

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economy and Growth Committee**  
held on Tuesday, 15th November, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,  
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

## PRESENT

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)  
Councillor M Goldsmith (Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Brookfield, D Brown, J Clowes, P Groves, S Hogben,  
M Houston, D Jefferay, A Kolker, R Moreton, D Stockton and P Williams

## OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise  
Charles Jarvis, Head of Economic Development  
Andy Kehoe, Head of Estates  
David Fenton, Housing Options and Homelessness Manager  
Chris Hutton, Senior Policy Officer  
Jez Goodman, Development and Regeneration Delivery Manager  
Wendy Broadhurst, Lead Finance Partner (Place)  
Adrian Leslie, Lawyer  
Mandy Withington, Team Manager (Corporate Property and Projects)  
Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer

## 26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

## 27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to Item 5 – Disposal of Public Open Space Land off Talke Road, Alsager, Councillor P Williams in the interest of openness stated that he was a ward member for Alsager and an Alsager Town councillor and had had interactions with the Council and others on the subject of Talke Road but declared that he had not pre-determined the outcome of the decision to be taken at the Committee's meeting.

In relation to Item 5 – Disposal of Public Open Space Land off Talke Road, Alsager, visiting member Councillor R Fletcher declared that an Alsager Town Councillor and had attended consultation meetings. He also referred to a post on social media and stated that he did not know this person and called for an apology from them.

In relation to Item 7 – Introduction of a Private Landlord Offer Scheme, Councillor M Goldsmith declared that he owned property that was rented out.

In relation to Item 7 – Introduction of a Private Landlord Offer Scheme, Councillor D Jefferay declared that he owned property that was rented out, but this was not in located in Cheshire East.

## **28 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2022 be approved as a correct record.

## **29 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION**

Councillor C Naismith addressed the committee in relation to Item 7 – Introduction of a Private Landlord Offer. Whilst he asked the Committee to support the proposal, he felt it was not a long-term solution to the problem and asked what happened after the 6-month period had expired. Renters needed to be able to access affordable and good quality housing and that councils should look into building their own housing to provide this rather than just relying on social landlords and housing associations.

Sue Helliwell urged the Committee to give due and proper consideration to the representations received in relation to the land to the rear of Talke Road, Alsager and to support the retention of the site as public open space as spending time in the natural environment had a positive impact on people's mental and physical health.

Lindsay Belfield spoke against the disposal of the public open space off Talk Road, Alsager referring to the biodiversity of the site and to protecting and enhancing the environment rather than disposing of the land.

Mr MacDonald spoke against the disposal of the land as it provided a valuable piece of open space for the wellbeing of local residents and stated that the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 set out a vision for a more open and greener Cheshire East and was this proposal not contrary to that.

## **30 DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE LAND OFF TALKE ROAD, ALSAGER**

The Committee considered a report on the proposed disposal of public open space land at Talke Road, Alsager.

The Council was the freehold owner of the land which been included within the adopted Local Plan as a housing and employment site. The Council was authorised to dispose of any land that it owned but where land could be regarded as open space, as defined under s336(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the Council was required to advertise its intention to dispose of the land for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper

circulating in the area in which the land was situated and then consider any objections received in response.

The disposal of the land had been advertised for two weeks in the local press in December 2021 and the objections/representations received were set out in appendices III and IV to the report.

The Committee had originally considered the disposal of the public open space land at its meeting on 31 May 2022 and had resolved that the decision be deferred to enable alternative potential uses of the land to be considered. An Addendum to the report had been provided which set out details of alternative uses of the land and responded to questions raised by the Committee at its meeting on 31 May 2022.

Councillor Rod Fletcher, a ward councillor for Alsager, addressed the Committee setting out the history and previous use of the land under consideration.

The Committee asked questions on several matters including the definition of public open space, the use of the adjacent land, future uses of the land and type of housing, previous lapsed planning applications on the land, cost of decontamination of land, sale value on the open market and if the recovering of clinker on the site had been considered.

As a few the questions related to financial information, details of which were contained within the confidential appendix to the report, it was proposed and seconded that the meeting move into Part 2 to consider these matters.

**RESOLVED:**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended on the grounds that it involved the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

The Committee asked, and officers responded, to question on finance and other matters contained within the confidential appendix to the report.

It was moved and seconded that the Committee move back into Part 1 to allow the press and public to return to the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

That the meeting move back into Part 1 to enable the press and public to return to the meeting.

*The Committee adjourned for a short break.*

The Committee in considering the proposal to dispose of the public open spaces land raised the following matters during the debate:

- the land being a brownfield site and labelled as such in the local plan, where it was identified for development
- concern about the loss of open space for use by local residents
- loss of trees and if tree preservation orders could be applied for
- loss of biodiversity
- concern about contamination of the site from previous use
- could a percentage of the proceeds of a sale be used to improve biodiversity in Alsager and this be raised with future developer if the land was disposed of
- sale would be capital receipt for the Council.

The recommendations of the report, having been moved and seconded, were put to the vote.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1 having considered the responses received as a result of the public notices, approve the disposal of the public open space land off Talke Road, Alsager.
- 2 delegate power to the Head of Estates to negotiate and agree terms for the disposal of the land, and to instruct the Director of Governance and Compliance to negotiate and enter into the legal agreements necessary to facilitate the disposal of the land.

### 31 **HOUSING OPTIONS DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY**

The Committee considered the Housing Option's Domestic Abuse policy, which had been developed to outline the services survivors/victims of domestic abuse would receive from the Housing Options Service.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 came into force on 29 April 2021 and introduced new duties on local authorities to ensure that all victims of domestic abuse and their children could access the right support in safe accommodation.

The Housing Options Team had been working towards gaining the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, which was a scheme open to housing associations, local authority housing teams and homelessness providers across the UK to help improve their response to domestic abuse. The Housing Options Team were assessed in June 2022 and successfully awarded the DAHA accreditation.

**RESOLVED (unanimously):** That the Committee

- 1 approve the Housing Options Domestic Abuse Policy, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

- 2 delegates authority to make any future minor amendments or legislation changes to the policy to the Director of Growth and Enterprise in consultation with the Chair of the Economy and Growth Committee.

### **32 THE INTRODUCTION OF A PRIVATE LANDLORD OFFER SCHEME**

The Committee considered the Private Landlord Offer Scheme which was being proposed to provide the Housing Options Team with the ability to negotiate with Private Sector Landlords to secure private rented accommodation for those who were a priority on the social housing waiting list or were currently homeless.

The Scheme would provide the council with the ability to directly refer prospective tenants to a landlord who had agreed to the terms of the scheme. The scheme aimed to provide enhanced financial cover to landlords and provide peace of mind that they would have a dedicated liaison officer who would be on hand to support them with any issues. It was proposed that the scheme would be piloted for a period of two years. The Committee requested that an update on the scheme be brought back in 12 months' time.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1 approves the Private Landlord Offer Scheme, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, including the adoption of a rent guarantee to underwrite a tenant's rent liability, and a finder's fee to encourage uptake from private landlords to accept referrals and help address housing need in the borough.
- 2 authorise the Director of Growth and Enterprise, in consultation with the Chair of the Economy and Growth Committee, to make further minor amendments to the scheme to ensure ongoing compliance with the law and guidance from the Government.

### **33 SECTION 106 FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN LIEU OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY UPDATE**

The Committee considered the report which provide an update on the Section 106 financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing policy.

The policy had been approved by the Committee in September 2021 and it had been agreed that the policy would be reviewed on an annual basis and any changes reported to the Committee.

A review of the policy had taken place in August 2022 and a small number of amendments were required to the policy. These included updating the policy to align with the recent Subsidy Control advice, amending the decision maker for projects, in line with the most recent version of the Constitution, and including an additional priority which allowed funding

from individual contributions to be combined with others, if a project required this.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 approve the updated S106 financial contributions in lieu of affordable housing policy, as set out in appendix 1 to the report.
- 2 note the changes made and delegate authority to approve any spends of financial contribution in lieu of affordable housing in line with the Cheshire East Council Constitution.

#### 34 **FINANCIAL REVIEW OF 2022/23**

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of the Cheshire East Council forecast outturn for the financial year 2022/23.

It was reported that a financial management training session would be held for members of the Committee on 5 December 2022.

The Committee noted the reduction in visitor numbers at Tatton Park and increases in costs due to inflation and asked what the revenue budget was for Tatton Park. It was agreed that this information would be circulated to committee members.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 note the report of the Finance Sub Committee of 9 November 2022 and specifically the recommendations of that Sub Committee:
  - 1.1 Finance Sub Committee recommend Services Committees to
    - 1.1.1 note the financial update and forecast outturn relevant to their terms of reference.
    - 1.1.2. note that officers will seek to improve the financial outturn across all Committees to mitigate the overall forecast overspend of the Council.
- 2 note Appendix 4 and the following sections specific to the Committee:
  - changes to Revenue budget 2022/23
  - Action Plan 2022/23
  - Corporate Grants Register
  - Debt Management
  - Capital Strategy
  - Reserve Strategy

## 35 CREWE REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee considered the report which provided an update on progress with the Crewe Town Centre regeneration programme, including projects supported by funding from the Future High Streets Fund and Towns Fund.

Crewe Town Board had undertaken an independent review to consider the cost and delivery risks facing the projects in the Towns Fund programme, particularly in relation to the increasing risk and potential impact of cost inflation.

The outcome of the review was to request the withdrawal of the Lyceum Powerhouse project from the programme, which would create a saving of £4,998,000, which would be reallocated across the programme. As the accountable body for Crewe Town Board and the Towns Fund, the Council's S151 officer was required to approve any change requests to the Government and given the significance of the decision, the Committee was asked to support this decision.

It was asked if the table at Appendix 2 to the report was up to date and if not, could the latest version be circulated to committee members.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 note the report and agree to further briefings being brought to the committee on the Crewe Town Centre regeneration programme.
- 2 approve that submission of a request to Government to remove the Lyceum Powerhouse project from the Towns Fund programme and to delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Customer Services, in consultation with the Executive Director of Place and Crewe Town Board, to propose the reallocation of funding across the remaining Town Funds programme.

## 36 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme for 2022/23.

With regards to the item on Handforth Garden Village – Delivery Strategy, it was understood that the Strategic Planning Board would be considering the planning application in January 2023, and it was therefore suggested that an additional meeting of the committee be held after this in early February 2023 to consider this matter.

Reference was made to the letter sent by the Chair of the Committee to the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, following the last meeting, raising concern about the delay in the review of car parking provision as this was linked to the Town Centre Vitality Plans. It was understood that there was still no item on the Highways and Transport

Committee work programme for it to consider this matter, and it was therefore requested that the Chair write again to the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee asking for the review of car parking provision to be added to their work programme.

Reference was made to the item for the January 2023 committee on the Regional Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Report and it was suggested that the committee would benefit from a briefing on the role and work of the Local Enterprise Partnership.

It was asked if the Committee could be briefed on the land owned by the Council, with specific reference to the land in the south Macclesfield area. It was noted that some of this land was subject to planning applications. It was agreed that consideration would be given to this request.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme for 2022/23 be noted.

**37 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended on the grounds that it involved the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

**38 HOUSING RELATED SUPPORT CONTRACT**

The Committee considered the report on the Housing Related Support Contract.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously):

That the recommendations as set out in the report be approved.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 5.22 pm

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)