

# CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economy and Growth Committee**  
held on Tuesday, 14th March, 2023 in the Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,  
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

## PRESENT

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)  
Councillor M Goldsmith (Vice-Chair)

Councillors S Brookfield, D Brown, J Clowes, P Groves, S Hogben,  
M Houston, D Jefferay, A Kolker, R Moreton, D Stockton and P Williams

## OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Peter Skates, Director of Growth and Enterprise  
Brendan Flanagan, Head of Rural and Cultural Economy  
Helen Paton, Cultural Economy Manager  
Karen Carsberg, Head of Housing  
Charles Jarvis, Head of Economic Development  
Alex Buckley, Digital Programme Manager  
Dan Griffiths, Programme Manager  
Andy Kehoe, Head of Estates  
Mahdi Choudhury, Corporate Energy Manager  
Ralph Kemp, Head of Environmental Services  
Wendy Broadhurst, Lead Finance Partner Place  
Adrian Leslie, Lawyer  
Rachel Graves, Democratic Services Officer

## 59 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

## 60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In relation to Item 6 – Archives Project – Delivery Phase, Councillor A Kolker declared he was a member of the Southern Planning Committee which would be considering the planning application for the Archives Centre and that he would leave the meeting during consideration of the report.

## 61 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

### RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2023 be approved as a correct record, subject to the correction to the spelling of Councillor Jefferay in the Declarations of Interest.

## 62 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public in attendance.

## 63 CULTURAL FRAMEWORK 2023-2028

The Committee considered the report which sought approval for the Cheshire East Council Cultural Framework 2023 to 2028.

The Framework set out the priorities and mechanisms for commissioning of cultural activity across the Council and with external partners.

The report also responded to the Notice Motion on Public Art Consultation, submitted to Council in October 2022 by Councillors A Gage and S Edgar, with proposals for the process for commission of public art, which following adoption would become part of the Cultural Framework.

The Chair read out a statement from the proposer of the Notice of Motion which asked that the Committee considered locking in the automatic requirement to hold a public consultation of at least 21 days when proposing public art and that this could be carried out at almost no cost via the Council's website.

During consideration of the process for public art consultation it was proposed that in Stage 7, the wording in the second box be amended to read 'Further consultation **must** take place at this point if identified in the engagement and consultation plan'.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1 approve the revised Cultural Framework 2023-2028, as set out in appendix A to the report.
- 2 approve the process set out for the commissioning of public art, as set out in appendix B to the report, and incorporate into the Cultural Framework, subject to the amendment of the wording in Stage 7 from 'may' to 'must'.

*Councillor A Kolker left the meeting before consideration of the next item.*

## 64 ARCHIVES PROJECT - DELIVERY PHASE

The Committee considered the report which provided an update on the 'Cheshire Archives – A Story Shared' project and provided the context for the delivery phase of the project, which included the building of a new History Centre in Crewe.

It was noted that the late Councillor Dorothy Flude had been very involved with the Archives Project and it was proposed that, subject to consultation, the new centre be named in her honour.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 delegate to the Executive Director Place to take all necessary actions to enable the delivery stage of the 'Cheshire Archives – A Story Shared' project.
- 2 delegate authority to the Executive Director Place, in consultation with the Director of Governance and Compliance, to enter into or approve any contracts or agreements (including professional consultants and building contracts etc.) required for the delivery phase.
- 3 approve the entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to address all relevant terms for collaborative delivery of the project with CWAC.
- 4 approve the participation as required in the acceptance of the offer of grant aid from the Heritage Fund by CWAC by the exercise of the delegated authority to proceed with this project.
- 5 consideration be given to naming the History Centre in honour of the late Councillor Dorothy Flude, subject to public consultation.

*The meeting adjourned for a short break during which Councillor Kolker returned to the meeting.*

## **65 NOTICE OF MOTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF COUNCIL HOUSING**

The Committee considered a report in response to a Notice of Motion relating to the development of Council Housing. Council on 14 December 2022 had referred the Notice of Motion to the Economy and Growth Committee for consideration.

The motion, was proposed by Councillor C Naismith and Seconded by Councillor A Critchley, read as follows:

That the Council commits to

- 1) creating a Cheshire East Council housing revenue account.
- 2) the development of a long-term strategy for the construction of high-quality, genuinely affordable council housing across the borough, underpinned by long-term secure tenancy agreements, with rents relative to the average wage of the geographical area. Thus, providing residents with security, health, education and social mobility opportunity that they deserve.

It was reported that as the Council was a non-stock holding Council, the proposals in the Motion would require significant financial commitment and outlay in establishing and developing the housing required to form a Housing Revenue Account. The proposal did not form part of the Corporate Plan and was not within the current MTFS proposals and would therefore require additional capital and revenue funds outside of the MTFS programme.

The Committee noted that the Council was developing its Housing Strategy and proposed that options to increase the number of houses for social rent and for specialist housing be including in the development of the Housing Strategy and be reported back to the Committee.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously): That

- 1 the Notice of Motion be noted; and
- 2 that options to increase the number of houses for social rent and for specialist housing be including the development of the Housing Strategy.

## 66 **DIGITAL INVESTMENT PLAN 2023-2025**

The Committee considered a report on the Digital Investment Plan 2023-2025 which provided an update on the progress with digital connectivity in the Cheshire sub-region and sought approval of the Connecting Cheshire Digital Investment Plan.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 adopt the Digital Investment Plan as the guiding strategy and plan to shape future outward facing Digital Investments and outward Digital Support activities of the Authority, utilising the ring-fenced Digital Funds.
- 2 note the current misalignment between project delivery up to and beyond 2026 and the staffing which is currently in place until 2023.
- 3 delegated authority to the Executive Director Place to ensure that the staffing required to support delivery and implementation of the interventions currently being undertaken as outlined in the Digital Investment Plan.
- 4 approve the establishment of a £500,000 “Alt Tech” grant scheme to support the hardest to reach premises across the Cheshire sub-region and delegate to the Executive Director Place the authority to determine the terms on which it operates, noting that it may be delivered by a partner authority.

- 4 approve a £300,000 business support package to ensure that businesses across the Cheshire sub-region have the skills necessary to harness the benefits of digital growth.
- 5 approve a £120,000 package of measures to stimulate local demand led digital upgrades and provide for stakeholder engagement to ensure that local communities are supported as they strive to upgrade digital services
- 6 provide delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place to enable the above projects, initiatives, and activities that support the plan to be implemented Funds.

## 67 CREWE TECHNICAL & DIGITAL INNOVATION CENTRE

The Committee considered a report on the progress to date on the proposal for a Technical and Digital Innovation Centre in Crewe Town Centre.

The Technical and Digital Innovation Campus was part of the Future High Street Fund programme to revitalise Crewe, funded in full by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). The aim was to provide flexible workspace and co-working offer in Crewe focusing on supporting start-up and growing companies in the fast growing digital and creative sector, and also improvements to the heritage assets at Christ Church.

The project had undergone feasibility work and considered the potential of using both the chancel at Christ Church and the Municipal Buildings Extension. This had determined that the only financially and operationally viable approach was to use the Municipal Buildings Extension.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 subject to DLUHC Agreement, approve the appropriation of the Municipal Buildings extension for the delivery of the Technical and Digital Innovation Centre project, by appropriation it was meant the lease or procurement of the building to a third party operator, cease occupation of the building by the Council, and carry out a refurbishment of the building to meet Future High Street Fund outputs.
- 2 delegate authority to the Executive Director Place, in consultation with the Chair of Economic & Growth Committee, Section 151 Officer, and Director of Governance and Compliance, to secure the DLUHC Agreement and, subject to DLUHC Agreement, take all necessary actions to deliver the TADIC project, including and without limitation:

- commencing staff engagement and consultation as necessary on the proposals, and relocation of the affected staff;
  - submission of necessary applications for planning, building regulations, etc and implement consent as appropriate;
  - procurement, contract award and/or execution of all necessary leases, agreements and documentation for both the refurbishment or modifications required at the Municipal Offices and other Council assets affected as consequence of relocated functions, and for the operational delivery of the project, including negotiation commercial terms with the operator/tenant including Council contributions to the fit-out of the premises; and
  - to amend or stop the project in the event that any issues or risks emerge that would fundamentally affect the deliverability of the project, or impact on the Council's financial position.
- 3 note that the historic Municipal Buildings fronting Earle Street is not part of this proposal and will be retained for civic use, including the Registrar function.
- 4 note that the Christ Church Chancel building will not be used for the project, but that heritage improvements to Christ Church are planned to be delivered as part of this project.

#### 68 PUBLIC SECTOR DECARBONISATION SCHEME - 3B

The Committee considered a report which informed of the acceptance under urgency powers of a Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund Grant of up to £7.8m, in three lots. The urgent decision also delegated powers to the Economy and Growth Committee to administer the grant.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 note the acceptance, under urgency powers, of the grants awarded up to £7,800,000 from BEIS for the purpose of decarbonising the Council's estate and enable the low carbon transition across selected schools, museum, leisure centres and Tatton Park.
- 2 note the approval, under urgency powers, of a fully funded Supplementary Capital Estimate up to the value of the grant offer(s).
- 3 note that the match-funding required from the Council to finance the schemes will be identified from existing budgets, and that approvals for virements will be obtained, in that regard, in accordance with the Finance Procedure Rules in the Constitution.

- 4 authorise the Director of Growth and Enterprise and the Section 151 Officer to enter into the Grant Offer Agreement on behalf of the Council and to take all necessary measures to administer, spend and distribute the grant.
- 5 authorise the Director of Growth and Enterprise to approve the delivery of the programme of work, in line with the conditions of grant, and the identification of local match-funding resources, and to obtain further approvals as required by the Council's financial procedure and procurement rules.

## 69 **2022/23 FINANCIAL UPDATE**

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of the Cheshire East Council forecast outturn for the financial year 2022/23 and a financial update and forecast outturn for the Economy and Growth Committee's areas of responsibility.

**RESOLVED** (unanimously): That the Committee

- 1 note the report of the Finance Sub Committee held on 8 March 2023 and the recommendations of that Committee to Service Committees to
  - 1.1 note the financial update and forecast outturn relevant to their terms of reference.
  - 1.2 note the delegated decisions relating to supplementary revenue estimates for specific grants coded directly to services in accordance with Financial Procedure Rules, as detailed in Appendix 4 to the report - Section 2, Table 2 and Table 3.
- 2 note Appendix 4 to the report and the following sections specific to the Economy and Growth Committee:
  - Changes to Revenue budget 2022/23
  - Corporate Grants Register
  - Debt Management
  - Capital Strategy
  - Reserve Strategy

## 70 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the work programme and were informed that the programme would be updated with the items for the June and July committee meetings and that the September meeting would receive a report on the Handforth Garden Village.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Work Programme be noted.

**71 CARBON NEUTRAL UPDATE**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the progress made by the Council to becoming a carbon neutral Council by 2025 and a carbon neutral Borough by 2045.

In May 2020, the Council had adopted a Carbon Action Plan which set out how the Council would become carbon neutral. The Action Plan set a carbon reduction target at 46% and an inseting target of 60% by 2025 from 2019 baseline levels. To date the Council had achieved carbon reduction of 11% and delivered 30% of its inseting target. The report detailed the progress in carbon reduction in the areas of Council's operations set out in the Action Plan.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee

- 1 note the progress made towards the Council's target to be carbon neutral for its own emissions by 2025 and the contents of the Borough wide baseline report 2045 (Appendix 1 to the report).
- 2 delegates authority to the Executive Director for Place to take all necessary actions including without limitation contract award and the execution of all necessary agreements and ancillary documentation to implement solar projects on the land referenced in Appendix 2 to the report.
- 3 delegates authority to the Head of Environmental Services in conjunction with relevant council teams to investigate emerging opportunities for domestic retrofit options for the residents of Cheshire East and proceed to procurement of a suitable solution.

**72 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items pursuant to Section 100(A) 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended on the grounds that it involves the likely discussion of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and public interest would not be served in publishing the information.

**73 UPDATE ON ROYAL ARCADE PROGRESS**

The Committee received a verbal update on the Royal Arcade project.



**RESOLVED:**

That the update be noted.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 4.53 pm

Councillor N Mannion (Chair)