

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and Communities Committee**
held on Thursday, 20th January, 2022 in the The Capesthorpe Room - Town
Hall, Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor M Warren (Chair)
Councillor Q Abel (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Benson, J Buckley, L Crane, T Dean, A Farrall, L Gilbert,
P Groves, C Leach, J Nicholas, J Parry, B Puddicombe and R Fletcher

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Paul Bayley- Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services
Helen Davies- Democratic Services Officer
Emma Fairhurst- Senior Conservation Design Officer
James Thomas- Senior Lawyer (attended via Microsoft Teams)
Ben Vickers- Senior Planner
Paul Goodwin- Head of Financial Services & Deputy Chief Finance Officer
Ralph Kemp- Head of Environmental Services
Tom Evans- Neighbourhood Planning Manager

36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Joy Bratherton (Councillor Brian Puddicombe was substituting).

37 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

38 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting 11 November 2021 be accepted as a correct and accurate record.

39 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Macclesfield Town Councillor Fiona Wilson attended the meeting to speak in relation to agenda item 8: Draft conservation area appraisal and management plans. The Chair used his discretion to enable Councillor Wilson to speak ahead of that item.

40 CARBON NEUTRAL PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

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

The Committee was advised the report was an update on the delivery of the commitment made by Council to being a carbon neutral council by 2025 and influence carbon reduction across the borough, the Action Plan had been adopted to achieve this.

Ralph advised the Committee that the data suggested that the Council was on track to achieving its carbon neutral ambition, the council had secured its fourth successful funding bid from Government, purchased its first council electric vehicles, planted 21,000 trees and progressed two large solar farms.

Part of the recommendation within the report was to approve joining the UK100 Network and this followed a pledge at full council committing the borough to be carbon neutral by 2045.

In line with the procedure rules within the council Constitution, the proposer of the original motion if present should be invited to speak first, followed by the seconder. The matter would then be opened up to wider discussion.

Councillor Quentin Abel addressed the Committee as the proposer of the original motion at full council, he brought up four points for consideration:

- 1) There was no additional cost to join UK100
- 2) There were many advantages of joining in relation to the access to data
- 3) This could help business and the population with their quality of life; and
- 4) The Council would gain access to funding and advice on securing future funding.

Councillor Rod Fletcher as the seconder of the original motion attended the meeting and addressed the Committee, he noted there had been misinformation spread about this proposal which had contributed to some hesitancy in support from across the council. Councillor Fletcher gave examples of both Liverpool and Surrey Local Authorities joining the UK100 and underlined the point that the organisation was not political and there were real benefits in gaining access to support and help to achieve environmental targets. Councillor Fletcher expressed a desire to see unanimous support for this recommendation.

The Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions. There was a query about the difference between carbon offset and carbon inset. Ralph Kemp explained that carbon inset is the term the Council had adopted for projects to capture carbon within the borough.

Ralph also explained that whilst joining the UK100 target was a pledge and there was no legal requirement to meet the targets, progress would be published.

The Committee asked if Cheshire East had consulted with Cheshire West, Ralph confirmed that Cheshire operate regionally, both through and outside of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), both authorities support each other with different conferences regionally and there would be a need to find some regional solutions e.g. transport solutions. Cheshire West were already committed to UK100.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That:

1) progress made towards the Council's target to be carbon neutral for its own emissions by 2025 and wider influence measures to reduce carbon emissions across the borough be noted;

2) Cheshire East Council joining the UK100 network, setting a borough-wide target to be carbon neutral by 2045 be agreed;

3) the Head of Environmental Services be authorised to take all necessary actions to enter into a collaboration agreement between Cheshire East Council and Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

4) the Head of Environmental Services be authorised to take all necessary actions to establish and procure an electric vehicle car club as a solution to reducing the carbon footprint of the Council's business travel and borough wide carbon emissions through public use of the car club.

5) the adoption of the Manchester City Council Low Carbon Build Standard as a requirement for all construction projects undertaken by the Council be recommended to the Economy and Growth Committee;

6) the £3.714 million Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Grant from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for further decarbonisation of Council buildings be accepted;

7) the Council plan to plant trees on suitable council owned agricultural land holdings as part of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan 2020- 2025 commitment to develop natural climate solutions such as tree planting and peatland management on at least 100ha of Council owned land be noted.

41 REFERRAL OF NOTICE OF MOTION: PROTECT THE RIGHT OF COMMUNITIES TO OBJECT TO INDIVIDUAL PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Tom Evans, Neighbourhood Planning Manager introduced the referral of the Notice of Motion from full Council in October 2021 to the Committee.

Tom advised the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), set out and engaged with stakeholders and residents on planning applications. This needed to be refreshes to remove covid provisions. Tom also explained that in October 2020, the Council responded to the Government's White Paper on proposed reforms to the planning system in which concern had been expressed about proposed changes that could remove an opportunity for the public to comment on the detail of a planning proposal. Given the length of time since the consultation took place, it could be timely to re-emphasise the Council's position to the new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC).

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That:

1) the updated Statement of Community Involvement, January 2022 attached at Appendix 1 be approved; and

2) the Chair of the Committee be authorised to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities calling on Government to protect the right of communities to comment on individual planning applications.

42 BROWNFIELD LAND REGISTER UPDATE

Paul Bayley introduced item to the Committee, Ben Vickers, Senior Planner and report author attended the Committee to answer any questions.

Councillor June Buckley raised a point about Ward Members and Town and Parish Clerks being notified 14-7 days prior to any publication of land to avoid any surprises.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That:

1) the 2021 update and publication of the Cheshire East Brownfield Land Register, comprising the sites listed in Appendix 1 be approved; and

2) future updates and publications of Part 1 of the Cheshire East Brownfield Land Register be delegated to the Head of Planning.

43 DRAFT CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLANS

Macclesfield Town Councillor Fiona Wilson attended the meeting and addressed the Committee specifically in support of the Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal.

Town Councillor Wilson gave the Committee some background to the document, the previous appraisal dated back to September 2005 and a review had been overdue. The Committee were advised that Macclesfield Town Council took forward a decision to fund a review of Macclesfield Town Centre in December 2019 in response to an approach offered by the Cheshire East Regeneration Team. Macclesfield Town Councillors were trained and had sessions with Cheshire East Neighbourhood Planning officers and following a tendering process, consultants were appointed.

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan was developed, in consultation with key groups in Macclesfield, these included: an internal group with Macclesfield Town Councillors, Cheshire East Council Planning, Regeneration and Conservation and Enforcement, a Heritage Conservation Group, Local Historians, the Civic Society, the Silk Heritage Trust, a Local Interest Group consisting of Residents, Cheshire East Members, Peaks and Plains Housing Trust, and schools.

Two workshops were held, one in March for consultation and one in June to gather feedback on the Draft Conservation Area Appraisal. The Final Draft Conservation Area Appraisal, the Management Plan and the Gazetteer are to be considered by the Committee today. An offshoot to this project has been a shopfront and signage design guide and a Macclesfield character assessment is also a work in progress.

Paul Bayley, Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services introduced the item to the Committee. Emma Fairhurst, Senior Conservation Design Officer and report author attended the Committee to answer any questions.

There was some discussion about the potential conflicts between energy efficiency and conservation of buildings. Emma explained to the Committee that conservation areas are not just building heritage it includes trees and land such as tree protection and better management for replacement tree schemes following tree loss.

In terms of retrofitting historical buildings that are not listed, yet have historical value to the community there is a flexibility to enabling positive outcomes. There was a discussion about the retaining and embedded carbon in existing buildings rather than demolishing the whole building and building new. Whilst this was not policy it was guidance to stop demolition of buildings, as most buildings can be upgraded to meet modern living standards.

RESOLUTION: (Unanimously)

That:

- 1) the draft Ollerton School Lane Conservation Area Appraisal (including a boundary review) and Management Plan be approved and then such plan be made available for a minimum of 4 weeks of public consultation.(Appendix 1a/b);
- 2) the draft Macclesfield Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan be approved and to then such plan be made available for a minimum of 4 weeks of public consultation.(Appendix 2a/b/c);
- 3) the draft Alderley Edge Conservation Area Appraisal (including Article 4 Direction) be approved and to then such plan be made available for a minimum of 4 weeks public consultation;
- 4) future decisions to consult on draft Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans be delegated to the Head of Planning, in consultation with the Chair of the Environment and Communities Committee and relevant ward councillors to gather knowledge from their area.

44 THIRD QUARTER FINANCE REVIEW

Paul Goodwin, Head of Financial Services & Deputy Chief Finance Officer attended the meeting and introduced the item to the Committee. It was noted that Tracey Baldwin, Principal Accountant was also in attendance to answer any questions from the Committee.

The Committee was advised, as noted in the report, to focus its scrutiny on the financial performance of services within its Terms of Reference (TOR).

The Committee was given the opportunity to ask questions.

Councillor Tony Dean made a general point that as a member of the committee, he understood the areas of responsibility, however at present this committee had

no influence on the budget. Whilst Councillor Dean did comment he could lobby Finance Sub-Committee, he felt it would be more productive, before the next round of the MTFS, to attend a half-day seminar that covered the changes being proposed in order to have more influence over the areas of scrutiny for this committee.

Paul Goodwin advised that the council was within the first year of moving to a committee system, and that this budget had been set under the previous Leader and Cabinet system. One of the reasons for the governance move was to widen committee engagement in budget setting, as reflected in the item on the agenda that related to the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). It was suggested that further briefings could be held for members, that would provide more information on the budgets of services under each committee's remit, earlier in the next financial cycle.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report of the Finance Sub-Committee (1st December 2020) be received and noted;
- 2) the recommendations of the Finance Sub-Committee to:
 - a) note the financial update and forecast outturn relevant to the Environment and Communities Committee terms of reference; and
 - b) note that officers will seek to improve the outcomes and financial outturn across all Committees to mitigate the overall forecast overspend of the Council.

be received and noted.

3) Appendix 7 and the following sections specific to this Committee:

- Changes to Revenue budget 2021/22
- Policy Proposals Update
- Corporate Grants Register
- Debt Management
- Capital Strategy
- Reserve Strategy

be noted;

4) the additional specific grant supplementary revenue estimate over £500,000 and up to £1,000,000 in Appendix 7, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 2 be approved.

5) further briefings be scheduled for members, to provide more information on the budgets of services under each committee's remit, earlier in the next financial cycle.

45 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)

Paul Goodwin, Head of Financial Services & Deputy Chief Finance Officer attended the meeting and introduced the item to the Committee.

The Committee was advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) report was the opportunity for the committee to feed back on the budget consultation document that related to the MTFS 2022-2026 for services under the remit of this committee. There were no specific new proposals that related to services for this committee but there were a number of existing proposals rolling forward from the MTFS 2021-25 relevant to this committee, these were listed as an appendix within the report.

The Committee were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Councillor Peter Groves asked if the salary levels for planning officers was being considered in relation to retention and recruitment of staff within this area.

Paul Bayley, Director for Environment and Neighbourhood Services noted that the Executive Director for Place had instigated a deep-dive review of planning services within Cheshire East and recruitment and retention of Planning Officers, including salary levels, would be considered within the scope of this review.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the MTFS 2022 to 2026 Consultation Document be received and noted;
- 2) comments made by individual Councillors be fed back to the Corporate Policy Committee for its consideration;
- 3) the following proposals rolling forward from the MTFS 2021-25 relevant to the committee (as part of Appendix 1 (Appendix A of the report) be noted:
 - 26) Regulatory Services and Environmental Health ICT procurement
 - 27) CCTV migration to wireless networks
 - 29) Orbitas income and management fee
 - 31) Everybody Sport and Recreation Management Fee
 - 39) Review of governance of ASDVs
 - 42) Strategic Leisure Review
 - 84) Waste Contract Inflation and Tonnage Growth
 - 85) Environment Strategy and Carbon Neutrality
 - 86) Tree Risk Management
- 5) the impact of the local government financial settlement as provided at Appendix 2 on the MTFS Consultation Document be received and noted;
- 6) it be noted that this committee can comment on any other element of the MTFS Consultation Document related to the responsibilities of the Committee (including WOC Business Plans, and Reserves levels);
- 7) it be noted that the minutes of this meeting will form the consultation response of the Committee for the consideration by the Corporate Policy Committee.

46 MEMBERS ADVISORY PANEL: CHESHIRE EAST CEMETERIES STRATEGY REVIEW

In the absence of Councillor Joy Bratherton, Councillor Mike Benson addressed the Committee on this item.

The Committee were advised that the Member Advisory Panel had met and agreed comprehensive Terms of Reference (TOR). The next meeting was the 10th Feb, before then the Sub-Committee will review data and then undertake site visits.

47 MEMBER ADVISORY PANEL: CHESHIRE EAST PLANNING PROCESS REVIEW

Councillor Tony Dean updated the committee on the work of the Planning Member Advisory Panel (MAP). This MAP was sitting alongside a deep-dive full-systems review of Planning services as instigated by the Executive Director of Place. The review included staffing issues and external users of the planning service.

The review entails three phases, the first is the largest and will report back in April. Phase two and three will complete in December 2022.

Councillor Dean noted that Cheshire East Council experienced one of the highest numbers of planning applications in the country with over 6,000 a year; Cheshire was an area where people wanted to build and extend, however the council does spend more in resources than the cost of the application which was an area of scrutiny. Other councils operate a definitive cut off point and reject applications for lack of information after three-weeks and it is incumbent on the applicant to pay again.

48 WORK PROGRAMME

Paul Bayley, Director for Environment and Neighbourhood Services introduced the item to the Committee.

The Committee were advised that three Notice of Motions from full Council would be added to the Work Programme and scheduled for March. These were: low carbon advertising, the replacement for Congleton Household Waste and Recycling Centre and single use plastics.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.21 pm

Councillor M Warren (Chair)