

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on Thursday, 7th January, 2021

PRESENT

Councillor J Clowes (Chairman)

Councillors Q Abel, C Bulman, JP Findlow, R Fletcher, M Hunter, A Moran, J Saunders, M Simon and L Wardlaw

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor J Rhodes, Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Corporate Services

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance

Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services

Diane Moulson, Senior Member Technology and Development Officer*

Alex Thompson, Director of Financial and Customer Services

* Attended for Minute No. 48 only

42 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B Murphy and R Vernon.

43 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 November 2020, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

45 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of a party whip.

46 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

47 PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION 2021/22

Consideration was given to the Medium Term Finance Strategy for 2021 to 2025 and a presentation on the Corporate Services budget proposals, with a view to providing feedback and comments to Cabinet prior to it taking a decision on it on 2 February 2021.

The committee asked questions and put comments in relation to;

- the financial figures given for the Adult Social Care precept, and that these be clarified and reported back to the committee;
- requesting that the detail of the memberships and subscriptions that had been proposed for the council to withdraw from, be circulated to the committee;
- concerns about the debt recovery savings proposals and the potential impacts this would have on residents and businesses that had struggled due to the Covid-19. (It was reported that the proposals would lead to greater efficiencies, collecting money upfront and having better debt recovery processes in place);
- concerns regarding the proposed staff savings and efficiencies and the impact this would have on the council's ability to deliver services, particularly legal support for enforcement activities; and
- the revenue implications of the proposed essential IT investment and procuring service systems.

It was reported that a pay inflation of 2.5% had been assumed within the budget consultation, however, following the announcement from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, national negotiations had begun. The committee noted that the potential pay freeze would not affect key workers or those affected by the minimum wage requirements

RESOLVED –

- 1 That Cabinet be asked to consider appointing permanent staff rather than agency staff, and that legal expertise be prioritised to support the council's enforcement activities.
- 2 That the comments raised by the committee be collated and passed on to Cabinet for consideration.
- 3 That the Director of Governance and Compliance report back to the committee on how enforcement matters were being addressed by the legal department.
- 4 That an item be added to the committee's work programme on the council's IT spend.

48 AMALGAMATION OF THE COUNCIL'S MEMBER FORUM AND PANELS

Prior to consideration by the Members Forum, the committee was requested to comment on a proposal to amalgamate the council's three informal Member panels; Brighter Futures Members Forum, the Member Technology and Development Panel and the Members Enquiries Service Panel.

The committee commented and recommended that;

- the amalgamation of the three panels be supported;
- in relation to the proposed workstreams, it was agreed that a sixth workstream of risk management be added;
- the minutes of the amalgamated panel be circulated to all members of the council; and
- the amalgamated panel be formalised by the Constitution Committee.

RESOLVED –

That the comments raised by the committee be passed on to the Members Forum for consideration.

49 FORWARD PLAN

The committee reviewed the council's Forward Plan of key decisions.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

50 WORK PROGRAMME

The committee reviewed its work programme.

RESOLVED –

- 1 That the work programme be noted.
- 2 That an item on the council's IT spend be added to the work programme.
- 3 That the item on Members Survey Results be removed from the work programme (due to having been previously considered by the Members Forum), and the results of the survey be circulated the committee for information.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.07 pm

Councillor J Clowes (Chairman)