

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Monday, 15th March, 2010 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)

Councillors A Arnold, G Baxendale, D Bebbington, S Conquest, J Crockatt,
M Davies, P Edwards and S Wilkinson

Apologies

Councillors J Narraway, G Barton, D Topping and Rachel Bailey

7 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2010 be approved as a correct record.

8 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no statements from Members of the Public.

10 LEISURE REVIEW-UPDATE

Guy Kilminster Head of Wellbeing attended the meeting and updated members on a review of Leisure Services currently being carried out by a Cabinet Sub Committee.

The review had been initiated because the original two unitary Councils had stated in their business case that a saving of £1,000,000 could be generated across Cheshire East through delivering leisure in a different way.

The sub-committee had agreed to the appointment of consultants (PMPGenesis) to review the performance of the inherited facilities and to consider alternative options for the future delivery of the service.

The report concluded that the performance of leisure services was mixed with some performing strongly and others not so well (to be expected with the merging of three District's Services). Income was deemed to be good compared to market averages, and with the exception of two facilities, staff costs were below average with the service described as lean in terms of staff costs to income. The

percentage cost recovery was good at about half the facilities. The poorer performing facilities were those that the predecessor authorities had already identified as being in need of replacement or significant refurbishment.

The presentation also covered the new opportunities available and the links between the leisure review and the Transformation programme generally

In particular, Leisure Services would need to demonstrate how it would meet the transformational outcomes which were set out in the Budget Report to Full Council on 25th February 2010. Those outcomes were that transformed services should be more:-

- **Local** – Services more fully based out in localities and, where appropriate, owned in those localities so that they are more easily accessible and more readily responsive to local people.
- **Joined Up** – Services more extensively co-located with those of partners, and based out in non-Council settings locally.
- **Sustainable** – a smaller set of Services, built around the Council's core businesses and affordable with the resources likely to be available.
- **Focused on outcomes** – a more tightly focused set of Services, directed towards achieving agreed objectives and outcomes.
- **Preventive** – Services which give much higher priority to prevention.
- **Innovative** – Services which encourage their staff to use their experience, intelligence and creativity to solve problems and to improve the experience of those who use the Services.
- **High Quality** – a set of Services committed to enhancing quality.

Much improvement was already underway and new ways of working had been introduced. These included:

- Introducing the free swimming scheme;
- Reviewing capital investment needs and improving customer experience through swim free capital monies and DDA monies for example at Crewe Pool, Wilmslow and Nantwich;
- Improvements being made at Shavington (interactive equipment installed) and Sandbach (new gym);
- Working with Children and Families to ensure the service was fully engaged in the Building Schools for the Future discussions;
- Working with Sport England to complete the Facility Improvement process;
- Working with Performance and Policy to initiate the needs assessment to determine Cheshire East residents requirements in relation to leisure;
- Identifying and progressing opportunities to initiate physical activity with targeted communities in non leisure centre venues (e.g. Sure Start centres);
- Engaged in discussions around local service delivery and devolution and considering with regard to playing pitches and pavilions for example;
- Discussing opportunities with the PCT to introduce exercise on prescription scheme across the Authority;
- Also discussing with the PCT engagement in 'care pathways' to help ensure the Service was part of the preventative activity to keep people in good health;

- Discussing the Service's role in re-ablement and personalisation with Adult Social Care to identify opportunities for the Service to be commissioned to deliver services for their client groups;
- Engaging consultants to review the management options for the Council's two golf courses;
- Developing a new culture within the Service that was customer focused

In response to questions from members of the Committee, the Head of Wellbeing informed the Committee that the Council needed to make better use of its facilities by for instance, taking leisure facilities into the community.

The current review did not cover assets such as football pitches. However, an asset challenge process was currently underway across the Council which was looking at, amongst other things, the cost of inherited facilities, such as Crewe and Congleton Leisure centres. It had been estimated that it would cost more to maintain these facilities over the next 5 years than to replace them with new facilities

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the presentation be noted.
- (b) That the Head of Wellbeing in conjunction with the Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, be requested to issue a press release based upon the presentation given at the meeting.

11 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATING POWERS ACT (RIPA) ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Audit and Compliance relating to operational procedures for the Council to undertake covert surveillance under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000.

In March 2009, Cabinet had approved policies and procedures for surveillance under RIPA 2000

Under the act, the Council was required to keep a detailed record of all authorisations, renewals, cancellations and rejections for inspection by staff of the office, which carried out inspections to oversee surveillance operations carried out by public authorities.

The Council's existing Policy and Procedures for RIPA included a provision for an annual report to Scrutiny Committee. It was proposed in future, however, that, the current policy should be reconsidered and the Annual Report to Members be submitted to the Governance and Constitution Committee in future instead of this Committee, in compliance with its role dealing with Audit and compliance issues. This Committee could continue to have information about RIPA and/or review its operation in accordance with the Scrutiny work programmes.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the policy and procedures in place within the Council to ensure compliance with RIPA be noted
- (b) That the steps being taken to ensure that the Council operates best practice with regard to RIPA be noted
- (c) That the Committee supports the proposal to routinely submit future RIPA monitoring reports to Governance and Constitution Committee and /or Cabinet

12 DATA QUALITY STRATEGY

RESOLVED – That consideration of this matter be deferred to the next meeting.

13 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Borough Solicitor relating to the current work programme.

The Committee had reviewed its work programme at meetings throughout the year and had refined the list of items into an active' and 'reserve' list. From the active list, the Committee had set up a Task and Finish Group to review the role and funding of the Voluntary Sector, and more recently, a Budget Consultation Group, involving Members from all 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees, to oversee the budget Consultation preparations.

At its meeting held on the 3 February 2010, the Voluntary Sector task group had taken a critical look at the review and scope, based upon the fact that the total funding position across all Council directorates for 2010/2011, was still not clear. Work was consequently underway across all corporate areas to identify future funding commitments and budgetary provision. Unfortunately, it had still not been possible to unravel all existing commitments from the demised authorities which in turn meant that a clear picture had not yet been established about future commitments and budget requirements.

Although there was general acceptance that a comprehensive review was required, the task group considered that this would be best achieved through a Corporate Officer working group.

Members consequently recommended that this Committee should disband the Task and Finish group and allow the review to take place through a Corporate Officer working group.

The Budget Consultation group had met twice during January 2010. At its first meeting, the group agreed its terms of reference and sought additional information from Finance officers on the 'Challenge sessions' that had been held between the portfolio holder and service heads.

At its second meeting on 29 January 2010, members of the group were able to question representatives from Service departments on a number of issues and were provided with an outline of the main points dealt with at the challenge

sessions. The group was then able to recommend the budget cycle of Overview and Scrutiny meetings which took place over 11 and 12 February 2010

The group reiterated its commitment to continuing the good work already started by recommending that preparations for the 2011/2012 Budget Consultation process should begin in April of this year, with the aim of having in place a robust timetable early in the new civic year to involve Overview and & Scrutiny committees in budget setting at the very start of the process and to ensure a continuing involvement throughout the new financial year.

The Committee had also identified at the beginning of the current municipal year, as a potential work programme item, the subject of asset management. At the present time, this matter sat in the reserve list. The Chairman had recommended that subject to prioritisation, this matter be brought into the active list for 2010/2011 for the committee to commission a study into the portfolio of assets held by the Council with a view to making recommendations as to their potential future retention/and or disposal.

The Chairman also referred to a potential item regarding a review of the governance arrangements in respect of Highways and Transportation issues, but informed the Committee that following a decision by Cabinet on 16 February 2010 that this matter would no longer be considered as part of the current work programme.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Work Programme, be noted
- (b) That the Voluntary Sector Task Group be disbanded pending an interim progress report from the Head of Policy and Performance.
- (c) That the completion by the Budget Consultation group of its initial deliberations in relation to the 2010/11 budget consultation be noted and the Committee re-convene the group with new membership to oversee the budget setting and consultation processes from 2011/12 and beyond
- (d) That the Borough Treasurer be requested to provide an awareness session at a future meeting of the Committee to cover :
 - The Asset register
 - The Asset challenge process
 - The devolution Programme

14 STRENGTHENING THE SCRUTINY FUNCTION

The Committee considered a report of the Borough Solicitor concerning a process to involve Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Cabinet in the work planning process for 2010/2011.

The proposal within the report suggested involving CMT and Cabinet in a two way process to formulate the majority of the work programme through informal meetings, leading to Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committees determining final work programmes in May/June 2010. This would ensure

that resources were made available to O&S Committees from Service Heads to complete reviews.

In turn, this would enable the committees to focus on Corporate priorities and to ensure that links to LAA targets, and BVPI's could be made at the outset.

The report had been considered by the Scrutiny Chairs group at its meeting held on 12 March and a number of alterations had been agreed. An amended version of the report was tabled at the meeting

RESOLVED – That the report be referred back to the Scrutiny Chairs Group for further consideration.

15 FORWARD PLAN - EXTRACTS

The Committee considered the items currently on the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted;

16 CONSULTATIONS FROM CABINET

There were no consultations from cabinet.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.34 pm

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)