

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Council**
held on Wednesday, 17th February, 2021

PRESENT

Councillor B Burkhill (Mayor/Chairman)
Councillor S Edgar (Deputy Mayor/Vice Chairman)

Councillors B Burkhill, S Edgar, Q Abel, M Addison, S Akers Smith, M Asquith, R Bailey, J Barber, M Beanland, M Benson, L Braithwaite, J Bratherton, S Brookfield, D Brown, C Browne, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Carter, J Clowes, S Corcoran, L Crane, S Davies, T Dean, D Edwardes, B Evans, H Faddes, A Farrall, JP Findlow, K Flavell, R Fletcher, T Fox, A Gage, S Gardiner, L Gilbert, M Goldsmith, A Gregory, P Groves, S Handley, A Harewood, G Hayes, S Hogben, S Holland, M Houston, M Hunter, D Jefferay, L Jeuda, A Kolker, C Leach, I Macfarlane, N Mannion, D Marren, A Martin, A Moran, R Moreton, B Murphy, D Murphy, J Nicholas, K Parkinson, J Parry, S Pochin, B Puddicombe, P Redstone, J Rhodes, L Roberts, J Saunders, M Sewart, M Simon, L Smetham, J Smith, L Smith, D Stockton, A Stott, R Vernon, L Wardlaw, M Warren, J Weatherill, P Williams, J Wray and N Wylie.

35 **PRAYERS**

The Reverend Ralph Kemp said prayers at the request of the Mayor.

36 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

37 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Item 8 - In the interest of openness, Councillor B Puddicombe declared that he was the Council's nominated representative on the Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, which was mentioned as being part of a consortium making a bid for a green homes grant in the report.

38 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2020 be approved as a correct record.

39 **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor

- 1 expressed his thanks to all those Members who had joined him at the Council's Holocaust Memorial Day Service last month. He also thanked Mrs Judith Hayman, who at the Service had talked in such an engaging way about the horrific impact of the Holocaust on her family, and thanked the Rev Michael Morton, from St Winifred's Church, Sandbach, who had also spoken at the Service.
- 2 referred to the recent media interest in a meeting of Handforth Parish Council, of which he was a member, and stated that nothing should detract from the importance of the business being considered at today's meeting which included agreeing the budget and the Council Tax precept, and that the Council had an agreed procedure for dealing with code of conduct issues.

40 **PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION**

Jane Smith referred to planning application 20/2540C and asked why the Council had given permission for the removal of the 10 metres of hedgerow for temporary vehicular access in spite of Alsager Town Council's concerns, which were backed up by policies in their recently adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The Portfolio Holder for Planning responded that Local Plan Policy PG6 – Open Countryside allowed for the development of public infrastructure and essential work to be undertaken by public service or authorities or statutory undertakers and the application related to the upgrading of a water treatment plant and was therefore acceptable in principle. Policy NBE4 of Alsager Neighbourhood Plan stated that, if because of development, trees and hedgerows were lost they should be replaced by native species and this had been secured by a condition of approval of the application.

Sue Helliwell referred to the Brighter Future Together Programme and stated that it appeared from details within the budget that there were going to be cuts or savings to the Programme and made reference to member behaviours. Sue Helliwell asked how the Council could ensure that the culture of the council kept on improving if cuts were to be made to the Brighter Future Programme. In response the Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Corporate Services stated that the Council's Brighter Future workstream was much wider than the cultural workstream and include four other areas of transformation and that there were no savings proposals in the MTFs relating to the cultural work.

Paul Duffy spoke in relation to the proposal to close the Congleton Recycling Centre with no option for a replacement and asked if the submitted petition and calculations for extra CO₂ were taken into consideration in deciding to close the recycling centre in Congleton and

how did closing a recycling centre fit in with the Climate emergency declared by Cheshire East back in 2019. The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste confirmed that the consultation responses and petition were taken into consideration and emphasised that a decision had not yet been made, and the matter would go back to the scrutiny committee before a decision was made by Cabinet.

Congleton Town Councillor Robert Douglas referred to the proposal for the closure of the Congleton Recycling Centre, making reference to damage it would cause to the environment, and stated that it was unthinkable that a town the size of Congleton would not have its own recycling site. He asked how many alternative sites Cheshire East had seriously considered to replace the existing site and what was their approximate acreage and distance from the centre of Congleton. In response the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste stated that the decision had not been taken to close the site and the matter would go back to the scrutiny committee before going to Cabinet for decision and asked that people put forward any suggestion where cuts could be made in other services to enable a site to be built in Congleton which they would consider.

41 LEADER'S AND DEPUTY LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council, in summary:

- stated that the Covid-19 infection rates in Cheshire East had fallen sharply in January from a peak of about 400 per 100,000 of population but in early February the decline had stopped at about 200 per 100,000 and that this appeared to be due to a number of outbreaks in care homes.
- reported that the rate was now at 134 per 100,000 and he thanked everybody who has helped to reduce the infection rate, including those simply following the rules and observing the hands, face, face guidance.
- stated that the vaccination programme organised by NHS Cheshire CCG and local GPs was going exceptionally well and over 90% of those in the top 4 cohorts had been vaccinated.
- encouraged those over 70 and who had not yet had their first vaccination to call 119 and book an appointment.
- praised the work done in distributing food and energy vouchers to the vulnerable and that with the help of schools, colleges, early years settings and other family support service more than 11,000 vouchers had been distributed.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, in summary:

- reported that since November last year a total of 14,000 business grants, had been paid out and that the Business Support Team had processed a further 561 applications within the last week. By the end of March the Council was expected to have paid out more than £4.5m in grant payments.

- reported that public consultation had commenced on second phase of our active travel schemes to encourage cycling and walking following a further award of government funding.
- reported that the Council's expression of interest to the Department of Transport's Rural Mobility Fund had been successful and a business case for a demand responsive transport scheme serving rural communities in the south of the Bourgh had been submitted.
- stated that HS2 Phase 2A had gained royal assent, which would bring high speed rail travel to Crewe.

42 RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET: THIRD QUARTER REVIEW (FINANCE) 2020/21

Council considered the recommendations from Cabinet in relation to the approval of supplementary revenue estimates and supplementary capital estimates.

RESOLVED: That Council approve:

1. fully funded supplementary revenue estimates above £1,000,000 relating to Covid-19 grants in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules, as detailed in Appendix 2 Table 1 to the report;
2. a supplementary capital estimate of £1,808,000 relating to Best4Business in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules, as detailed in Appendix 4, Annex D to the report;
3. an additional Supplementary Capital Estimate of up to £3,500,000 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund to further the Council's carbon neutrality objectives; and
4. an additional Supplementary Capital Estimate in relation to £1,523,750 from The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for Green Homes Grant, Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 1B (GHG LAD P1B).

43 RECOMMENDATION FROM CABINET: CORPORATE PLAN AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2021-25

Cabinet, at its meeting on 2 February 2021 had considered a report presenting the Corporate Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy for Cheshire East Council for 2021-25. The report set out how the Council would approach the financial challenges over the medium term and forecast a balanced budget for 2021/22.

Cabinet had recommended to Council the items in Appendix A to the report and these were proposed and seconded.

During the debate two amendments were proposed.

Amendment 1

To start the initiative for devolved ward budgets it is recommended that:

- a) the Council establish devolved ward member budgets of at least £4,200 per Ward Member for the financial year 2021/2022.*
- b) the proposals to be funded from the current allocation of Capital Grant funding to the Area Highway Groups of £350,000.*
- c) that the Committee System be asked to review achievements of the ward budgets scheme in 2021/22 with a view to widening the scheme in 2022/23 and beyond with a significant increase in the budget amount to be allocated to each Ward Member.*

The amendment was moved and seconded. The mover and seconder of the recommendations from Cabinet to Council agreed to accept the amendment subject to the addition of 'highways' so it read "...devolved *highways* ward budgets...". This was acceptable to the mover and seconder of the amendment and therefore the amendment became part of the substantive proposition.

Amendment 2

Propose that an additional £1m be added into the highways budget. This should be used for a concerted gully emptying programme to protect our highways infrastructure and to reduce flooding across the borough. This money should come from savings on travel and subsistence as we have saved over £1m so for this year! Any further saving in this year's budget should be ringfenced for highways to reduce any risk. On next year's budget any shortfall to be funded from unified communications p165 and waste extra tonnage p189.

The amendment was moved and seconded.

The Section 151 officer advised that a balanced business case in relation to the amendment had not been submitted and that the funding within the amendment was not a surplus and that the underspend on travel was already reflected in the budget as it stood. The amendment would lead to an unbalanced budget and the Section S151 Officer therefore advised Council not to adopt the amendment. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that the amendment as put would leave the budget unbalanced and was something which could not be voted on as it would be an unlawful budget.

In the light of the advice received the mover and seconder withdraw their amendment.

Following debate on the substantive recommendations, these were put to the vote, and in accordance with legislation, a recorded vote was carried out with the following results:

FOR

Councillors Q Abel, S Akers Smith, J Barber, L Brathwaite, J Bratherton, S Brookfield, C Browne, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Carter, S Corcoran, L Crane, D Edwardes, B Evans, H Faddes, A Farrall, K Flavell, T Fox, M Goldsmith, S Handley, A Harewood, S Hogben, M Houston, M Hunter, D Jefferay, L Jeuda, I Macfarlane, N Mannion, D Marren, A Moran, R Moreton, B Murphy, J Nicholas, J Parry, S Pochin, B Puddicombe, J Rhodes, J Smith, L Smith, A Stott, R Vernon and M Warren.

AGAINST

Councillors M Addison, M Asquith, R Bailey, M Beanland, M Benson, D Brown, J Buckley, J Clowes, S Davies, T Dean, S Edgar, JP Findlow, A Gage, S Gardiner, L Gilbert, A Gregory, P Groves, G Hayes, S Holland, A Kolker, C Leach, A Martin, D Murphy, K Parkinson, P Redstone, L Roberts, J Saunders, M Sewart, M Simon, L Smetham, D Stockton, L Wardlaw, J Weatherill, P Williams, J Wray and N Wylie.

NOT VOTING

Councillor B Burkhill and R Fletcher.

The motion was declared carried with 42 votes for, 36 against and 2 not voting.

RESOVLED:

That Council approve:

- 1 The Corporate Plan 2021-2025 (Appendix B to the report).
- 2 The Revenue estimates for the 2021/22 budget and the medium-term Capital Programme estimates 2021-2025, as detailed in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Report (MTFS) 2021-2025 (Appendix C to the report).
- 3 Band D Council Tax of £1,579.03 representing an increase of 4.99%. This is below the referendum limit (including 3% ringfenced for Adult Social Care) and arises from the provisional finance settlement (Appendix C, Section 2 to the report).
- 4 The 2021/22 non ring-fenced Specific Grants, and that any amendments to particular grants will be reported to Council if further information is received from Government Departments or other funding bodies (Appendix C, Annex 8 to the report).
- 5 The 2021/22 Capital Grants, and that any amendments to particular grants will be reported to Council if further information is received from Government Departments or other funding bodies (Appendix C, Annex 9 to the report).

- 6 The relevant Portfolio Holder to agree the use of additional Specific Grants received in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder Finance, ICT and Communication as further updates to the 2021/22 funding position are received.
- 7 The Prudential Indicators for Capital Financing (Appendix C, Annex 11 to the report).
- 8 The Portfolio Holder for Children and Families to agree any necessary amendment to the 2021/22 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) of £245.3m and the associated policy proposals, in the light of further information received from DfE, pupil number changes, further academy transfers and the actual balance brought forward from 2020/21 (Appendix C, Annex 8 to the report).
- 9 The Capital Strategy (Appendix C, Annex 11 to the report).
- 10 The Treasury Management Strategy (Appendix C, Annex 12 to the report).
- 11 The Investment Strategy; including the financial limits for various classifications of investment, and the investment decision making process set out in the Strategy (Appendix C, Annex 13 to the report).
- 12 The Reserves Strategy (Appendix C, Annex 14 to the report), which includes proposed movements to and from reserves, and to note the opening balance within the Collection Fund Earmarked Reserve includes a temporary £30m balance for Extended Retail Relief, to be used in full in 2021/22.
- 13 The amendment to Key Decisions as defined in the Constitution and the financial limits to be included within the Council's Finance Procedure Rules (Appendix C, Annex 15 to the report).
- 14 The amendment to establish devolved ward member highways budgets of at least £4,200 per Ward Member for the financial year 2021/2022, with the proposal to be funded from the current allocation of Capital Grant funding to the Area Highway Groups of £350,000 and that the Committee System review achievements of the ward budgets scheme in 2021/22 with a view to widening the scheme in 2022/23 and beyond with a significant increase in the budget amount to be allocated to each Ward Member.

and that Council recognises that Cabinet has noted:

- 15 The results of the Corporate Plan Consultation (Appendix B, Annex 1 to the report).

- 16 The Budget Engagement exercise undertaken by the Council, as set out in the attached Appendix C, Annex 2a to the report.
- 17 The results of the Budget Consultation (Appendix C, Annex 2b to the report).
- 18 The Report of the Council's Section 151 Officer, contained within the MTFs Report, regarding the robustness of estimates and level of reserves held by the Council based on these budget proposals (Appendix C to the report - Report from the Section 151 Officer).

44 **COUNCIL TAX STATUTORY RESOLUTION**

Consideration was given to a report relating to the setting of the Council Tax for 2021/22.

It was reported that Cheshire East Council, as a billing authority, was responsible for the billing and collection of Council Tax from local taxpayers and must, therefore, make a resolution to set the overall Council Tax level. This meant the Authority also collected Council Tax income to cover not only its own services but also precepts set by other authorities. The Council Tax levied was, therefore made up of four elements: -

- Cheshire East Borough Council
- Town & Parish Council precepts
- Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire precept
- Cheshire Fire Authority precept

Council was recommended to set the Council Tax for Cheshire East Council for the financial year 2021/22 at £1,579.03, in accordance with the formal resolutions as shown in section 13 of the report.

The motion in respect of the setting of the Council Tax was proposed and seconded. Following debate, in accordance with legislation a recorded vote was carried out in respect to this item, with the following results: -

FOR

Councillor Q Abel, S Akers Smith, J Barber, L Braithwaite, J Bratherton, S Brookfield, C Browne, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, S Carter, S Corcoran, L Crane, D Edwardes, B Evans, H Faddes, A Farrall, K Flavell, R Fletcher, T Fox, M Goldsmith, S Handley, A Harewood, S Hogben, M Houston, M Hunter, D Jefferay, L Jeuda, I Macfarlane, N Mannion, D Marren, A Moran, R Moreton, D Murphy, J Nicholas, J Parry, S Pochin, B Puddicombe, J Rhodes, J Smith, L Smith, A Stott, R Vernon, M Warren and P Williams.

AGAINST

Councillors M Addison, M Asquith, R Bailey, M Beanland, M Benson, D Brown, J Clowes, S Davies, T Dean, S Edgar, JP Findlow, A Gage, S Gardiner, L Gilbert, A Gregory, P Groves, G Hayes, S Holland, A Kolker, C Leach, A Martin, K Parkinson, P Redstone, L Roberts, J Saunders, M

Sewart, M Simon, L Smetham, D Stockton, L Wardlaw, J Weatherill, J Wray and N Wylie.

NOT VOTING

Councillors B Burkhill and B Murphy.

The motion was declared carried with 45 votes for, 33 against and 2 not voting.

RESOLVED:

That the Council Tax for Cheshire East Council for the financial year 2021/22 be set at £1,579.03, in accordance with the formal resolutions as shown in section 13 of the report, as follows: -

Formal Resolution

- 1 That it be noted that on 16 December 2020 the Council calculated the Council Tax base 2021/22.
 - (a) for the whole Council area as 153,796.10 (item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the "Act")).
 - (b) for individual parishes, as in Appendix A to the report.
- 2 That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2021/22 (excluding Parish precepts) is £242,848,656.
- 3 That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - a. £681,018,752 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.
 - b. £429,079,573 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - c. £251,939,179 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
 - d. £1,638.14 being the amount at 3(c) above divided by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the

Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).

- e. £9,090,523 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- f. £1,579.03 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by the amount at 1(a) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.
- g. Appendix A to the report being the amounts calculated by the Council, in accordance with regulations 3 and 6 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, as its total council tax base for the year and council tax base for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.
- h. Appendix B to the report being the amounts given by adding to the amount at (f) above, the amounts of special items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided by in each case the appropriate tax base from Appendix A, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 34(3) of the 1992 Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of the area to which one or more special items relate. (Band D charges for each Parish area).
- i. Appendix C to the report being the amounts given by multiplying the amount at (h) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the 1992 Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the 1992 Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands (Local charges for all Bands).

j. Appendix D to the report being the aggregate of the local charges in (i) above and the amounts levied by major precepting authorities, calculated in accordance with Section 30(2) of the 1992 Act (The total Council Tax charge for each band in each Parish area).

4 That it be noted that the Police & Crime Commissioner and the Fire Authority have issued precepts to Cheshire East Council in accordance with section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as shown in sections 10 and 11 of the report.

5 It was accepted that Cheshire East Council's basic amount of Council tax for 2021/22 was not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB and 52ZC of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

45 RECOMMENDATION FROM STAFFING COMMITTEE - PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Staffing Committee in respect of the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22.

The Staffing Committee, at its meeting on 21 January 2021, had considered the draft Pay Policy Statement and resolved that Council be recommended to approve and publish the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 and delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to make any necessary in-year amendments to the Statement.

Councillor C Bulman, Chair of Staffing Committee, referred to The Restrictions of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020, which had come into effect on 4 November 2020 and introduced a £95,000 cap on exit payments. Cllr Bulman reported that the Government had agreed that the cap may have unintended consequences and that the Treasury had ruled that it would disapply the regulations with immediate effect and therefore the cap would no longer apply. As a result of this the Monitoring Officer would be asked to amend the Pay Policy Statement accordingly.

RESOLVED: That

- 1 the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/22 be approved and published accordingly; and
- 2 the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make any necessary in year amendments and any further changes required to the Statement.

46 NOTICES OF MOTION

Consideration was given to the following Notices of Motion, which had been submitted in accordance with paragraph 1.34 of the Council Procedure Rules.

1 **Universal Credit**

Proposed by Councillor L Smith and Seconded by Councillor D Marren

This Council notes:

- *This April the Government plan to cut the benefit level for millions of claimants by ending of the time limited increase to the basic rate of Universal Credit (and the tax credit equivalent) announced by the Chancellor on 20th March as part of his pandemic response package.*
- *The £20 a week boost reflected the reality that the level of benefits were not adequate to protect the swiftly increasing number of households relying on them as the crisis hit. Exactly because that increase was a very significant and welcome move to bolster low- and middle-income families living standards, its removal will be a huge loss.*
- *Pressing ahead would see the level of unemployment support fall to its lowest real-terms level since 1990-91, and it's lowest ever relative to average earnings. Indeed, the basic level of out-of-work support prior to the March boost was – at £73 a week (£3,800 a year) – less than half the absolute poverty line.*
- *The increase in benefits have had a positive effect on the lives of thousands of local claimants who are better able to pay for life's essentials such as food, clothing, and utilities.*
- *The local economy has also benefited from the increase in benefit levels as claimants spend their money locally thereby supporting local businesses and jobs.*

This Council resolves to:

- *Write to the Chancellor, Rushi Sunak and to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson demanding that the £20 increase to Universal Credit is made permanent and extended to claimants on legacy benefits.*
- *Work with other local government organisations to form a coalition to pressure the government to make the £20 increase to Universal Credit permanent.*

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to Cabinet.

2 International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of Anti-Semitism

Proposed by Councillor S Gardiner and Seconded by Councillor M Asquith

This Council reaffirms its commitment to employ the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism as a key pillar of the Council's equality and diversity policies.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to Cabinet via the relevant overview and scrutiny committee.

3 Covid 19 Vaccination Programme Thanks

Proposed by Councillor R Bailey and seconded by Councillor M Beanland

This Council places on record their thanks to all involved in the Covid 19 vaccination programme within Cheshire East. This includes all health staff, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and volunteers.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be approved.

Before consideration of the next Notice of Motion, the Mayor announced that it would be inappropriate for him to chair the meeting whilst the Motion was being considered and would therefore leave the meeting during its consideration and that, following consultation with the Group Leaders, Councillor Rod Fletcher would take the chair.

The Mayor left the meeting room and Councillor Fletcher took the Chair.

4. Mayor of Cheshire East Council

Proposed by Councillor L Wardlaw and Seconded by Councillor J Saunders

The recent national coverage of the Handforth Parish Council meeting and our Mayors' participation in that meeting has led us to believe he has brought this Council and his role within this Council into disrepute.

He made no attempt to intervene as it became clear participants in that meeting were being bullied.

The work that has been done at Cheshire East over the last 3 years with the cooperation and commitment of all Members and officers to transform its culture and reputation from one of bullying and intimidation has been undermined by this sad episode.

The inaction of the Mayor could be seen as a demonstration of his complicity in the bullying that occurred, and this cannot be ignored if the integrity of the Brighter Futures Programme is to be maintained.

The role of Mayor is one that should promote Cheshire East Council, its residents, and its businesses across the country. In accepting the role as representative of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Mayor should be mindful at all times of his reputation and of those he represents. Sadly, the recent highly publicised events have shown that this has not been the case for Cllr Mr Barry Burkill.

Motion

In light of the above this Council resolves that it has no confidence in the Mayor and that his term of office as Mayor and Chairman of the Council will cease immediately.

Councillor Fletcher referred to the Monitoring Officer's advice note which concluded that the Motion 'must be referred to the Standards Committee' via the standards procedure and, in the light of this, he invited the mover to introduce their Motion and speak for 2 minutes and thereafter the Motion would stand referred to the Standards Committee without debate or vote.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the Standards Committee.

Councillor Fletcher vacated the Chair and the Mayor returned to the meeting room and took the Chair.

47 QUESTIONS

Councillor P Redstone asked how many planning officers had left since 2018, whether they had been replaced, what was the establishment of the department in 2018 and what was it now. The Portfolio Holder for Planning undertook to provide a written answer.

Councillor D Marren, in relation to flooding in his ward, referred to the Local Government Ombudsman setting up virtual meeting with the Council on

23 February and asked who would be attending, and if he could attend. The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste agreed to provide a written response to the question.

Councillor A Farrall referred to the Armed Forces Covenant and asked if the Council would consider if establishing a dedicated housing outreach officer to engage directly with members of the armed forces. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration responded that he would ask officers to look at examples at other councils to see if the Council could improve its offer and asked Councillor Farrall to forward the information he had.

Councillor J Clowes and Councillor M Asquith both referred to planning enforcement issues in their wards and asked that action be taken on these and meetings be arranged so the Parish Councils could put forward their concerns. The Portfolio Holder for Planning responded that they would need to discuss the issues raised with officers and undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor S Gardiner asked about the Council's policy for the reuse/recycling of items taken to the household waste sites which were of sufficient quality to be recycled. In response the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste stated that the operator's contract allowed for goods which could be reused to be salvaged and undertook to provide a written response with the details.

Councillor S Akers Smith referred to two Congleton residents who had received awards from the High Sheriff of Cheshire for their volunteer work and asked if the Council could also recognise the achievement of volunteers during the pandemic. The Portfolio Holder for Communities responded that the lockdown restrictions had prevented the holding of any events to recognise the work of volunteers and asked Members to let him know of ideas on how this Council could do this. The Leader of the Council asked Councillor Akers Smith to forward him the details of the two Congleton residents so that they could personally congratulate them on their award.

Cllr B Puddicombe asked about what plans the Council was making for post covid recovery in Cheshire East and especially in major towns. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration responded that the Council had been working hard to process and pay out grants to businesses and was working on an economic recovery plan. In Macclesfield the Council had been working with the Town Council and stakeholders to develop a town centre recovery plan and these plans would be developed for the other towns in Cheshire East.

Cllr C Bulman asked for clarification on the situation in relation to highways which had been raised earlier in the meeting and asked if the administration was going all they could to investing in the Borough's highways and footpaths. The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste

responded that the MTFS document before the meeting today, on page 316, set out the investment in highways. However the DoT had announced yesterday the level of funding the Council would be receiving, and this was £3million less than last year. The Council would ensure that it would do the best it could with the funding received.

Councillor M Simon referred to previous questions they had asked in relation to the removal of roads from the winter gritting routes and asked if any decision had been made in relation to Colleys Lane, Williston. The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste responded that the Council was hoping to make an announcement in April and that as soon as they had any information on the changes to winter gritting routes it would be shared with all Members.

Councillor R Bailey referred to a report in the Daily Telegraph on the slow payment of business support grants and asked what the backlog of applications at the Council was. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration responded that there were currently 184 grant applications awaiting assessment – a 14-day backlog, and they would provide a written response with the details.

Cllr H Faddes referred to the refurbished Market Hall in Crewe and asked when it would be reopening. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration responded that the reopening would depend on when the Government lifted the lockdown restrictions, but the Council was working to a provisional date in early May.

48 REPORTING OF URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Council received a schedule of urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive on behalf of Council, which was reported for information in accordance with Appendix 4 of the Council procedure rules.

RESOLVED:

That the schedule of urgent decisions be noted.

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and concluded at 5.08 pm

Councillor B Burkhill
MAYOR/CHAIRMAN