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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Strategic Planning Board**
held on Wednesday, 25th March, 2009 at Meeting Room, Alsager Civic
Centre, Lawton Road, Alsager

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs H Gaddum (Chairman)
Councillor B Moran (Vice Chairman)

Councillors A Arnold, Mrs R Bailey, D Brown, J Hammond, D Hough,
J Macrae, C Thorley, G M Walton and J Wray

Apologies

Councillors P Edwards, Mrs M Hollins and Wilkinson

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Edwards, M Hollins and S Wilkinson.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members gave a general declaration of personal interest in respect of items on the agenda where an individual member was a Member of Cheshire County Council and/or one of the Borough Councils or Parish Councils. In accordance with the Code of Conduct they remained in the meeting during consideration of these items.

14 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

No questions had been received from Members of the public on this occasion.

15 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

At its meeting on 4th March 2009, Members of the Strategic Planning Board had requested a report regarding substitution arrangements for the Board and planning Committees. Reference to this discussion had been omitted from the Minutes in error and an amendment was sought.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2009 be approved as a correct record, subject to the following corrections –

Minute 5 third paragraph, fifth line: the word ‘re-appointed’ be replaced with ‘confirmed’;

Minute 5 third paragraph: additional wording to be added to the end of the paragraph to read: ‘Members had raised the issue of substitution arrangements for the three Planning Committees and requested that a report on the subject to be submitted to the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Board; and

Minute 7 fourth paragraph: the words “together with the Protocol” be added to the end of the final sentence.

16 URGENT ITEM

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, business could only be transacted at a meeting if included on an agenda which had been subject to five clear days notice. The Chairman could, by reason of special circumstance, place urgent business before the Committee provided that the reasons for doing so were stipulated.

4a.1 Membership Changes: Northern and Southern Planning Committees

The Strategic Planning Board had agreed the membership of the Northern and Southern Planning Committees on 4th March 2009. Due to the filing of a vacancy on the Southern Planning Committee and a change to the proportionality arrangements relating to the Northern Planning Committee, a number of amendments had been put forward for the Board to approve prior to full Council on 2nd April 2009 at which time the memberships would be confirmed. On these grounds, the Chairman agreed to put the matter before Members.

A revised membership list was submitted to the Strategic Planning Board and it was -

RESOLVED: That the membership of the Northern and Southern Planning Committees be approved as follows:

Northern

Cllr C Andrew
Cllr G Barton
Cllr J Crockatt
Cllr H Davenport
Cllr L Gilliland
Cllr M Hardy
Cllr T Jackson
Cllr B Livesley
Cllr J Narraway
Cllr D Neilson
Cllr L Smetham
Cllr D Stockton
Cllr D Thompson
Cllr C Tomlinson
Cllr R West

Southern

Cllr D Bebbington
Cllr T Beard
Cllr M Davies
Cllr B Dykes
Cllr S Furlong
Cllr L Gilbert
Cllr B Howell
Cllr J Jones
Cllr S Jones
Cllr A Kolker
Cllr S McGory
Cllr G Merry
Cllr A Richardson
Cllr R Walker
Cllr J Weatherill

4a.2 Substitution Arrangements for Planning Board/Committees

The Chairman introduced as an urgent item, a discussion regarding substitution arrangements on the grounds that a debate on the subject was needed before the first meetings of the Board and Planning Committees post vesting day.

The Council's Constitution contained provisions relating to substitutes for members who were unable to attend meetings. The Strategic Planning Board

wished to reconsider those arrangements and recommend a procedure which was more suited to the Board and Planning Committees in particular, as part of an overall corporate review.

Pending consideration of the issues by full Council, the Strategic Planning Board considered that it would be preferable, as an interim measure for the party groups not to nominate substitutes to the Board or Planning Committees.

RESOLVED: That, pending consideration by Full Council of the constitutional provisions regarding substitutions, the Strategic Planning Board recommends that, as a temporary measure, Group Leaders should not nominate substitutes to the Strategic Planning Board and the Northern and Southern Planning Committees.

17 PROPOSED TRAINING SCHEDULE FOR COUNCILLORS ON STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD AND PLANNING COMMITTEES

Members considered the report of the Head of Planning and Policy which proposed a programme of training for Councillors appointed to the Strategic Planning Board and Northern and Southern Planning Committees. Appendix 1 attached to the report set out suggested topics for inclusion in the programme and sought Members' opinion on whether the training should be specific to a particular Committee or apply to all three. Members' were also requested to consider arrangements for delivery of the sessions, the suggestion being that a half hour slot be put aside at the beginning of each Committee meeting for this purpose.

The topics outlined in Appendix 1 were welcomed by the Strategic Planning Board although it was suggested that the programme be expanded to include development management and housing provision.

The approach advocated in the report with regards to the timings of sessions was not supported by Members as in their opinion this was too short a time limit to consider subjects in sufficient detail. Instead, half day sessions were proposed to be held on a six week cycle; with an invitation to attend being extended to all planning members for each session.

RESOLVED: That a) Subject to the inclusion of development management and housing provision, the programme outlined in Appendix A be approved; b) Sessions be open to all members of the Strategic Planning Board and the Northern and Southern Planning Committees; and c) The scheduling of half day events be based on a six week cycle.

18 PLANNING APPLICATION VALIDATION: LOCAL CHECK LISTS

As part of the drive to provide a quicker and more efficient planning service, a standard electronic application form (1APP) was introduced in April 2008. To support the standard form, local authorities were able to draw up their own validation checklist to address the level of required information required to accompany the different categories of planning application. The Strategic Planning Board was invited to a set of validation checklists for Cheshire East which had been appended to the agenda noting two minor amendments.

Under the Design and Access Statements paragraphs, a number of designated areas had been set out in the national guidance which did not necessarily apply to Cheshire East and the Chairman requested, to ensure clarity, that they be removed from the document or an explanatory note explaining their relevance be added. Concern was also raised that reference had not been included in the documents to sustainability matters, the Strategic Planning Board requesting that steps be taken to rectify the omission.

Other changes were proposed as follows –

Paragraph 7.6 main report. A discussion ensued about whether it was appropriate for the authority to state that it would *decline* to determine an application in the absence of requested information when in reality, the application would fail to be registered. A request was made for the word ‘decline’ in the third line of the paragraph to be removed and substituted with ‘registered’.

To promote an inclusive approach, it was suggested that appropriate hyperlinks be included in the electronic application forms to enable applicants to link to, rather than search for, applicable reference documentations. In supporting this proposal, Members went on to raise questions as to how well the Cheshire East website and Planning Portal were interlinking and the Strategic Planning Board requested that a progress report be submitted to its next meeting.

The need to consult on changes to the local lists was questioned by Members and for the avoidance of doubt, it was confirmed that minor amendments to policy would be submitted to the Strategic Planning Board for approval, with only fundamental changes being subject to public consultation.

RESOLVED: That the Planning Application Validation Local Check Lists be approved and adopted with effect from 1 April 2009.

19 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT: TIMES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Responsibility for setting the times for meetings of the Strategic Planning Board and Northern and Southern Planning Committees fell to this Board and at its meeting on 4th March 2009; it had agreed that meetings of the three bodies would commence at 2pm on Wednesday afternoons.

In making its decision, Members had not been made aware of any equality issues arising from its decision and an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was now submitted for completion. It was reported that although some groups would find it difficult to attend afternoon meetings, on balance it was considered to be the most appropriate arrangement.

RESOLVED: That the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment now submitted be noted and the decision of the Strategic Planning Board made on 4 March 2009 (minute number 5 refers) be reaffirmed.

20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that, subject to final approval at Council, the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Board would be held on Wednesday, 15th April 2009.

The meeting commenced at Time Not Specified and concluded at Time Not Specified

Councillor Mrs H Gaddum (Chairman)

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