

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Friday, 12th June, 2009 at Council Chamber, Municipal Buildings,
Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

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

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

Apologies

Councillors P Edwards and D Stockton

7 OFFICERS PRESENT

Russ Glennon – Head of Policy and Performance
Lisa Quinn – Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

8 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the notes of the informal meeting held on 5 May 2009 be approved as a correct record.

9 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/ PARTY WHIP

Councillor D Topping declared a personal interest in relation to Public speaking/questions on the grounds that he was a member of the Governance and Constitution Committee.

There were no declarations relating to the imposition of a Party whip.

10 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no questions.

11 PUBLIC SPEAKING/QUESTIONS

Councillor D Topping declared a personal interest in this matter on the grounds that he was a member of the Governance and Constitution Committee.

The Committee considered a report of the Democratic Services Manager detailing the terms of a consultation by the Governance and Constitution Committee in relation to the public and member speaking and question provisions that were currently contained within the Council's approved Constitution.

On 16 April 2009, the Governance and Constitution Committee had considered a report in response to requests received from the Shadow Authority's Scrutiny Committee to remove the public speaking/open session from the rules of procedure for the Scrutiny Committee. The Licensing committee had similarly requested that provision for members of the public to ask questions/speak at the commencement of meetings to the Licensing committee be waived.

Governance and Constitution Committee had on 21 May 2009 considered a further report relating to Member speaking rights at the Planning Board and Planning committee meetings and it had been agreed to recommend to Council that the Constitution be changed to reflect the provisions of the Planning protocol which gave Members speaking rights at those meetings, subject to certain requirements.

The Committee considered the need to separate arrangements for public/member involvement between decision making and non decision making committees. The view of the Committee was that it was not appropriate for questions to be asked by the public at meetings of non decision making committees but that it would be appropriate, subject to certain restrictions, at decision making committees. However, the committee did support allowing the public to make statements at meetings of Overview and Scrutiny committees.

RESOLVED –

That Governance and Constitution Committee be informed that the views of this Committee in relation to Public and member questions are as follows:

1. That the existing Planning and Licensing Protocols which override the member and public speaking and questioning provisions that apply to other committees, should be retained;
2. That the facility to allow questions by Members of the Public at meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees should be removed, but a period of 15 minutes be provided at the beginning of meetings to allow members of the Public to make a Statement(s) on any matter that falls within the remit of the relevant committee, subject to individual speakers being restricted to 5 minutes each;
3. That whilst acknowledging that Planning and Licensing Committees have separate arrangements in place for public involvement, in all other cases, members of the Public should provide 3 clear working days notice, in writing, if they wish to ask a question at any other decision making meeting, in order for an informed answer to be given, but they should not be required to give notice of intention to make use of public speaking provision (although as a matter of courtesy, a period of 24 hours notice should be encouraged);
4. That members of the Council should, in accordance with the current rules, be required to provide 3 clear working days notice in writing if they wish to ask a question at a full council meeting or Cabinet in order for an informed answer to be given;

5. That the existing provisions of the constitution relating to the way in which questions may be answered be preserved.

12 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The committee considered the work programme 2009/2010 which had been updated since the informal meeting held on 5 May 2009 to take account of matters raised by the Resources and Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holders at recent meetings with the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Three matters within the programmed remained High priorities, which were

- The Budget
- Review of IT provision and support for members
- The role and funding and performance of voluntary organisations.

Two matters had been recommended to be deleted from the work programme relating to support for members, and the adequacy of County record office accommodation. Both of these matters were residual items passed to the Committee from Cheshire County Council.

It was acknowledged that the rating of Risk management needed to be reviewed and advice would be sought in respect of this matter from the Head of Policy and Performance.

An officer working group had been set up to develop and introduce Project Management in Cheshire East.

RESOLVED – That

- (a) The Work programme be noted;
- (b) The items relating to Support for Members and Record Office Accommodation be deleted;
- (c) That the rating of Risk Management be reassessed following discussions with the Head of Policy and Performance;
- (d) That Task and Finish Groups be set up as detailed below to deal with the following issues :
 - (i) Role Funding and Organisation of Voluntary organisations

Councillors A Thwaite (Chairman)
A Arnold
J Crockett
S Conquest
D Stockton

- (ii) IT for Members

Councillors J Narraway (Chairman)
G Barton
G Baxendale
T Beard

(e) That The Borough Treasurer and Head of Assets be requested to submit a report to the next meeting, outlining the draft Budget Process.

13 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Head of Policy and Performance reported on arrangements to involve Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Performance Monitoring and highlighted the importance for Members to be aware of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) arrangements for the authority. Additionally, he sought the Committees assistance in the development of an Equality and Diversity Policy for the Council.

RESOLVED – That further discussions be held with the Head of Policy and Performance at the informal Scrutiny Chairs group about future involvement in the CAA process and Performance Monitoring and that Councillor Paul Edwards be invited to the meeting when this matter is discussed.

14 FORWARD PLAN - EXTRACTS

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

RESOLVED – That the contents of the Forward plan be noted.

15 CONSULTATIONS FROM CABINET

There were no consultations from the Cabinet.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.15 pm

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)