

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Policy Committee**
held on Thursday, 6th October, 2022 in the Committee Suite 1, 2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)
Councillor A Stott (Vice-Chair)

Councillors C Bulman (for Cllr Flavell), J Clowes, J P Findlow, S Gardiner,
A Martin, N Mannion, A Moran (for Cllr Browne), K Parkinson, J Rhodes,
M Warren and P Williams

Officers in attendance

Lorraine O'Donnell, Chief Executive
Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services
Helen Charlesworth May, Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration
David Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance
Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services
Sarah Bullock, Director of Policy and Change
Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise
Gareth Pawlett, Chief Information Officer
Josie Griffiths, Head of Audit and Risk
Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services and Governance
Dan Coyne, Head of Communities and Integration
Martin Smith, Registration and Civic Services Manager
Paul Mountford, Democratic Services

Apologies

Councillors C Browne and K Flavell

25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors J Clowes, A Moran and J Rhodes each declared in interest in an item on the agenda relating to the appointment of representatives to the Health and Care Partnership Board as they were expecting to be appointed to the Board. They each indicated that they would leave the meeting whilst the matter was considered and would return upon its conclusion.

Councillor A Moran declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in an item on the agenda relating to the 'Fight for Middlewich' petition on the grounds that he was a Director of ANSA. The Monitoring Officer advised that a dispensation within the Councillor Code of Conduct allowed councillors who were Directors of Council-owned ASDVs to remain present, take part in the debate and vote in relation to an item in which they had a

disclosable pecuniary interest. Councillor Moran indicated that he would remain present and participate in the consideration of the item.

In relation to the same item, and in the interests of openness, Councillor C Bulman declared that she was both a Town councillor and a Borough ward councillor for Middlewich.

In the interests of openness, Councillor N Mannion declared an interest in an item on the agenda relating to the Best4Business lessons learned review as he had participated in the 'scrutiny in a day' event referred to in the report.

26 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no public speakers.

27 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th July 2022 be approved as a correct record.

28 PETITION: FIGHT FOR MIDDLEWICH

The Committee considered a report on the 'Fight for Middlewich' petition. The petition, which had been signed by at least 5,000 petitioners, had been presented to Council on 20th July 2022 and referred to the Corporate Policy Committee. The officer responses to the demands and requests contained in the petition were appended to the report for the Committee's consideration.

As provided by the Council's petitions scheme, and at the invitation of the Chair, Laura Turner, the petition organiser, addressed the Committee in order to outline the background to the petition. She had prepared a supporting document which the Chair had agreed would be circulated to members of the Committee following the meeting.

The Chair thanked Laura Turner for attending the meeting and speaking on the matter.

During consideration of this matter, members noted the following:

- S106 contributions could be tracked on the Council's website.
- Work was underway to provide the Middlewich Eastern Bypass, which was one of the most significant infrastructure projects in the Borough.
- A 'funding by town' comparison would be a difficult and costly exercise to undertake as universal services were provided on a head-by-head basis.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. receives the petition;
2. notes the responses to those matters within the Council's control (items 1- 12 of Appendix 2); and
3. notes that items 13 – 17 of Appendix 2 will be referred to the relevant bodies identified within the Appendix.

29 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND - INVESTMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Committee considered an update report on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, including an outline of anticipated governance and project selection arrangements.

It was noted that since the core UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan had been submitted to the Government, a new Rural Fund had been announced on 3rd September. To access the allocation under the Rural Fund, additional information would need to be submitted as an addendum to the Investment Plan.

RESOLVED

That the Committee

1. notes the overview of the Cheshire East core UKSPF Investment Plan as submitted to the Department for Levelling up Housing and Communities on 1st August 2022, set out in the body of the report and Appendix A;
2. as Accountable Body, agrees the Terms of Reference of the new Cheshire East Shared Prosperity Fund Local Partnership Group set out at Appendix B;
3. notes the proposed governance arrangements and proposed project selection processes for the UKSPF; and
4. delegates authority to the Executive Director – Place to:
 - (a) submit a completed Rural Fund addendum to the UKSPF Investment Plan for Cheshire East after consultation with the Cheshire East Members on the UKSPF Local Partnership Group;
 - (b) make any amendments to the addendum to the UKSPF Investment Plan as required by government in order to release the funding or as required during the plan period to enable the effective spend of the fund;

- (c) accept the Rural Fund allocation for Cheshire East and approve a Supplementary Capital Estimate of up to £827,627 and to allocate the funding as set out within the Cheshire East UKSPF Investment Plan addendum; and
- (d) manage the Cheshire East Rural Fund 2023-25 programme, taking all necessary actions in the interests of maximising the impacts of the fund aligned to the fund parameters and local priorities, and aligned to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.

30 APPROVAL OF CORPORATE GRANTS POLICY 2022 - 2025

The Committee considered a report on a revised Corporate Grants Policy for the operation of grants schemes in Cheshire East Council for 2022-2025. The Policy set out how grants offered by Council service areas should be aligned to meet the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan.

It was noted that recommendation 3.3 of the report should refer to paragraph 8.1.4.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. approves the updated Corporate Grants Policy 2022 to 2025;
2. notes that each individual grant scheme implemented by the Council will have its own process put in place which aligns to the Corporate Grants Policy; and
3. delegates authority to Corporate Leadership Team / Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration to amend the policy as necessary and in the event of contemplated changes to the subsidy control regime detailed in section 8.1.4 of the report.

31 REGISTRATION SERVICE - CEREMONY FEES

The Committee considered a report which reviewed the fees that the Registration Service charged for ceremonies and related services.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee approves the fees set out in the Appendix to the report.

32 INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM - APPOINTMENT TO HEALTH AND CARE PARTNERSHIP

Having declared an interest in this item earlier in the meeting, Councillors J Clowes, A Moran and J Rhodes left the meeting prior to its consideration.

The Committee considered a progress report on the new governance arrangements for integrated health across Cheshire East, and the appointment of members to the new Place Partnership Board (now called the 'Cheshire East Health & Care Partnership').

Members noted with some concern that the formal governance structures were not yet in place and that the Board was currently meeting in shadow form.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. agrees that Councillors Arthur Moran, Jill Rhodes and Janet Clowes be appointed to the Cheshire East Health & Care Partnership Board; and
2. notes the nominations to the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

At the conclusion of this item, Councillors J Clowes, A Moran and J Rhodes were invited to return to the meeting.

33 PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY FOR COUNCILLORS

The Committee considered a proposed parental leave policy for Councillors.

The report invited the Committee to consider the recommendations of the former Constitution Committee, following its consideration of a motion with an attached draft policy on 15th July 2019 that had been referred to that Committee by Council on 21st February 2019. The draft policy had been shared with the current Constitution Working Group which had given the policy its broad support.

There was some concern about how ward responsibilities would be supported in the event of an extended absence by a ward member, particularly in the case of a single member ward.

It was noted that the arrangements could be reviewed in the light of experience.

RESOLVED

That the Committee recommends to Council that the proposed parental leave policy be adopted as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

34 **ICT STRATEGY PRINCIPLES**

The Committee considered a report on the development of an ICT Strategy for Cheshire East Council, the principles on which the Strategy would be based, and the timeline for its development.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. approves the development of an ICT Strategy for Cheshire East Council;
2. approves the principles in paragraph 6.6 of the report as the basis for the Cheshire East Council ICT Strategy; and
3. approves the timeline for development.

35 **SHARED SERVICES REVIEW UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report on work to date with the development of a new hybrid operating model for ICT Services following a review which had concluded that a move away from a shared service to a new hybrid operating model was the preferred approach, and was technically feasible and financially viable.

As this would be another complex business change programme, officers were mindful of the outcomes of the recent Lessons Learned Review of Best4Business which were to be considered later in the meeting. Further work on technical and financial assurance and due diligence would continue over the coming weeks, with the expectation that a further report would be submitted to the Shared Services Joint Committee in November and to this Committee in December.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee notes the work to date on a new hybrid operating model for ICT Services and the revised timescale.

36 **BEST4BUSINESS - LESSONS LEARNED REVIEW**

The Committee considered a report on the outcomes of the lessons learned review for the Best4Business programme.

The report set out the outcomes from the review and invited any further reflections and feedback.

Members and officers had participated in a 'scrutiny in a day' event on 1st August 2022 which had been facilitated by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.

The outcomes of the review were attached at Appendix 3 to the report. An assurance statement from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny was attached at Appendix 4.

The Committee was advised that a draft version of Appendix 3 had been published with the agenda in error. The final version of the Appendix, which was substantially the same, would be circulated to members of the Committee and published on the agenda web page following the meeting.

Members who had attended the one day scrutiny event were of the view that it had been productive and that everyone present had been candid.

Members thanked the Executive Director of Corporate Services for overseeing the review and bringing the project to completion.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. notes the key lessons and recommendations arising from the review;
2. notes that a final budget reconciliation report will be issued once the outstanding minor commercial and programme closure issues are resolved and final programme costs are confirmed; and
3. requests a report back on the practical actions being taken to address the lessons learned and recommendations.

Note: At 12.35 pm, the Committee adjourned for half an hour for lunch.

Councillor A Martin submitted his apologies for the remainder of the meeting.

37 FIRST FINANCIAL REVIEW 2022/23

The Committee considered a report which provided an early overview of the Cheshire East Council forecast outturn for the financial year 2022/23.

The report highlighted the negative impact of increasing inflationary pressures on the Council's budget since it was set in February 2022, and the ongoing costs of COVID-19 scarring. Members noted the consequential financial challenges being experienced by the Council and the ongoing activity to minimise the impact on services.

The Annex to the report provided information on the overall financial stability and resilience of the Council and demonstrated how spending in

2022/23 was being funded, including the positions on overall service budgets, centrally-held budgets, council tax and business rates. Further details were contained in the appendices.

In response to a number of questions by members, officers advised that:

- Section 106 Agreements did not include provisions for reviewing the level of developer contributions at a later date.
- Whilst there were financial pressures affecting all service committees, the report indicated that each committee would if necessary be required to make a contribution to the Council's overall financial position.
- The financial position would be further reviewed following the November budget when allocations to individual local authorities were known.

Officers were thanked for highlighting the emerging financial issues with the Committee at an early stage.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee

1. notes the forecast adverse Net Revenue financial pressure of £11.6m against a revised budget of £328.4m (3.5%);
2. notes the forecast Capital Spending of £187.9m against an approved MTFS budget £185.2m due to slippage carried forward from the previous year;
3. endorses the approach of Senior Officers to mitigate the adverse forecasts through the activities outlined in each 'Action Plan' contained in Annex 1 (Appendices 1 to 7), which include:
 - Managed restriction of in-year spending, whilst retaining essential services, in consultation with the relevant Committee.
 - Reviewing the level of spending on key contracts and reviewing the need for contract renewals during 2022/23.
 - Pricing and grant reviews to ensure income is being fully recovered on related activity.
 - Enhanced vacancy forecasting and management.
 - Re-alignment of, and appropriate use of balances, such as earmarked reserves, General Reserves and capital receipts.
 - Review and reprofile the Capital Programme to prevent any impact of related inflation on the revenue budget.
4. notes the contents of Annex 1 and each of the appendices, and notes that any financial mitigation decisions requiring member approval will be presented to the appropriate Committee;

5. approves supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services up to and including £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in Appendix 2 Adults and Health Committee, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 2;
6. approves supplementary capital estimates up to and including £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in Appendix 6, Section 5 Capital Strategy, Table 5;
7. approves capital virements up to and including £5,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in Appendix 6, Section 5 Capital Strategy, Table 5;
8. notes that Council will be asked to approve:
 - (a) fully funded supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services over £1,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in Appendix 1, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 3, Appendix 2, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 2 and Appendix 3, Section 3 Corporate Grants Register, Table 2; and
 - (b) capital virements over £5,000,000 in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules as detailed in Appendix 6, Section 5 Capital Strategy, Table 6.

38 PERFORMANCE REPORT - QUARTER 1 2022/23

The Committee considered a report which provided an oversight of organisational performance for the first quarter of 2022/23 against the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25.

The Director of Policy and Change gave a brief presentation to highlight the key messages in the report. As requested by the Committee, the report now contained appropriate benchmarking and performance indicators.

The Chief Executive advised that the Financial Review, Performance and Strategic Risk reports on the agenda were all emphasising that the Council was facing higher demand for its services, with higher costs and fewer staff to perform the work. Despite the various risks and challenges outlined in the report, however, the Council had made progress with the delivery of its priorities.

In response to a number of questions by members, officers commented as follows:

- The Executive Director of Corporate Services was chairing an officer working group to address the issues of recruitment and retention of staff. The Council was operating in a highly competitive labour market with staffing and skill shortages evident across the economy. Recent

media campaigns by the Council had resulted in some posts being filled.

- A written response would be provided on the operation of the health and wellbeing bus in rural and hard to reach areas of the Borough.
- Demand for car parking was still lower than pre-pandemic levels. The Chair of the Economy and Growth Committee added that this would be reviewed by the Committee in 12 months' time.
- Business rate collection was at the same level as for the same quarter in the previous year. Council tax collection was slightly down.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee notes the performance against Q1 of 2022/23 of delivery of the Corporate Plan.

39 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER ASSURANCE REPORT 2022/23 QUARTER 1

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the activity of the Council's Strategic Risk Register for Quarter 1 (April – June) 2022-23. The Strategic Risk Register was attached as Appendix A to the report, and included a commentary for each risk.

Members noted that there were five risk items which were at the maximum net score of 16 following mitigation.

In response to questions raised by members, officers commented as follows:

- With regard to HS2, a written response would be provided on whether the risks identified in the report were more aligned to HS2(a) or HS2(b).
- With regard to the increased demand for children's services, a written response would be provided on where the Council puts the statutory override for SEND into the risk assessment.
- Officers would consider and report back on the suggestion that risk reference SRR1C (Increased Demand for Children's Services) be split to provide a separate risk item on High Needs Education.

RESOLVED (unanimously)

That the Committee notes the position of the Strategic Risk Register for Quarter 1 2022/23.

40 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its work programme for 2022/23.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services highlighted that the second quarter reports on financial review, performance and strategic risk would be coming to the Committee's next meeting on 1st December. A report on the Afghan and Ukrainian resettlement schemes would also come to the

December meeting. A report on the HR Strategy would include an update on apprenticeships. The Director added that there might be a number of announcements made in the near future, such as investment zones, which would require the Council to respond quickly, so further reports may need to be added to the work programme for the next meeting.

Members noted that it may be necessary for the December meeting to be an extended meeting to accommodate the amount of business envisaged.

Councillor Mannion commented on the need for a corporate approach to addressing the needs of Ukrainian refugees for whom the Council had a statutory responsibility, for example in relation to housing, education and safeguarding. He also commented on the need for a service committee to consider the provision of photo IDs to avoid people being disenfranchised at the next election. Finally, he felt that consideration should be given to the Council's position of fracking.

The Chief Executive commented that any changes to electoral arrangements would require secondary legislation to be passed. The national body for returning officers had made the point that a significant lead-in period would be required for any changes. The original target date for the implementation of any changes was the date of the next local elections in 2023 but there was some question as to whether this would now be achieved. Councillor Mannion asked whether the issue could be raised with local MPs. The Chair agreed to take that suggestion away.

The Chair agreed to give further consideration to the issue of fracking.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services undertook to review the currently unallocated items on the work programme.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be noted.

41 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the following sub-committee meetings be received:

General Appeals Sub-Committee – 5th July 2022

Finance Sub-Committee – 6th July 2022

Finance Sub-Committee – 7th September 2022

42 REPORTING OF OFFICER DELEGATED DECISIONS

This item had been included on all service committee agendas in the current committee cycle to provide greater transparency of officer

decision-making and to draw to members' attention the monthly schedules of officer delegated decisions published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED

That

1. the officer delegated decisions for the Corporate Directorate in July and August 2022 be noted; and
2. this item be included as a regular item on future agendas.

43 REPORTING OF URGENT DECISIONS

There were no urgent decisions to report.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 2.42 pm

Councillor S Corcoran (Chair)