

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet**
held on Tuesday, 8th March, 2016 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor Rachel Bailey (Chairman)

Councillors A Arnold, P Bates, J Clowes, L Durham, J P Findlow, S Gardner,
P Groves and D Stockton

Members in Attendance

Councillors Chris Andrew, Rhoda Bailey, G Baxendale, S Corcoran,
L Durham, S Edgar, D Flude, S Gardiner, M Grant, G Hayes, L Jeuda,
R Menlove, D Newton, M Parsons, S Pochin, J Saunders, G Wait and
B Walmsley

Officers in Attendance

Mike Suarez, Kath O'Dwyer, Peter Bates, Caroline Simpson, Bill Norman,
Stephanie Cordon and Paul Mountford

Apologies

Councillor D Brown

The Chairman opened the meeting by saying that it was a great honour for her to have been elected Leader of Cheshire East Council. She then welcomed Councillors P Bates and L Durham to their first meeting as newly-appointed members of the Cabinet.

On the occasion of International Women's Day, the Chairman took the opportunity to thank Caroline Simpson, Executive Director for Economic Growth and Prosperity, for her years of service to the Council; this would be Caroline's last Cabinet meeting before she leaves the authority.

The Chairman congratulated Councillors O Hunter and A Moran on being elected Mayor elect and Deputy Mayor elect respectively at the last Council meeting.

The Chairman referred to the Corporate Plan approved by Council which would be a living document over the next few years, revisited on many occasions.

Finally, the Chairman thanked everyone who had been involved with the Council's efforts in support of the national 'Clean for the Queen' campaign.

119 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

Sue Helliwell, speaking on behalf of Alsager Town Council, asked whether, with the local plan looking to be finalised in 2017, it was still possible for town and parish councils who had not started a neighbourhood plan to pursue one now. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning replied that neighbourhood plans were useful tools which fed into the Borough Council's own development plan and which could enable local communities to benefit from community infrastructure levies. He therefore encouraged any area to formulate a neighbourhood plan. The Chairman added that in relation to the Local Plan the Council was now moving forward and going out to consultation.

Maeve Kelly referred to the Council's proposals to reorganise children's centre provision, commenting that Cheshire East would have fewer children's centres than Cheshire West and Chester when taking into account the difference in population between the two authorities. She also made comparisons between Ofsted reports on the children's centres of the two authorities, referring to four Cheshire East centres 'needing improvement'. Finally, she questioned how the figure of £500,000 savings had been arrived at in the Council's budget, given the apparent lack of a detailed implementation plan for the changed service; she asked that the Council release the plan as soon as possible.

The Chairman thanked Maeve Kelly for her comments and replied that what she had promoted as Portfolio Holder for Children and Families was the sustaining of the children's centre service. In relation to the Ofsted report she emphasised that the term 'requires improvement to be good' did not mean that the service was poor but that it was on its way to being good. Cheshire East Council had looked at four of its children's centres in terms of whether two of them were in the best position to serve their communities and whether the footfall in relation to the other two actually compromised the effective delivery of the service. With the removal of ring-fenced funding, it was important to ensure that the funding available was focussed on children's services and not on other areas. Kath O'Dwyer, Director of Children's Services, having been National Director at Ofsted, confirmed the Chairman's comments in relation to the Ofsted report on Cheshire East's children's centres. She added that it would have been inappropriate to work up a detailed implementation plan before Council had made a decision on the future direction of its children's centres. However, it had been possible to identify the necessary financial savings from the outline proposals.

Councillor D Flude referred to a 'pop up' car park that had appeared on the site of the former railway offices and Royal Mail sorting office in Crewe, with access onto the railway station bridge. The Council's Highways Engineers had informed her that no permission had been given for the car

park. She mentioned that the Council had purchased the sorting office and railway offices at a cost of approximately £2M in order to improve the access to the town and specifically to enable Network Rail to develop a car park and new station entrance. However, she wondered if some of the land had now been sold by Network Rail for other purposes. She sought clarification as to what exactly the Council had given to Network Rail and for what purpose. The Chairman undertook to provide a written reply.

Councillor Flude also referred to an issue with the call centre service where it appeared that a choice on the 'voice activated' options given was unable to deal with enforcement enquiries. She asked that the matter be addressed.

Finally, Councillor Flude referred to a meeting of the Children's Scrutiny Committee in April which she felt was likely to attract a significant amount of public interest. Given that the meeting was scheduled to start at 2.00 pm, she asked if the meeting could be recorded for the benefit of those who would be unable to attend. The Chairman replied that the Constitution Member Working Group had made a recommendation on the recording of meetings and that Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee would need to be consulted on the matter.

Councillor B Walmsley asked about the Council's plans regarding apprenticeships in Cheshire East in relation to the Skills & Growth Company. The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Health replied that the Skills and Growth Company ASDV was coming forward at exactly the right time to help businesses, both public and private, to understand the wide-ranging policy and legislative changes and boost apprenticeship numbers across the Borough. Now was the ideal time for the Council to lead by example on the Apprenticeship agenda, empowering the Skills and Growth company to develop and deliver the Council's apprenticeship programme, acting as a leading light to businesses across Cheshire East.

Councillor M Parsons, referring to the proposal to proceed with the Middlewich Bypass, asked if the Council would follow this up by showing similar commitment to the reopening of the Sandbach to Northwich Railway line to passenger traffic and providing the much needed Middlewich Station; and to the creation of traffic/pedestrian safety schemes in Lewin St. and at Town Bridge. The Chairman replied that the Council was focussed on delivering on its promises in Middlewich and that the Local Plan had identified and safeguarded an area for the provision of a railway station. The Council had also secured financial contribution from the developments on Warmingham Lane to improve the Town Bridge junction. Pedestrian facilities would be included in the improvements. Cabinet had also authorised a major commitment toward the delivery of the bypass at last month's meeting. This was a high priority for the Council and the delivery of its Local Plan. The bypass would help to alleviate some of the traffic and pedestrian safety issues, particularly along Lewin Street, by removing traffic from that part of Middlewich. However, it was

recognised that the Bypass would not open immediately and so the Cabinet was looking at local schemes that could be delivered sooner.

Cllr Corcoran asked if local councillors could be involved in the working up of the outline plan for children's centres. The Chairman reminded Councillor Corcoran that the Chairman of the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee had pledged to overview the process. The Director of Children's Services added that she would be happy for local councillors to be involved in the discussions on how the services are to be delivered in an alternative way.

Before moving on to the next item, the Chairman reported back on a matter raised by Councillor M Grant at the previous meeting in relation to the repairs at Manchester Bridge, Crewe. The Highways Team had visited the site and there had been a pledge by Network Rail to be mindful of its impact on the local community. Councillor Grant confirmed that the situation had improved and thanked Councillor Brown for his intervention.

122 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2016 be approved as a correct record.

123 **CHESHIRE SCIENCE CORRIDOR ENTERPRISE ZONE**

Cabinet considered a report on the Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone and its implications for Alderley Park.

The multi-site Zone encompassed a total of 133ha spread across Alderley Park, Thornton, Birchwood, and a number of smaller sites in Ellesmere Port. The report set out the details of the proposals for the Enterprise Zone, particularly in terms of the implications for Alderley Park, and sought the relevant approvals to implement the proposals ready for a launch of the Enterprise Zone on the 1st April 2016.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet

1. delegates authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Assets, to determine applications for business rates relief within the boundaries of the Cheshire Science Enterprise Zone (as at Appendix 1 to the report) and to agree a policy framework with sub-regional partners on how applications for discounts will be managed;
2. approves that any business rates growth achieved within the boundaries of the Cheshire Science Enterprise Zone on the Alderley

Park site (as at Appendix 1) be ring-fenced for reinvestment in the Cheshire Science Enterprise Zone area to support priorities agreed at the sub-regional level by the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, with final approval of spending to be agreed by the Section 151 Officer; and

3. delegates authority to the Director of Growth and Regeneration, in consultation with the S151 Officer and Portfolio Holders for Finance and Assets and Regeneration, to develop the governance arrangements with the Local Enterprise Partnership.

124 **UPDATE ON SUPPORT FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES AND UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN**

Cabinet received an update on the Council's work with partners to provide support for asylum seekers, refugees and unaccompanied children.

Work was ongoing with partners, the Home Office and the North West Regional Strategic Migration Partnership to establish the detail and implications at a voluntary level in both Compass, which supported asylum seekers, and the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme that supported refugees. The Council had registered its intent with the Home Office to participate in Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme in future phases once the details had been worked out.

The Central Government funding announcement had not provided the level of clarity that had been anticipated and there was a degree of uncertainty about the levels of support proposed. The Local Government Association was seeking clarification.

In addition, the Council has received a request from Central Government to assist Kent County Council with unaccompanied children on a voluntary basis as they had been overwhelmed with demand.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet agrees to

1. thank, and show its continued appreciation to, the faith communities in particular for the work that they are doing in preparation of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers;
2. continue working at a sub-regional and local level to agree a co-ordinated approach and delegate authority to the Head of Communities to work with Cheshire West and Chester Council and Warrington Borough Council (and more widely if appropriate) to plan for and deliver collectively the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation (SVPR) scheme and Compass programme in collaboration with the Council's local key partners once the financial implications are known;

3. support a maximum of three unaccompanied children and give delegated authority to the Director of Children's Services to work in partnership with Kent County Council to achieve this; and
4. receive a further update on progress with the SVPR and Compass programme in three months' time from the Head of Communities.

125 **BETTER CARE FUND 2016/17**

Cabinet received an update on proposals for the implementation and delivery of the Cheshire East Better Care Fund in 2016/17.

The report sought Cabinet support for the Council to continue the 2015/16 arrangements and enter into two s75 Partnership Agreements from 1st April 2016 until 31st March 2017 with local health partners (namely Eastern Cheshire CCG and South Cheshire CCG) with the option to continue for a further period of one year, subject to there being a national requirement to operate the Better Care Fund as a s75 pooled budget agreement.

Councillor J Saunders, Chairman of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, reported that the Committee at its meeting on 3rd March 2016 had supported the proposal but had expressed concern that a decision by Eastern Cheshire CCG not to increase its contribution to the pooled budget would create inequitable services across the Borough.

RESOLVED

That

1. the Council continue the 2015/16 arrangements and enter into two s75 Partnership Agreements from 1st April 2016 until 31st March 2017 with local health partners (namely Eastern Cheshire CCG and South Cheshire CCG) with the option to continue for a further period of one year provided that there is a national requirement to operate the Better Care Fund as a s75 pooled budget agreement;
2. delegated authority be given to the Director of Adult Social Care and Independent Living to make decisions and agreements on behalf of the Council in relation to the commissioning of schemes funded by the Better Care Fund, such delegated authority to be subject to consultation with the Director of Children's Services should Young Carers be agreed as a joint work area for 2016/17;
3. it be acknowledged that the continuation of the two s75 arrangements is proposed to reflect the local integrated care system programmes (Caring Together being led by Eastern Cheshire CCG and Connecting Care being led by South Cheshire CCG);
4. the proposal that the Council enter into a pooled budget for 2016/17 be approved; and

5. the Better Care Fund Governance Group be responsible for reviewing the delivery of the agreement.

126 **REGIONAL ADOPTION AGENCY**

Cabinet considered proposals for Cheshire East Council to join a Regional Adoption Agency with Trafford, Stockport, Manchester and Salford Councils.

For a number of years Cheshire East Council had worked closely with Tameside, Stockport and Trafford Councils as part of 'Four4adoption'. Cheshire East Council now looked to build on this work to form an effective Regional Adoption Agency bid. Tameside had taken the early decision to join a South Pennines partnership. The remaining three authorities had subsequently developed a strong bid which added Manchester and Salford, thus ensuring the requisite number of prospective children and adopters to meet bid requirements.

RESOLVED

That

1. Cheshire East Council enter a Regional Adoption Agency with Trafford, Stockport, Manchester and Salford Councils; and
2. decisions concerning the specific detail of the arrangements be delegated to the Portfolio Holder in consultation with the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Legal Services.

127 **COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTION FOR CARE LEAVERS**

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to provide 100% exemption from the payment of Council Tax to Cheshire East care leavers.

A recent report by The Children's Society had suggested that care leavers were a particularly vulnerable group for council tax debt. One of the report's recommendations was that care leavers be made eligible for council tax exemption. This would help to relieve some of the pressure on care leavers and would sit alongside a number of other financial support arrangements available to them.

RESOLVED

That

1. the proposal to provide 100% exemption to Cheshire East's care leavers from the payment of Council Tax, including those living outside the Borough, be approved; and

2. amendments be made to the S13A policy and procedure to include the above as appropriate.

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 2.56 pm

Councillor Rachel Bailey (Chairman)