

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Jobs, Regeneration and Assets Overview and Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 12th March, 2015 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor P Groves (Chairman)
Councillor F Keegan (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors G Barton, S Corcoran, S Hogben, J Wray and W Livesley (sub for J Weatherill)

Apologies

Councillor J Weatherill

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor D Stockton – Cabinet Member for Housing and Jobs
John Weir – Cheshire Neighbours Credit Union
Jez Goodman – Regeneration Programme Manager (Crewe)
Chris Jackson – Senior Projects Officer, Regeneration
Sharon Angus Crawshaw – Partnerships Manager
Heather McManus – Interim Head of Assets
Glyn Roberts – Property Projects Manager
James Morley – Scrutiny Officer

1 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman requested that the Committee note the sad passing of Councillor Phil Hoyland who had died suddenly on Wednesday 11 March 2015. Councillor Hoyland was a well liked and respected councillor and the Committee deeply regretted his passing and wished to send its condolences to his family.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

- (1) That minute 32 at fifth bullet point the word “did” be replaced with “did not”.
- (2) That minute 33 at fourth paragraph the words “the report” be inserted after “complete”.
- (3) That minute 35 at the first paragraph the third sentence be removed.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

4 DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of party whip

5 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

6 INITIAL RESPONSE TO HIGH GROWTH CITY TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT

Councillor D Stockton, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Jobs, provided an initial response to the Committee's High Growth City Task and Finish Group Report by thanking the task group for a well presented piece of work. A further full response to the Report would be requested and received at a future meeting in the new civic year.

7 ALL CHANGE FOR CREWE

The Committee gave consideration to an update on projects in the "All Change for Crewe" regeneration programme. Councillor D Stockton, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Jobs, and Jez Goodman, Regeneration Programme Manager for Crewe, gave a presentation about the various projects and initiatives which were currently taking place or being developed in Crewe. During the presentation the following points were made:

- A new entrance to the rail station had been developed last year on Weston Road with additional parking and taxi drop off reducing congestion on Nantwich Road.
- A new entrance and facilities, including operating theatres, had been completed at Leighton Hospital replacing some facilities which had been in place since 1971 when the hospital opened.
- Wulvern Housing had delivered 180 affordable homes through the affordable homes programme to date. The Council and its partners were prioritising the development of brownfield sites.
- Crewe Lifestyle Centre was currently under construction and would house a wide range of leisure and community facilities.
- Over recent months there had been a growth of many local businesses and there were a lot of strong expansion and investment opportunities under investigation.
- Last summer the Government had approved a bid for a new university technical college (UTC) in Crewe, based in the town centre, led by Manchester Metropolitan University, the Council and local businesses.
- Physical regeneration of the town centre was a high priority and a regeneration delivery framework was being developed to link the Local Plan with local commercial market requirements. It was suggested that the Committee be consulted on the delivery framework at the appropriate opportunity.

- The Council was continuing to pursue opportunities for geothermal energy in Crewe and was attracting interest from utility companies and financial investors.
- There were several major infrastructure projects either underway or planned for the near future including: Basford Way spine road; Crewe Green link road; M6 J16 and A500 widening; and M6 J17.
- In December Bentley Motors had announced large scale expansion of its Crewe site which would create hundreds of jobs including a new apprenticeship training facility.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted

8 UPDATE FROM CHESHIRE NEIGHBOURS CREDIT UNION

The Committee received an update on the recent activity of Cheshire Neighbours Credit Union (CNCU). John Weir, Chief Executive Officer, at CNCU attended the meeting with support from Sharon Angus-Crawshaw, Partnerships Manager. John informed the Committee about the progress being made by CNCU and some of the issues it was facing. During the discussion the following points were made:

- The Council had provided a £60,000 grant to CNCU which helped cover its running costs until September 2015 avoiding the closure of the credit union.
- Members were aware that CNCU would require some further financial support in the next year however wanted to ensure that the Council's investment was worth while. The Committee requested that CNCU share its business case to explain how it planned to become financially sustainable and independent.
- CNCU had been continuing to try and rebuild its reputation and develop new relationship with partners and customers following poor performance in the past.
- Income from loans was increasing per month and arrears on the loan book were low at 1.6-1.7% (some other credit unions in the country typically had 20-30% arrears).
- Membership of the credit union was growing steadily. Gaining access to the Council's libraries had helped increase the profile of CNCU, particularly in Macclesfield where it had previously had a limited profile with residents.
- Crewe Town Council had taken £15,000 of shares in CNCU.
- The use of Jam Jar Accounts was growing slowly. The credit union was trying to build relationships with housing associations to encourage their tenants to use jam jar accounts to help manage their money and pay rent. This was considered particularly useful with the introduction of universal credit.
- The payroll deduction scheme was also growing slowly. The credit union was taking £58,000 per month from employees at Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils; the target was to reach £100,000 per month to help secure the future of the credit union. CNCU was also developing relationships with local businesses to join the pay roll deduction scheme.

- The credit union had recruited two new board members with a wealth of skills and experience who would help achieve further growth and stability.
- There had been some interest from care leavers in having a credit union account however limited progress had been made with officers to complete the process. The Committee was requested to investigate how more progress could be made.
- The credit union wanted to make more progress recruit young people to become members. Members heard about a scheme called Future Savers, set up by Glasgow City Council, which provided a credit union membership, with a £10 deposit to all school pupils in S1 (year 8 equivalent). It was suggested that the Council should consider implementing a similar scheme for all year 7 pupils in the Borough each year. It was estimated that this would cost the Council £10,000 per year however would encourage young pupil to learn about finance and savings.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the update be noted
- (b) That a further update be received in July 2015 including a briefing on CNCU's business case

9 STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

Glyn Roberts, Property Projects Manager, and Heather McManus, Interim Head of Assets, attended the meeting to discuss the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP). The objective of the SAMP was to ensure that assets contributed to meeting the Council's corporate priorities and set out the Council's needs in the medium term. The SAMP was a detailed plan developed with the support of external consultants.

Members asked questions and commented about the SAMP and the following points arose:

- Assets were the second highest cost to the Council, following employee costs, and the SAMP was designed to help minimise costs by changing the way assets were used and improving service delivery.
- The SAMP was also designed to support economic growth in the Borough by utilising the Council's assets in the best possible way.
- It was acknowledged that there were some gaps in data available to aid decision making and these would need to be filled to ensure information published about assets was accurate and transparent. It was suggested that the strategy should be clear about what data is being referred to where it is incomplete.
- It was suggested that housing associations be added to the list of partners contained in the strategy. This was accepted.
- Approximately 80% of assets and land were registered with 20% still to be registered and would take some time to complete. The Committee agreed that ward councillors should be provided with all

information about land and assets owned by the Council in their area to enable them to communicate effectively with residents.

- The system for establishing whether an asset was surplus to requirements was complicated. Consideration had to be given to whether any asset which might be considered surplus could fulfil any other strategic purpose before being disposed of.
- The Council was investing in flexible working systems and technology to enable staff to work from any location. Desk/Staff ratio was being reduced to 7:10 to reduce the number of desk and ensure optimum use of corporate office buildings. It was explained that in order to achieve the goals the desk/staff ratio had to be strictly adhered to. Members expressed some concerns that a one size fits all approach to desks may not be the best way for some services to work.

RESOLVED

(a) That the Strategic Asset Management Plan be noted.

(b) That the Committee requests an update on the implementation of the Atrium System be provided at a future meeting.

10 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee gave consideration to the work programme and was asked to recommend some key items which should be taken forward into the new civic year. The following items were suggested:

- Crewe Regeneration Delivery Framework
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Business Engagement
- Cheshire East Engine of the North
- Macclesfield Town Centre

RESOLVED – That the work programme be updated as discussed.

The meeting commenced at 2.05 pm and concluded at 4.00 pm

Councillor P Groves (Chairman)