

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on Monday, 3rd February, 2020 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor J Clowes (Chairman)
Councillor B Murphy (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors J Bratherton, I Macfarlane, JP Findlow, R Fletcher, M Hunter, A Moran, M Beanland, M Simon and L Wardlaw

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor L Crane, Portfolio for Highways and Waste
Councillor J Rhodes, Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Corporate Services
Councillor A Stott, Portfolio Holder for Finance, ICT and Communication

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Nicola Andrews, Community Safety Manager (Plus Dane Housing Group)
Jan Bakewell, Director of Governance and Compliance
Tim Bamber, Customer Support & Enforcement Manager (Peaks & Plains Housing Trust)
Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services
Sarah Butler, Tenancy Enforcement Manager (The Guinness Partnership)
Steven Horton, Tenancy Enforcement Officer (Plus Dane Housing Group)
Frank Jordan, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Place
Mark Palethorpe, Executive Director of People
Gareth Pawlett, ICT Manager
Dave Squires, Head of Customer Services (Peaks & Plains Housing Trust)
Alex Thompson, Director of Financial and Customer Services

57 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Penny Butterill (substituted for by Councillor Michael Beanland) and Councillor Jos Saunders (substituted for by Councillor Iain MacFarlane).

58 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The committee reviewed the minutes of the meeting on 9 January 2020, and noted that the job titles of Kath O'Dwyer (Acting Chief Executive) and Michael Moore (Interim Communications Manager) had been omitted from the list of attendees.

RESOLVED -

That, subject to noting these two omissions, the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

59 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

60 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

No whipping declarations were received.

61 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

62 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Representatives from The Guinness Partnership, Peaks & Plains Housing Trust, and Plus Dane Housing Group attended the meeting to update the committee on the future planned arrangements for how anti-social behaviour was planned to be managed in Cheshire East.

Each housing provider gave an overview of its working arrangements in place to manage anti-social behaviour, before the committee had an opportunity to ask questions.

There was some discussion about whether equitable housing should be pepper-potted throughout a housing estate or whether it was better to keep it all together in an attempt to manage ASB. The housing providers advised that there was no perfect solution because it depended on the houses, the people and the area. The committee were advised that often private dwellings had been purchased by investors (often outside the area with no commitment to the community) who then let to private tenants, on many occasions there had been issues for customers of registered social landlords with private tenants which the housing provider had dealt with.

The housing providers all reported that, whilst the instances of ASB appeared to have increased in number, this was more likely to be the result of greater confidence in the reporting of it by customers.

The committee asked specifically about the significance of hate crime across the borough. Peaks & Plains Housing Trust reported little race crime, possibly because of the demographic of the area, however there had been significant issues with transgender hate crime. Plus Dane Housing Group reported a 2019 hate crime trend towards the gypsy and traveller community by local residents and the emerging issue of County Lines crime that had been monitored.

The committee recognised this item was an area previously scrutinised by the Health and Adult Social Care and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee via a task and finish group in April 2017, and noted the positive progression that had been made by the providers since then.

RESOLVED –

The representatives of the three housing providers be thanked for their attendance and update, and be invited back to present a further update in approximately one year.

63 2019/20 THIRD QUARTER REVIEW (FINANCE)

Consideration was given to the Third Quarter Review 2019/20, in advance of a decision being taken by Cabinet. Following detailed consideration of the report, the committee commented that;

- the earmarked reserves were too low;
- Cabinet had agreed to sell the shares in Manchester Science Park at its meeting held in June 2018 as no dividend was being received and the uplift may not have been as profitable in the future;
- the direct and in direct costs of the fire at Beechmere Residential Home should be reflected in the third quarter review;
- in relation to Outcome 4, paragraph 31, the £100K improvements made to Congleton Park should be publicised;
- in relation to Outcome 4, paragraph 33, it was agreed that the education package about air quality should be circulated to members;
- in relation to Financial Stability, paragraph 78, it was agreed that the level of resources to deal with flooding be reconsidered to ensure it was adequate;
- in relation to Financial Stability, paragraph 90, clarity was sought regarding the £91K saving, which was confirmed to be related to a Corporate Services restructure;
- that further details on the types apprenticeships would be circulated to the committee; and
- in relation to Sustainable Modes of Transport to Schools, it was agreed that the detail and number of applications from schools should be circulated to the committee.

RESOLVED -

That the comments raised by the committee be collated and passed on to Cabinet for consideration.

64 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020-24

Pursuant to the previous meeting held on 9 January 2020, members considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy, with a view to providing feedback and comments to Cabinet prior to a decision being taken on it. The committee commented and recommended that;

- the percentage of waste being sent to landfill should be circulated to the committee;
- the consultation process for the budget setting exercise be investigated, ensuring that in future, it is user friendly and encourages members of the public and relevant stakeholders to respond;
- members had concerns regarding the low levels of reserves and requested that Cabinet be asked to provide an outline of its financial strategy in relation to how it planned to strengthen its reserves in future years;
- in relation to investment in services, it was agreed that clarification as to why capital investment (18) was not included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, would be circulated to the committee;
- members were concerned that the increase in demand-led budgets had been at the expense of other budget areas;
- members welcomed the capital investment in relation to home repairs for vulnerable people;
- that the Charging and Trading Strategy be circulated to the committee; and
- the current deficit in relation to the Cheshire Pension Fund be circulated to the committee. It was acknowledged that the funding levels were now considered to be appropriate.

RESOLVED -

That the comments raised by the committee be collated and passed on to Cabinet for consideration.

65 ICT INVESTMENT (IIP)

Consideration was given to a report on the joint ICT investment made by Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils (Evolution).

The Corporate Manager for ICT advised the committee that the position of the ICT infrastructure in 2017 was not a platform that could be built upon, which had required the council to look to invest in in-house data centres (that contained all servers and network equipment,) plus further resilient servers in the Cloud. These data centres had to be fixed ahead of the

deployment of Windows 10 software. The joint ICT investment would enable simplification and cheaper updates for change in the future.

The committee noted there had been some difficulties with ICT hardware that had led to some nervousness amongst members of the Council about how successful the project would prove to be.

RESOLVED -

- 1 That recommendations 2.1 and 2.3 of the officer's report be noted.
- 2 That recommendation 2.2 be reworded to say that this committee acknowledge the benefits of this ICT-led investment programme (Evolution).

66 FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to the councils' forward plan of key decisions.

RESOLVED -

That the forward plan be noted.

67 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee reviewed its work programme; noted its interest in adding an item on the council's procurement framework to the programme, potentially as a workshop event.

The Scrutiny Officer agreed to liaise with officers regarding this request and return with an update on 2 April 2020.

RESOLVED -

- 1 That the items listed below be dealt with by the committee during the time indicated:
 - Best for Business - June 2020
 - Results of the Members Survey on the Members Enquiry Service, Members Technology and Development and the Brighter Futures Group - June 2020
 - Registered Social Landlords response to Anti-Social Behaviour- February 2021
- 2 That the following items be added to the committee's work programme to be scheduled in at a later date:
 - Corporate Peer Challenge

- Corporate Plan
- Procurement Framework

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 6.00 pm

Councillor J Clowes (Chairman)