

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economy and Growth Committee**
held on Tuesday, 31st May, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)
Councillor M Goldsmith (Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Brookfield, J Clowes, P Groves, S Hogben, M Houston,
S Holland (for Cllr Brown), D Jefferay, A Kolker, R Moreton, D Stockton and
P Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise
Paul Goodwin, Head of Financial Services
Adrian Leslie, Solicitor
Mandy Withington, Solicitor
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services

The Chair announced that Councillor Steve Hogben had replaced Councillor James Barber on the Committee. The Chair welcomed Councillor Hogben.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor D Brown. Councillor S Holland attended as substitute.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair referred to a matter to be considered later in the meeting regarding the proposed disposal of land off Talke Road, Alsager.

A number of Members of the Committee had sat on the Southern Planning Committee meeting in 2015 that had determined the original outline planning application for the development of the land at Talke Road which was in the ownership of the Council. It was considered appropriate for those Councillors to make declarations citing such matters as they would wish to bring into the open and indicating whether they had pre-determined the outcome of the discussion on Talke Road.

The following councillors declared that they had been involved with the planning process for Talke Road but had not pre-determined the outcome of the decision to be taken at the Committee's meeting:

Councillor N Mannion
Councillor J Clowes
Councillor P Groves

Councillor S Hogben
Councillor A Kolker

Councillor P Williams stated for the record that he was a ward member for Alsager and an Alsager Town councillor and chaired the Town Council's Play Area and Open Spaces Working Group. Councillor Williams had had interactions with the Council and others on the subject of Talke Road, but declared that he had not pre-determined the outcome of the decision to be taken at the Committee's meeting.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2022 be approved as a correct record.

4 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Geoffrey MacDonald spoke on behalf of Lindsay Belfield, the owner of 167 Talke Road, Alsager regarding the proposed sale of land behind 133-167 Talke Road, a matter that was on the agenda for the Committee's meeting. Mr MacDonald spoke against the disposal of the land as it provided a valuable piece of open space for the wellbeing of local residents and that the trees on the land shielded the houses from the sound of the adjoining railway. He also stressed the need for the access to parking spaces at the rear of the properties to be preserved.

Sue Helliwell urged the Committee to give due and proper consideration to the representations received in relation to the land to the rear of Talke Road, Alsager and to support the retention of the site.

5 ECONOMY AND GROWTH BUDGETS 2022/23

The Committee considered a report on the allocation of the approved budgets for 2022/23 to the Economy and Growth Committee.

The Finance Sub-Committee at its meeting on 2nd March 2022 had approved the allocation of the approved capital and revenue budgets, related policy proposals and earmarked reserves to each of the service committees.

Appendix C, setting out the financial reporting timetable for 2022-23, had inadvertently been omitted from the agenda and would be circulated to members of the Committee.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. notes the decision of the Finance Sub-Committee to allocate the approved capital and revenue budgets, related policy proposals and earmarked reserves to the Economy and Growth Committee, as set out in Appendix A to the report;
2. notes the supplementary estimates already approved as set out in Appendix B, Tables A and B;
3. approves the supplementary estimates set out in Appendix B, Table C;
4. approves the capital budget virements set out in Appendix B, Table D; and
5. notes that the financial reporting timetable will be circulated to members of the Committee for information.

6 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme for 2022/23.

Officers reported a number of amendments to the work programme:

- Town Centre Vitality Plans, currently scheduled for the 12th July, would be rescheduled to a later date to be confirmed.
- Empty Homes – Our Approach was rescheduled to 13th September.
- Domestic Energy Efficiency and Eco Flexibility Policy Review was rescheduled to 13th September.
- The Asset Management Plan would be reported either to the September or the November meeting, so that all members of the Council could be consulted on the Plan and their comments fed back as part of the report.

A new item on the Annual Performance of the Growth and Enterprise Department was planned for the meeting on 12th July.

Members asked that consideration be given to bringing forward items on the following:

- Town centre car parking, including Nantwich and Broad Meadow in Wilmslow.
- Underused assets arising from working from home.
- HMO Registration Scheme.
- An update on the Landlord Registration Project.
- Sites where development has stalled.
- Bringing long-term empty properties into use.
- Empty commercial properties in towns.

Officers advised that some of these items could be dealt with by way of a member update rather than as agenda items as they were cross-cutting issues of interest to other members.

RESOLVED: That

1. the Work Programme and the amendments reported at the meeting be noted; and
2. consideration be given to the various suggestions made by the Committee.

7 DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE LAND OFF TALKE ROAD, ALSAGER

The Committee considered a report on the intended disposal of Council-owned land at Talke Road, Alsager, which included representations made by local residents in response to the public notification of the proposal.

The Council was the freehold owner of the land which had been included within the adopted Local Plan as a housing and employment Site. Outline Planning permission had been granted on the site for housing, and a local developer had approached the Council to purchase the site.

Appendix 5 of the report contained financial information in relation to the matter. The Committee was advised that if it wished to discuss the contents of the Appendix, it would be necessary to move into part 2 and exclude the public and press. The Committee decided to proceed on the basis of an open discussion and would resolve to move into part 2 if that became necessary.

In answer to a question from members, officers advised that 'disposal' meant a transfer of ownership.

Officers advised that if the Committee were minded not to approve the disposal of the land at this time but to leave open the possibility of disposal at some future date, it would be necessary for the Council to undertake a further consultation process should the Council eventually wish to dispose of the land.

Concern was expressed about the impact on the Local Plan and the 5-year housing supply if it were decided not to dispose of the land, and whether alternative sites would have to be allocated for development.

There was also a view that insufficient consideration had been given to alternative uses of the land.

Members concluded that they did not have sufficient information at the present time to make an informed decision on the future of the land.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That a decision on the disposal of the land be deferred to enable alternative potential uses to be considered, and a further report be submitted to the Committee in due course.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.00 pm

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)