

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and Communities Committee**
held on Thursday, 18th July, 2024 in the The Capesthorpe Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor M Warren (Chair)
Councillor D Clark (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Brooks, T Dean, A Farrall, H Moss, D Jefferay, B Posnett,
H Seddon, H Whitaker, C O'Leary, J Clowes and L Crane

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Tom Shuttleworth, Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
Ralph Kemp, Head of Environmental Services
Tracey Bettaney, Head of Regulatory Services
Tom Evans, Neighbourhood Planning Manager and Interim Environmental
Planning Manager
Kim Evans, Licensing Team Leader
Sally Rose, Waste and Environmental Services Contracts Manager
Sarah Allwood, Senior Enforcement Officer, Environmental Protection
Tracy Baldwin, Finance Manager
Mandy Withington, Legal Team Manager
Josie Lloyd, Democratic Services Officer

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor L Braithwaite
Councillor K Edwards

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Chapman, S Gardiner and L Smetham. Councillors L Crane, J Clowes and C O'Leary attended as substitutes.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In the interest of openness, Cllr Brooks declared that one of the public speakers, Cllr Nigel Macartney, was known to her through membership of the Labour party, and also that she was a member of the Cheshire East library service.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 30 January 2024 and 11 March 2024 be agreed as a correct record.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Ms Jose Spinks, Secretary of the Friends of Bollington Library group, addressed the committee to highlight the importance of libraries in education and asked the committee to consider the impact libraries had on quality of life for residents.

Ms Sandy Milsom, Chair of the Friends of Bollington Library group, highlighted the range of activities undertaken at the library for all ages and stated that opening Bollington Library for one and a half days per week would not be sufficient for the full range of current services to be offered. Ms Milsom also stated that closing the library during the weekend would prevent school age children from being able to attend.

Ms Chris Holohan spoke in relation to the proposals affecting Bollington library. A protest had recently been held in Bollington with 200 children, parents and carers in attendance. Ms Holohan stated that Saturday was the busiest day at the library and closing on Saturdays would exclude families from accessing the services.

Ms Julia Cooper spoke in relation to Bollington library and reported that she had started a petition which currently had 1074 signatures and 87 statements in support of the library. Tuesday and Saturday mornings were the busiest times at the library; however, the proposal to open from 2pm on Tuesdays and close on Saturdays had led to a concern that usage would decrease. Ms Cooper asked the committee to consider the value the library added to the community.

Cllr Nigel Macartney from Bollington Town Council spoke in relation to the Libraries Strategy and stated that the library provision per 100,000 population was already lower in Cheshire East than neighbouring authorities. Cllr Macartney felt that the library proposals in the report were in contrast to the libraries strategy itself.

Mr Brian Perkins spoke as a resident of Bollington regarding the household waste and recycling centre closure. A survey had been undertaken by residents on tip usage and the findings were presented to Cllr J Snowball and Cllr K Edwards, along with questions from residents, for which Mr Perkins requested assurance that responses would be given. Mr Perkins referred to the upcoming three-month closure of the Silk Road and highlighted a concern about how Bollington residents would be able to travel to Macclesfield tip. Mr Perkins also raised a concern about CO2 caused by residents travelling further to access household waste and recycling centres. The Chair advised that a detailed response would be provided when the questions were received from Cllrs Snowball and Edwards.

Mr Jim Hoyle spoke as a Bollington resident and highlighted the range of services provided by the library and the opposition to the proposals from Bollington residents.

Mr Jon Weston spoke in relation to the libraries strategy and stated that there was a need to look at how to maintain the current provision at a lower cost as Cheshire East already had a lower provision than neighbouring authorities.

Ms Chris Harrop spoke in relation to waste collection and expressed concerns about the impact on older and disabled residents who used incontinence products which were considered biohazards and could become an issue if black bin collection changed to three-weekly. Ms Harrop felt that the use of a larger bin would not solve the issue as residents would be unable to store or move it and felt that the Council would be failing in its duty of care.

Mr Greg Lisle spoke in relation to the closure of household waste and recycling centre provision in Bollington and Poynton and highlighted concerns about the increased CO2 and cost to residents as a result of travelling to Macclesfield. Mr Lisle felt that the access to Macclesfield tip was dangerous and that there would be an issue with the upcoming three-month closure of the Silk Road.

Ms Catherine Leighton spoke in relation to Bollington library and stated that this was an essential facility and was important to the wellbeing of residents. Ms Leighton felt that if the library only opened 1.5 days per week, many services would be lost for those who needed them most.

Ms Juanita Bullough spoke in relation to Handforth library and emphasised the range of services the library provided and that cuts to opening hours would affect those residents most in need.

5 LIBRARIES STRATEGY - INITIAL PROPOSALS

The committee considered the report which detailed the progress in bringing forward a Libraries Strategy, the need for which was established following the public consultation undertaken in support of the Libraries Service Review in 2023 and as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-28. The report also outlined the next steps in developing the strategy, including seeking permission to move forward with a public consultation on the current draft proposals.

Cllr Liz Braithwaite attended to speak as a visiting member and asked whether library user information by postcode had been provided to Town and Parish Councils as part of any dialogue on funding. Officers responded that this information was held and had been provided where requested.

Cllr Ken Edwards attended to speak as a visiting member and asked the committee to consider recommending that 1.5 days would be the basic minimum provision and to consider a partnership arrangement with Town Councils which matched a community contribution hour for hour.

A query was raised as to the allocation of 1.5 days for tier 3 sites and what that would equate to in staff hours. Officers advised that current staff levels would be continued across the 1.5 days and that this information had been provided to Town Councils to inform their deliberations on topping up and could be shared with the committee in writing following the meeting.

A further query was raised as to usage figures for evenings and Saturdays. Officers undertook to provide this information in a written response.

During the debate, some members expressed concerns including that the projected figures as set out in the report were not sufficient to meet the required savings target, there needed to be more work on assessing usage and that the current proposals lacked detail.

Some members highlighted that the recommendations were only to consult at this stage and the intention was to focus on directing Council resources. It was hoped that this would be an opportunity to engage with residents to find solutions.

An amendment was moved and seconded which sought to change recommendation 2, as set out in the report, to read:

- 2. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson, to take all necessary steps to undertake a public consultation and associated engagement to establish:*
- a. Resident's views on the Libraries Strategy contained within Appendix A of this report and*
 - b. Expressions of interest from all relevant stakeholders relating to the future operation of the proposed tier 3 community managed library sites*

This was carried by majority and became part of the substantive motion.

RESOLVED (by majority):

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Approve the draft objectives of the Libraries Strategy (2024 – 2028)
2. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson, to take all necessary steps to undertake a public consultation and associated engagement to establish:

a. Resident's views on the Libraries Strategy contained within Appendix A of this report and

b. Expressions of interest from all relevant stakeholders relating to the future operation of the proposed tier 3 community managed library sites

3. Note that a clear recommendation on implementation of the Strategy, informed by the outcome of the public consultation and engagement with communities, will be brought back to Committee at a future date

6 WASTE COLLECTION - IMPLEMENTATION OF WEEKLY FOOD WASTE COLLECTIONS

The committee considered the report which provided an update on the legislation announced by Government in October 2023, as part of the Simpler Recycling Scheme, which mandated the introduction of weekly food waste collections for all local authorities by no later than 1 April 2026. The report sought approval to implement the recommended approach to delivering these weekly collections, as well as how residents were to be engaged throughout the process.

The report also set out the proposal to move to a three-weekly collection frequency for residual waste, to be delivered in parallel with the roll out of weekly food waste collections, in order to mitigate the risks around joining up large scale operational changes and the potential financial impact of introducing weekly food waste collections on the Council's revenue position.

Cllr Liz Braithwaite spoke as a visiting member to highlight concerns about bin storage for residents in town centre wards and offered to accompany officers on a tour of her ward to demonstrate the issue.

It was noted that assisted collections would continue to be available for residents with a medical need for support. Issues of human waste would be looked at through an equality impact assessment.

An amendment to recommendation 3, as set out in the report, was moved and seconded which sought to include that the authority would be delegated to the Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson. This was carried by majority and became part of the substantive motion.

A further amendment was moved and seconded which sought to amend the wording of recommendation 3, maintaining the inclusion of the above wording, to read:

3. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson, to take all necessary steps to undertake a public

consultation exercise relating to a move to three-weekly kerbside collections, with the results brought back to Committee in support of a future decision around implementation.

This was carried by majority and became part of the substantive motion.

RESOLVED:

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

Unanimously:

1. Note the legislative requirement for the Council to implement weekly food waste collections by no later than 1st April 2026

2. Approve the proposed approach as set out in the paper in order that the Council can comply with legislation mandating the introduction of weekly food waste collections, and delegate authority to the Head of Environmental Services to take all necessary steps to implement these proposals

By majority:

3. Delegate authority to the Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods, in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and Opposition Spokesperson, to take all necessary steps to undertake a public consultation exercise relating to a move to three-weekly kerbside collections, with the results brought back to Committee in support of a future decision around implementation.

7 FINAL OUTTURN 2023/24

The committee received the report which provided the final outturn for Environment and Communities Committee services for the financial year 2023/24. Members were asked to consider the serious financial challenges being experienced by the Council, and other local authorities, and to recognise the important activities aimed at minimising the impact on services.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8 SERVICE BUDGETS 2024/25 (ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE)

The committee received the report which set out the allocation of the approved budgets for 2024/25 to the Environment & Communities Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

9 REVISED STREET TRADING POLICY

The committee considered the report which sought adoption of a revised Street Trading Policy.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Environment and Communities Committee approve the adoption and implementation of the updated Street Trading Policy.

10 UPDATED AIR QUALITY STRATEGY

The committee considered the report seeking approval to adopt the updated Air Quality Strategy.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Environment and Communities Committee approve the adoption of the updated Air Quality Strategy.

11 ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The committee considered the report which sought approval to adopt the Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Consider the Report of Consultation (Appendix 2); the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report (Appendix 3); and the Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Report (Appendix 4)
2. Adopt the Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 1)
3. Delegate to the Head of Planning the authority to make minor non-material changes and corrections to the SPD prior to publication

12 APPOINTMENTS TO WORKING GROUPS AND PANELS

The committee considered the report which sought approval from the Environment and Communities Committee to appoint members to its working groups and panels for the 2024-25 municipal year.

The proposed membership was noted as follows:

Local Plan Member Reference Group

Cllr L Smetham (Cons)
Cllr S Gardiner (Cons)
Cllr T Dean (Cons)
Cllr L Braithwaite (Lab)
Cllr C Chapman (Lab)
Cllr L Crane (Lab)
Cllr M Warren (Ind)

Section 106 Member/Officer Working Group

Cllr S Gardiner (Cons)
Cllr B Posnett (Cons)
Cllr J Snowball (Lab)
Cllr J Bratherton (Lab)
Cllr D Jefferay (Ind)
Cllr M Gorman (Ind)

Cemeteries Strategy Member Advisory Panel

Cllr N Cook (Ind)
Cllr J Bratherton (Lab)
Cllr J Snowball (Lab)
Cllr L Smetham (Cons)
Cllr H Whitaker (Cons)

It was requested that Cllr L Crane also be added to the Cemeteries Strategy Member Advisory Panel.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Appoint Members to the Local Plan Member Reference Group as follows: Con: 3; Lab: 3; Ind: 1; Lib Dem: 0; NGI: 0
2. Appoint Members to the Section 106 Member/Officer Working Group
3. Appoint Members to the Cemeteries Strategy Member Advisory Panel
4. Agree that the Household Waste and Recycling Centres Working Group be discontinued
5. Agree that the names of the Members appointed will be submitted to the Head of Democratic Services and Governance

The committee considered the report which sought approval to adopt the updated Cheshire East Major Emergency Response Plan.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Approve the adoption of the updated Major Emergency Response Plan for Cheshire East
2. Delegate authority to the Interim Director Environment and Neighbourhoods to undertake updates to the Plan on a periodic basis

14 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The committee had no questions for clarification on the confidential appendix and therefore did not require to move into part 2.

15 CHESHIRE EAST MAJOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN UPDATE

RESOLVED:

That the appendix to the report be noted.

16 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10:00 and concluded at 14:58

Councillor M Warren (Chair)