

# **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee**

held on Tuesday, 8th February, 2011 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

### **PRESENT**

Councillor G M Walton (Chairman)  
Councillor A Martin (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors W S Davies, H Davenport, R Fletcher, T Jackson, M Parsons, M J Simon, C G Thorley and M J Weatherill

### **Substitute**

Councillor A Thwaite

### **In attendance**

Councillors L Smetham, D Thompson and R Menlove

### **Officers**

A Fisher, R House, R Kidd, P Sherratt, C Simpson and C Williams

### **Apologies**

Councillors S Broadhurst, L Gilbert and M Hollins

## **70 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

None

## **71 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/ OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public present wishing to address the Committee.

## **72 INTERIM PLANNING POLICY ON RELEASE OF HOUSING LAND**

Consideration was given to a report outlining that, at its meeting held on 18 October 2010, Cabinet considered the requirement to maintain a five year supply of housing land and approved the draft Interim Planning Policy on the Release of Housing Land to manage the release of additional land as an interim measure pending the adoption of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. The report considered the responses that had been received to the consultation that took place on the draft policy and proposed revisions to the draft Interim Planning Policy in the light of the comments made. The report had been considered by Strategic Planning Board on 26 January and their recommendations had been included in the report.

Since preparing the report for the Scrutiny Committee, Natural England had submitted its comments on the Habitats Regulations Assessment undertaken on the interim policy. Natural England was seeking additional clarification on the mitigation measures required to ensure that the policy did not impact on European Habitats Sites, and the following revisions were proposed to the justification to the policy:

- Recommendation 41:  
The development of any greenfield sites adjacent to the settlement boundaries will be considered as exceptional development and will be required to be of a high design standard and deliver 35% of the development as affordable housing in accordance with the Interim Affordable Housing Policy. New development will also incorporate open space and community facilities in accordance with the relevant saved Local Plan policy and will aim to provide access to open space in line with relevant accessibility standards outlined within the Cheshire East Open Space Assessment. They will also be required to contribute towards the improvements to the strategic and local transport networks and public transport in and around Crewe. In order to safeguard European Sites in proximity to Crewe, any highway improvements to serve the new development will not be located within 300m of a European Site and where necessary will incorporate run-off interception measures.
- Natural England had also commented that the Regulations governing European Habitats should be updated to “the Conservation of Habitats and Special Regulations 2010”
- Recommendation 39 be revised to replace the “Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 2007” with “Conservation of Habitats and Special Regulations 2010”

## RESOLVED

That subject to the revised recommendations highlighted above, Cabinet recommend that the Council:

1. Approve the housing requirement figure of 1150 net additional dwellings to be delivered annually, to be used pending the adoption of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.
2. Approve the adoption of the Interim Planning Policy on the Release of Housing Land as set out in Appendix 2 to the report and agree that it be used in the determination of planning applications.

## 73 INTERIM PLANNING STATEMENT ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Consideration was given to a report outlining to Members that the Cabinet approved the draft Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing on 20 September 2010. The report considered the responses that had been received to the consultation that took place and proposes revisions to the draft Statement in

the light of comments made. The report had been considered by Strategic Planning Board on 26 January and its recommendations were included in the report.

It was noted that 'staircasing' referred to shared equity affordable housing schemes

## **RESOLVED**

That Cabinet recommend that the Council approve the Interim Planning Statement on Affordable Housing as set out in Appendix 2 to the report and agree that it be used in the determination of planning applications.

## **74 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN - STRATEGY AND DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

Consideration was given to a report which outlined the proposed changes to the Local Transport Plan (LTP) strategy as a result of public consultation and set out the draft implementation plan, which would be aligned with the Government's four year spending review period (April 2011 to March 2015).

The draft implementation plan contained details of the initiatives which would be delivered in order to meet the objectives and priorities for transport set out in the 15 year LTP strategy. A four week period of public consultation on the draft implementation plan began on the 18 January and would run until 16 February.

It was reported that the wide consultation process including Member events had resulted in some amendments and that some policies were still to be developed.

Members of the Committee made the following comments and observations:

- With regard to paragraph 3.49 – Strategic Rail Infrastructure, Members agreed that the high speed rail network that would be serving the North West should stop within Cheshire East and agreed that the wording should be amended to reflect this.
- With regard to the feasibility study of the tram-train opportunities in the north of the borough, it was agreed that the continuation of the freight trains would need to be considered. It was highlighted that all Member issues would be considered within the feasibility study and that Crewe would not form part of the study as it was a main line station.
- With regard to paragraph 3.50 – South East Manchester Modal Study (SEMMMS), it was agreed that this should be amended to reflect both road and rail schemes.
- That proposals to introduce a check in counter for Manchester Airport at Crewe Station be progressed.
- With regard to the Dial-a-ride service, it was noted that there were no proposals to stop the service; however efficiency savings were currently being investigated.
- It was noted that the possibility of issuing taxi tokens would be investigated over the next 12 months.

- It was agreed that more detail was required as to how the bus service was to be reviewed, especially since the demise of Public Transport Liaison Committees. Members were informed that there was currently an Officer/Bus Company Forum which could be widened to include Members.

#### RESOLVED

1. That the changes to the final LTP Strategy which had been agreed by Cabinet as a result of the first phase of public consultation be noted.
2. That the comments highlighted above on the draft LTP implementation plan be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.
3. That the possibility of the Officer/Bus Company Forum being widened to include Members be progressed.

### 75 TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHWAYS SERVICES

Consideration was given to an update report on the procurement of the new 'Highway Maintenance Contract' which was a key work stream within the Total Transport Transformation programme. The report highlighted that Cheshire East's roads were a corporate priority, their condition had been deteriorating for several years and the Council aimed to transform the delivery of future highway services, including replacement of the current term maintenance contract as appropriate to driving improvement in highway condition perception across Cheshire East.

C Simpson outlined the timetable for the contract, informing Members that:

- The current contract would end on 5 October 2011
- The procurement process commenced in July 2010, the vision being to procure a more integrated model with a wider range of highway service being contracted out.
- That an evaluation process of the bids received took place and the bidders had been shortlisted to three.
- Detailed evaluation of the three bids was currently underway with a final provider being approved in June 2011.
- A Members Working Group consisting of 6 Scrutiny Members, had been established to review and track progress.

Members raised concerns regarding staff engagement. However it was highlighted there was a Staff Consultation Group which met monthly and that staff had been invited to the work place of the three shortlisted bidders to visit the work place and meet the current staff.

It was noted that the successful bidder would have to meet an outcome specification that would be monitored through performance management and that communication would form part of this specification.

#### RESOLVED

That the update be noted

## 76 HIGHWAY ROUTINE MAINTENANCE OPERATIONAL POLICIES

Consideration was given to the draft routine highway maintenance policies for:

- Highway Tree Maintenance and Inspections
- Highway Verge Maintenance
- Highway Weed Control
- Highway Hedge Maintenance
- Highway Surface Water

It was noted that, resulting from the highways maintenance procurement contract, there would be more area based workings with stewards being responsible for certain areas.

With regard to the Highway Verge Maintenance Policy, it was noted that the current height of the vegetation is kept between 12 and 75mm, however this would be increased to between 25 and 100mm. It was also noted that the works would be completed as and when required and therefore the policy would not specify how often the verges would be cut.

With regard to the Highway Weed Control Policy, it was agreed that works would need to be closely monitored to ensure that the policy was adhered to and that the dead weeds should be removed.

With regard to dangerous trees it was noted that there were currently no proposals to replace the trees, however this was something that could be investigated.

RESOLVED

That the Portfolio Holder for Environment be recommended to approve the policies subject to the comments highlighted above.

## 77 PAVEMENT CAFE POLICY

Consideration was given to a report requesting Members to comment on the reaffirmation of the inherited policy for the control and licensing of pavement cafes on the highway. The Council during its first 18 months had been approving and granting licenses under the Highways Act for businesses to place tables and chairs on the highway to enhance their trading. Such permissions and licences had been granted in accordance with the Highways and Town and Country Planning Acts, where appropriate, within strict guidelines.

The Pavement Café Policy was aimed to set out the Council's consistent approach, for owners and managers of restaurants, cafés, bars, tea rooms, coffee shops and snack bars, who may be considering placing tables and chairs outside their premises. The current operation of the Pavement Café licensing and conditions had served the Council well and adequately controlled pavement cafés for the benefit of shoppers and visitors, the business concerned and the economic well-being of the area.

It was highlighted that the application must fit in with conservation areas and that demarcation on what would require a licence still needed to be determined.

Members were generally supportive of the policy but agreed that issues such as land ownership and ensuring that there were no obstructions to the footpath would need careful consideration.

RESOLVED

That the portfolio Holder for Environment be recommended to approve the Policy subject to the Comments highlighted above.

Councillor C Thorley left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

## **78 STREET LIGHTING PROJECT**

The Portfolio Holder for Environment outlined the salient points of two street lighting trials that were currently being undertaken in Wilmslow. One consisted of turning 4 out of 5 street lights off and the other involved turning all the lights off between 11pm and 6am. Questionnaires would be completed throughout the trials and so far feedback had been varied. It was highlighted to Members that if the project was to be rolled out to the rest of the borough, town centres and main routes through towns would not be affected. Police were monitoring the situation to assess whether or not it had a negative impact on anti social behaviour.

The street lights required new chips at a total cost of £50.00 per light, which would be recouped within two years. There were currently 40,000 street lights within Cheshire East, 20,000 of which were located in residential areas.

RESOLVED

That the street lighting project be supported by the Committee

Councillor M Parsons left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

## **79 FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the extracts of the forward plan which fall within the remit of the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the extracts be noted

## **80 WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the work programme

RESOLVED

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.35 pm

Councillor G M Walton (Chairman)