

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economy and Growth Committee**  
held on Tuesday, 17th January, 2023 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,  
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

## PRESENT

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

Councillors D Brown, J Buckley, J Clowes, L Crane, P Groves, S Hogben,  
M Houston, D Jefferay, A Kolker, R Moreton and D Stockton

## OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise  
Charles Jarvis, Head of Economic Development  
Andy Kehoe, Head of Estates  
Ralph Kemp, Head of Environmental Services  
Jez Goodman, Development and Regeneration Delivery Manager  
Jo Wise, Development and Regeneration Delivery Manager  
Richard Milkins, Visitor Economy Manager  
Helen Paton, Cultural Economy Manager  
Wendy Broadhurst, Lead Finance Partner Place  
Adrian Leslie, Lawyer  
Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer

## 39 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Brookfield,  
R Moreton and P Williams. Councillor L Crane attended as substitute for  
Councillor Brookfield and Councillor J Buckley attended as a substitute for  
Councillor Williams.

## 40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

## 41 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

### RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2023 be approved  
as a correct record.

## 42 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public in attendance.

#### 43 CORPORATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Committee considered the Asset Management Plan, which set out how it would be used to manage land and property over the period 2022 to 2025.

The Asset Management Plan set out the Council's assessment management policy and practice and provided a baseline on property and land matters and supported capital investment decisions identified in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The purpose of the Asset Management Plan was to align the asset portfolio with the needs of the organisation. The key objectives Plan were

- deal with the impact of climate change
- deliver services to the Community and Customers of the Council
- deliver a compliant Estate with appropriate governance systems
- enabling and delivery of an efficient Council
- delivery of economic growth in Cheshire East
- enabling the delivery of quality of place.

A draft version of the Plan had been circulated to all councillors last year for consultation and their comments and observations had been worked in the Plan.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1 approve the Corporate Asset Management Plan; and
- 2 note the outcomes of the previous Corporate Asset Management Plan.
- 3 delegates authority to the Director of Growth and Enterprise, following consultation with the Chair of the Economy and Growth Committee, to make correct any spelling and make any final amendments to the Asset Management Plan.

#### 44 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023-2027 CONSULTATION

The Committee received a report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2023-2027 and the revenue and capital proposals contained within the MTFS relating to the Committee's responsibilities. As part of the consultation process the Committee was asked to provide comments and feedback to the Corporate Policy Committee on proposals related to the responsibilities of the committee.

The following comments were raised by Committee:

- concern that Members had not been involved in the drawing up of the proposals before them in the report. In previous year there had

been session with finance officers to discuss proposals before they went into the MTFs. It was asked if it was possible for the background workings behind each proposal to be circulated to the committee for information.

- Ref 64 Assets Buildings and Operational – the Committee was concerned that only spend on maintenance where there was a specific Health and Safety risk was not a sustainable approach and could cost the Council more in the long term.
- Ref 66 & 67 Rates increase for Cheshire East properties - it was asked why the rates increase for Cheshire East properties were being funded from the Collection Fund earmarked reserve. In response it was reported that the proposal were the result of the increase in business rates payable by Council due to the Valuation Office Revaluation which took effect on 1st April 2023. The estates rationalisation exercise was ongoing and this may ultimately reduce the level of business rates payable by the Council and therefore the uplift in rates currently forecast could be temporary.
- Ref 68 Office Estate Rationalisation – clarification was sought and given that the reference to Macclesfield Library related to the physical building and not the service. It was also raised if there would be a separate formal consultation about the move of the library building.
- Ref 72 Assets Transactions – it as commented that using auctions to dispose of property was not always the best way to dispose of property quickly and did not always achieve the best price.
- Ref 75 Restructuring Potential – it was suggested that the Council should look at retraining or upskilling staff before using schemes such as MARS. It was also queried if there was scope for transferring non-statutory services/non-income generating posts to town and parish councils.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1 That the Committee notes
  - 1 the year-end forecast outturn position for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
  - 2 the financial context and proposals contained within the Executive Summary of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (as set out in the MFTS report at Annex C, Section 1).
  - 3 the Revenue Grant Funding, as set out in Appendix 4 to the report
  - 4 the Earmarked Reserves, as set out in Appendix 5 to the report.
- 2 The Committee feedback be noted on the proposals within the MTFs, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, that can

support and advise full Council in fulfilling its responsibilities to approve a balanced budget for 2023/23 in the following areas:

- 1 Revenue Proposals, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report
- 2 Capital Programme, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report.

#### 45 VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGY

The Committee considered the Visitor Economy Strategy, which addresses future strategic direction and priorities for the period 2023-2028 with the aim to grow the value of the visitor economy and contribution to the Borough's wider economic growth.

The Strategy identified the issues facing the visitor economy, those aspects where Cheshire East was well positioned, and the strategic priorities that could support and grow the contributions of the sector.

#### **RESOLVED (unanimously):**

That the Committee approve and adopt the Visitor Economy Strategy 2023-2028.

#### 46 TOWN CENTRE VITALITY PLANS

The Committee considered the report which sought approval of the Town Centre Vitality Plans for Alsager, Congleton, Handforth, Knutsford, Middlewich, Nantwich, Poynton, Sandbach and Wilmslow.

The Council had commissioned the development of Town Centre Vitality Plans for the Borough's nine key service centres as identified in the Local Plan. With input from Town Councils, the draft plans had been produced and public consultation subsequently held.

The Town Centre Vitality Plans identified projects and initiatives which could be the subject of focus as and when sources of funding became available. The plans did not commit the Council to funding any initiatives or projects at the present time.

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

- 1 approve the Town Centre Vitality Plans, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, endorsing the priorities they identified to be taken forward to support town centre health as and when suitable funding opportunities arise, and resources allow.
- 2 endorse Town Councils being requested to also approve the plans with a view to establishing a joint set of agreed priorities.

- 3 where appropriate key relevant census data for 2021, when available, be added to the Town Centre Vitality Plans.

#### **47 REPURPOSING OUR HIGH STREETS (CREWE) GRANT SCHEME**

The Committee considered a report on the proposal to design and deliver a new grant scheme aimed at improving occupancy of vacant commercial premises in the Crewe Town Centre.

The Repurposing Our High Streets project would be a new scheme to address the high levels of vacancy of commercial premises in Crewe town centre, supporting businesses to take leases by contributing towards the initial costs of occupying and operating from vacant premises.

Councillor A Critchley, ward councillor for Crewe Central, attended the meeting and addressed the Committee in relation to this item.

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

- 1 approve the allocation of £1.45m Towns Fund grant to be used in the operation of the 'Repurposing Our High Street' project to be spent over the period January 2023 up to 31 March 2023.
- 2 delegates authority to the Executive Director Place to make any final amendments to the draft policy, as set out in Appendix 1, operate the scheme, and enter into any associated legal agreements.

#### **48 NOTICE OF MOTION: PUBLIC ART CONSULTATIONS**

The Committee considered the report on the Notice of Motion relating to Public Art Consultations.

The report set out that the Council's Cultural Framework was due to be considered by the committee at its meeting in March. The Cultural Framework would include full details of commissioning of art and cultural activity and would therefore address the issues raised in the Notice of Motion. It was therefore proposed that the Notice of Motion be included in the Cultural Framework report.

**RESOLVED:**

That full consideration of the Notice of Motion be given at the March meeting of the Economy and Growth Committee in the context of a report on the Council's Cultural Framework.

#### **49 SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH COMMISSION REPORT**

The Committee considered the report on the Notice of Motion relating to the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission Report.

The Notice of Motion submitted to the meeting of Council on 14 December 2022, proposed by Councillor Q Abel and seconded by Councillor M Houston, proposed that

- 1 Cheshire East Council notes and acknowledges the report and recommendations of the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission.
- 2 That the Council's Economy and Growth Committee be asked to consider the report and to determine the Council's response to the recommendations.

The report of the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission set out for each identified theme the vision and key priorities for them and provided a summary and analysis of the Early-Stage Delivery Plan 2022-2024.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1 endorses the final report of the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission 'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington', noting the priorities identified to be taken forward as and when suitable funding and opportunities arise, and resources allow.
- 2 endorse Town Council's being requested to consider the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission's findings and recommendations, with a view to supporting any actions which they can help to implement.

#### **50 MID-YEAR PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2022/23 - GROWTH AND ENTERPRISE**

The Committee considered the Mid-Year Performance Review report for the Economy and Enterprise Department for the first two quarters of 2022-23.

The report detailed the performance against the key priorities and key performance indicators of services in Housing, Estates, Rural & Cultural Economy, and Economic Development.

**RESOLVED (unanimously):**

That the Committee note the performance of the department.

#### **51 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2022/23.

It was reported that the special meeting on 10 February 2023 would receive 2 reports relating to the Handforth Garden Village Delivery Strategy.

It was requested that if the March meeting had a long agenda that the meeting start at 1 pm.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme for 2022/23 be noted.

**52 URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS - FUTURE HIGH STREETS FUND:  
PROPOSED PROJECT CHANGES**

In accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair had agreed that this item could be considered as an item of urgent business as it could not wait until the next scheduled meeting of the Committee to ensure that funding was reallocated.

The Committee considered the proposed variation to an existing funding arrangement regarding two projects within Crewe's Future High Streets Fund and sought approval for the submission of a Project Adjustment Request for the reallocation of funding between the projects.

Following engagement with Network Rail over the past two years it had been concluded that there was no scope to deliver enhanced pedestrian/cycling connectivity across the West Coast mainline at Earle Street and the balance of the budget allocated for this project was no longer required.

Progress was continuing with the Southern Gateway; however significant construction cost inflation had been experienced and additional funding was required to deliver the scheme as planned.

It was therefore proposed that a Project Adjustment Request be submitted to the Department of Levelling Up Housing & Communities seeking to reallocate the balance of approximately £1m grant funding from the Earle Street Link (feasibility) project to the Southern Gateway project.

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

- 1 notes the conclusion of technical feasibility assessments related to the Earle Street Link (feasibility) project and that it does not proceed in acquiring land for the purposes of future delivery of an Earle Street Link; and
- 2 approves the submission of a Project Adjustment Request to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities seeking

approval to reallocate approximately £1m funding within the approved Future High Street Fund programme for Crewe, from the Earle Street Link (feasibility) project to the Southern Gateway project.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 6.02 pm

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)