

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
held on Tuesday, 2nd December, 2014 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)
Councillor B Murphy (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors G Baxendale, M Grant, P Groves, F Keegan, P Hoyland,
W Livesley and A Moran

Apologies

Councillors D Neilson, J Saunders and M Simon

10 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 November be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11 ALSO PRESENT

Also Present

Councillor Peter Raynes – Finance Portfolio Holder
Councillor Peter Mason – Deputy Cabinet Member
Councillor Sam Corcoran

12 OFFICERS PRESENT

Peter Bates – Chief Operating Officer
Caroline Simpson – Director of Economic Growth and Prosperity
Steve Reading – Principal Accounting

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of the existence of a party whip

15 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

Peter Yates from Macclesfield attended the meeting and addressed the committee regarding the report in today's agenda regarding the revised approval process for the Local plan.

Mr Yates informed the committee that he had attended many sessions during the recent examination of the local plan and had personally made a number of submissions to the plan inspector.

He felt that the report on today's agenda which purported to provide a summary of the inspectors recent announcement on the suspension of the local plan process, did not in his opinion, accurately reflect the inspectors position and by way of illustration quoted a number of extracts from the inspectors statement.

He contended that as the Council would now have to revisit the building blocks of the local plan, i.e. Housing, Jobs and Green belt, the Council was faced with a decision as to whether to abandon the plan and start again, or amend the existing plan, with the risk that if the changes were considered by the Inspector to be significant, the plan could be rejected.

He also suggested that there had to be some provision for the public to comment especially if significant changes were proposed.

16 BUDGET SETTING PROCESS 2015/16 - UPDATE

Councillor Sam Corcoran attended the meeting and addressed the committee in respect of this matter.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Operating Officer on the pre-budget report.

The Budget setting process for 2015/16 had followed a four stage process of:

- Set parameters
- Gather evidence and develop proposals
- Consult and refine
- Approve

The Council was currently in the consult and refine stage. This Committee had a role in co-ordinating any comments made on the pre-budget process from the other 5 themed Overview and Scrutiny committees with a view to a formal response on the draft budget being made at a specially convened meeting of this committee due to be held on 20 January 2015.

In response to a question about the detailed Children Services budget, the Finance Portfolio holder suggested that more detailed discussion should be held at the Children's Families and Adult Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny committee in the presence of the Director of Children's services.

In response to a further question about the status of the Council tax freeze grant which the Council intended to accept ensuring that the Council tax remained at 2014/15 levels, the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that the grant had now been added to the base budget by the Government for future years.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That the process for the setting of the 2015/16 budget as set out in the report be supported;
- (c) That individual Overview and Scrutiny committees be reminded to feed that any comments on the budget that they may wish to make should be referred to this Committee in order that they could be forwarded to the Chief Operating Officer prior to the Christmas break.

17 LOCAL PLAN - REVIEW OF REVISED APPROVAL PROCESS

The committee considered a report of Adrian Fisher the Head of Strategic and economic Planning Adrian Fisher explaining that in light of the Inspectors interim views on the Local plan Strategy, the Council now had a choice of either suspending the examination or withdrawing the plan.

In support of the report, Adrian gave a presentation which proposed four work streams to address the concerns set out in the Inspectors Interim views dated 6 November 2014. Each of the work streams would be supported by a detailed project brief and specific timetable.

The four work streams were:

- Alignment of Employment and Housing Strategy
- Objectively Assessed need and Housing Requirement
- Updated green belt assessment
- Spatial Distribution

At the present time, the committee was informed that suspension appeared to provide the better approach, but would necessitate significant additional work to be undertaken.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and presentation be received;
- (b) That the committee welcomes the efforts of the portfolio holder and officers in producing the plan;
- (c) That a further report be submitted to this committee in due course on further detailed on the work streams, plans for consultation and timescales etc.

18 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee reviewed its work programme.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That the item relating to Digital Customer Services be dealt with at the 2 February 2015 meeting of the committee.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 4.40 pm

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)