

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet Member for Finance**
held on Wednesday, 3rd December, 2014 in the Fred Flint Room, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor P Raynes.

Councillors in attendance:

Councillors S Corcoran and D Newton.

Officers in attendance:

Adrian Fisher – Head of Strategic And Economic Planning

Cherry Foreman – Democratic Services Officer

22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

24 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

No members of the public were present.

25 CHESHIRE EAST LOCAL PLAN STRATEGY - EXAMINATION SUSPENSION

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report and explained that, in the 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.

He reported that the Council had published its Local Plan Strategy in March 2014; the Examination Hearings opened in September and had been adjourned on 4 October to allow for the consideration of material linked to strategic sites. The Inspector had used the period of adjournment to provide his interim views on matters considered in the first three weeks of hearings.

Whilst there were areas he considered to be satisfactory the Inspector had raised concerns in respect of four areas, these being the Councils objective assessment of housing needs, justification of the spatial distribution of development, the need to review the LPS to ensure the economic strategy within it was realistic, and the need for further work on the Councils approach to the Green Belt.

As is common in such situations the Council had been given three options i.e. to carry on, with the clear implication that the Plan would subsequently be found to be unsound; to suspend the examination and undertake further work; or to withdraw the Plan. Of these the first had already been rejected. Each of the remaining options had different risks and implications, the details of which were detailed in the report. It was considered that suspension was the preferred option; six months was the usual period of time for such a suspension meaning there was a lot to do and only a limited time in which to do it.

It was reported that the Council was currently seeking clarification from the Inspector on the programme of work needed and on certain aspects of his interim views and, once a response on these matters had been received, a request to suspend would be made. In the meantime work had been commissioned on the areas highlighted by the Inspector as that work would be needed whichever option was decided upon as the initial steps for both suspension and withdrawal were much the same.

It was reported that delays in the adoption of local plans were relatively common place and, of the 41 Local Plans submitted in 2013, only 19 had been adopted so far and they usually took at least 12 month to reach completion. The reasons for the Plans not being successful were varied but it was reported the most common reason related to objectively assessed need; since the Plan for CEC had been published in March 2014 further official guidance had been published on the way in which that work should be done. In addition a number of relevant studies and key cases been published and these would now provide useful additional guidance. The influence of the Green Belt was discussed and Members welcomed the involvement of external consultants and accreditors of the evidence produced.

A credible work plan was needed to show the review would have a chance of success and this had been fully reviewed at the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee the previous day.

RESOLVED

1. That Inspector Stephen Pratt be requested to suspend the Local Plan Strategy Examination to enable further supporting work to be undertaken to address the concerns he expressed in his Interim Views.
2. That, in accordance with section 20(7C) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Inspector be asked to recommend any Main Modifications to the Local Plan Strategy which he considers to be appropriate.
3. That the precise timing of the requests be delegated to the Head of Strategic & Economic Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, so as to take proper account of the clarification which has been sought from the Inspector.

The meeting commenced at 10.10 am and concluded at 10.45 am