

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 5th February, 2013 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor R Domleo (Chairman)
Councillor P Edwards (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors S Corcoran, H Davenport, D Newton, R West, J Wray and
G Barton

Apologies

Councillors W Fitzgerald

1 ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Peter Raynes - Finance Portfolio Holder
Councillor Paul Findlow - Corporate Portfolio Holder
Councillor Rachel Bailey – Children and Families Portfolio Holder
Councillor Peter Mason - Cabinet Support Member
Councillor Gordon Baxendale – Visiting Member
Councillor Phil Hoyland – Visiting Member

2 OFFICERS PRESENT

Lorraine Butcher -Strategic Director (Children, Families and Adults)
Vivienne Quayle- Head of Performance, Customer Services and Capacity
Chris Mann – Finance Manager
Alex Thompson – Finance lead Strategy and Funding
Tony Crane – Head of Service Early Intervention and Prevention
Nigel Moorehouse -Head of Service - Childrens Social Care
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of the existence of a party whip.

5 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings of the following committees be confirmed as correct records and signed by the Chairman:

Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee – 27 September 2012
Children and Families Scrutiny Committee – 9 October 2012

Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee – 25 October 2012
Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee – 1 November 2012
Corporate Scrutiny Committee – 7 December 2012

6 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present who wished to make a statement.

7 NEW SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee considered a report of the Borough Solicitor summarising the outcome of an informal meeting of the committee which took place on 10 January 2013 to decide how the Committee would operate in the context of the Council's new governance arrangements which were approved in December 2012.

The new terms of reference for the committee were as follows:

- The Corporate Scrutiny Committee will fulfil the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to the performance and functions of the Council and;
- in relation to the Budget and Policy Framework respond to any consultation which is required under the law or the Council's constitution;
- may 'call in' any decision of cabinet in accordance with the Scrutiny procedure rules contained within section 4 of the constitution;
- will scrutinise quarterly performance reports;
- may scrutinise any Cabinet decisions;
- may scrutinise the effectiveness of any existing policies and retrospectively any new policies introduced by Cabinet;
- deal with any matter referred to it in accordance with the Council's protocol on Councillor Call for Action.

In addition the Committee reviewed the work programme 'handover' document containing outstanding items from the Council's former Scrutiny committees.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That the new terms of reference be noted;
- (c) That the work programme handover document be noted and subject to further review at a future meeting;
- (d) That quarterly progress reports on section 106 monies be factored into

the committee's work programme.

8 2012/2013 THREE QUARTER YEAR REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Business Services and Head of Performance, Customer Services and Capacity setting out the Council's three quarter year financial and performance position.

The Council had an ambitious savings target of £21.7 million for 2012/13 with an extremely challenging delivery plan.

The strength of action taken in the third quarter of the financial year had led to an improvement of £0.7 million in the projected overall position since the mid year review. This would result in an increase in the Council's general reserves level from £12.5 million to £13.2 million.

In response to a question regarding the problems highlighted in the report about attracting and recruiting personnel into front line social worker posts, Lorraine Butcher confirmed that the Council had experienced some difficulties but the Council's long term aim was to arrest the reliance on agency workers. She was also able to confirm that no children's social workers had been made redundant since Local Government Review.

In response to a question about whether the under spend of £2.2 million under the heading 'early intervention and prevention' within Children and Families, had been deliberate, Tony Crane informed the committee that the under spend had resulted from the re-engineering some services in response to budget pressures.

In answer to a query about individual and strategic commissioning arrangements and the fact that strategic commissioning was overspent and Care4rce under spent, Lorraine Butcher explained, that clients with personalised budgets were not able to use these funds with internal providers.

Vivienne Quayle undertook to provide an answer outside of the meeting in relation to a question concerning how much of the £500 000 overspend referred to in the third quarter performance report related to the recycling bulking contract as opposed to the other cost pressures relating to green waste and non achievement of land fill reduction targets.

In response to a further question regarding car parking income, Vivienne Quayle informed the committee that the variance in figures related to the difference between the budgeted and actual figures and was not in fact a loss.

In connection with the performance report, Lorraine Butcher explained that some of the issues identified in connection with indicator NI56/60 were covered in the safeguarding peer review contained elsewhere in the agenda. However, in relation to indicator NI 145, Lorraine explained that the Council did not have sufficient accommodation and that the Council had therefore started a process to address the under provision.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and noted.

9 OUTCOMES OF SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PEER REVIEW

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Children, Families and Adults) relating to a peer review of the Council's safeguarding of children which took place between the 3 and 7 December 2012.

The review found that Cheshire East's key strengths were:

- A strong commitment at every level to improve outcomes for children;
- Good multi-agency working and partnerships;
- Strong leadership and management;
- A dedicated workforce; and
- The political will to implement change.

However, the Review identified that the Council needed to ensure that:

- Council staff and partners are clear about Cheshire East's vision for children and young people;
- Frontline staff have a good understanding of outcomes and how they are measured in practice;
- Partners, in particular Health, commit to change;
- The multi-agency delivery of Early Help is more effective;
- Staff in all agencies have a clear understanding of thresholds into Social Care and how they should be applied;
- The voice of the child is fully embedded in practice;
- Front line social work practice is consistently good; and
- Experienced and skilled Social Workers commit longer term to Cheshire East as a place to work.

Councillor Gordon Baxendale (visiting member) addressed the Committee regarding the need for more members of the Council to recognise and acknowledge their corporate parenting roles.

Councillor Phil Hoyland Chairman of Children and Families Policy Development Group (PDG) also addressed the committee and explained that he was looking forward to receiving recommendations from the peer review to allow the PDG to initiate some policy development work in this area.

In response to a question about why the report had highlighted inconsistency of practice and whether this related to ICT systems, Nigel Moorehouse explained that this was partly due to the fact that many of the Council's social workers were relatively inexperienced but was also connected to the fact that the Council needed to improve its ICT infrastructure to support the service.,

RESOLVED

- (a) That the key findings of the peer review contained in appendix 1 and the peer review action plan contained in appendix 2 be noted
- (b) That the report be referred to the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee for that committee to scrutinise the health implications of the peer review.
- (c) That the Strategic Director (Children, Families and Adults) be requested to report back to this committee in 6 months time on progress made.
- (d) That the Strategic Director (Children, Families and Adults) be also requested to report back to a future meeting to provide the committee with an update on ICT improvements

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.18 pm

Councillor R Domleo (Chairman)