

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Adults and Health Committee**
held on Friday, 2nd February, 2024 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor J Rhodes (Chair)
Councillor A Moran (Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Adams, C Bulman, D Clark, J Clowes, N Cook, D Edwardes,
M Edwards, S Gardiner, A Kolker, J Place and L Wardlaw

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Shelley Brough, Acting Director of Commissioning, and Integration
Jill Broomhall, Direct of Adult Social Care
Helen Charlesworth-May, Executive Director Adults, Health, and Integration
Karen Shuker, Democratic Services Officer
Dr Matt Tyrer, Director of Public Health
Janet Witkowski, Head of legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Nikki Wood-Hill, Lead Finance Business Partner

51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Burton. Councillor
C Bulman attended as a substitute.

52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

53 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2024 be approved as a
correct record.

54 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

Mr Steve Nichols attended the Committee meeting on behalf of the Rossendale
Trust, to speak in relation to item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy
Consultation 2024/25 - 2027/28 Provisional Settlement Update. Mr Nichols
requested that care providers receive the appropriate level of financial support in
respect of Cheshire East Council's 2024 - 25 budget setting process. The
Rossendale Trust and other care providers has a special relationship with
Cheshire East Council with 86% of service users located in Cheshire East and
without the financial security of large businesses with a wider geographic
disposition this made the Trust particularly vulnerable to the low fees paid by the
Council.

The cumulative underfunding over the past five years was having a detrimental effect on sustainability which made it difficult to do any meaningful future planning.

The Wirral and the Cheshire West and Chester Councils were consulting providers on provisional 24 - 25 supportive living rates which were higher rates for both day and night compared to Cheshire East. Mr Nichols stated that the local authority paid significantly different rates and was unjustifiable and the markets were not fully comparable.

The impact of the demise of Rossendale Trust on its staff and service users was unthinkable. As well as placing a huge burden on the Council's social care teams, the reputational risk to Cheshire East Council would be massive. Mr Nichols asked if the Council had the financial resources and manpower to meet the CQC regulations if the Trust was to fail. Cheshire East's strategy of underfunding their complex care and supported living providers in comparison to both surrounding local authorities and its own care home and domiciliary care rates, is putting all of this at extreme risk.

Mr Nichols asked the Council to address the unfair strategy before the 24-25 budget was set in stone.

Mr Jeff Dawson attended the Committee meeting on behalf of 1st Enable, to speak in relation to item 5 - Medium Term Financial Strategy Consultation 2024/25 - 2027/28 Provisional Settlement Update. Mr Dawson requested that care providers receive the appropriate level of financial support with regards to the 2024 and 2025 budget.

Mr Dawson described the very positive relationship they had with the Council, in particular with the commissioning contracts, legal and social work teams. The support previously given was outlined and there was a willingness to do whatever they could for its local authority colleagues.

Mr Dawson expressed his concerns in respect of all Councils and the NHS feeling the same pressures therefore it was no longer appropriate or viable for them to continue to subsidize the work they do in Cheshire East for much longer.

The organisation was recruiting, managing and training staff whilst waiting for the Council to come good on previous conversations had in respect of services being put on an equal footing for those local authorities, with almost identical or even demographically less challenging conditions in supplying safe, responsive, well led effective and caring support, a pre requisite for maintaining their regulatory duties.

In response, the Executive Director for Adults, Health and Integration thanked Mr Nichols and Mr Dawson for attending and acknowledged the work that care providers do and how valued that work was. Officers would be in touch to discuss the 2024-25 budget and how a negotiated position could be reached, although it was emphasised that Cheshire East Council would not be able to match the rates that were being paid by Cheshire West and Chester and Greater Manchester.

55 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY CONSULTATION 2024/25 - 2027/28 PROVISIONAL SETTLEMENT UPDATE (ADULTS & HEALTH COMMITTEE)

The Committee received a report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2024/25 – 2027/28 and the revenue and capital proposals contained within the MTFS relating to the Committee's responsibilities. As part of the consultation process the Committee was asked to provide comments and feedback to the Corporate Policy Committee on proposals related to the responsibilities of the committee.

It was reported that the High-Level Business Cases would be presented at the Corporate Policy Committee on the 13 of February.

The Committee asked questions and provided comments in relation to the proposals, summarised below:

- Pay Inflation – The Committee noted that a 3% increase had been used for the 2024/25 forecast compared to 2023/24 where a 5% figure had been forecasted. It was stated that the final pay award allocated for 2023/24 was 7.5%. Officers confirmed that the 3% increase had been agreed across all Service Committees.
- National Minimum Wage –members queried if enough growth had been invested into the service as the impact of national living wage increase would particularly impact the staff within the Adults and Health Committee remit. Officers reported that around £2.5m growth would be available to cover unexpected pricing expenditure during 2024/25, however the estimated costs of implementing the national minimum wage across the Directorate was £5-7m.
- Risk Management - Members acknowledged the precarious financial position of the local authority and queried what the major risks facing the service were. Officers stated that the key risks included: implementation of the national minimum wage, the number of young people transitioning from children's to adults through the SEND process, and the increasing activity taking place in the NHS and the subsequent impact this had on adult social care.
- Members noted that the service provision responsibilities placed upon the Adults and Childrens Committees significantly impacted individuals across the borough. Members queried whether there had been adequate encouragement across all committees for savings to be identified that related to more generic services, that did not specifically impact on individuals. Officers confirmed that the Corporate Leadership Team, through CEBERT, were taking all necessary steps to identify savings across all committees.

A list of additional budget proposals put forward by the Conservative Group were circulated to the Committee. The proposals included:

(ai) Identify and evaluate Cheshire East Council assets and their potential as short, medium and longer-term care provisions to reduce the Borough's dependency on out of area providers for high-cost adult social care and health

provisions. This dovetailed with similar proposals discussed with the Children and Families Committee on 31.01.24.

(aii) High Level Business Cases (HLBC) should be developed to progress activity for future provision.

(aiii) A clear schedule for the short, medium and longer-term development of appropriate sites must be included in the Work Programme for Economy and Growth, Adult Social Care and Health Committees, with clear KPIs and Project Management oversight throughout the life of the projects.

(bi) That the committee requests that the Corporate Policy Committee work collaboratively with the Adults and Health Committee to explore the establishment of a Cheshire East Social Workers / Care Workers Agency to be included under the Workforce Strategy (Retention and Recruitment).

(bii) To provide a cost savings analysis over 2024/25 with a view to bring forward for consideration as part of the 2025/26 MTFs proposals.

It was proposed and seconded that the proposals in Appendix 1 and the Conservative Group proposals be recommended to the Corporate Policy Committee for inclusion in the Council's budget for 2024/25.

RESOLVED: (By Majority)

That the Adults and Health Committee

1. Recommend to the Corporate Policy Committee, for their meeting on 13 February 2024, all proposals within the budget consultation, as related to the Committee's responsibilities, for inclusion in the Council's budget for 2024/25.
2. Agree that the additional proposals from the Conservative Group be recommended to the Corporate Policy Committee for inclusion in the Council's budget proposals for 2024/25.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.01 pm

Councillor J Rhodes (Chair)