

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Monday, 9th November, 2009 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)
Councillor J Narraway (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors A Arnold, G Barton, G Baxendale, S Conquest, J Crockatt,
M Davies, P Edwards, S Wilkinson and Rachel Bailey

Apologies

Councillors D Bebbington, D Stockton and D Topping

1 OFFICERS PRESENT

David Job - County Land Agent
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer
Diane Moulson – Member Development Officer

2 ALSO PRESENT

Councillor P H Mason - Procurement, Assets and Shared Services Portfolio
Holder

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 1 September and 14
September 2009 be approved as correct records.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest, or imposition of a party whip.

5 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no statements from Members of the Public.

6 COUNCIL OWNED FARMS

David Job County Land Agent attended the meeting and gave a presentation on
the review of the farms estate being undertaken across Cheshire.

In Cheshire, there were currently 79 farms consisting of 10,000 acres of land, of which 5,181 acres were located within Cheshire East. The farms were largely let to tenants and consisted mainly of land holding with some rented cottages.

The draft Capital Programme for 2010-13. had identified capital receipts of approximately £1.2 million per annum, to be realised through the sale of properties on farms.

Work was underway currently to assess the valuation of properties located on the Council owned farms and the capital receipts to be expected from sales, against the benefits of retention. Any sales would involve in the main, residential properties with small parcels of land and other ancillary buildings. Indications suggested that the market for such premises was still relatively strong.

RESOLVED – That David Job be thanked for his presentation, and a copy of the projected financial analysis of the farm disposals be forwarded to members of the Committee for information.

7 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The committee considered the work programme 2009/2010 which had been reviewed at a Mid-point meeting held on 20 October 2009.

The Chairman informed members that, unfortunately, little progress had been made in connection with the Voluntary Sector Task and Finish group.

In addition Members expressed the view that the original Budget Consultation timetable approved by the Committee on 13 July 2009 had not been adhered to and therefore suggested that an additional meeting of the Committee should be held in December to receive a progress report from the Borough Treasurer and Resources Portfolio Holder.

The Committee also requested progress reports on the Harmonisation of ICT systems and procurement of the Customer Relation Management Solution (CRM) at its next meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the revised work programme as produced at the Mid point meeting held on 20 October 2009 be approved;
- (b) That the Committee's dissatisfaction about the lack of progress in connection with the Voluntary Sector Task Group be formally noted;
- (c) That a special meeting of the Committee be convened in December 2009 to receive an update from the Borough Treasurer and Resources Portfolio Holder on the Budget preparations for 2010/2011;
- (d) That the ICT Manager be requested to give a presentation on the Harmonisation of ICT systems and Customer Services Manager be requested to give a presentation on the CRM at the Special Meeting to be held in December 2009.

8 FORWARD PLAN - EXTRACTS

The Committee considered the items currently on the Forward Plan that related to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Forward Plan be noted;
- (b) That the Borough Solicitor be requested to amend the format of the Forward plan to include in the 'Consultation' Column in respect of each item, reference to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to also include an explanation as to why details have changed since the original publication date, on each occasion that details have been amended.

9 SCRUTINY BRIEFING MEETINGS

The Committee considered the benefits of holding briefing meetings prior to the Main committee meetings on future occasions. Some members of the Committee questioned the transparency of cross party briefing, mid point meetings and meetings of the Scrutiny Chairs Group, all of which were currently held on an informal basis and did not admit the public and press

The Chairman undertook to consider the matter further and report back to the Committee at a future meeting

10 MEMBER TRAINING

The Committee considered the training needs of Overview and Scrutiny Members.

The North West Employers Organisation had been contacted about the possibility of that organisation providing bespoke training in relation to the following topics:

- The delivery of Work Programmes
- Scoping
- Questioning techniques.

The Member Development Officer outlined options available from two training facilitators to provide more advanced training on the many emerging issues in the field of Overview and Scrutiny.

RESOLVED-

- (a) That the Member Development Officer be requested to make arrangements with North West Employers organisation to provide training sessions on :
 - The delivery of Work Programmes
 - Scoping
 - Questioning techniques

- (b) That the Senior Scrutiny Officer be requested to obtain further details from the two training facilitators referred to, in connection with content of advanced courses available on emerging Overview and Scrutiny issues.

11 REFERRAL OF MATTERS TO SCRUTINY FROM COUNCIL AND OTHER SOURCES

The Committee considered the need for a consistent and co-ordinated approach for dealing with requests to deal with matters referred from Council and other sources. The Scrutiny Chairs Group (SCG) at its meeting held on 26 October had suggested that any referrals should in the first instance be considered by the (SCG) prior to the matter being forwarded to the appropriate committee.

RESOLVED – That in future, any matters referred to Scrutiny from Council and other sources be assessed against the Overview and Scrutiny criteria for selecting items and then added, when appropriate, to the relevant committee's work programme.

12 CONSULTATIONS FROM CABINET

There were no consultations from Cabinet.

13 WAIVER OF CALL INS

The had been no requests to waive of call-ins since the previous meeting.

Confirmed this 7th Day December 2009
Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.15 pm

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)