

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 1st February, 2011 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)
Councillor J Narraway (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors A Arnold, G Baxendale, D Brickhill, S Conquest, J Crockatt,
H Davenport, M Davies and D Topping, Councillor B Silvester (substitute for
Councillor P Findlow)

Apologies

Councillors G Barton and J P Findlow

78 OFFICERS

Vivienne Quayle – Head of Policy and Performance
Lisa Quinn – Borough Treasurer
Arthur Pritchard – Head of Assets
David Job- County Land Agent
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

79 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2010
approved as an accurate record.

80 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

81 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present who wished to make a statement.

82 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Borough Solicitor setting out the
2010/2011 work programme.

The Business Generation (BGC) Task and Finish Group had undertaken site visits on 18
January 2011 to the 4 Council owned BGC's at Brierley Business Centre Crewe, Scope
House Crewe, Congleton Business Centre and Sandbach Enterprise centre, Wesley
Avenue Sandbach. At its next meeting the group would be engaging with various
stakeholders including Chambers of Commerce, Town Councils and the private sector.
The group intended to conclude its investigations in March 2011.

The Budget Consultation Group had reviewed its original objectives for the 2011/12 budget largely due to the tight deadlines imposed on the Council as a result of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. The group had acknowledged that it would not now be possible to achieve any of the four objectives. The objectives had been to:

1. Disaggregate budgets to fit in with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny arrangements in relation to budget setting.
2. Give each of the 5 Overview and Scrutiny Committees an opportunity to have an input in setting budget priorities for the 2011/2012 budget.
3. Submit an advisory report to Cabinet, containing the preliminary views of Corporate Scrutiny on the budget challenge process, in light of the Government's funding announcement.
4. Organise a cycle of dedicated O&S meetings in early January to formally comment on the budget.

The pre-budget report had been released for consultation purposes on the 19 January 2011 and the Budget Consultation Group had taken an opportunity to question Cabinet and Heads of Service about the emerging budget prior to its public release on 13 January 2011. The Chairman informed the Committee that on 13 January 2011, there had only been sufficient time to consider the revenue budget the Group had been reconvened on 11 February 2011 to consider the capital budget proposals.

The Committee was also reminded that at an informal mid-point meeting held on 11 January, Members had supported a proposal to dedicate a future meeting of this committee to consider the future of Council owned farms.

The Committee then reviewed the schedule of work programme items.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Head of Policy and Performance be requested to submit a progress report on Risk Management to the Committee in the new civic year;
- (b) That the Head of Regeneration be requested to submit a report to the next meeting on proposals to deal with Highways and Transportation matters through LAP's;
- (c) That the Head of Assets be requested to submit a report to the next meeting on the future of Council owned farms;
- (d) That the Head of Policy and Performance be requested to provide a presentation to the next meeting on the operation of Customer Points in Cheshire East Libraries.
- (e) That the Head of Wellbeing be requested to ensure that the report expected to be submitted to Cabinet in June 2011 in relation to the future of the Lyceum Theatre Crewe and Knutsford Cinema, is presented to this Committee before that date.

83 SHARED ASSETS

Arthur Pritchard, Head of Assets, attended the meeting and briefed Members on a draft report due to be considered by Cabinet on 14 February 2011 on the disaggregation of shared assets between Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils. Following local government re-organisation and the creation of the two new unitary Cheshire Authorities, the former County Council's assets and liabilities as at 31st March 2009 were required to be allocated between the two new Councils on a fair, equitable and transparent basis.

In accordance with guidelines issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) this had to be achieved by 31st December 2008.

Arrangements were also put in place at that time to provide for, amongst other things, a formal arbitration procedure to determine the liability for and ownership of assets in the event that agreement could not be reached.

Negotiations and discussions had been ongoing between the two authorities for some time in an attempt to reach agreement regarding a number of disputed assets. The draft report set out the provisional agreement which had been reached at officer level and would be seeking formal Cabinet approval to that agreement.

The proposed settlement was due to be considered by Cheshire West and Chester (CWAC) Executive on 9th February 2011, with a recommendation to Council on 24th February 2011.

RESOLVED – (a) That consideration of this matter be deferred to a special meeting of this Committee to be held on Thursday 10 February 2011 at 10.00am.

(b) That the Head of Assets be requested to submit to the special meeting on 10 February 2011, the report due to be considered by Cabinet on 14 February 2011, together with details of the valuation of the individual assets involved in the disaggregation process.

84 BUDGET 2011/2012

The Committee considered the pre budget report which had recently been the subject of consultation with stakeholders and Members of the Council. The Committee questioned the Borough Treasurer in relation to the process for seeking approval of fees and charges. The Borough Treasurer informed the Committee that the setting of fees and charges was the responsibility of each Portfolio Holder and that the details of individual charges would not appear in the draft budget documents.

RESOLVED – That the Borough Treasurer be requested to present to the Committee at its next meeting a schedule containing all proposed variations in fees and charges for 2011/2012.

85 FORWARD PLAN - EXTRACTS

The committee considered items listed in the current Forward Plan.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be received and noted.

86 CONSULTATIONS FROM CABINET

There were no consultations from Cabinet.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.15 pm

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)