

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Council**
held on Wednesday, 16th December, 2020

PRESENT

Councillor B Burkhill (Mayor)
Councillor S Edgar (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors B Burkhill, S Edgar, Q Abel, M Addison, S Akers Smith, M Asquith, R Bailey, J Barber, M Beanland, M Benson, L Braithwaite, J Bratherton, S Brookfield, D Brown, C Browne, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, J Clowes, S Corcoran, L Crane, A Critchley, S Davies, T Dean, D Edwardes, B Evans, H Faddes, A Farrall, JP Findlow, K Flavell, R Fletcher, T Fox, A Gage, S Gardiner, L Gilbert, M Goldsmith, A Gregory, P Groves, S Handley, A Harewood, G Hayes, S Hogben, S Holland, M Houston, M Hunter, D Jefferay, L Jeuda, A Kolker, C Leach, I Macfarlane, N Mannion, D Marren, A Martin, A Moran, R Moreton, D Murphy, J Nicholas, K Parkinson, J Parry, S Pochin, B Puddicombe, P Redstone, J Rhodes, L Roberts, J Saunders, M Sewart, M Simon, L Smetham, J Smith, L Smith, D Stockton, A Stott, R Vernon, L Wardlaw, M Warren, J Weatherill, P Williams, J Wray and N Wylie

24 PRAYERS

The Reverend Ralph Kemp said prayers at the request of the Mayor.

25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors S Carter and B Murphy.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

27 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

On consideration of the minutes, Councillor R Bailey referred to a question she had asked in relation to 20 mph zones at the meeting of 21st October 2020 as referred to in Minute 18. She said that in asking the question, she had referred to the impact on the surrounding roads of Sandbach. She also pointed out that 'Audlem' had been misspelt in the minutes as 'Audlum'. She asked that the minutes be amended in respect of both matters.

RESOLVED

That subject to the amendments requested by Councillor Bailey, the minutes of the meetings held on 21st October 2020 and 19th November 2020 be approved as a correct record.

28 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor

1. Expressed his pride at the way in which Cheshire East Council had responded to the Coronavirus emergency and thanked staff for their hard work, ingenuity and commitment over what had been a very difficult and challenging year. He also paid tribute to those across Cheshire East who had kept essential services working, including doctors, nurses and paramedics, and those working in care homes. Finally, he paid tribute to the work of members of the Council in providing leadership in their communities over the last year.
2. Extended his sympathies to the families and friends of those who had lost their lives due to Coronavirus.
3. Expressed his appreciation of the Chief Executive who had joined the Council at a difficult time.
4. Referred to the Council's momentous decision to move to a Committee system from next May. He thanked all Members for the way in which the debate had been held at the Special Meeting, and he also thanked the Officers for the tremendous amount of work that they had done over many months to prepare the way for the decision.
5. Said that it had been a privilege to serve a second year as Mayor in difficult times but wished that it had not been necessary.
6. Wished everyone a peaceful Christmas.

29 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

Sue Helliwell asked the Council to provide free parking to support local businesses and residents. She also referred to a lack of public consultation and funding in relation to active travel schemes. The Leader responded that shop keepers in Knutsford had asked that parking charges be kept in order to prevent office workers from using spaces intended for shoppers. With regard to active travel schemes, he commented that all members had been emailed on 4th August. A public consultation was launched was still running. Of nine schemes put forward, one had been withdrawn and several others amended in response to comments received during the consultation. The Deputy Leader added that Sue Helliwell's reference to a £26m projected spend was actually a projected budget

deficit resulting from additional costs and lost revenue arising from Covid-19, and this had now fallen to £13m, largely due to the work of officers.

Congleton Town Councillor Robert Douglas stated that the Council's proposals for household waste recycling sites, which were out to public consultation, were misleading in that they were based on the period of the first lockdown when many residents did not use the sites and that the figures of usage were much higher than stated. He also said that the proposals did not include a detailed analysis of the environmental impact and the likely increase in fly tipping. He asked that the current consultation be withdrawn and that any future proposals contain up to date information and address environmental impact. The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste responded that sufficient information was available during the current consultation and she encouraged people to respond before the close of the consultation on 4th January 2021.

Macclesfield Town Councillor Fiona Wilson indicated that the Town Council was supporting the '20 is Plenty' initiative and she asked Cheshire East Council to support the motion before them today. She said that the initiative would support active travel schemes and lead to safer streets and lower carbon emissions. The Mayor indicated that the matter would be debated later in the meeting.

Nick Cheetham also asked the Council to support the '20 is Plenty' motion on the agenda and referred to his experience of living in Edinburgh where a city-wide 20 mph restriction had been introduced.

Jane Smith asked the Council to ban trail hunting on its land. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration responded that the Council's current policy did not allow hunting with hounds, or the promoting of such activities, on its land. The Council retained such rights when granting leases. There were a few instances where the Council was unable to exercise such control where a lease predated the creation of the Council in 2009 but these related to quite small pieces of land.

Brian Fox urged the Council to support the '20 is Plenty' motion on the agenda as a way of providing an environment which would enable children to move about freely and safely.

Mary Edwards also asked the Council to support the '20 is Plenty' motion as a way of providing a safe environment which people of all ages could enjoy.

The Mayor encouraged all those who had spoken on the '20 is Plenty' motion to remain for the debate later in the meeting.

Connor Naismith referred to a motion on the agenda in relation to bullying and asked if the culture at Cheshire East Council had improved. The Leader responded by giving an assurance that the culture had improved, referring to the Brighter Futures programme set up by the previous

administration in response to a report by the Local Government Association, and which was continuing. The new administration had submitted the Council to an LGA peer review and earlier this year which had concluded that there had been remarkable progress in the culture of the organisation over a relatively short space of time.

The Mayor referred to an unsigned letter which had been submitted to the Council. It was the Council's policy that the identity of those who ask questions should be known. The letter had been included in the papers for the meeting and the Mayor was content that the inclusion of the letter was sufficient for the purposes of the meeting.

The Mayor placed on record his own appreciation of all staff. He referred to a proposal in the budget to increase the pay of staff by 2.5% but went on to say that this proposal had been included in the budget before the Government's recent announcement that it intended to freeze public sector pay.

30 LEADER'S AND DEPUTY LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader of the Council, in summary:

- Reported, in relation to the coronavirus pandemic, that the government would announce what tier of restrictions Cheshire East would be in over Christmas, later today. The speed of decrease in the infection rate had levelled off recently and in the last few days had started to rise again. He urged all residents to remember the basic steps needed to keep safe.
- Reported that, in September, when it was clear that the second wave was starting, Cllr Craig Browne and he had written to the Secretary of State asking for more local control of Test-Trace and increased powers to enforce restrictions locally. The Council had now been granted most of the powers it had requested in September. The Council would use the new powers to work with businesses to ensure that their establishments were Covid-secure. However, the powers available to the Council, which included the power to issue improvement notices and immediate restriction notices, would enable the Council to act more quickly where businesses were in breach of the regulations and people were put at risk.
- Reported that, in October, all leaders of Cheshire local authorities had jointly submitted a request for financial support from Government to assist local businesses. A reply was still awaited.
- Reported that the Pfizer vaccine was now being rolled out across Cheshire, and the AstraZeneca vaccine was not far behind. Although it would take some months for the vaccination programme to be rolled out, he felt that, once we were through what was likely to be a difficult

winter, we could look forward to a better 2021. He wished everyone a merry and safe Christmas.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, in summary:

- Reported that there had been a positive response following the consultation on the Corporate Plan. The Council would be considering all feedback received and making some refinements to the Plan in the new year.
- Reported that, following consultation in 2019, the draft SADPD had been amended, removing a number of green belt sites from local service centres. Further representations were being received and would be sent, with the final draft, for examination by a planning inspector.
- Reported that Covid restrictions had had an impact on planning applications, enforcement, Section 106 Agreements and Discharge of Conditions applications, which were all taking longer to process. The Council was intending to address this through additional staffing resource but in the meantime was making some temporary changes to services, the details of which would be notified to all members.
- Reported that the Council's response to the Greater Manchester proposal for a Clean Air Zone had been submitted on 3rd December. A response was expected in the spring.
- Reported that the Council's response to the HS2b Western Leg Refinements consultation had been submitted on 11th December.
- Reported that the Chancellor had presented his Spending Review 2020 on 25th November. The details of this would potentially have implications for the Council's MTFS, and those details were expected to be announced tomorrow. The Council had launched its own consultation of the MTFS on 2nd December, and people were encouraged to submit their responses to the Council's proposals on the Cheshire East website.
- Hoped that everyone would be able to celebrate Christmas in a way that was special to them, and looked forward to returning to a more familiar way of life in 2021.

The Mayor echoed the comments of the Leader and Deputy Leader that everyone keep themselves healthy and safe over the Christmas and winter period.

31 DOMESTIC TAXBASE 2021/22

Consideration was given to the recommendations of Cabinet on 1st December 2020 in relation to the domestic tax base 2021/22.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, as the Cabinet member responsible for housing, welcomed the proposal that the premium charged for properties that had been empty for 10 years or longer be increased from 200% to 300% as a way of bringing properties back into occupation across the Borough.

RESOLVED

That

1. in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the amount to be calculated by Cheshire East Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2021/22 be 153,796.10 for the whole area;
2. the premium charged for property that has been empty for 10 years or longer be increased from 200% to 300%; and
3. the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021/22 be unchanged, other than increasing the income bands in line with CPI.

32 NOTICES OF MOTION

Consideration was given to the following Notices of Motion, which had been submitted in accordance with paragraph 1.34 of the Council Procedure Rules:

1. 20's PLENTY IN 2020

Proposed by Councillor S Akers Smith and seconded by Councillor J Barber

Cheshire East is a caring council, where the needs of residents come first. 20mph speed limits improve quality of life, helping to create places where walking, cycling, conversations and playing are prioritised over vehicle traffic.

20mph speed limits are supported by many bodies including the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), the Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health, Alzheimer's Society, Cycling UK, World Health Organisation, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Transition Towns and cities, towns and parish councils and community groups.

30mph speed limit was created in 1934 and has never been reviewed, despite a significant increase in number of vehicles from 1.5 million to 40 million. The speed and weight of vehicles kills 5 people every day in the UK, which prevents people from feeling safe walking and cycling.

Reducing the default speed limit to 20mph on most urban and residential roads except where it is safe and compatible with community needs for it to be 30mph, will encourage parents to allow their children to walk and cycle to school, creates safety for those using mobility aids and the partially sighted and will help many people feel safer cycling on the roads because lower speeds make the environment feel safer. This change will also reduce congestion, improve air quality and improve the fitness of the borough's residents, as well as improve the economies of town centres by making them nicer places for people to want to spend time in.

In 2019 Cheshire East Council committed to fight climate change and implementing a default 20mph speed limit in areas where there is a mix of vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists will help us achieve this. I urge councillors to make a real change to their communities and vote in support of this much needed Motion and join 21million other people in this country who have adopted the same policy, a default 20mph in central, urban and residential areas across the borough, unless where it is safe and compatible with community needs for it to be 30mph.

The Motion for "20's Plenty in 2020" asks Council to resolve to lend its support to:

- 1. The principle of introducing a default 20mph speed limit in central, urban and residential roads (these to be formally agreed in line with the law and the Council's decision-making arrangements) - not a blanket measure.*
- 2. Consideration of the practicalities and timescales of introducing such a scheme in consultation with the Director of Highways and Infrastructure, and the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste, with formal consideration by the appropriate decision-making body/bodies, as early as possible in 2021.*
- 3. Working with Cheshire police to help maintain compliance, once such arrangements are established.*
- 4. Working with town and parish councils and the community, collaboratively and financially, to achieve the objectives of this Notice of Motion.*

An amendment to the motion was proposed by Councillor L Crane and seconded by Councillor N Mannion as follows:

To replace points 1 and 2 with the following:

- 1. The principle of introducing a default 20mph speed limit where appropriate, not a blanket measure. This would be through the review of the Speed Management Strategy which is scheduled to take place in 2021 and the points raised, both for and against, during today's debate be considered during this process.*

Points 3 and 4 would still stand.

Councillor S Akers Smith and Councillor J Barber indicated their acceptance of the amendment.

The motion as amended now constituted the substantive motion before Council.

An amendment to the new substantive motion was proposed by Councillor J Clowes and seconded by Councillor M Simon which replaced reference to '20 mph limits' with '20 mph zones' and proposed that a cross party working group be appointed by the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the introduction of 20 mph zone schemes.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was declared lost.

A further amendment to the new substantive motion was proposed by Councillor P Williams and seconded by Councillor M Goldsmith as follows:

To replace point 1 with the following:

- 1. The principle of introducing 20mph speed restrictions where appropriate – not a blanket measure. This would be through the review of the Speed Management Strategy which is scheduled to take place in 2021 and the points raised, both for and against, during today's debate be considered during this process.*

The remaining points would still stand.

Councillor S Akers Smith and Councillor J Barber indicated their acceptance of the amendment.

The motion as amended now constituted the substantive motion before Council.

RESOLVED:

That Council supports the motion as amended as follows:

1. The principle of introducing 20mph speed restrictions where appropriate – not a blanket measure. This would be through the review of the Speed Management Strategy which is scheduled to take place in 2021 and the points raised, both for and against, during today's debate be considered during this process;
2. Working with Cheshire police to help maintain compliance, once such arrangements are established; and

3. Working with town and parish councils and the community, collaboratively and financially, to achieve the objectives of the motion as amended.

2. Support for Town Centres over Christmas and New Year

Proposed by Councillor J Clowes and seconded by Councillor S Gardiner

We propose that this Council support the cessation of car park charges on all Cheshire East Council-owned car parks that directly serve the Borough's Towns, Market Town and principal Service Centres for the period:

- *To commence from 3rd December 2020 when current Covid-19 restrictions are lifted (or whichever date in December is permitted, whereby compliance with national and local Covid-19 restrictions may be achieved).*
- *The car park charges respite period to end at the end of business on 17th January 2021.*

This action will provide the Borough's town centre traders with an essential and welcome boost once the current lockdown ends, whilst also encouraging Cheshire East Residents to "Shop Local".

Councillor Clowes referred to the discussion on this matter at the Cabinet meeting on 1st December and expressed disappointment that Cabinet had not supported the proposal. With Christmas now just a week away, it was now too late to pursue the actions proposed in the motion and consequently the motion was withdrawn.

3. Bullying is Unacceptable in Cheshire East

Proposed by Councillor J Parry and seconded by Councillor D Murphy

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly, tolerant and safe environment for all of our communities so they can participate in positive work, learning, social activity and enjoy a happy retirement. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable for anyone here in Cheshire East.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be approved.

33 QUESTIONS

Councillor S Brookfield asked if the Government had raised unrealistic expectations about visiting in care homes, and whether care homes in Cheshire East would have the necessary resources to undertake the additional work involved. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care responded that officers were working closely with Public Health and the care homes to support the roll-out of testing.

Councillor M Simon asked how the Council could ensure that the work of the Crewe Town Board was adequately scrutinised. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration responded that information on the work of the Board was available on the Council's website and that the work of the Board was adequately scrutinised by the Council in its role as the Accountable Body.

Councillor J P Findlow asked what had happened to the rejuvenation of Macclesfield Town. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration responded that he would be inviting local members to a briefing on the matter in the spring. Councillor Findlow also asked if the Council would be reviewing local service centres such as Prestbury. The Portfolio Holder was not aware of any plans relating to villages.

Councillor L Smetham asked for an update on the number of planning appeals still in the pipeline. Such update reports had regularly appeared on planning agendas until recently. The Portfolio Holder for Planning referred to a recent email to Members outlining current pressures on the Planning Department, but asked Cllr Smetham to email details of her concerns to her, whereupon she would respond in writing.

Councillor R Fletcher sought an assurance that the funding currently in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for highway improvements to Bank Corner, Alsager would not be removed from the Capital Programme. The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste responded that the proposed junction improvement works were currently at the feasibility stage and that this would establish the scope of the necessary works and their costs which in turn would establish whether the scheme would proceed.

Councillor A Gage referred to a local resident who had an adult son with special care needs who until recently had attended the Beeches Day Care Centre. Earlier this year, Council funding had been withdrawn. He asked why the funding had been withdrawn. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor D Stockton wished to ask a question on a specific issue relating to environmental impacts. He had no evidence that the Council had followed up on, and enforced, an appeal decision by the Secretary of State. He provided a reference number for further information and asked that the Portfolio Holder for Planning provide a written response.

Councillor M Benson referred to the two-way cycling scheme introduced in Sandbach and said that he had not been consulted on the scheme which had resulted in the loss of much-needed parking and had attracted objections from local residents. The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste responded that Councillor Benson had received an email on the matter on 4th August and that no comments had been received until after the scheme had been put in place.

Councillor H Faddes referred to individuals with mental health problems living on the streets during the winter and asked about the Council's arrangements for dealing with this. The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration referred to the Council's Severe Weather Emergency Plan and gave an assurance that dedicated teams were in place for dealing with rough sleeping.

Councillor S Pochin referred to the committee system to be introduced in May 2021 and asked the Leader to ensure that all members, including those who did not belong to a political group, would have a seat on a committee. The Leader responded that this was currently under consideration.

Councillor D Murphy expressed concern at the potential loss of a waste recycling centre in Congleton. The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste responded that it would be inappropriate to comment at the present time as the public consultation was underway. The outcome of the consultation would be reviewed in due course.

34 REPORTING OF URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Council received a schedule of urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive on behalf of the Council which was reported for information in accordance with Appendix 4 of the Council procedure rules.

RESOLVED:

That the schedule of urgent decisions be noted.

At the conclusion of the formal business of the meeting, the Mayor congratulated Mr Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services and Governance, on having served in local government for 35 years.

The Mayor wished everyone a happy Christmas and closed the meeting.

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and concluded at 4.30 pm

Councillor B Burkhill
MAYOR/CHAIRMAN