

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
held on Monday, 21st July, 2014 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)
Councillor B Murphy (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors G Baxendale, K Edwards, P Groves, P Hoyland, W Livesley,
J Saunders and M J Simon

Apologies

Councillors A Moran and D Neilson

1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 ALSO PRESENT

Councillors Barry Moran – Performance Portfolio Holder
David Topping – Service Commissioning Portfolio Holder
Paul Findlow – Governance Portfolio Holder
Peter Mason – Deputy Cabinet Member

3 OFFICERS PRESENT

Peter Bates – Chief Operating Officer
Brenda Smith - Director, Adult Social Care & Independent Living
Judith Tench - Head of Corporate Resources and Stewardship
Fintan Bradley - Head of Service: Strategy, Planning & Performance
Julian Cobley - Business Manager - Economic Growth and Prosperity
Kirstie Hercules - Principal Manager - Local Area Working
A Thompson - Corporate Manager Planning & Performance
Steve Reading -Principal Accountant

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

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

6 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present who wished to speak.

7 2013/14 FINAL OUTTURN REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

Peter Bates, the Chief Operating Officer, supported by the Head of Corporate Resources and Stewardship gave a presentation which covered:

- The final outturn 2013/14;
- Developing the Strategic Commissioning Council;
- 2014/15 Budget
- 2015/16 Budget.

In conjunction with the presentation, the Committee considered a report on the 2013/14 Final Outturn Review of Performance.

The pre-audited accounts for 2013/14 showed an under spend of £0.897m, compared to an approved revenue budget of £260m. The overall financial health, performance and resilience of Cheshire East Council were strong.

The report proposed the creation of new reserves of £12.4m. This increase would secure the overall level of reserves considered sufficient to continue to protect the Council against its assessed financial risks as well as provide opportunities for future investment.

Annex 1 to the report set out further details of how the Council had achieved the best outturn in relation to performance and revenue and capital budgets since it became a unitary authority in 2009. It was structured into three sections:

- § Section 1 Summary of Council Performance
- § Section 2 Financial Stability
- § Section 3 Workforce Development

In summary, the revenue and capital budgets had achieved their targets and general reserves had increased. There was evidence of high levels of performance in areas such as recycling and school inspections and road maintenance. The number of staff employed by the Council had decreased by 275, and the first of the new ASDVs had been set up.

There remained a number of challenges however, in respect of:

- Completing the Ofsted action plan;
- Managing customer feedback;
- Developing the local plan;
- Managing demographic changes;
- Responding to changes in government policy and the economy.

In response to a question about the recently announced revenue budget under-spend of approximately £900,000, the Chief Operating Officer informed the

committee that this amounted to approximately 0.35% of the total budget and had been achieved as a result of good management and good performance in key areas such as children and families and highways.

Judith Tench, Head of Corporate Resources and Stewardship informed the committee that in order for the Council to achieve its aspirations to become a Strategic Commission Council, it was important to have an understanding of what 'commissioning' meant. Commissioning was defined as a cycle of assessing the needs of people in an area, designing and achieving appropriate outcomes" that "may be delivered by the public, private or civil service sectors".

Judith explained that there were 3 stages involved in the commissioning cycle:

1. Assessing need;
2. Designing the process;
3. Procurement of the delivery of the service

She also explained that way in which the Council spent had changed dramatically since the inception of the Council with increasing levels of revenue budget dedicated to commissioned services The creation of ASDVs, would continue this trend.

In response to questions about how the Council would monitor productivity of ASDVs, Peter Bates explained that whilst there were opportunities to benchmark against other authorities, in reality, measuring productivity in some areas may be difficult, but that the Council was actively exploring options concerning the measurement of productivity.

The committee noted the current position in relation to the 2014/15 budget where the Council had achieved a 1.6% reduction in expenditure as compared to 2013/14.

The Chief Operating Officer outlined early headline proposals for the 2015/16 budget in the context of an expected 10% reduction in funding. Early indications had suggested a budget deficit of £6.6million which represented 1% of total expenditure.

Resolved – That the report and presentation be noted.

8 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered items listed in the current forward plan.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be received.

9 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The committee reviewed the work programme.

RESOLVED - That the report be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.15 pm

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)