

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee

held on Monday, 1st October, 2012 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor W Livesley (Chairman)

Councillors A Barratt, D Brickhill, H Davenport, W S Davies, K Edwards, W Fitzgerald, R Fletcher, S Hogben and P Hoyland

Apologies

Councillors D Stockton and P Hayes

In attendance

Councillors L Brown, S Corcoran, D Newton, R Menlove, A Moran, B Murphy and A Thwaite.

Officers

G Edwards – Streetscape and Bereavement Manager

P Hartwell – Head of Community Services

K Melling – Head of Highways and Transport

J Nicholson – Strategic Director, Places and Organisational Capacity

47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

48 DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

None

49 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/ OPEN SESSION

Councillor G Bennion from Hough Parish Council spoke in respect of the Call-in of Key Decision CE12/13-18 Inclusion of Streetscape and Parking Maintenance Activities within the Highway Services Contract. Councillor Bennion outlined his concerns regarding the extension of the Highways Services Contract to include streetscape as an excellent service was currently provided and the same level of standards must be maintained.

50 CALL-IN OF KEY DECISION CE12/13-18 INCLUSION OF STREETScape AND PARKING MAINTENANCE ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE HIGHWAY SERVICES CONTRACT

The procedure for the Call-in of Key Decision CE12/13-18 Inclusion of Streetscape and Parking Maintenance Activities Within the Highway Services Contract was circulated to the Committee.

On behalf of the 9 Members who had signed the Call-in, Councillor D Brickhill addressed the Committee and outlined the following reasons for Call-in:

The highways contract was unproven and insufficient evidence was available to show that the service would not deteriorate or even make the decision to change. Also:

- Professional advice was not taken from officers or not duly considered
- The decision was taken in the absence of adequate evidence
- There was inadequate consultation relating to the decision
- Viable alternatives were not considered.

Councillor Brickhill then went onto explain the above reasons in full detail. He also had concerns that, as the contract was for over £1million, this was in fact a Council decision and not a Cabinet Decision. The Monitoring Officer explained that as long as the decision was within the budget and policy framework and not a supplementary estimate, Cabinet had the power to make the decision.

Councillor R Menlove, Portfolio Holder for Environment outlined the decision taken on 17 September 2012, referring to the report summary and outlined that the purpose of the decision was to achieve more for less.

Councillors L Brown, S Corcoran, D Newton, A Moran and B Murphy attended the meeting as visiting Members to address the Committee and raised the following points:

- The decision may be premature as the efficiency and effectiveness of the decision had not been fully investigated. Therefore it may not achieve more for less. Extracts of a letter from Macclesfield Chamber of Trade were read out echoing this thought.
- Full consultation had not taken place.
- Streetscape was locally based and provided an excellent service.
- There may be hidden costs which had not been explored.
- This issue was not discussed as part of the budget setting process.
- There was no mention about the long term plans for green spaces.
- The authority was too focused on saving money.
- The devolution of services to Town and Parish Councils should take place prior to any decision being made.
- Parks and open spaces should be a priority for the authority as they improved quality of life.
- The sole purpose of the extension to the contract was to save money.
- Ringway Jacobs had yet to prove its effectiveness.
- There was a lack of detail regarding how the savings would be made.

- The report failed to outline how localism would be achieved.
- The report should have been scrutinised prior to it being considered by Cabinet.
- The benchmarks for success were unclear.
- The scope of the contract was not outlined nor did it address Section 106 monies.
- The contingency arrangements for emergency disasters were not outlined.

A list of questions, prepared by Members, for the Portfolio Holder and Officers was circulated round the table. Members agreed that this meeting should be adjourned to allow the Cabinet Member and Officers to fully prepare for Councillors questions. The answers to the list of questions would be circulated prior to the reconvened meeting. It was highlighted that there would also be supplementary questions at that meeting.

RESOLVED

That the meeting be adjourned until 16 October 2012 to allow the portfolio holder and officers to prepare a response to Members questions.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.35 am

Councillor W Livesley (Chairman)