

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council**
held on Wednesday, 15th December, 2021 in the Crewe Lifestyle Centre,
Moss Square, Crewe. CW1 2BB

PRESENT

Councillor S Pochin (Mayor/Chair)

Councillor D Marren (Deputy Mayor/Vice Chair)

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

Mayors Announcements

The Mayor, in summary

- 1 welcomed the newly appointed Executive Director of Children's Services – Deborah Woodcock, and the Director of Policy and Change – Sarah Bullock, to the Council.
- 2 reported on her charity drinks party held at Dorfold Hall which had raised £23,500 for her charity: Hopes and Beams.
- 3 reported that she had attended a number of carol services and recommended going to see the pantomime Sleeping Beauty on at the Crewe Lyceum theatre.
- 4 acknowledged that Councillor Suzie Akers Smith was standing in the North Shropshire parliamentary by election and wished her well.
- 5 was conscious that the agenda had 17 items on due to the cancellation of the November full Council meeting and stated, that whilst it was important not to restrict debate, it was important to be mindful of the risks of lengthy contact between a large membership present and asked that Members did not make unduly lengthy speeches.

42 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors M Addison, L Braithwaite, P Butterill, S Handley, A Harewood, G Hayes, M Hunter, L Jeuda, I Macfarlane, B Murphy, J Smith, L Smith and R Vernon

43 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

44 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2021 be approved as a correct record.

45 **PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION**

Mr Andrew Wood stated that since the last meeting he had spoken with the Director of Growth & Enterprise and following this discussion he felt that if the Government wanted the economy to grow, it should be putting money into the Economy and Growth department as this was where people went for help. It could then could employ more staff and help more people in the community.

Laura Turner asked why the Council had not, in her view, followed its objectives and had failed the town of Middlewich. She asked that members of the Council meet with Middlewich residents to listen to what they had to say. Councillor S Corcoran, Leader of the Council, responded by saying that ward councillors for Middlewich were working hard to support the residents and the Town and asked that she work with the ward councillors. The Deputy Leader, Councillor C Browne, drew attention to the previous week's meeting of the Highways and Transport Committee which had approved legal orders to enable the Middlewich Bypass to go ahead. He offered to meet with ward councillors and Middlewich Town Council.

Congleton Town Councillor Robert Douglas urged all Councillors to support the Motion being proposed by Councillors Murphy and Buckley to authorise the Environment and Communities Committee to carry out a full investigation of the costs and feasibility of a replacement site for the residents of Congleton and surrounding areas.

Sue Helliwell asked if the Council could confirm what was the estimated number of premature deaths in Cheshire East due to poor air quality, specifically in Sandbach and Alsager, and asked if the Council could confirm that the air quality measurement had been abandoned on Middlewich Road, Sandbach. Councillor M Warren, Chair of the Environment and Communities Committee responded that the Council had a responsibility to review and assess air quality in its area against the

national air quality objectives, and must produce an Air Quality Annual Status Report that reviewed trends in local air quality data over the previous year and progress on the delivery of its air quality action plans. The 2021 Annual Status Report had recently been published on the Council's website. The Report did not include a requirement to estimate the number of premature deaths within the local authority attributable to air pollution. Public Health England had published this data in the past, with the last set of data published in 2019. He confirmed that air quality monitoring continued to be undertaken at two locations on Middlewich Road in Sandbach and that the monthly data could be viewed on the Council's website.

Macclesfield Town Councillor Fiona Wilson sought assistance in resolving issues following the removal of several roads in Macclesfield from the winter gritting routes and stated that the Council had agreed to pay for the gritting of these routes. She suggested that the Council had refused to grant permission for this to happen. Councillor C Browne, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

Nicholas Dinham had submitted a statement asking for the re-establishment the Pathfinder Service and asked what steps the Administration proposed to take to ensure that those unfortunate enough to need the help of Social Services were adequately supported. He indicated that this would maximise income for the Council via assessed charges and would not let down the most vulnerable in society who are unable to advocate for themselves. Councillor J Rhodes, Chair of Adult and Health Committee, responded by stating that the Pathfinder Service provided a much wider role than providing financial help, and filling in forms. It was commissioned for two years and extended for a short time whilst a strategic review took place and the contract ended in May 2021 and been replaced with other services including a contract with the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide financial advice. Councillor Rhodes stated that there would be an investigation into the matters raised and a written reply would be sent to Mr Dinham.

Stuart Redgard stated that since October he had identified failings in the Highways Department and had received Council correspondence which he stated contained incorrect information. He stated that he also felt that the Council was breaching the Equality Act and the Health and Safety Act by taking so long to update to update the street lighting inventory. Councillor C Browne, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

46 **LEADER'S AND DEPUTY LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader, in summary:

1 wished everybody a Merry Christmas

- 2 stated that he regretted that the Government still refused to allow remote meetings for Councils and thanked all the Groups for their support to try to get the Government to allow remote meetings and said that he continued to lobby on this issue.
- 3 reported that the latest Covid-19 infection rate in Cheshire East was 447 per 100,000 and that it had been around this rate for some weeks. Rates in teenagers had been at over 3000 per 100,000 but the infection rate was now spread across the age groups with only the over 70s being under 100.
- 4 reported that a case of the Omicron variant had been report in Cheshire East and that it was not yet know if this variant was more or less severe but he had seen evidence that it was more infections than the Delta variant. He fully supported the wearing of a face covering in an indoor space to help stop the spread of infection.
- 5 reported that hospital admissions remained low and encouraged residents to get vaccinated, to get the booster and the flu vaccine as well. In the last week 4 residents in Cheshire East had died within 28 days of a positive test.
- 6 reported that HM Inspectorate of Probation has rated the Cheshire Youth Justice Services as good overall with outstanding ratings in areas of document and governance and joint working and thanked all who worked in this service.
- 7 thanked all Council staff for keeping services going during the pandemic.

The Deputy Leader, in summary

- 1 referred to the A51 carriageway reconstruction project and reported that works would be completed on schedule and the road would re-open on Friday 17 December.
- 2 reported that work on the Poynton Relief Road was progressing well and had had the opportunity to walk along part of the route. The project remained on target to be finished next Autumn.
- 3 reported that S106 agreements had been signed on land parcels in north west Crewe to allow the delivery of the scheme known as the North West Crewe Package, which aimed to aim to improve transport links in Crewe and help ease congestion and improve access to Leighton Hospital.
- 4 welcomed the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan along with the decision to progress with the northern link of HS2 but was disappointed with continued delays to the project.

- 5 following the focused OFSTED inspection in early November, reported that the Inspectors had identified the quality of the Council social work with vulnerable children and families as improved.
- 6 reported that the Council's website had been relaunched making it easier and quicker to access services, with an improved site search facility and improved accessibility standards. The feedback received had been positive and he thanked the Web Team for the work they had done in preparing for the launch of the new site.

47 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE:
INTERIM REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM**

Consideration was given to the report to Council and the recommendations from the Corporate Policy Committee, which met on 4th November 2021, in relation to the interim review of the Committee.

During debate an amendment was proposed to the Constitution Appendix relating to Public Speaking in the Procedure Rules (Chapter 3 – Part 1: Section 2, page 31) to amend paragraph 1 to read:

“ There will a period of up to 30 minutes for public questions at meetings of the full Council.”

The amendment was moved and seconded. The mover and seconder of the recommendations from Corporate Policy Committee to Council agreed to accept the amendment and therefore the amendment became part of the substantive proposition.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1 note the current and comparative data and the commentary so far.
- 2 note the proposals for delivery of further constitutional reform through the Constitution Working Group, supported by the Brighter Future Transformation Programme.
- 3 agree the revisions to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 4 to the Report, the additional changes to the Constitution reported at the Corporate Policy Committee on 4 November 2021, and the amendment to the Public Speaking Appendix in the Procedural Rules.
- 4 Require a further review to be provide to the Council and annually thereafter.

**48 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE:
COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2022/23**

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Corporate Policy Committee, which met on 2nd December 2021, in relation to the Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23.

RESOLVED:

That the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23 be amended as follows:

- Increase the cap on the maximum award from Band B to Band D (those living in a property banded higher than a D will receive the same amount those living in a Band D)
- Increase the maximum award for those passported to 100% from 75%. Passporting covers those in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (Income-based), Employment and Support Allowance (Income-related) or Income Support. Also increase the maximum for other groups in the lowest income bands to 80% from 75%, and revise the bands as follows and continue to increase the income levels by CPI each year:

| 48 | Single | 49 | Couple | 50 | Couple / lone parent with 1 child | 51 | Couple / lone parent with 2 or more children | 52 | Maximum award |
|----|--------------|----|--------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|--|----|---------------|
| 53 | £0 - £97 | 54 | £0 - £140 | 55 | £0 - £200 | 56 | £0 - £290 | 57 | 80% |
| 58 | £97.01-£115 | 59 | £140.01-£170 | 60 | £200.01-£230 | 61 | £290.01-£320 | 62 | 60% |
| 63 | £115.01-£140 | 64 | £170.01-£200 | 65 | £230.01-£260 | 66 | £320.01-£350 | 67 | 45% |
| 68 | £140.01-£165 | 69 | £200.01-£230 | 70 | £260.01-£290 | 71 | £350.01-£380 | 72 | 30% |
| 73 | £165.01-£190 | 74 | £230.01-£260 | 75 | £290.01-£320 | 76 | £380.01-£410 | 77 | 15% |

1 Income bands, categories, and awards for 2022/23

- Disregard Industrial Injuries Disablement benefit and Industrial Death benefit in full
- Deduct from earnings for child-care costs from those working and in receipt of Universal Credit: maximum of £175 for one child or £300 for two or more children each week
- Increase the fixed non-dependant deductions from £8 to £9 per week and increase each year in line with CPI (the same as the income bands)
- Reduce the earnings disregard for single people and couples without children to £20 instead of £25 per week
- Re-write the regulations in a clearer way and allow for more general disregards of new one-off grants.

49 **RECOMMENDATION FROM CORPORATE POLICY COMMITTEE:
DOMESTIC TAX BASE 2022/23**

Consideration was given to the recommendations of Corporate Policy Committee on 2 December 2021 in relation to the domestic tax base 2022/23.

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Taxbase) Regulations 1992, the amount to be calculated by Cheshire East Council as its Council taxbase for the year 2022/23 be 156,607.48 for the whole area.

50 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FINANCE SUB COMMITTEE: 2021/22
FINANCIAL YEAR UPDATE**

The Finance Sub Committee, at its meeting on 1 December 2021, had considered a report on how the Council was managing resources during the 2021/22 financial year and had made recommendations to full Council to approve fully funded supplementary revenue estimates over £1,000,000 as detailed in Appendix 1 Section 3 Table 1 to the report; to approve fully funded supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services over £1,000,000 as detailed in Appendix 1 Section 3 Table 2 to the report, and to approve supplementary capital estimates over £1,000,000 as detailed in Appendix 1 Section 5 Table 6 to the report.

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules,

- 1 the supplementary revenue estimates over £1,000,000, as detailed in Appendix 1 Section 3 Table 1, be approved;
- 2 the fully funded supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services over £1,000,000, as detailed in Appendix 1 Section 3 Table 2, be approved; and
- 3 the supplementary capital estimates over £1,000,000, as detailed in Appendix 1 Section 5 Table 6, be approved.

51 **RECOMMENDATION FROM AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:
PROCUREMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES**

The Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on 25 November 2021 had considered the proposals for the Procurement for External Audit Services and had made a recommendation to full Council to accept the invitation from Public Sector Audit Appointments to 'opt in' to the sector led option for the appointment of external auditors for five financial years commencing 1 April 2023.

RESOLVED:

That Council accepts the invitation from Public Sector Audit Appointments to 'opt in' to the sector led option for the appointment of external auditors for five financial years commencing 1 April 2023.

52 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The present Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, Councillor Margaret Simon, introduced the Committee's Annual Report for 2020/21 and then invited Councillor Rod Fletcher, Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee in 2020/21 to present the Annual Report to Council.

The report provided details of the work undertaken by the Committee and the assurances received during that year.

The Annual Report 2020/21 was received and noted

53 CONNECTING CHESHIRE ACCELERATED GRANT FUNDING

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval of a supplementary capital estimate for £2m grant funding from Building Digital UK (BDUK) to accelerate and extend the roll out of superfast broadband across the whole of Cheshire and Warrington.

Cheshire East Council was the Accountable Body for the Connecting Cheshire Partnership. The grant funding was required to be used to extend an existing contract with Airband to increase this contracts capacity to connect households in both Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester boroughs.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1 accept the £2m grant funding from BDUK
- 2 note that BDUK had attached two conditions to this new funding:
 - an outline model of how the contractor (Airband) intends to use the indicative £2m grant allocation, is provided
 - that the Authority renew its commitment to the existing policy of ringfencing gainshare arising from previous Connecting Cheshire contracts for use on digital investment across Cheshire
- 3 note that the Finance Sub Committee in December 2021 has recommended approval of the £2m Supplementary Capital Estimate, presented as part of the 2021/22 Financial Year Review.
- 4 approve a Supplementary Capital Estimate for £2m.

- 5 delegate authority to the Director - Economy and Growth to agree the terms on which the grant is offered and enter into a grant agreement to incur expenditure and activity in line with the conditions associated with the accelerated funding grant.

54 **EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST CAPACITY FOR SUPPORTING SEN LEARNERS**

Consideration was given to a report seeking approval of a Voluntary Ex-Ante Transparency Notice (VEAT) in relation to the recruitment of Educational Psychologists.

Due to the shortage of staff in the Education Psychologists Service, an innovative Recruitment and Retention strategy had been developed and included the supporting of trainee Education Psychologists through to qualification. However, until the strategy was fully implanted, there was a need to provide a direct award to appropriate Locum Education Psychologists companies over a five-year period. The Council could use a VEAT notice to directly award a contract without formal competition.

RESOLVED:

That approval is given for a Voluntary Ex-Ante Transparency Notice with a maximum contract value of £2.5 million to serve the Educational Psychologists Service over the next five years (up to 31 August 2026).

55 **WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION FUND FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE**

Consideration was given to a report relating to the Workforce Recruitment and Retention Fund.

The purpose of the Workforce and Retention Fund was to support local authorities to address capacity pressures within the adult social care workforce in their geographical area, through recruitment and retention activities during the winter months.

The Council had been awarded £982,203 from the Workforce Capacity Fund for Adult Social Care for Local Authorities and approval was sought for a grant funded supplementary revenue estimate.

RESOLVED: That

- 1 a grant funded Supplementary Revenue Estimate be made, for the 2021/22 Financial Year, of £982,203 to be funded from the DHSC Workforce Capacity Fund for Adult Social Care for Local Authorities allocation for Cheshire East Council.
- 2 the Executive Director Adults, Health and Integration be authorised to spend the money in accordance with the conditions of the fund.

56 NOTICES OF MOTION

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

1 Second Winter Gritting Consultation

Proposed by Councillor Janet Clowes and Seconded by Councillor Tony Dean

We propose that:

1. *In line with Cheshire East Council's Policy Decision of 2014, the results of the Second Winter Gritting Consultation, conducted in 2020 as a result of the call-in to the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee, is published on the Cheshire East Website, together with a full report that includes:*
 - a) *Who was invited to take part in the Consultation.*
 - b) *Who responded to the Consultation.*
 - c) *What documentation was provided to those selected to respond to the consultation*
 - d) *How the information, presented by respondents, was evaluated by Cheshire East Highways to inform the current Winter Gritting and Adverse Weather Strategy.*

- 2 *That as a result of the Consultation, Cheshire East Council publishes details of the well-maintained highways metrics used to determine which routes remained on the gritting schedules, but importantly, which routes did not remain on the gritting schedule as a result of this consultation and its findings.*
https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/council-information/consultations/consultation-results/consultations_results.aspx

"As part of the Council's commitment to transparency, from August 2014 we will feedback the results of consultations and surveys undertaken by the Council, from a single location".

References:

Cabinet 4 February 2020:

[Well-Managed Highways Infrastructure](#)

Environment and Regeneration Committee 16 March 2020:

[Call in of Cabinet Decision - Well Managed Highways Infrastructure](#)

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the appropriate Committee.

2 Low Carbon Advertising

Proposed by Councillor Brian Puddicombe and Seconded by Councillor Quentin Abel

This Council notes

- *It is possible for local authorities to implement advertising policies against specific products if they consider them to be harmful to the amenity of an area.*
- *The Council holds an Advertising Concession Agreement with Clear Channel UK (Adshel) to provide advertising on bus shelters.*
- *The Council promotes advertising opportunities on roundabouts across the Borough.*
- *That as a Local Planning Authority this Council is responsible for planning consent for advertising infrastructure.*

This Council believes

- *That the purpose of advertising is to stimulate demand for goods and services.*
- *That some advertising content undermines the Council's objectives regarding public health, air pollution and sustainable consumption.*

This Council resolves

- *To review its Advertising Concession Agreement to investigate the current set of prohibitions to include products that undermine the Council's objectives regarding public health, air pollution and sustainable consumption.*
- *To implement a Low Carbon Advertising Policy as part of the Council's planning policies to apply to bus stops, billboards and advertising spaces within the jurisdiction of the local planning area.*
- *To adopt a presumption against planning applications for all new digital advertising screens due to the high electricity use of these technologies.*

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the appropriate Committee.

3 Integrated Rail Plan

Proposed by Councillor Rachel Bailey and Seconded by Councillor M Sewart.

Government announced its Integrated Rail Plan on 18 November 2021, a plan which delivers the Crewe Hub ambition of 5 to 7 high speed trains an hour.

“In light of this commitment to Crewe, I propose that this Council accepts that its Policy Committee decision, taken on 4 November, was premature, and calls for an update to be provided no later than July 2022 Council.”

References:

[Integrated Rail Plan for the North and the Midlands](#)

Corporate Policy Committee 4 November 2021:

[HS2 Update](#)

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the appropriate Committee.

4 Investigation of Costs and Feasibility of a Replacement Recycling Site at Congleton

Proposed by Councillor Denis Murphy and Seconded by Councillor June Buckley

This Council authorises the full Environment and Communities Committee to carry out a full investigation to ascertain the detailed costs and feasibility of an alternative replacement recycling site for the residents of Congleton and surrounding areas following the closure of the former Congleton recycling site in September 2021.

This detailed investigation should also give full consideration to the replacement recycling site to include the provision of a reuse and repair facility as part of this Council's policy and commitment to work with communities to reduce carbon.

This investigation should also fully consider all potential suitable locations for such a permanent replacement recycling site including all those sites identified as being suitable in the report issued by consultants to the previous Cheshire East Council Administration in 2018 at a cost of about £50,000.

The full Environment and Communities Committee to provide a full report of its conclusions from these detailed investigations to full Council for its consideration no later than 30th June 2022.

Background

On 4th May 2021, Cheshire East Council's cabinet decided not to replace the recycling site for the residents of Congleton and surrounding areas. Cheshire East Council estimated that a replacement recycling site would cost about £ 4 million.

In making that decision, Cabinet admitted that the closure of Congleton's Household Waste Recycling Centre would result in a net increase of CO2 emissions of 158.8 tonnes per year every year.

Cheshire East Council was asked at that cabinet meeting of May 4th 2021, whether detailed information had been obtained from Norfolk Council to ascertain how they can build a recycling site at their Norwich South site for £ 1.9 million.

In response, Councillor Crane advised that Cheshire East Council had contacted Norfolk Council who had confirmed that the cost of £ 1.9 million in relation to their site did not include the purchase of the land or the building of a service road.

However, it would appear that the decision made by cabinet regarding not replacing the Congleton recycling site was based on incomplete information.

Since that decision was made by cabinet on 4th May 2021, the following additional and relevant information has been obtained by a member of the public concerning the Norwich South recycling site.

The Norwich South site at 7,500 sq metres, (1.85 acres), is 4.5 times the size of the former Congleton site of 1,642 sq metres, (0.4 acres).

The Norwich South site has a forecast throughput of 15,000 tonnes which is 5.4 times of the throughput of the former Congleton site for the year ended 31st March, 2020 of 2,783 tonnes. Congleton's throughput for the year to March 2020 had not been significantly impacted by Covid19.

The former Congleton recycling site only had space for about six cars. The Norwich South site has 46 car park spaces, of which 24 have been widened to 3 metres rather than the standard 2.4 metres to enable users safely take items out of the back doors of their cars.

That this cost estimate for the Norwich South site of £ 1.9 million includes a re-use facility of 242 sq metres which is 18.5 metres by 13.1 metres, (61 feet by 43 feet) with solar panels on the roof.

Given that in our opinion the original decision in respect of the replacement recycling site for Congleton made by cabinet on 4th May 2021 was based on inadequate information, it is now appropriate that a detailed investigation is carried out by the full Environment and Communities Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the relevant Committee.

4 Single Use Plastics

Proposed by Councillor Kate Parkinson and Seconded by Councillor Tony Dean.

This Council will lead by example by banning single use plastic from its operations.

Background

In 2019 this Council agreed to move to Net Zero Carbon by 2025 and has a programme of measures in place to try and meet this deadline. One of the simplest of measures to reduce our carbon footprint, and drastically reduce our potential to pollute the environment with non-biodegradable plastic, would be to cease using single use plastic items. By agreeing this Motion, we can help with the burden of plastic waste which is currently affecting the whole world, and we can also reduce our overall carbon footprint.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the relevant Committee.

57 QUESTIONS

Cllr S Carter asked if the road gritting cuts were still open to review at the request of Councillors, and if that review would be achieved using a clear criteria or matrix for their potential reinstatement. He also asked if it could be confirmed that this was a far fairer system than the one inherited from the previous administration and further asked if the Chair of Highways and Transport Committee could write to all the Conservative MPs in the borough asking them for help to find further government funding for road safety. Cllr C Browne, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, in response stated that any further review of the assessment of routes would be carried out in line with the assessment criteria that had already been published on the Council's website. As a result of the policy change, the Council had moved to a network hierarchy that prioritised areas of the network by importance, taking into account for example their expected use, economic and social factors including industry, schools and hospitals, access to communities and community facilities and this moved away from the traditional prioritisation of the network by road classification. This was consistent with the well managed highway infrastructure code of practice which is endorsed by the Department for Transport and allowed the Council to be considered a band three authority in terms of the incentive funding that was received annually from central government. Cllr Browne confirmed he would be happy to write to the MPs and reported that he, along with the Leader and Chief Executive had quarterly meetings with the five MPs, so there were plenty of opportunities to raise this with them as Councillor Carter has requested.

Cllr R Moreton stated that Congleton Hackney Carriage taxi drivers had only had one increase in the last 12 years, which he had been told was six years ago and was only 20 pence, and was on their standard charge. He

asked if this could be reviewed as a matter of urgency and the relevant committee consult with the drivers to find out a reasonable way forward. He also requested that officers of Cheshire East Council check licences because there were concerns that drivers from out of town were coming in and taking income from local drivers. Cllr D Edwardes, Chair of the Licensing Committee, responded that he would be happy to meet with the Congleton taxi drivers and would ensure that the matter would be discussed at Licencing Committee.

Cllr J Saunders welcomed the proposed £4 million investment in cared for children in the budget consultation and stated there was a need to focus on preventing children coming into care in the first place. Early Help helped target this area but over the next two years the Council was planning to cut the early help given to vulnerable families by £340,000 by making cuts to the number of frontline service workers - the very people who help those children and families who are facing challenges. Early Help contributes to preventing children being taken into care, offers support to children and families and by achieving both of these, it also saved money. She asked the Administration to reconsider their stance on this funding and respond to the Council consultation by supporting the reinstatement of these monies to the early help service as an essential part of the four-million-pound investment. Cllr K Flavell, Chair of Children and Families Committee, responded by saying that she did not support the cuts and had fought against them but it was a case of the savings that had to be made and tried to make sure that those savings were reduced were able to do so to try and support early help. The budget would be discussed at the Children and Families Committee meeting in January 2022.

Cllr S Gardiner stated that Dame Angela Eagle had referred in the House of Commons to a potential link between HIV aids and the omicron variant and asked what action the Public Health team were taking to ensure that the those living with HIV aids were protected and encouraged to take up the booster vaccination. He stated he was happy to accept a written response.

Cllr C Naismith welcomed the funding agreed under item 12 of agenda to expand the roll out of superfast broadband to rural areas but wished to raise that the situation in towns was not particularly "rosy" either. In the Wistaston Road area of his ward in Crewe it was recently reported as receiving an average speed of 0.25 Mbps, which was actually one of the worst speeds in the country. Crewe was an important hub of economic activity and broadband was important for business premises and increasingly remote working. He asked what steps were being taken to ensure that the Council worked with relevant stakeholders and encouraged central government to invest in digital infrastructure so that Crewe and other towns could realise their economic potential. Cllr N Mannion, Chair of Economy and Growth Committee, responded that he would consult with officers and provide Cllr Naismith with a written response with regards to the specific issue of the Wistaston Road area and also the general points raised.

Cllr A Critchley stated that covid rates amongst children were increasing and asked what advice and guidance schools were being given and what additional measures were being put in place. Cllr K Flavell, Chair of Children and Families undertook to provide a detailed written response but stated that meetings with held with the Heads and the school recovery team were regularly updating the guidance in light of what was happening.

Cllr L Wardlaw stated that decision-making on speed management within Cheshire East would come to a halt for almost a year while consultation on a revised strategy took place. The consultation had only begun on 1 December and anticipated implementation was summer 2022 and asked why the current strategy could not remain as the reference document until any new policy was adopted by Council. Cllr C Browne, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee undertook to provide a written response but stated that speed management would continue. A distinction had to be made between where the Council's authority lies and where the responsibility lies in respect of the emergency services, (for example, the police) . The Council had some responsibility for speed management, but not for speed enforcement which lay with the Police.

Cllr R Bailey referred to the winter gritting cuts and stated that in her ward, following three days of icy weather, the non-gritted Coole Lane had seen three accidents and the school bus cancelled. If a review took place and a route was deemed as too expensive not to grit, both in terms of repairs and temporary traffic lights and police and fire service time and resulted in a change, would that route be gritted from here on. Cllr C Browne, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, responded that the introduction of the policy was about fairness, applying the same criteria across the Borough and not about saving money. Two years ago, the Council actually spent £1.7 million from the revenue budget on winter service treatment, and this year was budgeting to spend £2 million. The matter was due to come to the Highways and Transport Committee for an interim review on the 2 March and then a full further review at the following committee.

Cllr L Crane referred to the Notice of Motion proposed earlier by Cllr D Murphy, requesting a detailed report into providing a replacement waste site in Congleton and stated that it was her understanding that this was already underway as part of the work to put in place a new household waste contract when the current one ended in 2023. She asked if this was correct. Cllr M Warren, Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, responded that the household waste recycling contract was due to start in April 2023 and a waste management board consisting of officers from the council and staff from ANSA has been created to oversee the development of that new contract and part of the process would include consideration of all future provision of household waste recycling provision in the Borough.

Cllr J Rhodes refereed to the Integrated Rail Plan and HS2 and asked if the five to seven trains an hour were guaranteed because she thought that

this related to the trains going north to Leeds. She was not certain how the change in the government policy had affected this and asked if the money for the station was guaranteed. Cllr C Browne, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, responded that the Integrated rail provided commitment to build the HS2 western leg, and he read out an excerpt from the Plan - "our plans allow the Crewe hub vision to be realised with up to five to seven HS2 trains per hour able to call at Crewe". As things stood no agreement was in place other than a suggestion to extend two platforms and put in place some new signage.

Cllr A Farrall referred to the question asked by Cllr Carter and asked that the Chair of Highways and Transport Committee write an open letter for all councillors to sign in support, to ask our local MPs to make representations on behalf of Cheshire East residents to the Department for Transport for dispensation, or at least no penalty, for additional priority gritting routes in the highway's maintenance incentive fund. Cllr C Browne, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, responded that he would be happy to do so. He stated that, following the initial review, 345 roads were retained, 218 were removed but 107 new roads that had never been gritted before were added. He stated that the scores that were attributed to some of those, for example in the 218 that were removed, 113 of those roads actually scored zero, which suggested they should never been gritted in the first place. Following the further round of consultation which was carried out in-between September and November last year, with Area Highway Group chairs, schools, cycling groups, Town and Parish Councils and the emergency services, 129 responses were received and a further 43 routes were added. The net reduction was about 68 roads which was approximately 3% of the network.

Cllr S Holland referred to the decision to recommend the Pathfinder Service be decommissioned and replaced by upskilling roles and services within the Council itself thus ensuring and maintaining that Cheshire East residents continue to receive the support needed. However, none of the services recommended to replace Pathfinder supply or substitute what Pathfinder provided for residents and asked that the Council reconsider the decision to revoke the Pathfinder Service so that the most vulnerable residents within our society here in Cheshire East could continue to access vital services. Cllr J Rhodes, Chair of Adult and Health Committee, responded that she had responded to this question under the Public Question item and would report the findings on the case that Council Holland had dealt with, to Councillor Holland when the investigation had been done.

Cllr L Gilbert stated that Central Bedfordshire Council had adopted new legal powers that could result in people being fined if found with their engines left running whilst parked. The Council had said the aim was to improve air quality and support its sustainability plan. He asked the Leader if the Council would commit to arranging for officers to bring forward a similar scheme for Cheshire East. Cllr S Corcoran responded that he had looked at this before and other Councils that had adopted this, had issued very few penalty notices. He thought it was important to look at

enforcement. It was less about climate change and more about health. It was possibly an item which could be discussed at the Environment and Communities Committee where ideas could be put forward about how it could be enforced.

Cllr L Smetham stated her question was in support of Councillor Holland regarding the letter from the resident read out in Public Speaking Time. She stated that the loss of the previous Pathfinder Service was much regretted and had spoken at Cabinet a couple of years ago to plead for the Pathfinder Service which was successful, much needed, and respected. She asked if Cllr Rhodes response to the earlier question could be circulated to all Councillors.

58 **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 were reported for information in accordance with the Council procedure rules.

RESOLVED:

That the schedule of urgent decisions be noted.

The meeting commenced at 11.15 am and concluded at 3.10 pm

Councillor S Pochin
Chair/Mayor