

**PRESENT:**                   **Cheshire West and Chester Council:**  
Councillors Carol Gahan (Chairman), Paul Donovan and  
Karen Shore

**Cheshire East Council:**  
Councillors Arthur Moran, Jill Rhodes and Amanda Stott

Visiting Members:       Councillor Lesley Smetham (Cheshire East Council)

Officers in attendance:   **Cheshire West and Chester Council:**  
Laurence Ainsworth       Director of Public Services Reform  
Lyn Brown                   Democracy and Elections Officer  
Peter Lloyd                  Head of Change and Technology  
Aaron Thomas               B4B PMO and Governance Lead  
Mark Wynn                   Chief Operating Officer

**Cheshire East Council:**  
Jane Burns                   Executive Director Corporate  
Services  
Michelle Dodd               B4B Testing Manager  
Jamie Hollis                 Interim Head of Legal  
Alex Thompson              Director of Financial and Customer  
Services

**External Partners:**  
Nick Brown                   B4B Change and Implementation  
Lead, Augere  
Graham Forsdyke           B4B Programme Director, Ameo

### 31    **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chairman, Councillor Carol Gahan, welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting and introductions were made.

### 32    **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No Declarations of Interest were made.

### 33    **MINUTES**

**DECIDED:**   That

the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

### 34    **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME/OPEN SESSION**

No members of the public were in attendance and no questions had been submitted prior to the meeting.

## **35 ARCHIVES PROJECT UPDATE REPORT**

Jane Burns, Executive Director Corporate Services, Cheshire East Council, introduced a report on behalf of Paul Newman (Archives and Local Studies Manager, Cheshire Shared Services) who was unable to attend the meeting. The report provided a progress update in relation to the 'Cheshire's archives: a story shared' project, funded by Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund (Heritage Fund).

Members were reminded that updates had been presented to the Committee in June and November 2020 following the award of a development grant of £544,900 by the Heritage Fund. Members noted that since November activity had focused on:

- developing an evaluation strategy for the development phase of the project
- reviewing target audiences, as suggested by the National Lottery Heritage Fund
- recruiting a community engagement officer, expected to be in post in March 2021
- identifying items from local studies and archives collections to support the interpretation proposals for the project
- working with environmental team around sustainability

Ms Burns outlined the priorities for the next three months, including continued detailed design work, further work in terms of online interpretation of the collections, carrying out in-depth research into audiences and appointing a business consultant. She confirmed that preparatory work was continuing at pace and a further update would be brought back to the Committee in June 2021.

Members welcomed the comprehensive update and thanked officers for the report and the presentation. In response to a query around under-represented audiences, particularly amongst the BAME community, Ms Burns suggested looking for opportunities to utilise the existing BAME staff networks within both councils. Members were also keen for officers to explore opportunities for joint communication when the project came to fruition as this was a really exciting good news story to promote as widely as possible amongst residents.

### **DECIDED: That**

the current status of the project be noted.

## **36 BEST4BUSINESS UPDATE REPORT**

Mark Wynn, Chief Operating Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council, presented a report which was a regular update on the latest position with regard to the implementation of the replacement HR and Finance system for the councils and their partners. The report updated on progress in the following key areas since the last formal meeting of the committee in November 2020:-

- the first programme go live decision and system launch
- the remaining programme plan for delivery
- the financial position of the remaining programme
- governance and oversight of the programme

Mr Wynn drew Members' attention to the programme plan update in section 5 of the report and the significant milestone achieved which was the first phase 'go live' for Finance, Procure to Pay, Income to Cash and Critical HR on 8/9 February. This followed a period of extensive testing of the programme against all the pre-determined criteria set which were met and allowed the 'go live' to take place, with 1,000 users a day accessing the new system. He also highlighted section 5.5 onwards in the report which set out the process for the safe and seamless transition of the second phase of 'go live' which was the payroll elements. It was noted that a further report would be presented to Members at the next meeting in March, outlining the transition from phase one to phase two and the plans for the second 'go live'. In addition, Mr Wynn outlined the significant level of training and business readiness undertaken within councils, council companies and schools to ensure users were ready for the 'go live'. He reported that the programme was still within the existing budget framework set by Members and future arrangements for oversight of the programme across both councils was also noted.

In the ensuing discussion, Members welcomed the update report and were very pleased that the first phase 'go live' milestone had been reached. They looked forward to a further update on the second phase of 'go live', recognising that payroll was a key element and noting that initially the existing and new systems would be run in tandem. Mr Wynn reassured Members of a phased and safe testing of the payroll systems to ensure the former and new systems were aligned to each other and that all transactions for each staff member matched.

Members thanked all the teams involved in the implementation of the new core business system, particularly as much of the testing and implementation had been undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, Members welcomed the suggestion of a post implementation review following the second phase 'go live' as an opportunity to review processes and learn lessons for the future.

**DECIDED: That**

- (1) the successful launch of the Finance and Payments elements of the new Unit4 ERP system be noted;
- (2) the current position on the implementation plan and timetable for the remaining programme, including ongoing activity to ensure go-live readiness for the two Councils and partners, be agreed;
- (3) the reported financial position of the remaining programme be noted; and
- (4) ongoing activity in relation to Member oversight and governance be agreed.

**37 SHARED SERVICES STRATEGIC REVIEW**

Laurence Ainsworth, Director of Public Services Reform, Cheshire West and Chester Council, presented a report which set out the proposed approach to a series of strategic reviews of the eight shared services in order to take stock and ensure that they continued to meet their objectives, were cost effective and fit for purpose.

Members were reminded that many of the eight shared services had been established 12 years ago in the last round of local government reorganisation, had a collective spend of around £23m a year and approximately 360 staff. Mr Ainsworth outlined that a business planning framework and performance management framework had been put in place to ensure oversight and drive continuous improvement. He highlighted that Members had requested a review to ensure the requirements of both councils would continue to be met over the coming years. He also outlined the proposed timeline for a phased review between March and October, given the scale and mindful of events and projects, capacity and also the ongoing response to COVID-19. He confirmed that local, independent consultants C.Co Services had been commissioned to undertake the review, jointly funded by both councils. He reassured members that senior officers would meet on a regular basis to manage the reviews in a co-ordinated way and retain focus and that the joint committee would have full oversight of the reviews.

Members welcomed the strategic review and felt it was very timely and would ensure the shared services continued to be fit for purpose. In response to a query whether there was scope within the review for any additional shared services, Mr Ainsworth explained that although the reviews would primarily be looking at the existing shared services, it could potentially identify opportunities for additional collaboration going forward. In addition, the introduction of a new committee system at Cheshire East Council from May 2021 was raised and governance oversight and joint scrutiny would be considered as part of the wider shared services review to ensure flexibility to respond to Members' expectations.

Members reiterated their appreciation for the improved, clearer and more standardised performance information presented to them for each of the shared services and felt this timely review would also assist in understanding the various components of each shared service.

**DECIDED: That**

- (1) the proposed approach to the Shared Service review process be endorsed;
- (2) the Shared Services Joint Committee oversee the review process and be updated on a regular basis; and
- (3) the Shared Services Joint Committee oversee the delivery of the agreed recommendations.

**38 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note the date of the next meeting which was currently scheduled for Friday 12 March 2021.

Chairman .....

Date .....