

Version
Number: 2.2

Key Decision N

Date First
Published:

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 8 April 2021

Report Title: Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group – Members’ Facilities, Accommodation and Culture Recommendations

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1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report introduces the findings, conclusions and recommendations made by the overview and scrutiny task and finish group, set up by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review Members’ Facilities, Accommodation and Culture.
- 1.2. The original remit of the task and finish group has been overtaken by time and events. However, members’ views on the issues raised remain important and can be taken into consideration as the council plans its recovery from Covid restrictions, as they relate to members’ facilities.
- 1.3. The report is presented to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as the “parent” overview and scrutiny committee, to comment on the findings and advise on the way forward.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the report of the Members’ Facilities, Accommodation and Culture Task and Finish Group be received.

3. Recommendations from the Task and Finish Group

- 3.1. In light of the decision taken by Council on 19 November 2020 to move to a committee system form of governance from May 2021, the group would ask that as part of the council's various workstreams put in place to achieve a successful governance transition, consideration is given to the points raised in this report when determining how the council may re-arrange and re-use its members' facilities within the committee system.
- 3.2. Although there is no appetite to reserve certain rooms exclusively for member meetings, the group felt that prioritisation arrangements should be considered.
- 3.3. That consideration be given to determine any economical and affordable ways that the council could increase and improve the public display of the civic history, culture and heritage of Cheshire East Council and its three former authorities (Congleton Borough Council, Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council, and Macclesfield Borough Council).
- 3.4. The group would ask that the Council gives consideration to the longer-term goal of constructing its own purpose-built council chamber, to both improve the delivery of Council meetings and introduce a space within which the heritage and culture of Cheshire East and its three former authorities can be proudly displayed.
- 3.5. That as part of the preparatory work for implementing the committee system from May 2021, consideration be given to the availability of car parking spaces on busier meeting days i.e. when full Council is held, and that council determines if any priority parking arrangements should be put in place.
- 3.6. That the council continues to build on the great strides it made through 2020/21 – successfully completing its Digital Refresh Programme and transforming how it delivers its work and meetings – by ensuring that continued IT training is made available to support continued effective remote working and virtual meeting delivery.
- 3.7. That, in light of the rollout of laptops and IT equipment to all elected members and foficers, Council considers making a committed pledge to reducing the authority's use of paper, both in day-to-day work activities and for documentation for meetings.
- 3.8. That the council continues to periodically review the use of its facilities and accommodation, to make certain that cost and resource-efficacy is achieved.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

4.1. The recommendations made in this report aim to help Cheshire East Council to continue to review and improve the efficient, effective use of its facilities, accommodation and ICT equipment, and to improve its public display of the rich history, heritage and culture of Cheshire East, Congleton, Crewe and Nantwich, and Macclesfield.

5. Other Options Considered

5.1. No alternative options were considered.

6. Background

6.1. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee initially established this task and finish group in December 2016, with the purpose of reviewing whether the facilities, accommodation and cultural arrangements of Cheshire East Council were fit for purpose for the council's increased elected membership following the merging of the former Cheshire authorities (Congleton Borough Council, Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council and Macclesfield Borough Council) into the current unitary authority in 2009.

6.2. The work of the group was paused on two occasions, which led to the delay in the production of this final report. The two remaining members of the task and finish group (Councillors M Simon and A Moran) with the support of officers, reconvened this piece of work in November 2019 and produced the appended report.

6.3. The final report of the task and finish group (Appendix 1) was updated to ensure that the group's findings, conclusions and recommendations reflected the significant changes undertaken by the council both in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and in preparation for the its change in governance arrangements in May 2021.

7. Implications of the Recommendations

7.1. Legal Implications

7.1.1. There are no legal implications associated to the report and recommendations at this stage, however, there may be legal implications associated with the implication of any approved recommendations.

7.2. Finance Implications

7.2.1. The recommendations have not yet been financially assessed. Further work would be required to capture the specific financial implications of any approved recommendations.

7.3. Policy Implications

7.3.1. There are no policy implications at this stage, however, the approval of any recommendations may result in policy changes.

7.4. Equality Implications

7.4.1. There are no equality implications associated to this report.

7.5. Human Resources Implications

7.5.1. There are no human resources implications associated to this report.

7.6. Risk Management Implications

7.6.1. There are no risk management implications associated to this report.

7.7. Rural Communities Implications

7.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

7.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

7.9. Public Health Implications

7.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

7.10. Climate Change Implications

7.10.1. Some of the recommendations would have wider benefits in relation to potentially reducing vehicle emissions, as well as paper, printing and ink usage, which would help the council to achieve the objectives of the Cheshire East Carbon Action Plan, and to respond to its declaration of “an environment and climate emergency”.

8. Ward Members Affected

8.1. No ward members are directly affected.

9. Consultation & Engagement

9.1. No formal consultation and engagement was required.

10. Access to Information

10.1. The following documentation was used to support the development of the review.

- 10.1.1. [The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels \(Coronavirus\) \(Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2020](#)
- 10.1.2. [Minutes of the virtual meeting of \(Cheshire East\) Council held on Thursday, 19th November, 2020](#) (regarding the resolution to introduce a committee system form of governance from May 2021)
- 10.1.3. [Minutes of the virtual meeting of \(Cheshire East Council\) Cabinet held on Tuesday, 5th May, 2020](#) (regarding the approval of the Cheshire East Carbon Action Plan)
- 10.1.4. [Minutes of the meeting of \(Cheshire East\) Council held on Wednesday, 22nd May, 2019](#) (regarding the council's declaration of "an environment and climate emergency")

11. Contact Information

11.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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