

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
held on Wednesday, 26th August, 2015 at The Silk Room - Town Hall,
Macclesfield SK10 1EA

PRESENT

Councillor G Baxendale (Chairman)
Councillor C Andrew (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors M Beanland, E Brooks, M Grant, J Rhodes, M Warren and
S Gardner (substitute)

In Attendance

Councillor L Gilbert – Portfolio Holder for Communities

Councillors S Corcoran, N Mannion and B Roberts – Call in Members

T Bettaney - Principal Manager: Regulatory Services and Health

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S Pochin

16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Due to a technical error it was agreed that the minutes would be deferred until the next meeting.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

18 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

There were no whipping declarations

19 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no members of the public present wishing to speak

20 CALL IN OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION OF 13 JULY 2015 - PEST CONTROL SERVICE REVIEW

On behalf of the 6 Members who had signed the Call In, Councillors S Corcoran, N Mannion and B Roberts addressed the Committee and expanded on the following reasons for the Call In:

1. Viable alternatives had not been considered in public, in particular the option to transfer the service to an existing or new alternative service delivery vehicle.
2. The proposal was not considered by the relevant overview and scrutiny committee.
3. The alleged budget requirements to remove the subsidy for the service was not evident within the budget proposals presented to Members in February 2015.
4. The background notes stated that the proposal arose from a review of enforcement activities, however it had been stated that the proposed savings did not affect enforcement. There was reference in the report to different delivery options, however they had been considered in a public meeting.
5. To effect the changes proposed in the current financial year would incur a non recurrent redundancy cost, for which there was no identified budget. The decision was therefore outside the budget and policy framework.

The Call In Members suggested that:

The budget information reported to Members was vague and needed to be made clearer with detailed information. The Call In Members were of the understanding that the proposals relating to the Pest Control Service had previously been withdrawn.

The possible savings from reducing the service were unquantified and the alternative options had not been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Therefore the decision should not be rushed allowing the Committee to review the service and options.

Research indicated that the rat population was growing and their resistance levels to poisoning was increasing. They also carried life threatening diseases, which would put vulnerable members of the public at risk.

The current service had a 90% customer satisfaction rate. The expertise of the highly trained technicians would be lost. Residents could be forced to pay higher prices for treatment in the private sector, which may result in untreated pest problems.

Councillor L Gilbert, Cabinet Member for Communities, responded to the Call In. He informed the Committee that the service was a discretionary function. He therefore questioned whether or not the Council should be providing the service as there was capacity within the private sector and that subsidising the service was unfair to external competition.

The authority had limited resources, the service currently cost £60k to provide and the proposal was to introduce a reduced service delivery model. Over the years there had been a steady decline in the number of service requests, the

treatment of rats and mice infestations would be retained at an increased cost to residents.

The Committee considered the information it had received regarding the Call In and the response to the Call In. It was proposed that the Committee need not offer advice to the Portfolio Holder on the decision.

RESOLVED

That the Portfolio Holder be informed that this Committee has no advice to offer in respect of the decision taken on 13 July 2015 in connection with the Pest Control Service Review.

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and concluded at 12.36 pm

Councillor G Baxendale (Chairman)