

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Council**
held on Wednesday, 19th October, 2022 in the Tenants' Hall,
Tatton Park, Knutsford WA16 6QN

PRESENT

Councillor R Fletcher (Deputy Mayor/Vice Chair in the chair)

Councillors Q Abel, S Akers Smith, L Anderson, M Asquith, R Bailey, J Barber, M Beanland, M Benson, L Braithwaite, S Brookfield, D Brown, C Browne, J Buckley, C Bulman, P Butterill, J Clowes, S Corcoran, L Crane, S Davies, T Dean, D Edwardes, S Edgar, H Faddes, A Farrall, JP Findlow, K Flavell, 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, L Jeuda, A Kolker, C Leach, I Macfarlane, N Mannion, A Martin, A Moran, B Murphy, D Murphy, C Naismith, J Nicholas, K Parkinson, S Pochin, P Redstone, J Saunders, M Sewart, 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

33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M Addison, J Bratherton, S Carter, B Evans, D Jefferay, L Roberts, D Marren, R Moreton, J Parry, B Puddicombe, J Rhodes and M Simon.

34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

35 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2022 be approved as a correct record.

36 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Mayor, in summary:

- 1 reported the apologies of the Mayor, who was attending a funeral in the East Riding of Yorkshire.
- 2 thanked all those who had paid tribute to the Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II using the Council's books of condolence and the

on-line book. The books of condolence would be transferred to the County Records Office.

- 3 thanked the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire and the Dean of Chester for the service of commemoration for the Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II held at Chester Cathedral on the day before her funeral and reported that Cheshire East Council has been well represented at the service.
- 4 reported that Helen Davies, Democratic Services Officer, was moving on to work for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and wished her well in her new job.
- 5 highlighted engagements that the Mayor had undertaken since the last meeting of Council. These had included a visit to the local charity 'The End of Life Partnership', and attendance at the Everybody Awards where they had presented a '1st place award'.
- 6 invited Members to enjoy the wonderful grounds at Tatton Park after the meeting.
- 7 reported that those Members who had ordered wreaths for Remembrance Sunday would be able to collect them at the end of the meeting.

37 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

Callum and Crystal, representing all Care experienced young people in Cheshire East, explained why the six pledges for Cared For and Young People were important, and also why all needed to act on the pledges for children and young people of Cheshire East. Councillor K Flavell, Chair of Children and Families Committee, thanked Callum and Crystal for taking the time to attend the meeting and for explaining the importance of the pledges.

Mr Stuart Redgard stated that in his opinion the highways department was not fit for purpose and gave four examples of failings in the Wilmslow area relating to the street lighting asses register, the winter gritting routes risk assessment, the two vehicle barriers on Grove Street, and the Gully Inspection programme.

In response the Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee, Cllr C Browne, stated that updating of the Street Lighting asset inventory was an ongoing process and was aware that there were still several areas where updates were required. He had been assured that the updates relating to the lighting on A538 were being dealt with as a priority and the asset data would be updated within the next 4 weeks.

With regards to the winter gritting routes risk assessment, he was not clear which roads where being referred to. As part of the winter service policy

the Council's Highways Service undertakes a comprehensive annual review which considers any changes to the network, reported incidents, new roads, revisions to bus routes, feedback from drivers and correspondence. The outcome of this process for the 2021/22 winter season was reported to Highways and Transport Committee in July. A conscious decision was made not to remove any roads which were previously part of qualifying bus routes, pending a full review of this aspect after the 2022/23 winter season.

Cllr Browne reported that a joint inspection of the condition and operation of the Grove Street barriers had been undertaken on the morning of 17 October by officers from Highways and Parking Services teams and both barriers had been found to be operable with no defects preventing opening or closing.

Cllr Browne went on to state that during the undertaking of the gully emptying programme there were a small number of gullies which on first visit were unable to be emptied due to access issues. This could be from stuck covers or parked vehicles. These gullies were tagged by the highways team, logged on the system and subsequently revisited for emptying at a later date with additional equipment to ensure that they could be emptied. This applied to around 3.5% of the overall gully numbers across the highway network. During the current programme, an additional number of gullies had been identified, emptied and added to the asset inventory. This had resulted in the programme to empty over 99,000 gullies taking slightly longer and it would now be completed in November 2022. The programme dates on the progress tracker were regularly reviewed and updated.

Honorary Alderman David Neilson congratulated the Council on the pledges for Cared For and Young People. He explained that he had been a special guardian for 5 children in the last 13 years and asked the Council to think about special guardianship orders as there was no mention of them in the Strategy. Children under special guardianship were not classified as being in care, even though the local authority pays for them to be looked after by somebody. He was concerned that some of the wording on forms used did not take special guardianship into consideration and asked that this be reviewed. Councillor K Flavell, Chair of Children and Families Committee, asked if he could email her with the details so that it could be looked into.

Sarah Bradley, on behalf of a Facebook Group called The Hill Crossing Campaign, asked Councillors to support Cllr S Akers Smith Notice of Motion on crossings. She stated that the original campaign in 2018 for a crossing on the Hill was turned down as there was no private or public funding available, and the footfall criteria had not been met and in her view this criterion should be removed. The Hill in Sandbach desperately needed a crossing and the Council's support was needed to make sure that the S106 agreements monies received in 2019 were spent by 2024 or the monies would go back to the developers. Cllr C Browne,

Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, responded that the Council had a robust assessment and prioritisation process in place for requests for new pedestrian crossings. This was used in line with national guidance to allow Council resources to be directed to those sites with the highest level of need. He had been informed that there were currently no available s106 funds to support the crossing on The Hill and the s106 funds referenced were focused on improving traffic signal arrangements at the junction of The Hill and the A534. He confirmed that all new traffic signal equipment did utilise LED technology.

38 LEADER'S AND DEPUTY LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader, in summary

- 1 referred to the recently launched report by the Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable Inclusive Growth Commission, which set out projects which would help to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025 and encouraged all to read the report.
- 2 encouraged those present to search on the Cheshire and Merseyside All Together Active website for details of the campaign to encourage residents to regularly undertake 75 minutes of physical activity to reduce the risk of colon cancer, dementia, and type two diabetes.
- 3 reported that the Council was planning for increased demand for services to support residents who were experiencing financial stress, including the established support such as the household support fund, emergency assistance, housing benefit and council tax support. The Council would continue to provide essential food and fuel vouchers.
- 4 announced that the Council would be launching a Warm Places scheme to provide spaces where people could go, free of charge, to spend time to keep warm if they were struggling to heat or keep their homes warm.
- 5 reported that the Council was facing extreme financial pressures due to rising energy prices, high inflation rate and increased costs to deliver and commission essential services. The Council would be joining with other councils to call on the government to provide funding so that it could ensure that the most vulnerable were supported and aware of the help available to them.
- 6 reported that the Council had been working with town councils to produce Town Centre Vitality Plans and encouraged all to look at these plans.

- 7 encouraged those eligible to get their flu vaccine and covid booster vaccine.
- 8 reported that Crewe Pride was taking place on Saturday 22 October 2022 from 12 noon to 4 pm at Crewe Market Hall, with a parade through the town centre.

The Deputy Leader, in summary

- 1 reported that the Council was supporting residents through established support schemes such as the Household Support Fund, workplace schemes and was also providing winter wellbeing items to those residents most in need such as warm clothing and energy saving products as well as essential food.
- 2 reported that the Council was facing extreme financial pressures due to raising energy price, rising inflation and increased delivery costs.
- 3 reported that the Council had secured a grant of £151,000 to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure at 15 locations in Cheshire East, including Crewe, Knutsford, Macclesfield, Middlewich, Congleton, and Nantwich.
- 4 reported that the Council had submitted expression of interests forms for several Investment Zones in Cheshire East
- 5 reported that the Inspector had issued his final report on the examination of the draft SADPD. The Council would now prepare a version for adoption at the Council meeting on 14 December 2022.
- 6 provided an update on the HS2 petitioning process and reported that the Council had submitted petitions against the Phase 2 Hybrid Bill, setting out objections to the Bill and how would like them to be resolved.

39 CARED FOR CHILDREN AND CARE LEAVERS STRATEGY PLEDGES

Consideration was given to the Cared for Children and Care Leavers Strategy 2022-2026 and the six Pledges contained within the Strategy.

RESOLVED:

That the Pledges be accepted and endorsed by the Council in order to make a commitment to the Cared for Children and Care Leavers as Members and Officers and to ensure that there was a clear and joined vision to supporting Cared for Children and Care Leavers and this being everyone's responsibility.

40 **FIRST FINANCIAL REVIEW 2022/23**

Consideration was given to the report seeking approval for supplementary revenue estimates and capital virements as part of the First Financial Review 2022/23.

The Corporate Policy Committee, at its meeting on 6 October 2022, had considered the report and noted the recommendations to Council.

RESOLVED: That Council approve:

- 1 three fully funded supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services over £1,000,000, in accordance with the Financial Procedural Rules, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 2 capital virements over £5,000,000 in accordance with the Financial Procedural Rules, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

41 **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22**

Cllr James Nicholas, Vice Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, presented the Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2021/22 to Council.

The report provided details of the work undertaken by the Committee and the assurances received during that year.

The Annual Report was received and noted.

42 **POLITICAL REPRESENTATION ON THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**

Consideration was given to a report relating to the political representation the Council's Committees, which addressed a recent change in political group membership as the result of a group member becoming a 'non-grouped independent' councillor.

RESOLVED:

That the political group and other representation, as set out in the Appendix to this report, and the methods, calculations and conventions used in determining this, as outlined in the report, be adopted, and the allocation of places to Committees be approved.

43 **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRS**

Consideration was given to the appointment of the Vice Chairs of the Environment and Communities Committee and the Southern Planning Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor S Akers Smith be appointed as the Vice Chair of the Environment and Communities Committee, and Councillor P Butterill be appointed as the Vice Chair of the Southern Planning Committee.

The meeting adjourned for a short break

44 **RECOMMENDATION FROM AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:
MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT**

Consideration was given to the recommendations of the Audit and Governance Committee in relation to the Code of Conduct.

The Audit and Governance Committee recommendations were moved and seconded. During the debate an amendment was proposed to refer the matter back to the Audit and Governance Committee's Working Group to reconsider and bring forward a Code of Conduct which was supported by all on the Audit and Governance Committee.

The amendment was proposed, seconded, and put to the vote and declared lost.

Following debate on the substantive recommendations, these were put to the vote.

RESOLVED: That Council:

- 1 adopt the draft Member Code of Conduct, incorporating all amendments proposed by the Group Leaders, and
- 2 adopt the draft Member Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure to take effect following adoption of the Members Code of Conduct.

The meeting adjourned for short break.

45 **NOTICES OF MOTION**

Consideration was given to the Notices of Motion which had been submitted in accordance with the Council's Procedural Rules.

1 Fair Tax Declaration

Proposed by Councillor P Williams and Seconded by Councillor N Mannion

Recognising that Cheshire East Council already meets some of the requirements of the Fair Tax Declaration, Council resolves to sign-up to the Declaration in its entirety

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the Corporate Policy Committee or such other appropriate committee, based upon the constitutional terms of reference

Post meeting note – the Notice of Motion was referred to the Finance Sub Committee.

2 Safe Night-time Travel for Workers

Proposed by Councillor L Smith and Seconded by Councillor S Handley

This Council notes that;

- *Shift work is widespread in many industries, particularly hospitality, as well as health and care workers, retail , cleaning, security and porter staff and can often entail late-night working;*
- *Many workers, especially women, are increasingly worried about their safety travelling to and from work at night*

This Council believes that;

- *While employers may feel their duty of care to staff ends when an employee finishes a shift, they also need to take into consideration journeys home, especially during unsocial hours;*
- *The weakness of enforcement of the law against sexual assault, including up-skirting, on public transport is appalling and only 2% of victims go on to report sexual harassment on public transport;*
- *The Get Me Home Safely campaign - [Get ME Home Safely | Make Our Communities & Workplaces Safer](#) , which calls on employers to take all reasonable steps to ensure workers are able to get home safely from work at night, is greatly needed and should be supported;*
- *Greater numbers of trained staff and stronger enforcement of the law against sexual assault and harassment on public transport are urgently needed;*

This Council will;

- *Use its powers - as others such as East Dunbartonshire Council - and adopt a policy that our licensing board will ensure the process for approving late night licences will be linked to the provision of free transport home.*
- *Calls on Cheshire East Council to use its powers - as others have done – to allow our licensing board include additional criteria when considering late opening applications from licensed premises dependent on venues providing free transport home for night shift employees. This will significantly benefit the safety and wellbeing of hospitality workers,*

particularly women, who often cannot afford, or access, safe transport options late at night and benefit our community.

- Publicly call for improvement to late night and off-peak transport service provision and use the Government's Safety of Women at Night Fund to provide extra night services, as well as work with employers to use the fund for supplementary taxi travel.*
- Publicly call for the lowering of fares and opposition to any cuts to public transport funding and for our local council to use their powers and political platforms to achieve this.*
- Publicly call for the municipal ownership of buses in order to lower prices and improve service provision, especially for night-time and off-peak services and endeavour to work with Greater Manchester Combined Authority as they move forward with bus franchising using powers under the Bus services Act 2017*
- Make representation to appropriate regional and national levels of governance to bring forward national minimum standards for taxis and private hire as per the recommendations of the Task and Finishing group and in support of this motion and its demands on behalf of our local community.*

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the Environment and Communities Committee and the Highways and Transport Committee or such other appropriate committee, based upon the constitutional terms of reference.

3 Public Art Consultations

Proposed by Councillor A Gage and Seconded by Councillor S Edgar

This Council resolves that all works of public art undertaken by the council or works of public art to be undertaken by third parties on council owned land or assets should be subject to a public consultation of residents within the affected settlement area. Where singular or multiple artwork option(s) are proposed the consultation should provide the consultees with the option to oppose the proposed artwork.

The consultation should last no less than 21 days and all results should be made readily available to the Cheshire East public before a final decision is made. The consultation will act in an informatory and advisory capacity with all final decisions on the commissioning of public art to be decided by the relevant body of democratically elected members as defined by the council's constitution.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the Economy and Growth Committee or such other appropriate committee, based upon the constitutional terms of reference.

4 Tree Planting

Proposed by Councillor T Dean and Seconded by Councillor Q Abel

That this Council:

- a) recognises the significant benefits of street trees and is committed to increasing the number of street trees across the borough*
- b) will work with Town and Parish Councils to identify suitable locations for tree planting and hedgerow creation*
- c) will ensure its policies require rather than prevent the replacement of felled street trees where appropriate to do so.*

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the Highways and Transport Committee or such other appropriate committee, based upon the constitutional terms of reference.

5 Cost of Living

Proposed by Councillor J Clowes and Seconded by Councillor T Dean

We propose that:

Cheshire East Council is determined to ensure the protection of the residents of Cheshire East from the cost-of-living challenge driven by Covid and Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine.

These combined effects have led to rising energy prices and our residents facing significant cost of living pressures.

This council is cognisant of the significant work that the Government has done to support the residents of Cheshire East. It notes the benefit that the two-year energy price guarantee and the certainty it will give to residents across Cheshire East as well as the enormous help that the £400 energy bill discount will provide to every household.

It further notes the additional support of the £650 cost of living payment for those in receipt of means-tested benefits, £300 for pensioner households and £150 for recipients of disability benefits in Cheshire East.

Cheshire East Council thanks the Government for providing equivalent support for those not on the mains energy grid and the protection of jobs in Cheshire East that the six-month protection for businesses will provide.

Cheshire East Council further welcomes the Government's longer-term plans that will maximise domestic energy produced through North Sea oil and gas, as well as nuclear energy and renewables that will contribute

towards securing energy independence in the long term and ensure that Cheshire East will never be subject to energy price hikes caused by illegal wars again.

Cheshire East Council therefore resolves to:

- 1 *Work with the Government to ensure that it delivers the much-appreciated support to the residents of Cheshire East as quickly as possible.*
- 2 *Proactively identify those most in need of support in Cheshire East and ensure that they access all the Government support for which they are eligible.*
- 3 *Identify further local opportunities in Cheshire East for energy generation to help increase the supply of energy to further aid the long-term lowering of prices, support the Government's aim of domestic energy security and create local jobs.*

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the Corporate Policy Committee or such other appropriate committee, based upon the constitutional terms of reference.

Post meeting note – the Notice of Motion was referred to the Adults and Health Committee.

6 Criteria for the installation of zebra crossings and light controlled crossings

Proposed by Councillor S Akers Smith and Seconded by Councillor L Anderson

That a report be prepared for the relevant Committee which will enable the Council to review the criteria for traffic light timings and to review the criteria for the installation of zebra crossings and light controlled crossings with the ambition to installing more each year.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the Highways and Transport Committee or such other appropriate committee, based upon the constitutional terms of reference.

7 Hydraulic Fracturing ('Fracking')

Proposed by Councillor N Mannion and Seconded by L Anderson

Last month the Government announced the lifting of the moratorium on fracking that had been in place since 2019 following earth tremors and environmental concerns.

It is understood that certain areas of Cheshire East may have geological conditions, shale rock, suitable for the hydraulic fracturing process to extract shale gas.

As admitted by the British Geological Survey, the risk of large tremors from fracking 'remains a scientific challenge for the geoscience community'.

In addition to the risk of earth tremors there remain significant unresolved environmental concerns around the contamination of ground water and associated public health and safety issues.

Therefore, it is proposed that:

- 1. Cheshire East Council not support any activity associated with the exploration, extraction or storage and transportation of shale gas on land it owns, leases or manages.*
- 2. That where necessary, the council's environmental, mineral and planning policies be updated to deter all activities associated with fracking and shale gas exploration, extraction or storage and transportation within Cheshire East.*
- 3. Local Members of Parliament be lobbied to support this position.*

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be referred to the Environment and Communities Committee or such other appropriate committee based upon the constitutional terms of reference.

8 Debate Not Hate

Proposed by Councillor S Corcoran and Seconded by Councillor C Browne

This Council supports the Debate not Hate Campaign, signs the public statement and calls for the government convened working group to tackle this issue.

RESOLVED:

That the Motion be approved.

46 QUESTIONS

Councillor L Anderson asked what the Council was doing to encourage companies to generate renewable energies in Cheshire East to help the Cheshire East residents move away from fossil fuels and become net zero. Councillor N Mannion, Chair of Economy and Growth Committee,

responded that all were aware of support schemes for energy bills for households. The government had indicated, but not provided details of support for small and medium enterprises. Councillor Mannion undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor S Brookfield on behalf of Councillor L Smith stated that Children's Services, along with other essential services, had been operating in a context of significantly reduced funding from central government for over a decade whilst demand had continued to rise. She stated that the government were failing to support children as early as needed which could lead to greater problems in the future. She asked if it was about time that every single member of the Council called upon the richest in society to pay their tax which they could well afford and stop expecting everyone else to foot the bill. In response Councillor K Flavell, Chair of Children and Families Committee stated the reduction year on year of funding for the council has caused tremendous pressures in children's services and adults etc. and yet many of these services were statutory so there was no choice but to provide these services, - 70% of council tax was spent on services for adults and children. The government had continually cut funding, and many Councils were facing financial difficulties because of the lack of funding in areas of high needs. so yes, I would agree we need to call for better funding for children's services from the government.

Councillor S Gardiner stated he wanted the committee system to work and that if it was going to be effective, councillors' needed to be properly prepared in advance of those meetings by reading the papers and attending the briefing meeting. However, agenda papers were not always received in time to do this. Cllr Gardiner asked if consideration could be given to this matter. Councillor S Corcoran, Chair of Corporate Policy Committee, responded that, ideally, agenda papers should arrive in time to allow member to read them before the briefings but due to issues with the postal service this was not always happening. He reminded Members that agenda papers were always available online and, for climate change reasons, he encouraged members to access their agenda papers this way to save on paper and printing costs.

Councillor A Gage stated he have visited Delamere House - a multi-use Cheshire East office block in Crewe. When he had reached the floor of his destination, he found that 50 desks were occupied by roughly 4 individuals and on visiting the floor above had found this to be a similar experience. He asked what percentage of usual desk staff were currently not at their desks and what methods were being used to monitor and measure the performance and productivity of those working at home. Councillor S Corcoran, Chair of Corporate Policy Committee, stated that some of the matters raised were staffing matters and should be dealt with by officers rather than members and that a written response would be provided. Councillor Corcoran indicated that there were benefits of people working at home for climate change reasons in terms of travel time, and that home

working could also be more productive. He accepted that, as the Council moved to more of a hybrid model, there would be spare office space which was being looked into by officers.

Councillor M Houston asked about progress with the Crewe NW package works. She and Councillor Naismith during recent ward walks and during traffic monitoring exercises undertaken with local PCSOs had been able to see for themselves one of the problems that has arisen from the closure of Middlewich Road and this was that motorists were choosing to use residential side streets as 'rat runs' and local residents were worried that they were unable to cross the road safely outside their own homes.

Cllr C Brown, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee responded that the Project was being delivered in 3 phases: -

Phase 1 – included the Leighton Hall roundabout and the Smithy Lane roundabout, which should be completed by Jan 23

Phase 2 – included the Flowers Lane roundabout and Minshull new road roundabout and the East West link – and this should be completed by March 2023

Phase 3 – included the Fairfield roundabout, north south spine road and Smith New Lane and these should be completed by March 2024.

He reported that the current target was to have the road completed and fully opened to traffic by April 2024 but advised that there had already been delays caused by various utilities companies not turning up on site when booked to carry out essential works. The A530 was scheduled to be reopened in January 2023 but having said that the principal contractors were working extremely hard including working at weekends to get that section re-open earlier if possible.

Councillor L Jeuda asked what were the implications for the Council of the expected massive cuts on public spending the government was about to announce at the end of the month and, what if anything, could the Council do to try and mitigate the suffering caused for our most vulnerable residents? Councillor A Stott, Chair of the Finance Sub Committee, responded that all service committees would consider a report on how each section of the Council would deal with overspends that were being reported due to inflation, pay awards utility bills.

Councillor S Corcoran, Chair of Corporate Policy Committee, referred to the report that went to the Corporate Policy Committee setting out the £11.6 million inflationary pressures on the Council this year. He stated to put this into context, the general reserve was £14 million. This illustrated the level of pressure the Council was under.

Councillor A Kolker stated that the Leader, in their 2019 election manifesto, promised the people of Cheshire East that the rubble charges

would be abolished. He stated that this promise had been kept in Congleton by abolishing the entire tip, and asked when would the promise be honoured in the rest of the Borough? Councillor M Warren, Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, responded by stating that the Environment and Communities Committee had formed a cross party working group to look at the provisions for household waste and recycling centres across the borough in the medium to long term future. With regard to rubble charges, there was a question as to whether it should be mandatory for Councils not to be able to charge for disposal of rubble at household waste sites. Councillor Warren undertook to speak to officers and provide a written response.

Councillor S Akers Smith thanked Councillor Corcoran for his statement on providing warm banks such as libraries and community centres across the borough and asked if they would be available on Sundays, bank holidays, Christmas, Boxing Day, and New Year's Day? In response Councillor Corcoran stated he commended the work of Connected Communities Team in trying to look at what was available in the third sector. He stated that he did not believe there were any plans to open libraries on Sundays but there were other facilities available. He suggested that this was something that could be worked out best at a local level and should build on the success of the people helping people service.

Councillor C Bulman asked, given that the Council had agreed the virement of money for the Middlewich Eastern bypass, could it be confirmed if the work was on schedule to get it finished? Councillor C Brown, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, responded that early works onsite had been completed including the ground investigations but there was a Compulsory Purchase Order process to go through. 7 objections had initially been received, 2 had been subsequently withdrawn but a public inquiry may need to be held, assuming the remaining 5 objections were not also withdrawn. That was estimated to be in November and would be followed by the submission of the final business case in Spring 2023 to the Department of Transport. Hopefully an award of funding would be made by September 2023 to allow the construction contract to be awarded by November 2023 and physical construction to begin on site by January 2024, with the final opening date targeted for Sept 2026.

Councillor P Redstone asked about Best4Business and stated that he had attended a governors meeting earlier in the week when the headteacher again reported that Best4Business had failed to deliver. The business system was 100% over budget and was still failing to deliver. In response Councillor S Corcoran, Chair of Corporate Policy Committee, stated that the matter had been debated at the Corporate Policy Committee. He was aware of some of the problems experienced by schools and that there was a special care package put in place to assist schools. He referred

Councillor Redstone to the report considered by the Corporate Policy Committee.

Councillor M Beanland stated that he had been reminded that there was a draft bio-diversity net gain SPD that was published for consultation by Cheshire East in the period May 2021 – June 2021, and asked when the final version of the document would be published. Councillor M Warren, Chair of Environment and Communities Committee, undertook to provide a written response.

Councillor S Handley asked what was the status of Great British Railways bid? Councillor C Browne, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, responded that during the meeting a statement had been received to the effect that the legislation would not be enacted in the current parliament. He expressed his disappointment on this news.

Councillor C Naismith stated that he welcomed the prospect of Cheshire Archives being co-hosted in Crewe in the History Centre; however, he had been approached by a number of residents who would have preferred to see the existing building repurposed rather than demolition and a complete rebuild. He asked whether a full options appraisal had been carried out at the outset of this project and on what basis had it been decided that repurposing was not the preferred option. He asked whether cost of the demolition had changed because of recent inflationary pressures. Councillor N Mannion, Chair of the Economy and Growth Committee, responded to the effect that the option of repurposing it was originally included in the appraisal but that it was found not have been fit for purpose in both economic and practical terms. The building had been assessed in a practical sense as not being capable of carrying the weight of the archives, that would be moving to Crewe. That was why the repurposing option was not accepted. The project was within budget estimate because of the National Lottery funding, as match funding, enabled the Council to deliver this with Cheshire West and Chester Council.

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and concluded at 3.30 pm

Councillor R Fletcher
Deputy Mayor/Vice Chair

COUNCIL 19 October 2022
Item 5 – Public Speaking Time/Open Session

Mr Richard Slater

Question

With many officers working from home and others self-isolating from work, is the Council considering selling-off the Westfields office or Macclesfield Town Hall?

With changed working arrangements for staff, what guarantees can you offer that public money is being used well, and what measures do you have in place to ensure appropriate productivity? I do have concerns that working from home might lead to staff not being well supervised, with this potentially leading to them becoming unproductive

Written Response

The Council is currently reviewing its office accommodation needs. No decisions have been made on disposals.

The Covid pandemic required many businesses and organisations, including Cheshire East Council, to make immediate changes to how and where some staff work. However, many of our front-line staff continued to operate as they did before the pandemic. We are looking into more hybrid ways of working, which is necessary given the recruitment and retention challenges we are dealing with. Regular supervision between staff and their line managers is routine, irrespective of where and how staff work, and we have policies for dealing with performance.

Mr Dave Poole

Question

My questions relate to agenda item 12 – Member Code of Conduct

Can anyone confirm that members will still be able to talk to the press about decisions they don't agree with i.e. the winter gritting routes and can they be negative about the Council.

In a document by the Department for Communities and Local Government it clearly states what Cllr's must do about registering your personal interests. "Holders of the public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work". With this in mind, is it a good idea for potential Cllr's to have their nomination papers signed by a member of an organisation, when you know the organization has already lobbied the Council you are hoping to win a council seat, for support either financially or committed to promoting their event.

Is this reportable to the monitoring officer or higher authority?

Written Response

Elected members can express their genuinely held views regarding council services, positive or negative, provided that these views are expressed in an appropriate manner and in accordance with relevant protocols, including the Members Code of Conduct.

The process for the declaration of interests by elected members, and the content of those declarations, is prescribed in legislation and the Members Code of Conduct. The appropriate course of action in any particular situation is very much dependent on the exact circumstances, therefore a hypothetical answer cannot be provided. If it is believed that an elected member has not correctly declared their interests, recourse is by way of a complaint to the Monitoring Officer.

COUNCIL 19 October 2022

Item 14 – Questions

1 Cllr L Anderson

Question

What is Cheshire East Council doing to encourage companies to generate renewable energies in Cheshire East to help the Cheshire East residents move away from fossil fuels and become net zero?

Written Response:

As part of the Council's commitment to influence carbon reduction and its pledge for the Borough to be carbon neutral by 2045 the Council is undertaking a detailed assessment of carbon emissions across the borough. This will form part of an update report on the Council's Carbon Neutral Plan to committee in the new year detailing best practice in decarbonisation sector by sector.

The Council is also working regionally through the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission enabling and encouraging collaboration between local councils, communities and businesses to deliver decarbonisation on a regional scale. The Council is also working with Reaseheath college and other key partners to plan a second Cheshire Net Zero Carbon Conference to make connections and share best practice.

4 Cllr A Gage

Question

Whilst on council business I paid a visit to Delamere house and members will know that it is multi use Cheshire East office block in Crewe. When I reached the floor of my destination rather than the busy hub of a whirring council nucleus, I expected to find I walked into an open expanse where 50 desks were occupied by roughly 4 individuals. Just to make sure this wasn't an anomaly I visited the floor above and found this to be a similar experience. I noted that the leader of the councils support for climate change issues through things such as not printing paper so why is the council trying to be green when its heating entire office blocks which are almost empty, and can you tell members what percentage of usual desk staff are currently not at their desks and what method is being used to monitor and measure the performance and productivity of those working at home.

Written Response

Cllr Corcoran response at meeting:

Some of the matters are clearly staffing matters and should be dealt with by officers rather than members. In terms of the issue over climate

change I do think there are benefits of people working at home for climate change in terms of travel time. I do think there are occasions where it can also be more productive and I think the aim as we come out of the pandemic should be to gain from the positive experiences and learn from those but also change the way of working to a sort of hybrid model so I do accept that as we move to a more hybrid model there will be spare office space and that is something that I know the officers are looking in to.

Further to Cllr Corcoran's response at full council to your question when he said that some of the matters are clearly staffing matters and should be dealt with by officers rather than members, I would like to comment as follows:

The Covid pandemic required many businesses and organisations, including Cheshire East Council, to make immediate changes to how and where some staff work. However, many of our frontline staff continued to operate as they did before the pandemic.

Pre-pandemic the ratio of full time equivalent (FTE) staff: desk ratio was 7:10. Current ratios are being reviewed service by service. It is also worth understanding that staff are at a workstation as much as they ever were, just these are not in offices as much as they were. Very few staff have a fixed desk as such. Those who might be mainly in an office can also be in meetings or other activities away from a desk.

We are looking into more hybrid ways of working, which is necessary for several reasons, including the need to be an attractive employer given the recruitment and retention challenges we are dealing with. Regular supervision between staff and their line managers is routine, irrespective of where and how staff work, and we have policies for dealing with performance.

6 Cllr P Redstone

Question

When will B4B live up to its name? I attended a governors meeting earlier this week and the headteacher yet again had to report B4B had yet again failed to deliver. This business system is 100% over budget and still failing to deliver a best for business.

Response

It was debated in Corporate Policy Committee, cross party discussion and a mop up one day lessons learned session was held. I am aware of some of the problems experienced by schools, and I know that there is a special care package put in place to assist schools with that so rather than a written reply I might refer you to the papers from corporate policy committee.

Officers have been working directly with the headteacher to address specific issues and will continue to be available to help through the senior named contacts already provided.

The Corporate Policy Committee on 6 October 2022 considered a detailed report on the Lesson Learned from the Best4Business Programme. It concluded that programme largely achieved the outcomes agreed by Members of Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils when the programme was commissioned in 2016. It also concluded that there are important lessons to learn for any future complex, multi-year change programmes involving numerous organisations, including around the procurement of such projects. For ease the report can be found here:

<http://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=959&MIId=9260&Ver=4>

The B4B Programme has now been formally closed. The day-to-day transactional services, including payroll, are run by the Transactional Services Centre, as a shared service run by Cheshire West and Chester Council on behalf of both councils.

7 Cllr A Kolker

Question

To the leader - In 2019 in your election manifesto you promised the people of Cheshire East that you would abolish rubble charges although I can see that you have kept this promise in Congleton by abolishing the entire tip I ask when you are going to honour this promise to the rest of the Borough?

Written Response:

Earlier this year the Government undertook a consultation seeking views on preventing households being charged for the disposal of DIY waste and seeking evidence on the impact of booking systems at household waste recycling centres. The Council is awaiting publication of the outcome of the consultation. Future household waste and recycling centre provision is to be reviewed by a working group established by the Environment and Communities.

11 Cllr M Beanland

Question

In light of the massacre of trees around Poynton pool I was reminded that there is/was a draft bio -diversity net gain SPD that was published for consultation by Cheshire East in the period May 2021 – June 2021 the final version of the document is yet to be published - when will document be published?

Written Response

The first Draft Biodiversity Net gain SPD was published in May 2021 and provides guidance on how Cheshire East would apply policies within its

development plan. The guidance is specifically related to policy SE3 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' of the Local Plan Strategy and policies ENV1 'Ecological Network' and ENV2 'Ecological Implementation' of the then draft Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD).

Supplementary Planning Documents provide guidance on how policies in the development plan should be applied and in this case, two of the key policies the SPD provides advice on are held in part two of the Council's local plan, the SADPD.

The examination of the SADPD took place in November 2021 and the Council has recently received the Inspectors report which concludes that, subject to minor modifications, the SADPD is a sound plan and may be adopted.

Through the examination process it was possible the Inspector would modify policies that the BNG SPD sought to provide further guidance on, and indeed, both policies ENV1 and ENV2 have been the subject of modification. Therefore it has been necessary to await the inspectors findings in order to proceed to the final draft of the document. Further, because of its reliance on policies in the SADPD, the final draft version of the BNG SPD cannot be adopted until after the SADPD has been adopted itself. Therefore, proceeding ahead of the SADPD timetable has not been possible.

Receipt of the Inspectors report means the adoption of the SADPD will now be considered by Council in December. Subject to adoption of the SADPD, the final version of the BNG SPD may be published for consultation.

13 Councillor Naismith

Question

I strongly welcome the prospect of Cheshire archives being co-hosted in Crewe in the History Centre; however, I have been approached by a number of residents who would have preferred to see the existing building repurposed rather than demolition and a complete rebuild. Can the chair of Economy & Growth committee advise on whether a full options appraisal was carried out at the outset of this project and on what basis was it decided that repurposing was not the preferred option? Has the cost of the demolition changed because of recent inflationary pressures?

Written Response

The reuse of the existing library building - unfortunately the building is one of its age and constructed using methods of its time. the option of repurposing it was originally included in the appraisal however it was found not to be fit for purpose in both economic and practical terms.

The other building being used will be in Chester Building. It will be used to store items and documents that are over a thousand years old, in a very

sensitive environmentally controlled building. The building was assessed in a practical sense as not being capable of carrying the weight of the archives, that would be moving to Crewe. That is why the repurposing option was not accepted.

Costs – figures of retail price inflation are 10.1% at the moment. We know that in the construction industry that is probably higher still. The project is within budget estimate because we will be relying upon national lottery funding as match funding to deliver this with ourselves and Cheshire West and Chester Council. Cost plans have been completed to RIBA3 stage and these are within budget. That includes significant allowances for inflation (taking account of the higher than normal BICS inflation rate that tracks the construction indices) and with significant 'client risk' allowances on top. Clearly, we cannot accurately address cost until the project is tendered, but we do feel that sufficient allowances have been made at this stage to give a good measure of confidence. The cost plan for part of the scheme (related to the public realm) has also been externally verified as part of the Towns Fund bid to Government.