

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 8th March, 2011 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

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

Councillors G Baxendale, D Brickhill, S Conquest, J Crockatt, H Davenport,
J P Findlow, S Wilkinson and F Keegan (Substitute)

Apologies

Councillors A Arnold, G Barton and M Davies

87 OFFICERS PRESENT

Vivienne Quayle – Head of Policy and Performance
Guy Kilminster – Head of Health and Wellbeing
Caroline Simpson – Head of Regeneration
Paul Bayley – Customer Services Manager
Lynda –Cotterill - Community Libraries Manager
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

88 ALSO PRESENT

Councillor R Menlove – Environment Portfolio Holder
Councillor D Flude

89 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That subject to it being recorded that Councillor S Conquest was present at the meeting held on 14 December 2010 the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2011, be approved as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

90 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

91 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

92 LIBRARIES - CUSTOMER POINTS

Note: With the permission of the Chairman, Councillor D Flude attended the meeting and addressed the committee in respect of this matter.

The Committee considered a joint report of the Head of Health and Wellbeing and Customer Services Manager, relating to changes in provision of customer access in libraries, achieved by the creation of single Council access points.

Between April and September 2010, the first phase of the transfer of customer points had taken place in Alsager, Congleton, Holmes Chapel, Middlewich and Knutsford. This had been achieved by making better use of staffing and property resources and transferring the former district Council Customer Service points into libraries.

The second phase was now under consideration, following a review of the lessons learned in phase 1.

The main additional demand from customers visiting libraries had been identified as:

- Taking Council tax payments in former Congleton Borough locations
- Issuing concessionary travel passes
- Providing advice and support for benefits applications and receiving and verifying evidence relating to a benefits claim

There had been a small number of complaints received relating to the lack of privacy, particularly when customers wished to discuss a sensitive issue, such as a benefits claim. Library staff were addressing this in the short term by taking customers to a more suitable location within the library to hold such conversations. In the longer term, the new library design would remove the traditional counter and there would be greater use of customer self service which in turn, would reduce queues.

In response to Members questions relating to the new self service arrangements and payment methods such as 'Paypoint' and other automated payment methods, the Head of Policy and Performance informed the Committee that a considerable amount of data had been collated by the former district Councils that would provide evidence to support the economic case for this type of payment method and would also show that there was now also greater choice for customers.

The Council's Customer Services Strategy was currently being reviewed which would allow Customer Service Centres in Crewe and Macclesfield to provide customers with a one stop shop service including access to specialist staff on an appointment basis. Libraries and other community hubs where appropriate, would provide an information point service in other locations. The information points would be able to provide information and signpost customers to self serve. Work was ongoing to describe the role that libraries would play in the community hub, learning from the lessons of the initial transfer of Customer Service Points.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

93 JOINT HIGHWAYS/TRANSPORTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Caroline Simpson Head of Regeneration attended the meeting and updated the Committee on developments that had taken place to increase Member engagement in Highways and Public Transportation issues since the

Members briefing held in February 2011. The Council had announced that a budget of £350,000 had been allocated from the 2011/12 programme to deliver ward list priorities or 'minor improvement works'. The process of identifying the detailed programme would be simplified for the new financial year to ensure that the maximum amount of resource was directed to front-line delivery of projects rather than allocated to officer time, and to reflect a move from ward-based lists to lists based on the LAP (Local Area Partnership) geographical boundaries.

The £350,000 budget would be allocated per LAP area, based upon the length of the highway network in each LAP.

It had been recognised that there was a wider need for Members to be involved at ward level in decisions relating to the overall maintenance programme.

Caroline informed the Committee that each LAP Manager would shortly be arranging meetings of local highways groups involving local ward members to discuss local highways programmes.

In connection with Transportation issues, the Public Transport Forum which had now met twice, had agreed to increase elected Member representation, by inviting a Member from each of the 7 LAP's to sit on the forum.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

94 FEES AND CHARGES

Note: With the permission of the Chairman, Councillor D Flude attended the meeting and addressed the committee in respect of this matter.

The Committee considered a schedule containing the current and proposed fees and charges for all Council Services.

RESOLVED – That the list of fees and charges be noted, and referred to all other Overview and Scrutiny Committees for consideration.

95 FORWARD PLAN - EXTRACTS

The Committee considered items listed in the current Forward Plan.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be received and noted.

96 CONSULTATIONS FROM CABINET

There were no consultations from Cabinet.

97 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

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

The Committee was informed that the Budget Consultation Group had concluded its consideration of the draft budget proposals on 11 February 2011. At that meeting the group had considered the capital programme proposals for the 3 year period 2011-1014. Representatives from Cabinet and Corporate Management Team had attended the meeting to answer Members questions.

The Business Generation Task and Finish Group had undertaken site visits to a variety of business generation facilities. These included, 'Regenerate Pennine Lancashire' in Blackburn, an independent company run on behalf of a consortium of 6 East Lancashire authorities; a national private sector operator in the business centre and flexible workspace industry in Stockport; and finally an independent private sector operator in Macclesfield. The group had arranged a series of meetings to interview a number of internal and external stakeholders in March and was on course to report back its findings to this Committee in April 2011.

The Committee then reviewed each item in the work programme. The Committee noted that the final report on depot rationalisation was due to be considered by the Committee in April.

- RESOLVED –
- (a) That the report be received;
 - (b) That the Committee consider making a recommendation on the future of the Budget Consultation Group at its next meeting;
 - (c) That the Business Generation Task and Finish group be requested to undertake site visits to the Council's depots in advance of the report on rationalisation being considered by the Committee at its next meeting.

98 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the Committee be changed to Thursday 14 April 2011 at 2.00pm.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.40 pm

Councillor A Thwaite (Chairman)