

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**
held on Monday, 13th January, 2014 at The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)

Councillors S Corcoran, H Davenport, W Fitzgerald, R West, J Wray and
K Edwards (substitute)

Apologies

Councillor D Newton
Gill Kelly

80 ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Peter Raynes – Finance Portfolio Holder
Councillor Peter Mason – Cabinet Support Member

81 OFFICERS PRESENT

Lorraine Butcher – Executive Director of Strategic Commissioning
Peter Bates – Chief Operating Officer
Brenda Smith – Director Adult Social care and Independent Living
Stephanie Cordon – Head of Communities
Tony Crane – Director of Children's Services
Caroline Simpson – Director Economic Growth and Prosperity
Peter Hartwell – Head of Public Protection and Enforcement
Kevin Melling – Head of Highways and Transport
Alex Thompson – Finance lead – Strategy and Funding
Jo Wilcox – Corporate Finance Lead
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

82 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2013 be
confirmed as a correct record.

83 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

84 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of the existence of a party whip.

85 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

86 PRE -BUDGET CONSULTATION 2014/15

The committee considered the 2014/15 pre-budget report.

The report highlighted the main proposals in the budget for 2014/15 and the context for the financial challenges for the future. The strategy supported the Council's priorities in the three year plan agreed by Council in February 2013. The report also set out the engagement plan for the current budget setting process.

The Chief Operating Officer informed the committee that the Council was in a strong financial position. The report stressed however, that the Council still faced challenging circumstances during the next year and the future. The Council's ambition was to continue to improve services and to provide better outcomes for local people within appropriate funding levels.

The report proposed:

- Maintaining reserves at a prudent level that protected vital services and managed cash flow during the transformation of services;
- Accepting the Government Offer of a Council tax freeze grant;
- Allocating £17.5 million to support more vulnerable residents through continuation of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme;
- No external borrowing, but to utilise up to £37 million of the Council's resources to support planned Capital expenditure in 2014/15

The committee then heard from each Head of Service in the following order:

Children and Families

Positive steps had been made and were continuing to be made in reducing the number of cared for children, and in particular in reducing the number of out of borough placements. This had reduced the Council's costs considerably and provided better outcomes for children. Additionally, better partnership working, particularly with health colleagues was producing efficiencies and this coupled with extra efficiencies expected through improved commissioning was expected to drive down costs further. Transport costs were under review as fewer children were now in care, it was expected that savings could be delivered. The Council was particularly pushing forward the initiative to develop further independent travel training for those with Special Education or Social needs.

Adult Social Care

The key theme within adult social care was the need to provide more for less. The Council had ambitious plans to stimulate the social care market in order to ensure that the market was able to respond to individual need to provide conditions whereby more people would take up direct payments in respect of personalised budgets. The Council would be realigning its commissioning plans in order to collaborate more effectively with health partners and would be

reviewing its funding commitments, for example, in respect of intermediate/transitional care beds. The impacts of the new Care Bill were still being analysed.

Environmental Protection and Enhancement

Two major change projects had been highlighted within this directorate to provide significant savings as part of the Councils' drive to introduce arms length delivery vehicles. These were bereavement services and ANSA (waste fleet management and grounds maintenance and mechanical street sweeping play areas, trees drainage etc)

There had been a significant amount of pothole repairs undertaken during the current financial year. This has resulted in a major improvement in the condition of the highway. New arrangements for the treatment for potholes had enabled the Council to ensure that the unit cost of repairs had been driven down, which meant that more could be repaired. The need for a waste transfer station in the north of the borough was highlighted and that this may require significant capital investment in order realise subsequent revenue savings.

Note: At this point in the proceedings there was a 10 minute adjournment and the Committee reconvened at 11.56

Public Protection and Environment

Ambitious targets to make savings and improve the leisure offer for Cheshire residents were being pursued through the creation of the Leisure Trust. Particular emphasis would also be given to enforcement with an overriding aim to increase compliance rather than generating additional income through enforcement fees.

Local Communities

This relatively new service for the Council had an overarching aim to help communities to become stronger and less reliant on public services and to improve delivery and targeting of services with partner organisations. Savings could be made by business improvement and efficiency without any adverse impact on the Council's customers and additional savings would be made through renegotiation of concessionary travel contracts which was expected to produce 16% reduction in the Councils' costs.

Economic Growth and Prosperity

A growth item of £130,000 had been included in 2014/15 to fund a new investment team to tap into the government's announcement that £2 billion funding would be available through a bidding process to ensure that Cheshire East was at the forefront of investment opportunities. In addition a growth item of £350,000 had been added to increase the capacity of the planning department in the run up to the finalisation of the local plan process. On the back of this, there would be ambitious targets to achieve additional planning fee income, and in respect of asset rationalisation and disposal, to increase the Council's Capital receipts. In addition, the Council's subsidy to Tatton Park would be reduced because of the success of the new commercial arrangements. Additional savings were expected in phase 3 of the management review.

Corporate

A range of proposals were considered around innovative financing of the capital programme, improving procurement arrangements, productivity and effectiveness of delivering central services. The cost base for central services was already around 20% lower than the average for English Unitary Authority.

A brief insight was provided into the future capital programme arrangements which would be designed to improve planning and clearly classify commitments, stages of development and affordability.

RESOLVED -

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That senior managers be thanked for their attendance at today's meeting.

87 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee reviewed its work programme.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 1.45 pm

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)