

## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
held on Monday, 18th January, 2021 as a Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

### **PRESENT**

Councillor JP Findlow (Chairman)  
Councillor Q Abel (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors L Braithwaite, S Brookfield, J Buckley, T Dean, P Groves,  
M Hunter, D Jefferay, C Leach, K Parkinson and H Faddes

### **VISITING MEMBERS**

Councillor Rachel Bailey  
Councillor Janet Clowes

### **OFFICERS**

Frank Jordan- Executive Director of Place and Deputy Chief Executive  
Paul Bayley- Director of Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services  
Peter Skates – Director of Growth and Enterprise  
Andrew Ross- Director of Infrastructure and Highways

### **41 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **42 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED- That the minutes of the meeting 16 November 2020 be accepted as a correct and accurate record.

### **43 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **44 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

No declarations of a party whip were received.

### **45 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public present or registered who wished to speak.

## 46 BUDGET 2021/2022 CONSULTATION

Frank Jordan, Executive Director of Place introduced and presented this item to the Committee.

He advised the Committee that Cabinet have proposed a set of draft budget proposals and if approved by Full Council the proposals did indicate a balanced budget. Cabinet would consider the results of the budget consultation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb and in addition to this Central Government had provided a settlement for Local Authorities.

All proposals had been listed and structured under draft Corporate Plan themes: Open, Fair and Green, and RAG (Red, Amber, Green) Rated by Cabinet Members. Any proposal marked as Red or Amber denoted Cabinet Members were minded to reconsider the proposals following consultation and the full details of the Government settlement.

Frank advised the Committee of key headlines:

- 1) The potential available for Cheshire East Council from the Government Settlement, meant the level of Council Tax (that was set by Full Council) gave rise to an opportunity to add an additional precept of 3% that would be linked to Adult Social Care on top of the Council Tax rate. This would provide more income and enable reconsideration of some of the proposals.
- 2) In terms of the cost base, there was an opportunity to freeze pay for Local Authority employees, an additional Social Care grant was to be awarded. The amount will be based on amount of funding raised locally, so it is linked to Council Tax.
- 3) New Homes Bonus will be reviewed in the medium term.
- 4) Government had changed guidance and rules around use of capital funding raised through public works and loans board if used to acquire assets for a yield. This was part of Medium Term Financial Strategy which was approved last February, this is no longer appropriate under the new guidance.

Frank presented a list of proposals for the Place Directorate under the themes of Open and Green.

Open:

Flexible Resourcing for Regulatory Services  
Urban Grass Cutting  
Highways Correspondence  
Tourist Information Centres  
Regulatory Services ICT System £9k  
Constellation Partnership  
Orbitas  
Public Rights of Way  
Everybody Sports and Recreation (ESAR)  
Highways  
ASDV Review  
ANSA Savings of £259k  
Strategic Leisure Review

## Estates Transformation and Neighbourhood Service Review

Green:

Development of Transit site for Gypsy and Travellers- £27k Growth  
Tatton  
Asset/Service Transfer  
Fixed Penalty Income  
Housing Services- £45k  
Waste- Tonnage and Contract inflation £810k  
Environment Strategy  
Trees  
LED Lighting for Street Signs  
Parking Strategy (37k-£955k)  
Local Bus Services

The committee considered the Pre-Budget Consultation 2021/22 proposals relating to services that fell within its remit, with a view to passing on its comments, feedback and recommendations to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny (28 January 2021) to include within its final budget scrutiny feedback to Cabinet (2 February 2021).

Members asked questions and put comments in relation to;

- In respect of the Boroughwide Consultation on the Parking Strategy and the Local Transport Plan, that the consultation timeframe be extended to take into account the difficulties people without access to the internet may have experienced trying to access services such as libraries which are closed as part of the national lockdown guidance relating to the Covid-19 pandemic. Easter was given as a suggestion.
- It was noted that the budget proposals came with an attached caveat that:

*Proposals marked RED / AMBER had been identified as those only being considered for consultation and any subsequent implementation if the Local Government Funding Settlement does not sufficiently increase the funding to Cheshire East Council. RED items would be removed first where possible.*

The Committee agreed that for items relating to the Environment and Regeneration budget, the items marked in red and Amber could represent c£770k of savings. Recommendation from the Committee was to retain those savings regardless of the outcome of the Local Government Funding Settlement.

- The Committee proposed that a plan for rural grass cutting could be developed as there was some reported road safety issues reported in certain parts of the borough. Members were keen to note from Officers when rural grass was planned to be cut and/or sprayed and also the issue of Pavements siding out' was raised, especially on major A roads where people can't walk down.

## **RESOLVED –**

That the committee's comments, questions and feedback on the Pre-Budget 2021/22 Consultation proposals be formalised and presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (28 January 2021) to include within its final budget scrutiny feedback/recommendations to Cabinet (2 February 2021).

### **47 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE REPORT**

Frank Jordan, Executive Director for Place introduced the item. He advised the Committee to note that this performance report should be reviewed noted this is not an ordinary year.

The Committee were advised that the recovery reports highlighted: performance and that it was useful to note services have had to deliver entirely new services- e.g support with shielding, business and economic support- grants etc. Services such as enforcement and regulatory services have had to increase capacity as there had been provision of additional support for those homeless or at risk of.

Waste collection and Highways had maintained a service where possible.

The Planning department had experienced pressures working remotely, especially as the demand is increasing not decreasing.

The Council have reacted where possible, and been able to provide services not previously offered before.

The Committee commended the officers who have worked throughout the pandemic, especially those who had distributed grants to businesses.

There was some discussion that related to:

- The retention of Environmental Health officers, Frank advised that this had been tracked in previous years and additional support had been sought to meet targets but this was not a sustainable approach. Therefore, a different approach had been taken around recruitment.
- The Council worked to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Covid-19 guidance on food hygiene and standards activities that focused on high risk areas. This stated that Local Authorities are expected to prioritise their activities through remote assessments initially, and physical onsite inspections were required for high risk and non-compliant establishments. However the FSA had stated that only physical inspections would count towards the annual inspection programme. The Council were awaiting further guidance to understand how this will affect next year's inspection programme.
- Members raised the issue about potential missed bin collections, Frank agreed to pick up this point and feed back to Members.
- The timeframe of Planning applications, Members were advised timeframes were adjusted to take into account extensions of time with applicant, these were always within the best interests of the applicant.
- The potential to add to the volunteer base for areas of work such as litter picking.
- The timeline for financial support to businesses must be high priority.
- Concerns on the number of refusals against officer recommendations that were overturned by the Planning inspector. Members were advised that

whilst fluctuations within appeals did happen, the proportion of appeals was significantly higher. Further analysis over two quarters would be needed to assess any trends or whether it was symptomatic of the applications at that time.

- Home adaptations did have a backlog of work, but this will be looked at when restrictions lifted enough to enable contractors to go into other people's homes.
- The question of digital Infrastructure and broadband being rolled out across the borough would be dealt with as part of the draft corporate plan, this would contain revised strategic objectives where performance would need to be set and reset considered as part of that.
- The Committee asked how many Cheshire East properties would benefit from the Airband agreement, Peter Skates agreed to pick up this point direct with Members.

RESOLVED: That

- Frank Jordan be thanked for his attendance and presentation to the Committee;
- Frank Jordan to feed back to Members in respect of potential missed bin collections; and
- Peter Skates to feed back to Members in respect of how many properties would benefit from the Airband agreement.

#### **48 FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Forward Plan.

RESOLVED- That the Forward Plan be received and noted.

#### **49 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the Work Programme.

Councillor Findlow advised the Committee that:

- the Carbon Action Plan Update was due to come before this Committee on the 15<sup>th</sup> March, however Senior Officers were waiting to give an indication as to whether the Update will go to Cabinet in April or May 2021, any later than this and it would need to be passed to the new Environment and Communities Committee;
- similarly, the Draft Quality Air Quality Plan Update also due to this Committee on the 15<sup>th</sup> March would not be ready for this meeting and would need to be passed to the new Environment and Communities Committee; and
- In regard to the Task and Finish Group for flooding, the Group was due to meet a Consultant from The Flood Hub, a funded organisation that provided advice and guidance to support householders, businesses and communities across the North West in becoming more flood resilient. This meeting was being scheduled for early February following on with a subsequent meeting that involved peers from Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council who had direct experience with severe flooding.

RESOLVED- That

a) The Work Programme be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.42 pm

Councillor JP Findlow (Chairman)