

## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and Communities Committee** held on Thursday, 27th July, 2023 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

### **PRESENT**

Councillor M Warren (Chair)  
Councillor J Snowball (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Brooks, L Buchanan, T Dean, A Farrall, S Gardiner, D Jefferay, B Posnett, H Seddon, L Smetham, H Whitaker and D Edwardes

### **OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Tom Shuttleworth – Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods  
Jane Gowing – Interim Director of Planning  
Tracy Baldwin – Finance Manager  
James Thomas – Principal Solicitor  
Josie Lloyd – Democratic Services Officer  
Tom Evans – Neighbourhood Planning Manager  
Sally Rose – Contract Manager - Waste  
Chris Allman – Head of Neighbourhood Services  
Joanne Shannon – Libraries Management

### **84 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr John Bird. Cllr David Edwardes attended the meeting as a substitute.

### **85 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Gardiner, Cllr Seddon, Cllr Warren, Cllr Brooks, Cllr Buchanan and Cllr Dean declared that they were members of the Cheshire East library service.

Cllr Dean declared that his daughter-in-law worked for the library service in Cheshire West which was a combined service with Cheshire East.

### **86 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

### **87 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION**

Cllr Robert Douglas from Congleton Town Council attended the meeting to speak in relation to item 7, Green Waste Subscription – Implementation Update, and highlighted concerns that this would have an adverse impact on Cheshire East’s carbon neutrality target. He had been advised by residents that they intended to put their garden waste into their household waste bins instead of paying the charge and, while there remained a free service at household waste and recycling centres, he felt that this discriminated against residents who could not easily access these sites and that it would worsen Cheshire East’s carbon footprint by residents travelling to dispose of waste. Cllr Douglas asked the committee to defer the introduction of the green waste charge until a replacement recycling site could be opened in Congleton.

Cllr Suzy Firkin from Congleton Town Council addressed the committee in relation to item 7 and stated that fly tipping would increase around Congleton and that Congleton Town Council would be responsible for the cost to deal with this. Cllr Firkin recognised that Cheshire East is under financial pressure but asked that this is used as an opportunity to raise money to improve the waste and recycling infrastructure and suggested that money paid by Congleton residents could be used to fund a new recycling site or local composting site.

Ms Sue Helliwell also spoke in relation to item 7. Ms Helliwell expressed concerns regarding the potential issues that could arise from residents not subscribing to green waste collections, including food waste going back into non-recycling bins, increased fly tipping and subsequent costs for removal, the environmental impact of additional car journeys from those who choose to take green waste to recycling centres, and Cheshire East’s budget not being balanced if uptake targets are not met due to the cost of living crisis. Ms Helliwell referenced a solar farm being built to provide electricity to the Leighton Grange recycling facility and asked whether Cheshire East would be able to sell electricity back to the National Grid, and queried whether a third party currently pays Cheshire East for food and garden waste. Officers undertook to provide a written response to the queries raised.

## 88 **SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

The committee received the report which sought approval to consult on the final draft of the Sustainable Drainage Supplementary Planning Document.

Page 19 of the final draft document (appendix A) contained the text ‘seek permission’ under an image and it was queried whether this permission had been secured. Officers undertook to confirm this following this meeting.

The report made references to a 100 year event plus climate change allowance and it was queried when this period starts from. Officers

confirmed that this information could be clarified and added into the document prior to publication.

Members thanked the officers for the work on the report.

**RESOLVED (unanimously)**

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Approve the final draft SuDS Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix A) and to undertake four weeks of public consultation
2. Publish the associated Report of Consultation (Appendix B)
3. Publish the associated Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report ("SEA") (Appendix C)
4. Publish the associated Equalities Impact Assessment Screening Report ("EQIA") (Appendix D)

**89 PROVISIONAL FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2022/23**

The committee received the report which provide an overview of the Cheshire East Council provisional outturn for the financial year 2022/23.

It was requested that the resolution in the minutes should state that the committee noted the report, rather than considered, as the item was for information only. Officers would ensure that the wording in future reports reflected this.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Note the report of the Corporate Policy Committee (Agenda for Corporate Policy Committee on Tuesday, 11th July, 2023, 10.00 am | Cheshire East Council).
2. Note the financial performance of the Council in the 2022/23 financial year relevant to their terms of reference.
3. Note the delegated decisions relating to supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in Section 2 of each Committee Appendix(Annex 2).
4. Note the update on performance with regard to the MTF5 2023-27 approved budget policy change items, in respect of Services within the remit of the Committee (Annex 3).

5. Note a virement for £218,718.10 that will be approved by the Director of Finance and Customer Services in consultation with the chair of the Environment and Communities Committee and the chair of the Finance Sub-Committee to fund the works required at St Chads Churchyard, Wybunbury.

## 90 **MTFS 92 GREEN WASTE SUBSCRIPTION - IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**

The committee received the report which detailed the progress in delivering the Green Waste subscription charge and how the charge will be implemented.

Cllr Liz Wardlaw spoke as a visiting member and raised queries including whether the Council is required to deliver a specified tonnage of waste, whether the reference to four new members of staff will include administrative positions to meet increased demand, how many instances of fly tipping there had been within the last 12 months and how many resulted in successful prosecutions. In response, the committee were advised that there was no guaranteed minimum tonnage within the Biowise contract, the additional staff would include two customer facing administrative positions and two waste education officers. Data on numbers of fly tipping and successful prosecutions would be provided in a written response.

Cllr Janet Clowes spoke as a visiting member and raised a number of points including that lower income households could be most affected if they do not have the space to compost in the way described, fly tipping was rarely prosecuted but was significant environmentally and contributed to the contamination of watercourses, and that the policy was looking at green waste as a problem when it should be seen as a resource.

There was significant debate which included the following points:

- Some members felt that they did not have sufficient involvement in the production of the MTFS and were unable to make changes to the proposals
- Green waste charging was controversial with residents and it was felt that many may choose not to pay
- It appeared to be a change of course as there had been investment in encouraging residents to dispose of food waste in green bins
- Instances of fly tipping may go unreported when on private land which would particularly affect rural areas
- Concern that reducing the collection of green waste, as was done by Cheshire West, was not included in the proposal
- The Council had to set a balanced budget by law and this was one of the few services within the committee's remit that was not statutory

- There was an opportunity to be environmental with the change, such as encouraging home composting and rewilding to reduce garden waste

It was requested that the minutes show that the following members voted against the proposal: Cllr Tony Dean, Cllr Stewart Gardiner, Cllr Becky Posnett, Cllr Lesley Smetham and Cllr Hayley Whitaker.

**RESOLVED (by majority):**

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Agree the proposals for delivering the Green Waste subscription charge as included within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-27, including the initial annual subscription charge of £56.00, which in future will be agreed as part of the Council's fees and charges regime.
2. Delegate authority to the Head of Environmental Services in conjunction with relevant council teams to undertake all necessary actions to implement and deliver the Garden Waste subscription scheme.

**91 MTFS 93 LIBRARIES SERVICE REVIEW - IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**

The committee received the report which provided an update on the implementation of the Cheshire East Libraries Service Review following the approval of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-27.

A request was made for information to be provided on how the number of responses to this consultation compares to the average response rate to consultations within the Council. This information would be provided in a written response.

Cllr Wardlaw spoke on behalf of Cllr Clowes as a visiting member, referring to other areas of the Council that included their enhanced use of library venues and facilities over the 2023-25 period to meet their own MTFS savings and strategies and asked to what extent did this consultation take into account the MTFS commitments of other directorates. The committee were advised that while mitigations were in place, the proposal did not directly consider the MTFS commitments of other directorates.

Comments were put forward as part of the debate including:

- Members felt they were not given choices as part of the MTFS and that there should be earlier engagement with members going forward
- It was requested that when considering the MTFS, if there are aspects within that are going to be a significant change to the way

in which services are delivered, that those consultations are shown clearly/separately to other proposals

- It was acknowledged that the provision of libraries is a statutory service
- Members thanked officers for doing all they could to minimise the impact

It was requested that it be recorded in the minutes that the proposal was carried with eight in favour and five against.

**RESOLVED (by majority):**

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Note the progress made to date in implementing the Libraries Service Review included as a specific proposal within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-27 as approved at Council on 22 February 2023, including the feedback from the recent public consultation exercise.
2. Agree the final details of the changes to library opening hours, as included at Appendix C and the implementation programme.
3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director - Place to take all necessary steps to implement the Libraries Service Review, and to make all consequent changes to service provision including the necessary staff restructure and consultations.
4. Delegate authority to the Executive Director – Place to enter into funding agreements related to the ‘top up’ service offer.

**92 STANDING ITEM: MEMBERS ADVISORY PANEL: CHESHIRE EAST CEMETERIES STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Member Advisory Panel was reconvened post-election and had its first meeting on 17 July. Cllr Joy Bratherton had been reappointed as Chair.

There had been engagement with a specialist consultant who had now provided a draft strategy which was being reviewed by officers before being shared with the member advisory panel for their input.

The approval of the strategy was scheduled on the committee’s work programme for the September meeting and would be followed by the procurement of a consultant to undertake the development of the specific site management plans for each cemetery covered by the strategy. The consultants would bring back a cemeteries investment programme, informed by their individual management plans, in due course.

**RESOLVED:**

That the update be noted.

**93 STANDING ITEM: WORKING GROUP: HOUSEHOLD WASTE & RECYCLING CENTRES**

Cllr Rob Moreton attended as a visiting member to highlight concerns about the lack of a recycling centre in Congleton. Cllr Moreton stated that fly tipping had increased in Congleton since the closure of the site and that it was expected that this would get worse with the introduction of green waste charges. The Council had advised that there would be the possibility to have pop-up tips in the town on a regular basis but this had not yet been provided. Cllr Moreton asked that a permanent recycling centre is provided in Congleton and that regular pop-up tips are made available in the short term.

The working group had met on 24 July for the first time since the election and reappointed Cllr Laura Crane as Chair. A paper would be brought to committee in September to look at options and seek approval to go out to public consultation and undertake a contract procurement exercise. A report would be brought back to committee in around 12 months for a final decision that would include a reference to any new site at Congleton.

**RESOLVED:**

That the update be noted.

**94 WORK PROGRAMME**

There had been two items added to the work programme since the agenda was published – one was on the household waste and recycling centre provision and the other was on an upcoming bid to the Football Foundation relating to a potential new facility at King George V playing fields in Crewe. Both reports were scheduled for the September meeting.

In relation to the MTFs, a request was made for a report to be brought to the September meeting outlining how each service within the committee's remit could make savings with a view to members deciding which proposals to take forward. It was noted that a report was scheduled for November committee to consult on the MTFs and that briefings on emerging proposals would be scheduled for August/September, however members felt that would be too late for them to have a say in which proposals are taken forward. It was agreed this request would be looked into following the meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10:00 and concluded at 13:53

Councillor M Warren (Chair)