

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held on Thursday, 8th April, 2021

PRESENT

Councillor J Clowes (Chair)
Councillor B Murphy (Vice-Chair)

Councillors I Macfarlane, C Bulman, JP Findlow, R Fletcher, H Faddes, D Edwardes, J Saunders, M Simon, R Vernon and L Wardlaw

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor L Crane, Vice-Chair of the Highways and Transport Committee
Councillor K Flavell, Chair of the Children and Families Committee
Councillor T Fox
Councillor M Houston, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor J Rhodes, Chair of the Adults and Health Committee
Councillor A Stott, Chair of the Finance Sub Committee; Vice-Chair of the Corporate Policy Committee

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services
Jacky Forster, Director of Education and 14-19 Skills
Richard Hibbert
Frank Jordan, Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Place
Kevin Melling, Head of Environmental Protection and Enhancement
Gareth Pawlett, ICT Manager
Andrew Ross, Director of Infrastructure and Highways
Alex Thompson, Director of Financial and Customer Services

* Attended for Minute No. 77 only

** Attended for Minute No. 84 only

70 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Q Abel (substituted for by Councillor I Macfarlane), M Hunter (substituted for by Councillor H Faddes), and A Moran (substituted for by Councillor D Edwardes).

71 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 March 2021, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

72 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

73 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of a party whip.

74 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

75 COVID-19 UPDATE

Consideration was given to the Cabinet (13 April 2021) Covid-19 Update report, which provided an update on the work undertaken by the council to respond to, and recover from, the Covid-19 pandemic. It also provided detail on how the forthcoming Covid-19 Roadmap change on 12 April would impact Cheshire East, as well as the ongoing financial implications faced by the council.

The committee's questions focused on how the council had managed the ongoing financial implications of the pandemic, with particular attention paid to the implications to the Leisure Services Commissioning Budget; the payments made by the council (through its own budget and through designated grant funding, and whether there were any additional financial implications expected in respect of leisure services.

RESOLVED –

That the update be received and noted.

76 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM

Consideration was given to a report outlining the financial implications of the incoming committee system form of governance. Members asked questions and put comments in relation to;

- concern regarding the report taken to the Constitution Committee (6 April 2021) noting that full council meetings would be restricted to three hours, with an option to extend to four hours at the most;
- that no modelling exercises had been undertaken to accurately assess the potential cost implications of operating the committee system; and
- what was considered to be 'affordable' and what evidence there was that the committee system plans had kept within that affordability.

RESOLVED –

- 1 That the report and its recommendations be noted.
- 2 That the committee's concerns and reservations that the report lacked the fiscal data it had expected to receive and scrutinise.

77 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S ICT INFRASTRUCTURE SPEND

The committee gave consideration to a report on the council's spend in relation to ICT infrastructure and whether cost value had been achieved. Members noted that the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic revealed that this council, like all other organisations/authorities, needed to be up to date with its ICT infrastructure and equipment.

RESOLVED –

- 1 That the update be noted.
- 2 The committee extended thanks and appreciation to the council's ICT Service for its excellent work in supporting members and officers to quickly transition to new ways of working following Covid-19.

78 REFRESHED EQUALITY OBJECTIVES AND EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY 2021-25

The committee gave consideration to the council's refreshed Equality Objectives and proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-25. The committee was positive and supportive of the Strategy and some members noted that it included and achieved exactly what they hoped it would.

The Chairman gave thanks to Councillor M Houston, Cheshire East Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion, as well as Councillors S Gardiner and P Redstone, for their contributions to the development of this Strategy.

RESOLVED –

That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse and support the refreshed Equality Objectives and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-25.

79 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

The committee received a report outlining progress made against the recommendations in the council's Corporate Peer Challenge, one year following its undertaking in January 2020. Members of the committee asked questions and put comments in relation to;

- the concerns raised about the council's transition to the committee system and it adopting a single Scrutiny Committee, and that it would have been helpful for the report to provide more detail to elaborate on this;
- the hard work undertaken by the council and its elected members to develop and operate effective partnership and/or community arrangements during the response and recovery from Covid-19;
- this being a valuable exercise for the council to undertake, and hoped that it would form part of the council's ongoing self-evaluation process;

- how invest-to-save strategies could have been used more prominently in the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021-25; and
- welcoming the newly-adopted Customer Experience Strategy and ensuring residents' queries, concerns and issues are prioritised.

RESOLVED –

That the report be received and the committee's comments be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 13 April 2021.

80 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE SCORECARD - QUARTER 3, 2020/21

Consideration was given to performance data related to Corporate Services for the third quarter period of 2020/21. Some of the key areas noted and discussed included FOI responses rates, staff sickness rates, apprenticeships, and numbers of agency staff employed.

RESOLVED –

That the report be received and noted.

81 UPDATE FROM THE (BEST4BUSINESS) JOINT SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

The committee received a verbal update from Councillor JP Findlow on the recent activity/work of the (Best4Business) Joint Scrutiny Working Group with Cheshire West and Chester Council. At its most recent meeting on 18 February 2021, the Group reviewed the roll-out of 'Go-Live 1' and received an update on the progress with 'Go-Live 2'.

The Group had agreed to hold two further meetings, the first to review the roll-out of 'Go-Live 2' and the last to undertake a post-implementation review of the programme to capture lessons learned.

RESOLVED –

That the update be received and noted.

82 TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT - MEMBERS' FACILITIES, ACCOMMODATION AND CULTURE

The committee gave consideration to the report of the Members' Facilities, Accommodation and Culture Task and Finish Group. Members discussed the findings and recommendations put forward in the report and suggested that positive actions could be made on the back of it.

The committee discussed how the report and its recommendations could be progressed in order for it to be dealt with and recognised in the most effective manner. The Chairman proposed that the report be referred to Cabinet on 4 May 2021 for it to consider and formally refer the recommendations to the appropriate body within the committee system.

RESOLVED –

- 1 That the report and its recommendations be welcomed, and the current and former members and officers be thanked for their contributions to this piece of work.
- 2 That the report and its recommendations be referred to Cabinet on 4 May 2021 for it to consider and formally refer the recommendations to the appropriate body within the committee system.

83 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item pursuant to Section 100(a)4 of the Local Government Act 1972, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

84 ASDV REVIEW

The committee considered a report on the council's ASDV Review. Members raised a number of questions and comments in relation to the agenda papers and supplementary presentations provided at the meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the committee supports the draft recommendations for Cabinet (4 May 2021), but notes the need for additional assurance in respect of financial monitoring and assurance that the proposed model presents the best solution to deliver the intended benefits and outcomes and that suitable ongoing monitoring arrangements would be put in place.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 7.15 pm

Councillor J Clowes (Chair)