

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Policy Committee**
held on Thursday, 1st December, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1, 2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

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

Councillors D Brown, C Browne, J Clowes, J P Findlow, K Flavell, N Mannion,
A Martin, J Rhodes, J Saunders, M Warren and P Williams

Officers in attendance

Lorraine O'Donnell, Chief Executive
Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services
David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance
Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services
Sarah Bullock, Director of Policy and Change
Josie Griffiths, Head of Audit and Risk
Michael Moore, Head of Communications
David Malcolm, Head of Planning
Abigail Rushton, Senior Manager – Workforce Development
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services

The Chair welcomed Councillors David Brown and Jos Saunders who had recently been appointed to the Committee in place of Councillors Stewart Gardiner and Kate Parkinson.

44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

45 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2022 be approved as a correct record.

46 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

47 HIGH SPEED RAIL 2 PHASE 2B - QUALIFYING AUTHORITY AND SCHEDULE 17 DECISION-MAKING

The Committee considered a report which sought to consult the Committee prior to a decision being made by full Council on whether the

Council should become a Qualifying Authority for the construction of phase 2b of the High Speed Rail 2 (HS2).

The proposed approach would enable the Council to have greater control over the approval of construction details associated with the High Speed Rail scheme. This was necessary to ensure that the impacts of the developments on the local environment and local amenity were fully considered and addressed in line with the approach of the Cheshire East Council Local Plan Strategy.

The decision to become a Qualifying Authority would require changes to the Constitution which had to be approved by full Council. The proposed changes were set out in Annex 1 to the report.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That it be recommended to Council that the Council become a Qualifying Authority for the construction of phase 2b of the High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) as set out in the report and that the Constitution be amended accordingly as set out in Annex 1 to the report.

48 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR RESIDENTS 2022-25

The Committee considered a proposed Communications Strategy for Residents 2022-25 following public consultation on the draft strategy.

The response to the consultation had been largely supportive of the draft strategy, as presented to the committee in July. The strategy had been updated as a direct result of feedback provided through the consultation.

In response to a question about whether the Council had a policy of acknowledging communications, the Chief Executive referred to the recently-adopted Customer Services Charter which set out standards for responding to communications from the public.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. approves the final Communications Strategy for Residents 2022-25; and
2. notes that further updates will be provided to the Committee on progress against the aims of the Strategy on a six-monthly basis.

49 CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Committee considered a report on progress with the delivery of a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to consultation and engagement, since the previous report in July 2022.

It was noted that the final report on the recommendations of the Cheshire East Citizens' Panel would be presented to members in the near future.

Members commented on the need to avoid digital exclusion of older people.

Officers undertook to ensure that the contact details of those parish councils that were not members of ChalC had been forwarded to Jackie Weaver who was overseeing meetings of the new Town and Parish Council Network this year.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. notes the Cheshire East Council Consultation and Engagement toolkit (Appendix 1 to the report);
2. notes the programme of consultation and engagement activities planned for the remainder of 2022/23 (Appendix 2); and
3. notes the development of the new Town and Parish Council network.

50 WORKFORCE STRATEGY 2021-2025 - PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee considered a report on progress with the delivery of Cheshire East Council's Workforce Strategy 2021-2025; an update on the Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS); and a review of the programme of activities supporting organisational culture.

It was noted that the take-up of new apprenticeships had begun to recover post pandemic and that with anticipated new starts already in place for quarters three and four, the Council should come close to reaching its target.

Officers undertook to provide details of the retention figures for apprenticeships.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. notes the progress in delivering the Workforce Strategy, and the programme of activities to support organisational change; and
2. agrees to receive further updates every six months to monitor progress.

51 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION - ANNUAL REVIEW

The Committee considered a report on progress with the delivery of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025.

In response to questions asked by the Chair on behalf of Councillor M Houston, the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion, officers advised that:

- The members of the People's Panel had been selected according to an algorithm to ensure that they reflected the Borough's population.
- The recruitment and retention group was focussing on key vacancy areas and how the Council could recruit and retain staff. Feedback was being provided by new recruits on the retention process and work experience.

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the progress in delivering the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

52 FINANCIAL REVIEW UPDATE 2022/23

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

Members were asked to note the serious financial challenges being experienced by the Council due to inflation and rising demand for services which were increasingly complex. The report outlined the measures required to mitigate pressures on spending. Annex 1 to the report provided information on the overall financial stability and resilience of the Council.

The Director of Finance and Customer Services undertook to provide a written response providing further information on how the Ukraine Grant had been used.

In response to whether the Autumn Statement had made a positive or negative impact on the Council's financial position, the Chair referred to a recent survey of local authority chief executives which indicated that a majority felt that the measures announced had made their council's financial position worse. The Director of Finance and Customer Services added that the Autumn Statement had announced spending increases below inflation and that this would have a negative impact on services.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. notes the forecast adverse Net Revenue financial pressure of £8.7m against a revised budget of £328.4m (2.7%), and recognises that this

presents marginal change to the position reported at Quarter One, reflecting the difficulties to mitigate the financial pressures faced by the Council;

2. notes the forecast Capital Spending of £179.6m against an approved MTFs budget £185.2m due to slippage carried forward from the previous year;
3. notes the significant level of activities outlined in each 'Action Plan' contained in Annex 1 (Appendices 1 to 7);
4. notes the contents of Annex 1 and each of the appendices, and notes that any financial mitigation decisions requiring member approval will be presented to the appropriate Committee;
5. recommends to Service Committees to:
 - (a) note the financial update and forecast outturn relevant to their terms of reference;
 - (b) note the overview of financial circumstances affecting Directorate budgets provided at 6.8 of this report; and
 - (c) review the action plans which seek to improve the financial outturn across all Committees to mitigate the overall forecast overspend of the Council.

53 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 2 2022/23

The Committee considered a report which provided an oversight of organisational performance for the second quarter of 2022/23 against the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25.

Officers undertook to provide a written response to provide a breakdown of the figures relating to child poverty in Cheshire East.

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the performance against Q2 of 2022/23 of delivery of the Corporate Plan.

54 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER ASSURANCE REPORT Q2 2022/23

The Committee considered an update on the activity of the Council's Strategic Risk Register for Quarter 2 (July – September) 2022/23.

Members noted the number of risks which, even after mitigation, remained in the highest risk category.

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the position of the Strategic Risk Register for Quarter 2 2022/23.

55 HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE 2022/23

The Committee considered a report which provided a summary of accident and information data for the Council and maintained schools for the first two quarters of 2022/23 and comparative data for the same periods in the last three years.

RESOLVED

That the Committee notes the report.

56 DOMESTIC TAXBASE 2023/24

The Committee considered a report which set out the council tax base calculation 2023/24 for recommendation to Council in December 2022.

It was noted that there was no new homes bonus for this year.

It was also confirmed that council tax premiums on properties that had been empty for two years or more had been set at the maximum level allowed.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That

1. it be recommended to Council that:

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the amount to be calculated by Cheshire East Council as its council tax base for the year 2023/24 is 158,778.54 for the whole area; and

2. the Committee notes that the Council Tax Support scheme is agreed for 2023/24 as unchanged other than the increases in line with CPI as agreed in the last consultation and Council decision last year.

57 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee received an update on its work programme for 2022/23.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be noted.

58 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the following sub-committee meetings be received:

General Appeals Sub-Committee - 23rd August 2022

General Appeals Sub-Committee - 20th September 2022

General Appeals Sub-Committee - 11th October 2022

General Appeals Sub-Committee - 8th November 2022

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.18 pm

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)