

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
held on Thursday, 3rd November, 2016 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor M Simon (Chairman)
Councillor M Grant (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors S Corcoran, B Dooley, S Edgar, D Flude, A Moran, S Pochin,
J Saunders, B Walmsley and J Wray

Apologies

Councillors G Barton and H Wells-Bradshaw

25 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

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

28 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

29 ENFORCEMENT AGENTS

Adrian Lardner, Debra Grogan from the Council's Enforcement Agents Bristow and Suter attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the work of the company with the Council. The company had begun its work with the Council in 2011 and had had its contract extended in 2015.

The Committee was informed that since the introduction of new legislation in 2014, the way that enforcement agents operated had changed. This was in response to the government's wish to reduce aggressive bailiff behaviour which had introduced standard scale of fees and a defined clear process for debt recovery. With effect from April 2014 Bailiffs ceased to exist and were replaced by enforcement agents.

Therefore, at the compliance stage, only three fees were now payable.

They were:

- £75 as soon as the case was received
- £235 enforcement fee which covered multiple visits if necessary
- £110 if goods needed to be removed.

If a debt totalled over £1500 a tariff of 7.5% of the value was charged

Enforcement officers largely dealt with debtors via electronic communication means, through emails, telephone calls etc. and had reduced face to face contact with debtors by reducing the need to knock on doors.

The changes in legislation had brought about a success rate of 40-50% in the compliance period meaning that fewer people than ever had any face to face contact with enforcement agents. There was also a defined process for dealing with vulnerable people and enforcement agents undertook specific training.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be received and noted.

30 MID YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Operating Officer relating to the mid - year review of Performance 2016/17.

The report highlighted financial and non-financial pressures and performance indicating how the Council was working to achieve the outcomes of the Corporate Plan 2016 to 2020.

Nationally, care services in particular were experiencing rising caseloads and increasing complexity of care needs as well as rising costs from minimum wage requirements for care providers. This was particularly relevant in Cheshire East as the Council's budget included net expenditure of over £140m for services provided by the People directorate.

The Mid Year Review of Performance provided evidence about how the Council engaged with residents, businesses and its partners to achieve positive outcomes.

The report demonstrated that the overall financial health, performance, resilience and value for money at the Council was strong, and that the reserves strategy remained effective. A potential overspend of £1.2m (0.5%) was currently being forecast, which in line with national trends was being strongly influenced by an increase in caseload and costs associated with Children in Care.

At Annex 1, the report set out details of how the Council was performing in 2016/17. It was structured into three sections:

Section 1 Summary of Council Performance - brought together the positive impact that service performance and financial performance had had on the 6 Residents First Outcomes during the year.

Section 2 Financial Stability - provided an update on the Council's overall financial position. It demonstrated how spending in 2016/17 had been funded, including: service budgets, grants, council tax & business rates, treasury management, centrally held budgets and reserves.

Section 3 Workforce Development - provided a summary of the key issues relating to the Council's workforce development plan.

The Committee questioned each of the Executive Directors on their respective performance results.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That whilst acknowledging the huge financial pressures facing the Council at the moment as outlined in the mid quarter performance report, particularly in relation to adults and children's care provision, the Committee notes the good levels of performance highlighted in the report and welcomes the opportunity presented by Cabinet comment regularly on the quarterly performance reports.

31 BUDGET CONSULTATION

The Chief Operating Officer gave a brief outline of the budget consultation arrangements over a three-year period, starting in 2017/18.

He informed the committee that 344 of 353 local authorities had agreed to take up the offer of multi-year agreements with the Government. Although this was a three-year agreement, Council tax would still have to be approved on an annual basis.

It was suggested that a further update could be provided at the December meeting of the committee with a view to formal budget proposals being considered by individual Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the new year.

RESOLVED – That the Chief Operating Officer be requested to provide an update on the budget consultation arrangements at the 1 December meeting and the status of that meeting be changed to a formal meeting open to the public.

32 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee reviewed its work programme.

RESOLVED – That a progress report on the Local Plan Process be received early in 2017.

33 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee reviewed the forward plan.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.48 pm

Councillor M Simon (Chairman)

