

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet**
held on Tuesday, 27th May, 2014 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor M Jones (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, A Barratt, G Baxendale, L Brown, K Edwards,
M Grant, P Groves, B Livesley, R Menlove, A Moran, B Murphy, D Newton,
L Smetham, A Thwaite and J Wray

Officers in Attendance

Peter Bates, Lorraine Butcher, Anita Bradley, Heather Grimbaldeston,
Barbara Dale and Paul Mountford

Apologies

Councillor David Brown and Mike Suarez

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A Moran declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 6 on the agenda, relating to single person discounts for Council Tax.

2 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

A Mr Wainwright asked what would happen with regard to the land required for the proposed Congleton Link Road if the Council did not receive the necessary funding for the scheme. The Leader replied that if the funding were not received the scheme would be cancelled. However, he was confident that the scheme was fundable and he expected an announcement on funding for a number of the Council's infrastructure projects in the summer.

3 QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS

Councillor L Smetham asked for an update on gypsy and traveller provision. The Leader referred to a briefing circulated recently to all members of the Council regarding work commissioned to determine the need for permanent transit site provision and to identify suitable sites. The Cabinet would be bringing forward proposals for a transit site as soon as possible. It was anticipated that a planning application would be brought forward by the autumn.

Councillor K Edwards referred to reports in the press that some local authorities were considering a model of care for the protection of children based on the wholly-owned company model. He asked if there were any plans to change the pattern of childcare provision and protection at Cheshire East. The Leader replied that no proposals had come forward for consideration by the Cabinet and that while the wholly-owned company model worked well in many areas, he was personally doubtful about the use of the model for the delivery of care services. He added that safeguarding services should be provided by the Council's in-house social workers.

Councillor Edwards also referred to the statement made by the Leader at the Annual Council meeting regarding the Council's engagement with and support of people living with dementia, their families and carers. He asked if the Council's thinking had since moved forward in this area. The Leader replied that this was a significant issue for Cheshire East and that the Cabinet would be bringing forward proposals in the summer.

Councillor L Brown asked if there were likely to be any more resources to support the work of the voluntary, faith and community sector which provided assistance for many vulnerable people within the community. The Leader agreed on the need to support the sector and referred to the Council's budget surplus for the year, suggesting that it might be appropriate to pass this back to people.

Councillor Rhoda Bailey asked if there had been any progress with regard to the future use of the Lyme Green site at Macclesfield. The Leader replied that the Council was waiting to hear from a local business that was thinking of moving onto the site. Both Councillor Bailey and the local parish council would be informed once the final position was known.

Councillor R Menlove asked if there were any plans for the Council to investigate the funding available to exploit coal-bed methane in Cheshire East after a neighbouring authority had incurred substantial costs in conducting a similar investigation. The Leader replied that he would look to the Government or private sector to fund any such investigations and not the taxpayers of Cheshire East.

Councillor B Murphy asked when the political group leaders would meet to resolve the outstanding issue of the new Deputy Cabinet Member posts and their proposed remuneration. The Leader replied that this would happen very soon.

Councillor Murphy also asked why the Cabinet was not willing to enhance the role of the Macclesfield Local Service Delivery Committee. The Leader replied that the Council would not prejudge the outcome of the Macclesfield Community Governance Review and would wait until the preferences of local people were known regarding future governance arrangements for Macclesfield.

4 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th April 2014 be approved as a correct record.

5 NOTICE OF MOTION - SINGLE PERSON DISCOUNT

Cabinet considered the following motion which had been moved by Councillor S Corcoran and seconded by Councillor M Sherratt at the Council meeting on 10th April 2014 and referred to Cabinet for consideration:

“This Council supports the proposals of the Local Government Association for reforming the single person discount. Under the plans, councils would have the flexibility to adjust the discount for working people living alone in large homes – rated council tax band E and above. Discounts for single people in smaller homes and all pensioners would remain protected.”

The motion had followed a press release on the matter by the Local Government Association on 17th March 2014.

Whilst it was recognised that the flexibility to restrict single person discounts would remain at the discretion of the Council it was felt that the proposal was not appropriate for Cheshire East for the following reasons:

- § The claim that Band E property is considered a large home was not substantiated in relation to the tax base in Cheshire East.
- § Welfare data confirmed that some single residents in Band E properties were themselves considered on lower incomes, and received Council Tax Support. The number of such cases could increase if Council Tax charges were increased by 33% following the removal of the discount.
- § Taxpayers currently affected by recent Council Tax Support reductions would be further impacted by a reduction in discount.
- § The proposals would present an unwelcome impact on families where children still resided with a single parent.
- § Taxpayers who have adaptations to their property to accommodate a disability currently received a reduction in council tax. The removal of single person discount would increase their council tax above the pre-disabled reduction level.
- § Council Tax legislation also provided for reductions of 25% for households where more than one person resided but the other resident

was 'disregarded'. A number of inequities could arise if single person discount were removed in isolation.

- § There was unlikely to be any impact from the proposal that would make better use of existing housing stock.

Councillor S Corcoran was unable to attend the meeting but Councillor D Newton spoke on his behalf.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet does not support the motion for the reasons set out above.

6 SCHOOL ORGANISATION SUB COMMITTEE - DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURE

Cabinet considered proposed changes to the procedure for considering statutory school reorganisation proposals and decisions on non-statutory education reorganisation proposals which attracted objections.

Changes were now proposed to the formal procedure to comply with the most recent DfE guidance. The proposed change was intended to provide an equal opportunity for proposers and objectors to question each other's case or to provide oral responses, as appropriate, in the interests of transparency. This had been a recommendation of the School Organisation Sub-Committee at its meeting on 19th September 2013. The proposed procedure was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

RESOLVED

That the proposed procedure for considering statutory school reorganisation proposals and decisions on non-statutory education reorganisation proposals which attract objections, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.

7 VULNERABLE AND OLDER PEOPLE'S HOUSING STRATEGY

Cabinet considered a report seeking the ratification of a Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy for Cheshire East Council.

The report summarised the nature of the Strategy, its construction, and the findings of the Strategy's consultation process.

The Strategy championed a holistic and integrated approach towards improving the prospects and well-being of vulnerable and older people, seeking to unite the work of the Council, community partners and providers in a concerted direction. Extensive liaison had taken place across Adults' Services, Children's Services, Public Health, Housing and Planning to ensure that the Strategy reflected the priorities and initiatives of those services.

RESOLVED

That the Vulnerable and Older People's Housing Strategy and action plan, as appended to the report, be ratified and become operative for Cheshire East Council.

8 CONGLETON LINK ROAD - PREFERRED ROUTE ASSESSMENT AND NEXT STEPS

Cabinet considered a report which highlighted the findings of the recent public consultation on the proposed Congleton Link Road, recommended a preferred route for the road and sought approval to undertake the further work necessary to submit a planning application for the scheme.

The proposed Link Road was a key component of the Council's economic growth strategy and new Local Plan, enabling job creation, delivering housing growth and addressing longstanding traffic congestion and environmental issues in the town.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet

1. notes the findings of the Public Consultation report;
2. approves the findings of the Preferred Route Assessment report, namely that a modified hybrid of the Red and Purple routes be taken forward as the preferred route;
3. approves that the necessary steps are taken to protect the preferred route shown in Annex A from future development including introducing the necessary modifications (as a minor amendment) to the submission draft of the Local Plan Core Strategy at the earliest opportunity; this protection also to apply to the linking spur roads to Radnor Park and Congleton Business Park;
4. authorises the Director of Economic Growth and Prosperity in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and other relevant Cabinet members to determine the proposed boundaries of the 'strategic locations' as set out in the submission draft of the Core Strategy to reflect the preferred route as the boundary of development;
5. approves a minor amendment to the submission draft of the supporting Policy Principles document of the Local Plan (Policy C0 2) to specify that the protected route status of the proposed new highway will extend to 100m either side of the proposed new centre line;
6. approves that the alignment of the preferred route and spur roads be further developed and notes the costs of the project development to

enable the submission of a planning application and further development of the business case and that the professional support required for this is provided by Jacobs through the Highways Contract with Ringway Jacobs;

7. approves that officers commence detailed discussions immediately with affected landowners, local residents, businesses, parish councils and recognised community groups to refine the design details (including access arrangements and traffic management measures) and that supplementary formal consultation be undertaken to inform planning submission material;
8. approves that a 'pre-planning application' consultation be held and that the details and arrangements be delegated to the Head of Strategic Infrastructure in consultation with the Portfolio Holder;
9. notes the anticipated programme for the next stage of work;
10. delegates authority to the Director of Economic Growth and Prosperity to authorise entering into licences for the purpose of gaining access to third party land for the purpose of carrying out surveys or, in the event that the use of a licence is not possible or appropriate, to authorise the use of the Highway Authority's powers to gain access to land pursuant to ss289-290 of the Highways Act 1980; and
11. agrees in principle that a capital provision be identified in 2015/16 to make allowance for possible acquisition of land/blight claims subject to a more detailed business case.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.20 pm

M Jones (Chairman)