

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Jobs, Regeneration and Assets Overview and Scrutiny Committee

held on Monday, 20th July, 2015 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor H Wells-Bradshaw (Chairman)
Councillor J Weston (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors D Bebbington, S Brookfield, C Browne, L Durham and B Roberts

In Attendance

Councillor L Gilbert – Cabinet Member for Communities
Councillor T Dean – Deputy Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Assets
Councillor S Edgar – visiting member
John Weir – Cheshire Neighbours Credit Union

Officers Present

Heather McManus – Head of Assets
Sharon Angus-Crawshaw – Partnerships Manager
James Morley – Scrutiny Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee gave consideration to the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2015.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

4 DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of party whip

5 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

6 DEVOLUTION OF ASSETS

Heather McManus, Head of Assets, presented a report on the devolution/transfer of assets by the Council to town and parish councils and community groups. In September 2011 Cabinet had approved the transfer of 50 assets to local town and parish councils in line with the Localism Act 2011. The current position was that the Council had transferred 38 of those assets.

It was stated that progress regarding the transfer of assets had been good. Some town and parish councils had not expressed interest or were not in a position to take on those assets which had not yet been transferred. The rate at which the Council has been able to transfer assets to town and parish councils was considered good based on the resources available and was high compared to other local authorities.

The Council also had to consider requests from community groups to take on local assets and/or services under the Community Right to Challenge rules from the 2011 Act. The number of requests received by the Council had been very low in the first years after the Act was introduced however recently the number of requests had increased. Community Right to Challenge had an impact on the Council's strategic direction because it involved services as well as assets. A Right to Challenge required a full business case and the Council had to be confident that the community group was able to operate the asset and services effectively.

The Committee was requested to consider whether there was any further work required. The Committee was satisfied with the performance of the assets team in the transfer of assets. It was suggested that there may be a need to reconsider the original list of assets which was developed in 2011 to establish what should be done with the assets which remained and were not likely to be taken on by the town and parish council.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted

7 CHESHIRE NEIGHBOURS CREDIT UNION

John Weir, Chief Executive of Cheshire Neighbours Credit Union (CNCU), attended the meeting to discuss the performance and support needs of the credit union. A briefing note was provided documenting the recent history of the credit union and the current situation regarding its future.

The credit union had over the previous three years undergone significant changes following poor management of loans and costs. Running costs had been reduced and membership had increased. In 2014 the former Finance Policy Development Group made some recommendations to Cabinet for non financial support to the credit union including use of libraries and officer space. At the beginning of 2015 the Council also provided £60,000 funding to help CNCU to cover costs to enable it to continue operating until September 2015.

Although improvements had been made CNCU was still in an unsecure position and now required another £30,000 to cover some of its costs in order to continue operating into the next year. The credit union was also required by new rules of the Bank of England to maintain 3% capital ratio in its accounts which equated to £25,000.

Members were concerned that the credit union required financial support in order to continue operating however did not have enough information at the meeting to make any recommendations to the Council about provided any support. It was suggested that formally proposals should provided to the Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder by the credit union so a decision could be made.

RESOLVED

That the Committee urges the Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder to give consideration to how the Council can support Cheshire Neighbours Credit Union to continue operating

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.12 pm

Councillor H Wells-Bradshaw (Chairman)