CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
held on Friday, 12th February, 2021 as a Virtual Meeting

PRESENT

Councillor JP Findlow (Chairman)
Councillor Q Abel (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors L Braithwaite, S Brookfield, J Buckley, T Dean, A Farrall, P Groves, M Hunter, D Jefferay, C Leach and K Parkinson

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Councillor Laura Crane, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste

VISITING MEMBERS

Councillor Suzie Akers- Smith
Councillor David Brown
Councillor Janet Clowes
Councillor Sally Holland
Councillor Denis Murphy
Councillor Mike Sewart

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Paul Bayley- Director of Environment & Neighbourhood Services
Helen Davies- Democratic Services Officer
Christopher Hutton- Senior Policy Officer
Frank Jordan- Executive Director of Place
Ralph Kemp- Head of Environmental Services
Peter Skates- Director of Growth and Enterprise

50 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

51 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Suzanne Brookfield raised the point that in the previous minutes, Councillor Ashley Farrall had given apologies and Councillor Hazel Faddes was a substituting Member, however this was not reflected under Apologies for Absence.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct and accurate record subject to the amendment with Councillor Farrall's apologies.

52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest given.

53 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of the Party Whip.

54 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Congleton Town Councillor Robert Douglas attended the meeting and gave a statement on the Household Waste Recycling Centre in Congleton.

Councillor Douglas stated that Cheshire East Council provided a public consultation for the Household Waste and Recycling Centres which he found to be misleading and contradicting information. He noted that May-June 2020, figures were used which is when people were in lockdown and visits to waste sites were restricted. The figures that related to early 2016 came from a time when the Arclid site was still in operation and as a result was misleading. Councillor Douglas surmised that the closure of the Congleton site could result in longer queues, reduced recycling and idling cars.

Mr. Connor Naismith attending the meeting and gave a statement on Flag Lane Baths in Crewe.

Mr. Naismith advised that Flag Lane Baths in Crewe were an important part of Crewe's heritage although they had become a hotspot for Anti-Social Behaviour. Mr. Naismith would like to know what steps Cheshire East Council was taking in regards to regeneration in that area.

RESOLUTION: That

- Councillor Douglas and Mr. Connor Naismith be thanked for their attendance and questions to the Committee today; and
- Frank Jordan, the Executive Director for Place be asked to provide a substantive response in writing for Mr. Naismith

55 HOUSEHOLD WASTE & RECYCLING CENTRE- CONSULTATION RESULTS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillor Laura Crane, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste introduced this item and advised that it represented the consultation responses on Household Waste and Recycling across the borough, and included the end of lease for the waste site in Congleton.

Ralph Kemp, Head of Environmental Services presented the item to the Committee.

At this point in the meeting, it was noted by the Chairman that there had been no report circulated with the agenda and that several Members had noted this to him.

Ralph advised that this item was scheduled to go to Cabinet in March. He then presented a short presentation that reviewed the outcome of the consultation and the proposed recommendations for debate and discussion.

The key messages for the Committee were that Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRC) were within a reasonable distance and free of charge to use for residents within the borough of Cheshire East. Currently ANSA delivered the contract through HW Martin however this contract would be ending in March 2023. The Council were already within an extension period and this could not be extended. Cheshire East Council was looking for future provision.

20% of the waste that CEC processes was from bin banks and HWRC. 80% was collected at the kerbside.

The Municipal Waste Strategy focussed on the management of waste and waste reduction. In order to prepare for the end of the contract the Council commissioned a further review in 2020 to:

- Review the existing service, comparing it with neighbouring and similar authorities;
- Review the wider waste management market to examine existing contracts and delivery arrangements; and
- Model a range of scenarios for the future shape of the household waste recycling centre contract.

In 2018-19 Cheshire East was positioned 14th highest from 345 authorities in England for waste per household

The consultation responses had asked residents to consider 4 scenarios and indicate how strongly the resident supported or opposed each option being considered. From the responses, the top answer was to keep the current service as it is. This would involve the replacement of Congleton HWRC when the lease on the current site expires in September 2021.

In considering the draft recommendations the following items were key issues:

- The commissioning of a new contract for the delivery of the Household Waste Recycling Centre service in the borough by the end of March 2023.
- It was anticipated that the cost of the new contract will increase significantly owing to volatility in the market for recyclables.
- The lease for the current Household Waste Recycling Centre in Congleton would expire in 2021. Not delivering a new facility in Congleton would deliver a reduction in the future running cost of the HWRC service and so partly mitigate the anticipated increased cost of the new contract. Furthermore, it would avoid the cost associated with repaying the capital investment required to deliver a new facility at Congleton which is estimated to be £250k per annum.

- Therefore a proposal was to not replace Congleton Household Waste Recycling Centre at the end of the current lease in Sept 2021.
- The nearest alternative sites would be in Alsager and Macclesfield.
- Once procurement was undertaken, there maybe a need to consider further site closures.

Ralph advised that there was the option for comments as part of the consultation. There had been some emerging themes that included: the concern on the environmental impacts and that the removal of the Congleton HWRC may cause such as: fly tipping, increased car journeys, queuing, misuse of kerbside recycling, increased drive time, costs to other sites, vulnerable people could struggle to travel, and the increase of demand with new homes being built in the area.

There would be an 18-month lead time to procure a contract and this is the point at which procurement needed to begin. Once procurement is undertaken, the number of sites may need to be looked at again.

The Committee were invited to ask questions and there was some discussion about, if Congleton and Poynton sites were to close, had any analysis been done to show neighbouring sites have the capacity to take on the additional displacement this would cause and also how close Congleton would be to achieving 50,000 of houses (per Waste Site) with additional houses being built.

Ralph advised that of the scenarios consulted on, scenario four was the one whereby Poynton and Congleton close, he agreed to send the analysis data to the Committee outside of the meeting.

There was some discussion about the previous ownership of the Waste site in Congleton and whether the Borough Council had sold it, only for Cheshire East to now be renting it back, it led to questions about the other potential sites not owned by Cheshire East Council.
Ralph confirmed Congleton is the only one not owned by Cheshire East Council.

The Committee questioned why a longer lease hadn't been secured and agreed that the presentation posed more questions and overall did not contain the level of information to enable Members to make an informed decision.

Innovative opportunities were discussed such as the introduction of mobile waste sites or skips or a new site at Arclid so as not to reduce the service.

Ralph advised Cheshire East Estates team have negotiated as much as possible however the current owner felt the site has more potential as a retail development but different sites had been considered.

The Committee considered the new Cheshire East Corporate Strategy had three themes running throughout the document- Fairer, Cleaner and Greener.
There was some discussion that the south of the borough had never been equitable or fair in relation to Household Waste Sites and the potential that cars will be travelling further and the risk of flytipping was not in line with a green agenda.

The Chairman opened up the question for visiting Members. Councillor Janet Clowes noted that the consultation was not yet available on the website as all results should be, and that whilst there had been good uptake in responses, Members needed to know what the comments, trends and themes were in order to check the recommendations are sound. Councillor Clowes felt that the consultation had been too narrow, not innovative and not considered other possible options or radical rationalisation of sites for a specific service.

Ralph advised he will work to get the full consultation on the web.

Councillor David Brown asked if there was a possibility of Cheshire East Council buying the site from the current owner.

Ralph advised the Council was unable to extend the current lease or remain there and that the Councils asset team did negotiations so a written response would have to follow.

Councillor Mike Sewart made a comment that potentially the north of the borough could see a large amount of residents travelling to waste sites there.

The Committee considered their recommendations to Cabinet and concluded that these decisions had to be made because there isn't enough money in the Council budget. That being said, there was agreement that:

- there was not enough information to make an informed decision to scrutinise properly; and
- there was little innovation show towards a joined up solution.

The Committee voted in favour of a recommendation that Cheshire East Council requests to buy the current site in Congleton with a sensible offer given the current economic situation and strong resident voice as seen in the consultation.

Councillor Laura Crane assured the Committee that its comments had been noted and there would be consideration taken as to whether there could be any further opportunities to scrutinise this item.

RESOLVED: That

- Ralph Kemp be thanked for his attendance and presentation;
- Ralph to feed back the data analysis of if neighbouring waste sites had the capacity to take on the additional displacement if Congleton and Poynton sites were to close;
- That Cabinet be advised that this Committee recommend Cheshire East Council request to buy the current site in Congleton with a sensible offer given the current economic situation and strong resident voice as seen in the consultation; and
- Councillor Laura Crane explore any possibilities for this item to come back to this Committee for further scrutiny ahead of review by Cabinet.

56 HOUSING: CONSULTATION UPDATES

Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise introduced the item and , Senior Policy Officer Chris Hutton provided the Committee with an overview on the

Vulnerable and Older Persons Housing Strategy 2020-2024 and the Tenancy Strategy, the Cheshire East approach to consultation, an update of the consultation for both strategies including amendments and the approach to adoption.

The Committee heard that the Vulnerable and Older Peoples Housing Strategy was not a statutory document, Cheshire East has one as part of a good practice document. There were three main priorities to the strategy:

- People are supported to live in their own homes independently for longer;
- When required, people can receive the support they need in a wide range of specialist, supported accommodation within the Borough; and
- People are able to make informed choices about the accommodation, care and support options within Cheshire East.

The Committee heard that the Strategic Housing Team had sought legal advice regarding the running of the consultation during lockdown. During the early days of the pandemic, government guidelines were more restrictive and so the consultation ran for eight weeks and was then extended for another 4 weeks, in total it ran from May- August 2020. The consultation consisted of an online survey and questionnaire and did incorporate recommendations given from Health, Adult Social Care and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

There had been 32 responses to both consultations plus additional emails, the focus was now on the next steps and adoption of the strategy and were:

- A review of the actions for each cohort;
- Significantly improved 'Supported Living' sections for learning, disability and mental health;
- The impact of Covid-19 and the response from Cheshire East Council; and
- Adoption by Portfolio Holders.

The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions, and there was some discussion about the 32 responses given to the consultation. Chris explained that this was in line with previous responses to similar strategies.

The Committee requested a tracked version of the consultation document to see the context of any alterations as a consequence of the consultation views.

Chris then gave another short presentation on the Tenancy Strategy.

This is a statutory document but Registered Providers only have to take due regard to it and aren't bound by it. The strategy focused on the types and circumstances of tenancies, including fixed term and circumstances that granted any extensions.

The Tenancy Strategy consultation ran from Oct-Jan 2021 and took the form of an online survey and questionnaire.

Chris explained that Pre-Covid the team would have engaged with face to face meetings would have had breakout rooms for smaller focused groups.

The next steps and adoption for the Tenancy Strategy were:

- Review of comments that related to Domestic Abuse;
- Updated figures;

- Acknowledgement of figures that related to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)/rent arrears and clarifying the processes that are used to manage this; and
- Adoption by Portfolio Holder

The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions, and there was some discussion that included:

- Registered Housing Providers take due regard to the Tenancy Strategy, despite the fact that they don't need to follow it. Registered Housing Providers were engaged with during the drafting of the strategy and advice was sought on current working practices;
- That the Registered Housing Provider has the authority to grant provision for people taking pets into social housing;
- That the strategy is renewed as required, it has been nine years since the last one; and
- Clear communication and pathways for tenants that included expected behaviours and actions by the tenant.

RESOLUTION:

- That Peter and Chris be thanked for their attendance today and for the presentations to this Committee; and
- That Chris circulate a tracked version of the consultation documents to see the context of any alterations as a consequence of the consultation views.

57 **FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED- That the Forward Plan be received and noted.

58 **WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the Work Programme.

The Chairman noted that the March meeting would be the last for this Committee before the Council moves into a Committee System style of governance.

Councillors Peter Groves and June Buckley advised the Committee that the Task and Finish Group meetings from this week had been very excellent and informative and extended their thanks to the Chairman and Democratic Services for arranging them.

RESOLVED- That the Work Programme be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.35 pm

Councillor JP Findlow (Chairman)