

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Policy Committee**
held on Tuesday, 7th September, 2021 in The Ballroom, Sandbach Town
Hall, High Street, Sandbach, CW11 1AX

PRESENT

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)
Councillor A Stott (Vice-Chair)

Councillors C Browne, J Clowes, JP Findlow, K Flavell, R Fletcher,
S Gardiner, N Mannion, A Martin, J Rhodes, M Warren and L Smetham (for
Cllr Parkinson)

Officers

Lorraine O'Donnell, Chief Executive
Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services
Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services
David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services

Apologies

Councillor K Parkinson

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th July 2021 be approved as a
correct record.

24 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

25 COVID-19 UPDATE

The Committee considered a Covid-19 update report which summarised
recent developments on an exception basis.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services informed the Committee that
since the report was published, the infection rate in Cheshire East had
increased to 341 cases per 100,000 population.

The Executive Director also drew attention to a report published by the National Audit Office on Initial Learning from the Government's response to Covid-19 which contained some useful insights for local authorities.

In answer to members' questions, it was reported that:

- Variations in the numbers of people receiving vaccinations in different wards were due to demographic differences such as some wards having a younger age profile but efforts were being made to target the harder to reach sections of the community.
- The position regarding the vaccination of 12-15 years olds and the provision of booster vaccinations for the elderly was still in flux and the Council was preparing for a number of scenarios. Further information could be provided on request.
- With regard to the wearing of masks at wedding ceremonies, there was a need for the Council to ensure the safety of its registration staff, as well as guests.
- With regard to the additional top-up grant to support local businesses, the communications plan was ready to roll out in the next two to three weeks, using various media platforms and external partners. Further information regarding the policy for administering the grant could be provided on request.
- Further detailed financial and other information relating to the Council's response to the Covid pandemic would be reported to the relevant service committees.
- A report on progress with the various initiatives around the training and retraining of young people and supporting them into the workforce or further education would be submitted to a future meeting of the Children and Families Committee and could also be included in a future Covid-19 update report.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

26 CONSULTATION ON THE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE SCHEME

The Committee considered a report on proposals to consult on the Emergency Assistance Scheme for 2022/23, a non-cash scheme which provided support for people in financial hardship.

In response to members' questions, officers advised that:

- Checks would continue to be made on individuals so as to avoid duplication in providing support. Individuals accessing the scheme would, however, be provided with access to other Council services where appropriate.
- Consultation on the scheme would close at the end of December and a report on the outcome would be submitted to the Committee early in

the new year with a view to the scheme being in place by the start of the next financial year.

- Funding for the scheme would come from the Council's budget.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. agrees to a formal consultation on the Emergency Assistance Scheme for 2022/23; and
2. delegates final design of the consultation material to the Director of Finance and Customer Services in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.

27 DEVELOPING A DIGITAL STRATEGY - PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered a report on progress with the development of a Digital Strategy which aimed to improve connectivity for all communities and address inequalities in the most disadvantaged communities where individuals and businesses had poor connectivity.

The report outlined the proposed themes to be embedded within the Strategy, a timeline for delivery and approach to consultation.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. approves the development of a single Digital Strategy for Cheshire East Council;
2. approves the principles on which the Cheshire East Council Digital Strategy will be built as outlined at paragraph 5.8 of the report;
3. approves the themes to be incorporated within the Cheshire East Council Digital Strategy as outlined at paragraph 5.9 and Table 1 of the report; and
4. approves the timeline for development.

28 WORKFORCE EFFICIENCIES AND TERMS AND CONDITIONS REVIEW

The Committee considered a report on the development of a Future Workplace Strategy, informed by the lessons learned from Covid, feedback from Pulse Surveys of staff and discussions with the trade unions, which would set out the Council's approach to more permanent agile and flexible ways of working.

The report outlined a programme of work to achieve efficiencies and sought agreement to commence consultation/negotiation with the recognised trade unions and staff on potential changes to staff terms and conditions. Benchmarking against comparator authorities in the North West would be undertaken prior to any formal engagement with the trade unions.

In response to questions from members, the Chief Executive advised that:

- The three new Executive Directors who would shortly be taking up their posts with the Council were receiving regular briefings on progress with the Future Workplace Strategy.
- The positives and negatives arising from flexible working were set out in the most recent pulse survey of staff.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. supports the ongoing engagement with trade unions and staff on new ways of working and other workforce initiatives;
2. approves the commencement of formal consultation/negotiation with the recognised trade unions on changes to a range of terms and conditions of employment at an appropriate time following a review of how the Council's terms and conditions compare to other authorities, including those in the North West;
3. delegates authority to the Executive Director of Corporate Services to implement any changes following consultation/negotiation, and the Executive Director submit a report on the outcome of the consultation/negotiations to the Committee prior to implementation;
4. notes that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy savings of £50k in 2021/22 will be achieved through reduced travel costs; and
5. requests a further update at a future meeting on the options to deliver the Medium-Term Financial Strategy savings of £350k in 2022/23 and £100k in 2023/24.

29 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered an updated work programme.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services advised that a briefing report on terms and conditions would be brought to the 4th November meeting.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be noted.

30 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

Councillor A Stott, Chair of the Finance Sub-Committee, presented the minutes of the Sub-Committee's meetings of 1st and 27th July 2021 to the Corporate Policy Committee in accordance with paragraph 2.20 of the committee procedure rules.

It was noted that the Chief Executive had attended the meeting on 27th July although not listed as present in the minutes. The minutes would be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Finance Sub-Committee be received.

31 REPORTING OF URGENT DECISIONS

The Committee was informed of an urgent decision taken on behalf of the Committee in accordance with paragraph 2.11 of the committee procedure rules. The decision was to approve the Council's participation in the Afghan Locally Employed Staff (LES) Resettlement Scheme by resettling five families in the Borough.

Members welcomed the decision and expressed support in principle for accommodating more families under the scheme.

The Chairman reported that the Council was also providing temporary accommodation for around 20-30 refugee families in the Borough.

RESOLVED

That the urgent decision be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.25 pm

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)