

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet**
held on Tuesday, 10th December, 2013 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3,
Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor M Jones (Chairman)
Councillor D Brown (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Rachel Bailey, J Clowes, J P Findlow, L Gilbert, B Moran,
P Raynes, D Stockton and D Topping

Members in Attendance

Councillors Rhoda Bailey, L Brown, S Corcoran, K Edwards, S Hogben,
W Livesley, P Mason, R Menlove, A Moran, B Murphy, D Newton, P Nurse,
A Thwaite, S Wilkinson

Officers in Attendance

Mike Suarez, Lorraine Butcher, Peter Bates, Suki Binjal, Caroline Simpson,
Heather Grimbaldeston and Paul Mountford

Apologies

Councillors S Gardiner and L Smetham

98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

99 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public wishing to speak.

100 QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

Councillor A Moran referred to the number of Conservative members, including Cabinet support members, who had raised questions at the last Council meeting.

The Leader responded that his members found question time at Council meetings helpful. Responding to a question by Councillor L Brown, he stressed that all councillors were able to ask questions of Cabinet members.

Councillor S Corcoran asked about progress in discussions between the Council and Arighi Bianchi with regard to a proposed distribution centre at Lyme Green, Macclesfield.

The Leader advised that discussions were continuing.

Councillor K Edwards referred to a report produced last year by the Portfolio Holder for Finance setting out progress with the Council's three year financial strategy, and addressing any potential funding gap.

The Portfolio Holder for finance responded that he intended to produce a similar report this year. He added that next year's financial position would be manageable but that future years would be more challenging.

The Leader commented that he anticipated a balanced budget over the next three years.

Councillor Edwards asked if the Leader had good news for the many fundraisers who were raising funds in Macclesfield libraries.

The Leader responded that the Council was proud to support its partners and voluntary groups. He asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance to give a written response to Councillor Edwards' question.

Councillor W Livesley asked if the community interest agreement with Macclesfield Town Football Club had been signed.

The Leader responded that an agreement had not yet been signed although the Council continued to support the Club.

Councillor Livesley asked if local ward members could receive details of the empty properties in their wards.

The Leader responded that the Council wanted to encourage brownfield site development and that the Council was converting more empty properties than other Councils.

Councillor S Hogben asked for an update on the proposed Lifestyle Centre for Crewe.

The Leader responded that a decision would be taken in the next few days. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Care added that an announcement would hopefully be made before Christmas.

Councillor Hogben also referred to a former elderly persons' home within his ward and sought assurances that it would be put to good use in the near future.

The Leader undertook to look into the matter.

101 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th November 2013 be approved as a correct record.

102 **CONGLETON LINK ROAD - APPROVAL TO PROCEED TO
PUBLIC CONSULTATION (FORWARD PLAN REF. CE 13/14-14)**

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to proceed with a public consultation exercise on the four shortlisted routes for the proposed Congleton Link Road.

The report provided a summary of the overall public consultation strategy.

RESOLVED

That

1. the shortlisted route options, shown at Appendix A to the report, be taken forward for public consultation;
2. the public consultation exercise be undertaken for a 6 week period, commencing in early January 2014, to include the following key events/tasks:
 - § Exhibition events at Congleton Town Hall
 - § Consultation leaflet and questionnaire to be distributed to all landowners/residents/businesses which lie within 500m of any of the four options being considered
 - § Advertisement feature within the Congleton Town Council's local newsletter January edition
 - § Congleton Link Road website update, including an electronic questionnaire on the website
 - § Press release prior to Public Consultation
 - § Meetings with all affected Parish Councils
 - § Meeting / drop in event with the Business Community
 - § Direct meetings with various affected landowners
3. a post-consultation report be produced to summarise the findings of the consultation; and

4. the indicative delivery programme be noted.

103 **NOTICE OF MOTION - REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS**

Cabinet considered a response to a motion submitted to Council on 13th October 2013 and referred to Cabinet for consideration.

Councillor S Hogben had proposed, and Councillor S Corcoran had seconded, the following motion:

“That this Council build on its previous work in reducing its own carbon emissions. This Council will promote strenuous further efforts to cut not only its own carbon emissions but those of its many partners within the sub-region, including the private and business sectors.

The Council recognises that financial pressures face all sectors of the economy, but also recognises the vital importance for future generations of conserving resources of all kinds and cutting environmental pollution.

In view of the loss of Invest to Save funding, and in its role as a community leader, the Council commits to redouble its efforts to fund carbon reduction projects, and seek support in this work from all its partners.”

The Council was currently on track to achieve its carbon reduction target. Since instigating its Carbon Reduction Programme in 2010 the Council had reduced its emissions by 18%, or 5,705 tonnes CO₂. This significant achievement had resulted in a cost avoidance of £1.8 million which would otherwise have been spent on energy consumption. This in turn had enabled the Council to better support front line services.

The Council had signed up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change in 2009. In 2012, the Nottingham Declaration had been succeeded by the Climate Local Agreement, developed by the LGA. Cabinet was asked to consider whether it wished the Council to become a signatory to the new initiative.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet

1. receives and acknowledges the motion referred by Council;
2. acknowledges the significant work that has been undertaken by the Council to date in reducing its own carbon emissions in order to support the corporate target of reducing carbon emissions by 25% by 2016;

3. in view of the fact that the carbon reduction target for energy management has been achieved 3 years early, agrees to increase the carbon reduction target for Council buildings to 35% in support of other areas of the Authority;
4. further promotes the reduction not only of its own carbon emissions but also of those of its many partners within the sub-region, including the private and business sectors; and
5. agrees to sign up to the Climate Local Agreement, which replaces the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change to which the Council had previously been a signatory.

104 **NOTICE OF MOTION - AUDITOR'S VALUE FOR MONEY
CONCLUSION**

Cabinet considered a response to a motion submitted to Council on 17th October 2013 and referred to Cabinet for consideration.

Councillor S Corcoran had proposed, and Councillor P Nurse had seconded, the following motion:

“The Council welcomes the qualified value for money conclusion from the external auditors and:

- § Accepts that more ‘more needs to be done to ensure that tough decisions are taken when setting the budget rather than relying on services to deliver savings in year’.
- § Commits to setting a realistic budget for 2014/15 so that the major overspends seen in recent years do not recur and that unplanned remedial actions are not necessary:
- § Agrees to ensure that its decision making is – and is seen to be - transparent to the public.”

A copy of the auditor’s final Value for Money conclusion as outlined on page 23 of their 2012/13 Audit Findings Report was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. Members were asked to note that the wording of the auditor’s conclusion differed from that quoted in the motion submitted to Council. Specifically, the final conclusion confirmed that the Council’s arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources were found to be satisfactory ‘in all significant respects’.

An action plan had already been put in place to address the auditor’s 2012/13 findings and conclusions, demonstrating the Council’s commitment to build on the progress achieved to date.

RESOLVED

That the motion be rejected on the basis that action is already in hand to address the substantive issues raised by Grant Thornton in their Audit

Findings Report, and that progress will be further enhanced by the action plan recently endorsed by the Audit and Governance Committee.

105 **PROPERTY-RELATED CONSULTANCY SERVICES (FORWARD PLAN REF. CE 13/14-57)**

Cabinet considered a report on the future commissioning of property-related consultancy services.

The Council, as part of its business planning for 2014/15, would be considering options for the future delivery of asset-related services, building on the achievement of the Corporate Landlord model and the formation of the Development Company.

Current arrangements for the delivery of the construction and development projects included the commissioning of external property-related consultancy services via the Council's own Framework Agreement. This Agreement would expire on 31st October 2014 and could not be extended within EU Procurement Rules. It was essential that a mechanism was in place to enable the Council to continue to deliver its property-related projects effectively.

An analysis of options had been undertaken as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, with the conclusion that a replacement Framework Agreement would be the preferred option. The option analysis process had identified that Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council had recently entered into a Strategic Property Partnership with Carillion and CBRE. Initial discussions had identified the potential for Cheshire East Council to utilise this Framework, either at Partnership or Supply-Chain level.

In considering this matter, the Leader expressed the intention of developing a Cheshire East First business policy aimed at involving locally-based companies wherever possible.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet

1. approves the establishment of a Framework Agreement through which to commission property-related consultancy services;
2. notes the recent establishment of Stockport Strategic Property Partnership and authorise officers to explore service delivery options and undertake due diligence in connection with the Council's potential utilisation of the Partnership;
3. delegates authority to the Director of Economic Growth & Prosperity, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets, to award contracts to providers meeting the requirements of the Framework;

4. delegates authority to the Director of Economic Growth & Prosperity, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets, to abort the procurement, should the need for the Framework no longer be required; and
5. delegates authority to the Director of Economic Growth & Prosperity, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets, to utilise the Stockport Strategic Property Partnership on the basis of recommendations from Assets, Finance, Procurement and Legal Services.

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REVIEW OF 2014-15 SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA

Cabinet considered a report on proposed options for the schools funding formula for 2014-15.

Following a consultation exercise with all head teachers, governors and business managers in September 2013, the Council had worked closely with the Formula Working Group, a sub-group of the Schools Forum, to develop a formula which aimed to minimise turbulence for schools. The proposals had been discussed and approved by the Schools Forum on 3rd October 2013, and had to be approved by Cabinet before final submission to the Department for Education by 21st January 2014.

Details of the funding formula and its implications were set out in the report.

It was stressed that a new policy of clawback of surplus school balances would not affect any money raised by the schools themselves through fundraising.

RESOLVED

That for the 2014-15 Schools Funding Formula:

1. £1.5m of DSG be added to the funding for low level Special Educational Needs (SEN), delegated to schools through the Low Cost High Incidence (LCHI) formula factor and distributed according to pupil numbers identified by the new mandatory prior attainment indicators, the money to come from savings delivered in 2013/14 in the SEN placements budget;
2. the rural proofing strategy be broadened to include schools; and
3. all other existing formula factors be maintained at their current level, as agreed with the Schools Forum.

Cabinet considered a report on the Council's tax base for Cheshire East which identified important changes to the calculation of the tax base for 2014/2015.

The calculation of the tax base contributed to the calculation of overall funding for Cheshire East Council in each financial year.

The Council was required to approve its tax base before 31st January 2014 so that the information could be provided to the Police and Crime Commissioner and Cheshire Fire Authority for their budget processes. Details for each parish area were set out in Appendix A to the report.

The Council Tax Support Scheme was not set to change for 2014/2015 other than to reflect the usual CPI inflationary increases. A predicted increase in claimant numbers was likely to result in a requirement for additional support; therefore an additional 1% allowance had been made available within the tax base to cover this increased demand.

The calculation of the tax base was a matter for full Council following a recommendation by Cabinet.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, recommends to Council the amount to be calculated by Cheshire East Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2014/2015 as 137,548.53 for the whole area.

Before closing the meeting, the Chairman referred to the recent death of Honorary Alderman Norman Edwards, a former Mayor of Macclesfield, and to the death of John Barber, a former Macclesfield Borough Councillor and Poynton Town Councillor. The Council's flag was flying at half mast to mark these sad events as well as the death of Nelson Mandela.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.18 pm

M Jones (Chairman)