

# **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Scrutiny Committee**  
held on Monday, 24th June, 2013 at The Capesthorne Room - Town Hall,  
Macclesfield SK10 1EA

## **PRESENT**

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)

Councillors S Corcoran, H Davenport, W Fitzgerald, D Newton, R West,  
J Wray, and B Murphy. Mr J McCann (Diocese of Shrewsbury)

## **Apologies**

Councillors P Edwards and J Kelly (Church of England))

## **9 ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor Peter Raynes – Finance Portfolio Holder  
Councillor Rachel Graves – Children and Families Portfolio Holder  
Councillor Barry Moran – Performance Portfolio holder  
Councillor Paul Findlow – Corporate Portfolio Holder  
Councillor Peter Mason – Cabinet Support Member

## **10 OFFICERS PRESENT**

Chris Mann – Finance Manager  
Jo Wilcox – Corporate Finance Lead  
Alex Thompson – Finance Lead Strategy and Funding  
Steve Reading – Principal Accountant  
Kate Rose – Principal Children's Safeguarding Manger  
Mark Nedderman – Senior Scrutiny Officer

## **11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the meeting held on 7 May 2013 be confirmed as correct record and signed the Chairman.

## **12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interests.

## **13 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of the existence of a party whip.

## **14 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION**

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

## **15 QUARTER 4 BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE OUTTURN 2012/13**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Chief Operating Officer providing a summary and detailed information about the Council's financial and non- financial performance at the final quarter of the 2012/2013 Financial year.

Section 1 of the report provided details of Service financial performance for the year. It demonstrated the level of controlled expenditure compared to budget. It also focused on significant changes from the positions reported at the Three Quarter Year Review (TQR), in relation to the key financial pressures which the Council's Services had faced, the areas of high financial risk to the Council, and the strong remedial measures undertaken by Services to mitigate these pressures. Key issues affecting Services' Capital Programmes were also reported.

Section 2 provided an update on the overall Financial Stability of the Council. It demonstrated how spending in 2012/2013 had been adequately funded, including the positions on Grants, Council Tax and Business Rates, Treasury Management, Centrally held budgets, and the management of the Council's Reserves.

Section 3 provided a summary of the key non-financial performance headlines for the year showing how over 60% of the Council's performance indicators were within tolerance targets for 2012/2013.

The Finance the portfolio holder informed the committee that the final outturn report provided evidence of much improved financial discipline across the whole Council which demonstrated that the Council was performing better at lower cost.

Christine Mann highlighted the significantly improved position in respect of reserves which had enabled contributions to be increased by an amount of £7.6 million leading to a final balance of £19 million.

The Committee welcomed the financial report, although expressed concerns about the significantly high level of remedial action taken during 2012/13 (amounting to £22.4 million) to mitigate in year budget pressures and therefore sought assurances about the accuracy of future budget forecasts, particularly in Adult's and Children's services.

In connection with specific pressures outlined in Children services in relation to staffing levels, the Children and Families portfolio holder explained that there were national shortages in the supply of qualified social workers. The committee was informed that the Corporate and Performance PDG would soon be undertaking a review of the Council's recruitment and retention policies in this area.

In connection with performance, the Committee concluded that whilst there were many positive aspects to the performance report, one pleasing example highlighted by the Committee being the 20% improvement in relation processing of major planning applications(to NI 157(a)) the committee felt that there were still some areas of concern that would require specific monitoring in the future, for example, the Council's arrangements in respect of personalisation in Adult Social services which had led the Committee to question whether the Council should continue with these arrangements.

#### RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That the general direction of travel in respect of the Council's budget management arrangements be commended and the committee's expectation that it hopes that improvements will continue to be made in future be placed on record and conveyed to Cabinet;
- (c) That in relation to the Capital Programme, the Interim Chief Operating Officer Committee be requested in future to provide an explanation of any slippages identified as under - spends in the approved capital programme;
- (d) That in relation to performance, the Interim Chief Operating Officer be requested to identify in future reports, which targets are set nationally and those determined locally;
- (e) That the Committee's gratitude be extended to the staff for their efforts in difficult circumstances.

#### 16 REGULATION 33 VISITS - PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Safeguarding Manager on Regulation 33 Visits. Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 Act required a monthly visit to children's homes and units which were run by the local authority, by a person not employed at the home nor directly responsible for it Visits took place every calendar month, unannounced, varying in time and date, usually requiring a minimum of 3 hours.

It was reported that visits had taken place at the following settings:

- Ivy Lane
- Claremont Road
- Broad Street

#### RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report be received and noted;

- (b) That the thanks of this committee be placed on record for all the volunteers and Members who undertake visits to Children's establishments in accordance with regulation 33 of the Children's Homes regulations 2001.

## **17 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee considered a report of the Interim Monitoring Office/Head of Legal Services regarding the Committee's work programme 2013/14.

RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 11.40 am

Councillor S Wilkinson (Chairman)