

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee**
held on Thursday, 1st March, 2012 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor H Murray (Chairman)
Councillor M Grant (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors L Brown, P Hayes, D Hough, W Livesley, G Wait, J Wray and
K Edwards
Emily Lam – Co-opted

Apologies

Councillors M Parsons

OFFICERS PRESENT

Adrian Fisher – Strategic Housing and Planning Manager
Juliet Blackburn – Performance and Partnerships Manager
Kirsty Hercules – Partnership Manager
Jane Strange – Policy and Research Manager
James Morley – Scrutiny Officer

155 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no Members of the Committee present who wished to declare any interests

156 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN

Mr Anderson, member of the Brethren Christian Fellowship, attended the meeting to speak about the Council's Core Strategy and Local Plan. He stated that community facilities including facilities for faith groups were important and should be considered in the Core Strategy. Community facilities are necessary to make a community tick and not giving consideration to them would create ghost towns. He wanted the Committee to request that the Spatial Planning team include the wording of paragraph 126 of the Draft National Planning Policy Framework (DNPPF) in the Core Strategy.

The Council's Strategic Housing and Planning Manager was present at the meeting to address the Committee regarding this matter. He stated that the aim of the Local Plan and Core Strategy was to create thriving communities. The Core Strategy would consider existing community facilities and the need for new community facilities. The infrastructure plans for each area which considered the need for roads etc also included the need for "soft" infrastructure such as shops, services and meeting places.

The Strategic Housing and Planning Manager assured the Committee that although the exact wording of the paragraph would not be used as the DNPPF was guidance and not useable as policy but that there would be provision in the Core Strategy that reflected the sentiments of the guidance and that the provision of community facilities would be part of all parts of the Local Plan.

The Committee welcomed the assurances given by the Strategic Housing and Planning Manager that the provision of community facilities was included in the Core Strategy and that paragraph 126 of the Draft National Planning Policy Framework be taken into account although the Committee does not insist on the exact wording being used, and in doing so also suggested that when considering the community facilities mentioned in paragraph 126 of the Draft National Planning Policy Framework the Strategic Housing and Planning Manager also considers youth facilities in the Core Strategy which are not contained within paragraph 126.

157 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

The Committee received a report on the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy from the Performance and Partnerships Manager. The report gave an overview of the Council's current arrangements for ensuring that it complies with its general and specific duties under the Equalities Act 2010.

The Council had adopted a common sense approach to dealing with equality issues. The Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) had overseen work to comply with the general and specific duties of the Council to comply with the Equalities Act 2010. There was no Equalities Officer for the Council; instead each department managed its own work on dealing with equalities issues. The CEG was made up of representatives from each department and legal support. A full review of the Single Equality and Inclusion Scheme (SEIS) action plan had been carried out taking into account the requirements in the Equality Act. Directorate Action Plans were being prepared which would give clearer ownership of actions and progress to each Directorate.

The Council had Equality Objectives to help focus attention on the priority equality issues in order to deliver improvements in policy making and delivery. The draft equality objectives were contained in Appendix 1 of the report. They were developed taking into account the review of the SEIS action plan. Consultation was taking place on the proposed equality objectives with the intention to report final objectives to Cabinet on 2nd April 2012.

The Committee welcomed that a common sense approach was being adopted but suggested that it may be helpful to have a statement that set out the Council's desire to avoid disadvantaging anybody based on the Equality Act 2010 list of protected characteristics. The Committee asked for examples of cases where anyone had transgressed against the Equality Act. It was hoped that service managers were engaging with staff on a continual basis to ensure understanding and compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's key objectives.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be received and noted

- (b) That the Partnerships and Performance Manager be requested to return to the Committee in two months with the data from the consultation on the proposed equality objectives and also to provide examples of equality issues regarding employment procedures.

158 **LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIPS (LAPS)**

The Committee received a presentation about Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) in Cheshire East from the Performance and Partnerships Manager and the Partnerships Manager. The presentation illustrated the role of LAPs, the role of LAP managers, the membership of LAPs, the area plans from each LAP and gave some examples of good work that had been carried out by some of the LAPs in Cheshire East.

Members discussed the achievements and challenges of their local LAPs and how they felt the LAPs could be improved in the future.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the presentation be received
- (b) That the Committee recommend that Local Area Partnerships should be allowed to continue in their current form to allow them to continue to grow and develop into more effective local services.
- (c) That the Committee agree that Local Area Partnerships need more resources and that the resources supplied by the Council should be matched by the Council's partners.
- (d) That the Council should consult with major partners within the Local Area Partnerships in order to achieve benefits from joining services closer together.
- (e) That the Committee appreciate the work being conducted by Local Area Partnership managers and that they be thanked for the services they provide.

Councillor Livesley left the meeting

The Partnerships Manager left the meeting

159 **CORPORATE POLICY UPDATE**

The Committee received an Oral briefing on the Corporate Policy Unit from the Performance and Partnerships Manager. The Corporate Policy Unit was a resource which was used to work on areas of policy development that cut across departments to make sure that services were joined up. The Corporate Policy Unit was used to maintain knowledge of changes to legislation and possible implications of new Bills on the Council's policies. The Corporate Policy Unit was also used to brief the Members of Parliament for the Borough on Policy updates. The Corporate Policy Unit did not write or develop policy.

RESOLVED: That the Oral briefing be noted

160 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Work Programme and discussed items for the upcoming meetings.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be updated

161 **FORWARD PLAN**

RESOLVED: That the Forward Plan be noted

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 1.15 pm

Councillor H Murray (Chairman)