **13.0 Feedback from customers**

- There have been very few formal complaints about Homechoice and those received have been more about procedure rather than policy. A review of procedures will be undertaken following the policy review
- 80% of review requests relate to additional information being provided to support medical or welfare needs priority. The review group will look at how best to highlight the need to provide relevant information to support initial assessment.

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name:	Marilyn Houston
Designation:	Cheshire Homechoice Co-ordinator
Tel No:	01270 686527
Email:	<a href="mailto:marilyn.houston@cheshireeast.gov.uk">marilyn.houston@cheshireeast.gov.uk</a>

## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

### **REPORT TO: ENVIRONMENT AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 July 2011
<b>Report of:</b>	Borough Solicitor
<b>Subject/Title:</b>	Work Programme update

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#### **1.0 Report Summary**

- 1.1 To review items in the 2011 Work Programme, to consider the efficacy of existing items listed in the schedule attached, together with any other items suggested by Committee Members.

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the work programme be received and noted.

#### **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is good practice to agree and review the Work Programme to enable effective management of the Committee's business.

#### **4.0 Wards Affected**

- 4.1 All

#### **5.0 Local Ward Members**

- 5.1 Not applicable.

#### **6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health**

- 6.1 Not known at this stage.

#### **7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs**

- 7.1 None identified at the moment.

#### **8.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

- 8.1 None.

#### **9.0 Risk Management**

9.1 There are no identifiable risks.

## **10.0 Background and Options**

10.1 In reviewing the work programme, Members must pay close attention to the Corporate Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

10.2 The schedule attached, has been updated in line with the Committees recommendations on 21 June 2011. Following this meeting the document will be updated so that all the appropriate targets will be included within the schedule.

10.3 In reviewing the work programme, Members must have regard to the general criteria which should be applied to all potential items, including Task and Finish reviews, when considering whether any Scrutiny activity is appropriate. Matters should be assessed against the following criteria:

- Does the issue fall within a corporate priority
- Is the issue of key interest to the public
- Does the matter relate to a poor or declining performing service for which there is no obvious explanation
- Is there a pattern of budgetary overspends
- Is it a matter raised by external audit management letters and or audit reports?
- Is there a high level of dissatisfaction with the service

10.4 If during the assessment process any of the following emerge, then the topic should be rejected:

- The topic is already being addressed elsewhere
- The matter is subjudice
- Scrutiny cannot add value or is unlikely to be able to conclude an investigation within the specified timescale

## **11.0 Access to Information**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

Name: Mark Grimshaw  
Designation: Scrutiny Officer  
Tel No: 01270 685680  
Email: [mark.grimshaw@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:mark.grimshaw@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

## Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Work Programme – 27 June 2011

Issue	Description/Comments	Suggested by	Portfolio Holder	Corporate Priority	Current Position	Date
Congleton Town Centre	To receive an update on the progress made on Congleton town centre.	Committee	Macrae	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	Deferred	13 September
Local Sustainable Transport Fund	To give consideration to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund	Macrae	Macrae	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	Deferred	13 September
Sustainable Towns Benchmarking	To give consideration to a report on Sustainable towns benchmarking	Interim meeting	Macrae	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	Deferred from 21 June	13 September
Renewable Energy	To consider the potential for the development of renewable energy in Cheshire East by 2030 to help deliver the Council's targets for carbon reduction.	Chairman	Bailey	To enhance the Cheshire East Environment	Deferred	13 September (delayed until consultants appointed)
Update on Macclesfield Economic Master Plan	To receive an update on the proposals	Committee	Macrae	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	On Target	13 September
Localism Bill and Policy Implications	To receive a briefing on the parts of the Localism Bill which fall within the remit of the Committee	A Fisher/C Simpson	Macrae	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	On target	13 September 2011
Development Management Transformation	The basic platform is now in place, however the data still needs to be transferred,	Chairmen's Group/Committee	Macrae/Brown	Being an excellent Council and working with	Deferred until remit of Committee is	TBA

## **Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Work Programme – 27 June 2011**

Project and Member Group	which should be completed by March. The Committee have requested assurance that the systems are now in place.			others	confirmed.	
Gypsy and Traveller Policy	To give consideration to the draft policy	Macrae	Macrae/Bailey	The growth and development of a sustainable Cheshire East	Deferred until conversation with Cllr Macrae to provide an update.	TBA
Community Transport	To consider recommending a policy on Community Transport	Committee	Menlove		Task and Finish Group to be appointed	TBA

### **Possible Items to Monitor or consider at future Meetings**

Crewe Crematorium – Cllr Menlove  
 Performance Management – Cllr Brown  
 Street Naming and Numbering Policy – Cllr Menlove  
 Visit to Macclesfield Silk Heritage Trust Sites and Crewe Railway Heritage  
 SEMMMS – Cllr Macrae  
 Waste Needs Assessment – Cllr Menlove (revisit July 2012 when yearly figures available)

Visit to recycling plant – July 2011  
 Planning Tour of completed planning developments – September 2011

### **Dates of Future Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Meetings**

21 June 2011, 5 July 2011, 13 September 2011, 25 October 2011, 22 November 2011, 20 December 2011, 24 January 2012, 21 February 2012, 20 March 2012 and 24 April.

## **Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee Work Programme – 27 June 2011**

### **Dates of Future Cabinet Meetings**

4 July 2011, 1 August 2011, 5 September 2011, 3 October 2011, 31 October 2011, 28 November 2011, 5 December 2011, 9 January 2012, 6 February 2012, 5 March 2012, 2 April 2012 and 30 April 2012.

### **Dates of Future Council Meetings**

21 July 2011, 13 October 2011, 15 December 2011, 23 February 2012, 19 April 2012 and 16 May 2012.

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## **FORWARD PLAN 1 JULY 2011 - 31 OCTOBER 2011**

This Plan sets out the key decisions which the Executive expect to take over the next four months. The Plan is rolled forward every month. It will next be published in mid July and will then contain all key decisions expected to be taken between 1 August and 30 November 2011. Key decisions are defined in the Councils Constitution.

Reports relevant to key decisions, and any listed background documents may be viewed at any of the Councils Offices/Information Centres 6 days before the decision is to be made. Copies of, or extracts from these documents may be obtained on the payment of a reasonable fee from the following address:-

Democratic Services Team  
Cheshire East Council ,  
c/o Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach Cheshire CW11 1HZ  
Telephone: 01270 686463

However, it is not possible to make available for viewing or to supply copies of reports or documents, the publication of which is restricted due to confidentiality of the information contained.

A decision notice for each key decision is published within 6 days of it having been made. This is open for public inspection on the Council's Website, Council Information Centres and Council Offices.

The law and the Council's Constitution provides for urgent key decisions to be made. A decision notice will be published for these in exactly the same way.

Forward Plan 1 July 2011 to 31 October 2011

Key Decision	Decisions to be Taken	Decision Maker	Expected Date of Decision	Proposed Consultation	Relevant Scrutiny Committee	How to make representation to the decision made
CE10/11-7 Crewe Green Link Road 'Best and Final Offer'	To approve that the Strategic Director Places, Head of Regeneration and the Borough Treasurer can finalise and submit the Council's 'best and final offer' bid for Government funding for the project.	Cabinet	1 Aug 2011	Basford East and West Developers, local ward members and Parish Councils.	Prosperity	John Nicholson, Strategic Director Places
CE11/12-9 Options for Revised Public Transport Support Criteria	To approve revised support criteria to guide future investment in local bus, rail, and community transport services subsidised by the Council, and to consider proposals to withdraw low priority contracts under the new criteria.	Cabinet	1 Aug 2011	Process to include a 6 week communication period, to include user groups, partners and stakeholders.	Environment and Prosperity	Caroline Simpson, Head of Regeneration
CE10/11-89 Cheshire East Housing Strategy	To adopt the Local Housing Strategy, a key document which articulates the housing vision for Cheshire East, setting out the housing priorities and way in which they will be delivered.	Cabinet	5 Sep 2011	With stakeholders, partners, general public during the development of the Strategy; the Draft Strategy will also be consulted upon.	Prosperity	John Nicholson, Strategic Director Places

<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>Decisions to be Taken</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Expected Date of Decision</b>	<b>Proposed Consultation</b>	<b>Relevant Scrutiny Committee</b>	<b>How to make representation to the decision made</b>
CE11/12-3 Cheshire and Warrington Local Investment Plan 2	To approve the draft Local Investment Plan 2 for Cheshire and Warrington prior to its submission to the Cheshire and Warrington Leaders Board.	Cabinet	5 Sep 2011	With regional partners (formally known as housing associations) by presentations and circulation to interested parties.	Environment and Prosperity 5 July 2011	John Nicholson, Strategic Director Places
CE11/12-4 Business Planning Process 2012/2015 - Business Plan	To approve the Business Plan for 2012/2015 incorporating updated budget and policy proposals together with the Capital Programme.	Cabinet, Council	6 Feb 2012	With all Members and a range of local stakeholders including PCT's, Parish Councils, social care representatives, businesses, trades unions, the schools forum and the public.	To be determined but expected to be a scrutiny budget consultation group.	Lisa Quinn, Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets (Section 151 Officer)

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