

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and Communities Committee** held on Thursday, 8th June, 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, B Posnett, H Seddon, L Smetham, L Anderson, D Edwardes and J Saunders

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Tom Shuttleworth – Interim Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods
Jane Gowing – Interim Director of Planning
Tracy Baldwin – Finance Manager
Mandy Withington – Legal Team Manager
Josie Lloyd – Democratic Services Officer

75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr Bird, Cllr Jefferay and Cllr Whitaker. Cllr Anderson, Cllr Edwardes and Cllr Saunders attended as substitutes.

76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In the interest of openness, the following declarations of interest were made in relation to item 5, Notice of Motion: Silica Sand Extraction Site Buffer:

Cllr Gardiner declared that he was a member of the Strategic Planning Board.

Cllr Seddon declared that she was a member of the Strategic Planning Board, was a member of Congleton Town Council and lived close to a proposed quarry site.

Cllr Brooks declared that she was a member of the Strategic Planning Board.

Cllr Smetham declared that she was a member of the Strategic Planning Board and had two sand quarries within her ward.

77 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2023 be agreed as a correct record.

78 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Cllr Robert Douglas from Congleton Town Council attended the meeting to speak in relation to item 5, Notice of Motion: Silica Sand Extraction Site Buffer. Cllr Douglas referred to a proposed silica sand quarry site at Somerford Farm and his concerns about silicosis. Cllr Douglas stated that the company proposing to open this site, Sibelco, had written to residents but that the majority of the letters were not received. Sibelco had advised that dust from the site will sometimes reach the properties but that it would not contain dangerous particles; however Cllr Douglas stated that residents did not have confidence in these assurances. Cllr Douglas asked Cheshire East Council to consider that independent air quality monitors be installed at varying distances for new silica sand quarry sites to ensure that the level of silica particles remain within legal limits.

79 NOTICE OF MOTION: SILICA SAND EXTRACTION SITE BUFFER

The committee received the report in response to a Notice of Motion put to full Council in February 2023.

A query was raised as to the Private Members' Bill which was put forward in the UK Parliament in December 2021 in relation to this matter. This bill had not progressed and therefore currently had no legal status. The Council was following national guidance; however, if national policy should change, the Council would ensure compliance. It was noted that, when planning applications were submitted, there were requirements for compliance with other regulations such as health and safety.

RESOLVED (by majority):

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Note the national guidance and proposed local planning policy position in relation to air quality including crystalline silica dust.
2. Reconfirm the Council's proposed approach as set out in the draft Minerals and Waste Plan and that the matter be considered in the normal way through the statutory local plan preparation process.

80 ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE BUDGETS 2023/24

The committee received the report which set out the allocation of the approved budgets for 2023/24 to the Environment and Communities Committee.

A concern was raised by Members who had voted against the budget that agreeing to note the report would suggest they supported it. Members were advised that the budget was approved in February and that the intention of this report was to keep the committee updated but that there would be further opportunities for decisions throughout the year in relation to some of the proposals. It was requested that it be recorded in the minutes that the Conservative members did not wish to support the noting of this report.

A query was raised as to the items within the budget that were subject to consultation, such as charging for green waste collection, and what the implications would be if the results of the consultation did not support the proposal. The committee were advised that the budget would need to remain balanced and therefore proposals for alternative items would need to come forward. Reports on the implementation of the planned proposals would be brought to committee throughout the year.

A request was made for fewer non-decision reports to be brought to committee meetings going forward as this was a decision making meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

81 2022/23 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW - ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

The committee received the report which provided an update on the performance across Environment and Neighbourhood Services for the financial year 2022-23 against the relevant priorities, actions and measures of success within the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25.

Members thanked the Planning team for their work in reducing the backlog.

A query was raised regarding the figures for registered library users and whether children under five were included in this. Officers undertook to clarify this following the meeting.

There was discussion around communications and ensuring that policy decisions were communicated clearly to residents in a way that all can understand. It was noted that it had been recognised that more structured communications were needed and that there were plans for taking this

forward. It was suggested that this could include engaging with outside organisations where appropriate to ensure a consistent message.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

82 APPOINTMENTS TO SUB-COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS, PANELS, BOARDS AND JOINT COMMITTEES

The committee received the report which sought approval from the Environment and Communities Committee to appoint members to the Cemeteries Strategy Member Advisory Panel, the Household Waste and Recycling Centres Working Group, the Local Plan Member Reference Group and to establish and appoint members to the Section 106 Member/Officer Working Group.

A motion was moved and seconded to amend the wording of the recommendations in the report to clarify that the committee were agreeing to the appointment of members to these working groups and that they be submitted to the Head of Democratic Services and Governance in consultation with the Group Leaders and Group Administrators. This was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED (unanimously):

That the Environment and Communities Committee:

1. Agree to the appointment of Members to the Cemeteries Strategy Member Advisory Panel and note its Terms of Reference
2. Agree to the appointment of Members to the Household Waste and Recycling Centres Working Group and agree that the Terms of Reference be reviewed and confirmed at its first meeting
3. Agree to the appointment of Members to the Local Plan Member Reference Group as follows: Con: 3; Lab: 3; Ind: 1; Lib Dem: 0; NGI: 0 and note its Terms of Reference
4. Agree to the establishment and appointment of Members to the Section 106 Member/Officer Working Group and agree that its Terms of Reference be agreed at its first meeting
5. Agree that the names of the Members appointed will be submitted to the Head of Democratic Services and Governance in consultation with the Group Leaders and Group Administrators

83 WORK PROGRAMME

A request was made for the report on green waste collection charges to include the implications, such as the environmental impact of residents using black bins instead or the risk of other costs arising. A further request was made for the business plan to be shared with the committee.

A query was raised regarding the Cleaner Crewe project and whether this could be rolled out to other areas of the borough. Members noted that the resources may not be available for wider roll out but that this could be looked at. A briefing on this project had taken place prior to the recent elections and could be repeated if required for new members.

A request was made for more information on the Dog Fouling and Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order and the Alley Gating Public Spaces Protection Order. Officers undertook to share more information on these items following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10:00 and concluded at 11:19

Councillor M Warren (Chair)