

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Policy Committee**
held on Thursday, 3rd March, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1, 2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)
Councillor A Stott (Vice-Chair)

Councillors C Browne, C Bulman (for Cllr Rhodes), J Clowes, J P Findlow, K Flavell, R Fletcher, S Gardiner, N Mannion, A Martin, A Moran (for Cllr Warren) and M Sewart (for Cllr Parkinson)

Officers

Lorraine O'Donnell, Chief Executive
Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services
Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services
David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance
Sarah Bullock, Director of Policy and Change
Sara Barker, Head of HR
Gareth Pawlett, Head of Information Communication Technology
Josie Griffiths, Head of Audit and Risk
Dan Coyne, Community Development Manager
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services

Apologies

Councillors K Parkinson, J Rhodes and M Warren

79 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A Moran declared an interest as a non-executive Director of Ansa in relation to Item 9 (Health and Safety Update) insofar as it related to the company.

80 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

At this point, the Leader made a brief statement that Cheshire East Council was prepared to support refugees from Ukraine and was well-placed, with its partners, to do so. The Government had announced the Ukraine Family Scheme and the Local Sponsorship Scheme for Ukraine, and the Council was in daily contact with the Home Office. Further information was available on the Council's website.

81 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th February 2022 be approved as a correct record.

82 ARAP/ACRS BRIDGING HOTEL AND RESETTLEMENT SCHEME REPORT

The Committee considered an update report on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), including details of the wrap around support provided by Cheshire East Council and partner agencies for over 300 individuals, and information on five families that had now been resettled into permanent accommodation in Cheshire East.

It was suggested that the private housing sector should be asked to consider making 4-5 bedroom properties available to the Home Office to assist in providing accommodation for refugees.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. acknowledges the high-quality wrap around support provided to date for the ARAP/ACRS cohort within the bridging hotel and that this will be expected of the Council until at least 30th June 2022;
2. acknowledges the integration support for the five families from the ARAP scheme to date, that have already been permanently settled in Cheshire East; and
3. asks that the National Housebuilders Bodies be approached to ascertain their willingness to provide assistance with the resettlement of refugees under this scheme.

83 REVIEW OF THE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE SCHEME

The Committee considered proposed changes to the Emergency Assistance Scheme for 2022/23 following a review.

It was suggested that the Committee review the operation of the scheme later in the year to assess whether the budget for the scheme was sufficient. The Director of Finance and Customer Services advised that a report would be brought back to the Committee if necessary.

The question was asked whether rent deposits under the scheme were recycled. The Director of Finance and Customer Services undertook to look into the matter and notify members.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee approves the Emergency Assistance Scheme with the following changes from 1st April 2022:

- to allow for discretion in applying the current limit of only one Emergency Assistance award per 12 month period, enabling further support to be provided in exceptional cases;
- to provide supermarket vouchers in addition to the existing process of referrals to food banks for those in food crisis;
- to extend the Scheme to provide utility vouchers to those in fuel crisis; and
- to confirm that the scheme will remain non-cash based to reduce the risk of abuse.

84 CHESHIRE EAST DIGITAL STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of consultation on the draft Digital Strategy, with a majority of the responses received being supportive of the aims, principles and actions contained within the Strategy.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That

1. the final Digital Strategy for Cheshire East Council be approved; and
2. further updates be provided to the Committee on progress against the aims of the Strategy on a 6 monthly basis

85 CYBER SECURITY UPDATE

The Committee considered an update report on cyber security within the Council. The report sought to assure members across a number of areas about the protections in place to mitigate any associated risk.

In response to a question, the Head of Information Communication Technology confirmed that from a Shared Services perspective, Cheshire East Council and Cheshire West and Chester Council had been subjected to three cyber attacks over the last three years. The effect of the attacks had been limited by the security arrangements in place.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

86 **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY - PROGRESS REVIEW**

The Committee considered a progress report on the delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025. Highlights in the progression of the Strategy after the first year were set out in the report.

RESOLVED

That the progress in delivering the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy be noted.

87 **UPDATE ON WORKFORCE EFFICIENCIES AND TERMS AND CONDITIONS REVIEW**

The Committee considered a report on progress to review workforce efficiencies and terms and conditions. The report also provided information on the current employee relations context and information from the benchmarking exercise recently undertaken.

In response to questions from members, the Head of HR advised as follows:

- The Pulse surveys had shown that staff were having frequent 1:1s with their line managers and were regularly engaged with team members. Performance Development Reviews were being conducted virtually.
- Training was being provided virtually, which was significantly cheaper than face-to-face training.
- Staff were being supported as regards their mental health and were able to work in an office environment if they wished.
- With a few exceptions, staff working from home were not designated as home workers and therefore did not receive an allowance.
- With regard to the cost of working from home, staff had been advised that they were able to claim income tax relief.
- Officers held meetings with trade union representatives on a weekly basis.
- The package of measures to be negotiated with the trade unions was largely concerned with travel arrangements and green travel initiatives.
- The £758,000 savings from reduced staff travel included a 30% reduction in mileage £428k and regular user savings circa £193k and the remainder from other travel-related savings/efficiencies.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. notes the progress made in achieving savings arising from staff travel for 2021/22;

2. notes that the Regular Car User allowance re-application process has been completed and that the results are being implemented in accordance with the Council's policy;
3. supports a revised approach to formal consultation/negotiation with the recognised trade unions with a view to developing a package of measures which will include changes to staff terms and conditions and improved benefits for staff aligned to the Council's new ways of working and the green agenda relating to staff travel; and
4. notes that authority has been delegated to the Executive Director of Corporate Services to implement any changes following consultation/negotiation.

88 HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE QUARTER 3

The Committee considered an update report which provided a summary of accident and information data for the Council and maintained schools for Quarter 3, 2021/22, the year to date and comparative data for the same periods in the last two years.

In response to a question, the Head of Audit and Risk advised that accidents to staff as a result of working from home should be reported. No such incidents had been recorded to date. However, the message to staff would be renewed.

RESOLVED

That the update report be noted.

89 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme for 2021/22.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services advised that the items on Community Governance Review and Constitution Codes and Protocols listed for the meeting on 14th April would go on to full Council. In view of the numbers of people likely to attend the Committee's meeting for the Community Governance Review, Democratic Services were seeking to secure an appropriate venue.

The meeting on 14th April was currently scheduled to start at 2.00 pm and members wondered if this would allow sufficient time to consider the Community Governance Review alongside other business on the agenda. Officers would consider the feasibility of bringing the time of the meeting forward.

The Director of Governance and Compliance advised that the constitution included a dispensation to allow Councillors to take part and vote on

Community Governance Review matters in which they had disclosable pecuniary and prejudicial interests. Officers would be informing all members that they would not be precluded from speaking on the subject at Council.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be noted.

90 REPORTING OF URGENT DECISIONS

There were no urgent decisions to report.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.30 pm

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)