

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

held on Tuesday, 20th December, 2011 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor L Gilbert (Chairman)
Councillor G M Walton (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors A Barratt, P Butterill, H Davenport, R Fletcher, P Hayes, S Hogben
and G Baxendale

Apologies

Councillors G Barton, K Edwards and P Hoyland and A Thwaite

ALSO PRESENT

Cllr R Menlove – Cabinet Member for Environmental Services

OFFICERS PRESENT

Paul Griffiths – Infrastructure and Development Manager
Andrew Ross – Strategic Highways and Transportation Manager
Paul Burns – Parking Services Manager
Diane Bramall – Media Relations Officer
James Morley – Scrutiny Officer

154 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no members of the Committee who wished to declare a personal interest

155 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/ OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present who wished to address the Committee

156 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 22nd November be approved as a correct record and sign by the Chairman.

157 STRATEGIC HIGHWAYS UPDATE

The Committee received a presentation from the Strategic Highways and Transportation Manager and the Principal Transport Officer about the current position of the Council's key transport projects. The presentation outlined how

infrastructure planning and delivery would be integral to the implementation of the key economic strategies of the Borough as well as the proposals in the Local Plan. The presentation proceeded to give updates on the current projects supporting 'All Change for Crewe', 'Make it Macclesfield' and the Sustainable Towns strategies as well as how national infrastructure proposals in the area will affect the Borough.

After the presentation the Committee asked questions and the following information arose:

- Members of the Committee looked forward to having an opportunity to have an input into the Council's response to the proposed High Speed Rail Network "HS2". Currently there were four possible routes being considered and the preferred route would be chosen for consultation in September 2012. The main priority for Cheshire East would be to support mitigation of the environmental impact of HS2 whilst maximising the economic benefits.
- The Committee believed that when consultation with local members was conducted on projects such as Junction 17 of the M6 and the Middlewich Bypass local members in the surrounding areas should also be consulted as these projects would have a wider impact on traffic in their wards.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted and the Strategic Highways & Transportation Manager and the Principal Transport Officer be thanked.

158 **PLANNING ENFORCEMENT**

This item was withdrawn from the Agenda

159 **CAR PARKING - INCOME**

The Committee received a report on Car Park Income from the Parking Services Manager and were asked to make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services. The Committee were asked to receive a report by the Council's Scrutiny Chairmen's Group (SCG) which was concerned by the underachievement against budgeted income for the first quarter of the municipal year.

The report suggested that nationally local authorities experienced shortfalls of between 5 and 15% which was attributed to the difficult economic conditions and reduced customer spending power as well as lower footfall on high streets due to internet shopping. A regional comparison showed that over the previous three years Cheshire East had performed consistently and maintained a reasonable position against the average.

The Parking Services Manager assured the Committee that car parks were being maintained to a good standard, were open whenever possible and that enforcement was performing well both on the streets and in car parks.

Some Members of the Committee suggested that the income deficit may be due to the tariffs being set too high. The Parking Services Manager stated that the figures that SCG had questioned were from before the recent tariff rise in August 2011 and income had shown a 5% increase since the tariffs increase. Analysis showed that parking demand was more price sensitive in some towns compared with others and there was no overall correlation between price rises, income and demand. Car Parking was subject to the laws of supply and demand and in many cases lowering the price would not increase income through greater demand because many car parks were already filled to capacity most days due to limited supply of spaces.

The Parking Service Manager stated that there had been positive feedback from the 'Pay by Phone' trial that was being conducted. This actually cost customer slightly more due to the phone charge however customers preferred the convenience of the system. Parking Services was also looking into installing pay machines that accepted cards payments which it was hoped would make paying easier for customers and encourage the use of car parks.

Members of the Committee suggested that perhaps the budget was too optimistic about the income that car parks were able to generate. Income had been relatively consistent over recent years however it had continued to fall short of the budget figure that had been used in previous budgets. The Committee suggested that next years budget needed to be more realistic and reflect historical/actual income which was achievable in the current climate.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted and the Parking Services Manager be thanked for attending.
- (b) That the Committee believe the budget for car parking income had been set too high and that the Committee recommend to the Cabinet Member for Environmental Services that historic data be used to create a realistic budget figure for the 2012/13 budget.

The Parking Service Manager left the meeting.

160 **CAR PARKING - PARKING CHARGE SCALE PROPOSALS**

This item was withdrawn from the Agenda.

161 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee gave consideration to the Work Programme.

RESOLVED: That the current Work Programme be agreed.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.35 pm

Councillor L Gilbert (Chairman)

.....