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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Advisory Panel - Performance and Capacity**
held on Wednesday, 21st January, 2009 at Council Chamber, Municipal
Buildings, Earle Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ

PRESENT

Councillor J Hammond (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs D Thompson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Mrs E Alcock, T Beard, D Brown, P Mason, H Murray, J Narraway
and D Stockton

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors P Edwards, Miss S Furlong, M Hardy and F Keegan.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A number of Councillors who were existing County Councillors, Borough Councillors and Town and Parish Councillors declared a personal interest in the business of the meeting en bloc.

14 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public, present wishing to address the Panel.

15 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes be approved as a correct record subject to the last paragraph under the heading Minute No.8 'Task Groups'-'Branding' being amended to state that it was a number of new bus stops which had been erected and not bus shelters.

In addition under Minute No.6 'Shared Back Office-Update Report' an additional paragraph was included as follows:-

(vi) That ICT Shared Services be a small part of ICT provisions that data centre(s) would continue in the East with a view to establishing a single Cheshire East Centre hosting all Cheshire East systems.

16 2009/2010 BUDGET

The Borough Treasurer provided the Panel with a financial overview of the budget as well as highlighting key budget assumptions and the impact that the economic downturn, which the Country was currently experiencing would have on Cheshire East Council.

In considering the report Members of the Panel raised the following issues:

- (i) It was queried why there was a difference between Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester of £30 million pounds in terms of the Formula Grant allocated to each of the Authorities. This is due to the fact that the East has a much higher Council Tax Base and therefore has a different funding package.
- (ii) It was queried what the time limit for paying back the transitional costs was. The Borough Treasurer confirmed that the aim is for transitional costs to be paid back within 3 years, although the maximum pay back is within 5 years.
- (iii) In relation to the figures on page 10 of the report it was queried whether the healthy nature of the figures was as a result of the sale of properties in the West. This was confirmed as correct.
- (iv) It was queried why the Capital Programme spend started at 94.7 million pounds in 2009-10 and then decreased dramatically to 48.0 million pounds for 2011-12. It was noted that the figures contained within the report reflected existing commitments to each of the Authorities. This could increase as new schemes were considered.
- (v) It was queried whether or not a number of policies in relation to waste collection service, economic development, land allocation, transport links and so forth were being addressed by the new Authority. There was concern that nothing of substance was being promised. In response to the above issues raised the Borough Treasurer confirmed that these issues would need to be considered and that a substantial amount of information would need to be brought together.
- (vi) It was queried if there would be greater Member involvement in the budget setting process in the future. It was noted that next year the budget setting process would commence earlier and it was the intention of the Authority to involve Members and other Stakeholders in the process.
- (vii) It was queried if there would be greater Member involvement in the setting of the Capital Programme. Again it was confirmed that this would be the case.
- (viii) In respect of page 12 of the report it was requested that under the bullet point relating to Stronger Communities the word 'assets' be inserted after the word 'decision-making'. This request was agreed.
- (ix) In respect of the first two paragraphs on page 20 of the report further explanation was sought on the differences between capital spend and revenue spend. The Borough Treasurer acknowledged that further details on the differences between capital and revenue spend could be incorporated into future reports.
- (x) In respect of page 23 of the report concern was expressed that no reference had been made to litter or graffiti in areas for investment.
- (xi) In respect of page 26 of the report clarification was sought as to who had authorised a review of CCTV for the three existing Authorities.

- (xii) In respect of the third bullet point down on page 37 of the report, further clarification was sought as to where finances would be spent on crime and reducing anti-social behaviour.
- (xiii) In respect of the fourth bullet point on page 28 it was requested that this be expanded to provide further detail. In response it was noted that each Authority had its own ICT support system. Eventually the proposal would be to establish would be to create one system by bringing together all of the current systems. It was hoped that people would be able to work collectively together under one location using ICT system in order to support the operation of the Council. Location would be an issue and as a result a review across the board was currently being undertaken.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and noted.

17 SHARED SERVICES UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report updating Members on Shared Services.

It was reported that following a meeting of the Leaders and Chief Executives of Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester it was agreed that a Joint Programme Development Team would be established, to be chaired jointly by the Section 151 Officers. The purpose of the Team was to ensure all the shared services were designed and developed to both Councils satisfaction during the run up to Vesting Day. It was anticipated that Officers would be working closely with colleagues in the West in order to govern all of the shared services.

Further discussions ensued in relation to the European Funding Budget which both Council's could use to extract additional finances from. Members raised concerns that the majority of funding would be transferred to the West and that if the East did not benefit from being involved in the Unit then it should pull out.

In response the Borough Treasurer stated that Cheshire East would examine closely the benefits of the service and what the Authority would be getting out of it. However she emphasised the importance of working on a pooled budget service with the West rather attempting to split budgets for the two Authorities.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

18 MOBILE AND FLEXIBLE WORKING

Consideration was given to a report updating the Panel on flexible and mobile working arrangements.

It was reported to the Panel home working would be available but this would be limited and that the main focus would be on where people could work. The intention was to allow people to work at a variety of locations with the opportunity of 'hot desking' to be made available to a number of employees.

Human Resources policies were at consultation stage and if the Panel felt it appropriate then Members would also be given the opportunity to make comments on the prospective policies. It was agreed that the Panel would find it useful to comment on any Human Resources Policies. In addition the Panel welcomed the proposals being suggested however some concerns were raised that control over any new arrangements of working would need to be carefully exercised.

Clarification was sought as to whether or not the flexible and working arrangements put forward was a Cheshire East initiative. In response to this question it was confirmed that this was the case. In addition it was queried to what extent the Council would support and control the Policy. In response it was confirmed that it was for the Members of Cheshire East Council to decide the policy's specifications.

The Panel emphasised the importance of ensuring that robust arrangements were in place in order to ensure that abuse of the system did not take place. Members wished to highlight the importance of ensuring that services provided continued to benefit members of the public and that any new arrangements in place would not impact on the service that the public received.

Officers agreed that proposals established would need to contain the correct balance that was right for the new Authority, its employees and the services provided.

RESOLVED

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Human Resources policies currently undergoing consultation be brought back to a future meeting of the Panel for the Members consideration.

19 TASK GROUP UPDATES

Consideration was given to a report, updating the Panel on the progress made in respect of the Partnerships Workstream Task Group and the Customer Access Task Group.

Partnerships Workstream

With regard to the Task Group relating to Partnerships Workstream, it was noted that a number of meetings had taken place between strategic partners in relation to how the different partners would engage with the Community and Cheshire East Council.

The Panel were informed that an engagement/development workshop with partners was to be held on 26 January 2009 at Tatton Park, Knutsford with over 25 people were attending the event.

The Panel sought clarification if the event was open to all Cheshire East Councillors. It was suggested that the Senior Member Services Officer confirm if the event was open to all Councillors with the Officer responsible for organising the event. If it was then an email would be circulated to all Members.

In respect of work that was commencing in the agreed neighbourhood pilot areas, clarification was sought from the Portfolio Holder for Capacity and Performance as to the scope of the pilot schemes and if Disley and Adlington as well as Poynton were also included in the pilot scheme.

In response to this the Portfolio Holder confirmed that a pilot scheme for each of the areas highlighted in the report would commence prior to 1 April 2009.

Clarification was also sought as to what the pilot scheme would involve. The Portfolio Holder agreed to obtain further information and report back to the next meeting.

Customer Access

With regard to the Task Group relating to Customer Access it was noted that the shared services issues with Dalton House was being addressed.

Feedback from the Telephone Self-Delivery pilot was due in the next three to four weeks. It was hoped that feedback from this pilot would be positive.

The Group was also considering face-to-face opportunities in rural areas and work respect of this was scheduled to be undertaken shortly in conjunction with the Cheshire Rural Retail Partnership. Furthermore Officers had liaised with some Members of Cheshire East Council as to the services that could be delivered in remote areas including the possibility of using the Post Office to deliver some local services.

Consideration was given to the possibility of using facilities such as video conferencing and teleconferencing to provide remote access to some services.

The next meeting of the Group was scheduled for 4 February, however a number of Members were unable to make this date and it was requested that the possibility of changing the meeting to another date be investigated.

RESOLVED

That the updates be noted.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel would take place on Thursday 5 March 2009 at 2.00pm at Westfields, Sandbach.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.00 pm

Councillor J Hammond (Chairman)

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