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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee**
held on Thursday, 13th March, 2025 in The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor L Wardlaw (Chair)
Councillor R Vernon (Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Adams, D Brown, H Seddon, M Sewart, J Snowball,
L Anderson, G Marshall, M Brooks, L Braithwaite and T Dean

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Cheshire East – Lead Local Flood Authority
Domenic De’Bechi – Head of Highways
Guy Metcalfe - Flood Risk Manager
Sarah Hemmings - Street Lighting and Drainage Manager

Environment Agency
David Brown, Senior Advisor, Flood Risk Management
Katy Holt, Team Leader, Flood Risk Management

United Utilities
Emma Birch, Area Engagement Lead for Cheshire
Craig Connor – Wastewater Drainage Area Manager

Cheshire Fire Authority
Matt Barlow, Service Delivery Manager

Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services
Jennifer Ashley, Democratic Services Officer

33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Craig Browne, Nicola Cook, Sam Corcoran, Brian Drake, Margaret Simon and John Smith.

Councillors Lata Anderson, Liz Braithwaite, Mary Brooks, Tony Dean and Garnett Marshall attended as substitutes.

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In the interest of openness and transparency, Councillor Tony Dean declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 in that he formerly worked for the Environment Agency.

35 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2024 be approved as a correct record.

36 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no registered public speakers.

37 UPDATE ON FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

The Committee received presentations on flood risk management from key colleagues representing Cheshire East Highways (Lead Local Flood Authority), Cheshire Fire Authority, United Utilities and the Environment Agency. Representatives updated Committee Members on the role of their organisations in the event of flooding and how partners worked together.

Cheshire East Highways highlighted to the committee that flood risk and drainage management is a growing concern with reoccurring incidents that are contributed to from a range of factors including third party ownership of drainage infrastructure, increased level of development, climate change and more frequent extreme weather events with persistent heavy rainfall.

Localised issues were bringing challenges in terms of applying for funding as it is difficult to demonstrate positive impacts for high numbers of residents which is a consideration when producing business cases for funding allocations. In addition, levels of development across the borough is adding to the challenges of providing sufficient management of water and drainage issues.

The committee noted that the team had responded to an unprecedented number of emergency calls over the New Year period with 230 calls requesting assistance with flood related incidents. The impact of this lasted a number of weeks with several teams involved in the clean-up operation. As a result of this, it was confirmed that gully cleansing operations have been increased. In addition, funding is being sought to improve drainage systems to make them more efficient and sustainable.

Representatives from United Utilities presented information to the Committee regarding their improvement plan that had recently been approved by OFWAT as the industry regulator. The plan detailed where funding would be spent to improve services and increase education, as the leading reason for flooding was blockages in sewers.

The Environment Agency provided details of their 'Cows to Coast' and 'Environment Lands Management' schemes which were natural flood risk management initiatives. In addition, flood risk mapping details had been

improved, along with a better understanding of the data available which in turn has resulted in better preparation for flooding incidents.

Cheshire Fire Authority informed the Committee that as a category 1 responder, the role of Cheshire Fire was to be prepared to respond to a range of emergency situations and increasingly, to incidents of flooding. The service had reviewed its ability to respond to events of this nature and staff have been appropriately trained and suitable equipment available to support incidents of flooding.

Following a review of the Community Risk Management Plan, locations of crews and appropriate vehicles has been improved and has allowed response times across the borough to be reduced. Overall, the service is better placed to respond to the range of emergencies they are now seeing.

The Committee asked a number of questions to all partner agencies to which it was agreed a written response would be provided.

The questions included;

Cheshire East Highways

- How many 'dig-ups' were outstanding?

Environment Agency

- What is the Northwest budget, and budget specifically for flood prevention?
- How are pollution rates measured, and what levels are there in Cheshire East?
- What impact has enforcement had, has there been any successful cases?

United Utilities

- In relation to monitoring of blockages, from the data available can you identify how many blockages were in the Cheshire East area?
- New Treatment Works – where are they to be located and when will they be operational? How are current ones functioning, are there plans to upgraded systems?
- Permits around water treatment levels for rivers, what are these and what level is required to be deemed 'safe'?

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked all partners for their attendance and ongoing collaborative working.

RESOLVED:

That the presentations be noted.

38 **WORK PROGRAMME**

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be noted and that the Chair and Democratic Services will agree the appropriate timeframes for items to be presented.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 1.30 pm

Councillor L Wardlaw (Chair)