

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
held on Thursday, 7th July, 2016 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor M Simon (Chairman)
Councillor M Grant (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors Rhoda Bailey, G Baxendale, S Corcoran, D Flude, A Moran,
B Walmsley, H Wells-Bradshaw and J Wray

Apologies

Councillors G Barton, S Edgar, S Pochin, J Saunders and J Weston

1 ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Peter Groves –Finance and Assets Portfolio Holder
Alex Thompson - Corporate Manager Strategy & Reporting

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 April be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of the existence of a party whip.

5 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

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

6 FINAL OUTTURN PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Operating Officer setting out the Council's financial and non-financial performance at the final outturn of 2015/16 and highlighted the latest progress towards achieving the Council's residents first outcomes as described in the Council's three year plan 2013-2016.

The final outturn review showed that the Council had continued to build upon positions achieved in the past two years. The Council's reserves showed an underspend of £0.5m representing a variance of 0.2%.

In annex 1 of the report, further details of the Council's performance were set out in three sections:

Section 1 Summary of Council Performance - brought together the positive impact that service performance and financial performance had had on the 5 Residents First Outcomes during the year;

Section 2 Financial Stability - provided an update on the Council's overall financial position. It demonstrated how spending in 2015/16 had been funded, including the positions on overall service budgets, grants, council tax and business rates, treasury management, centrally held budgets and the management of the Council's reserves;

Section 3 Workforce Development - provided a summary of the key issues relating to the Council's workforce development plan;

The report indicated that mitigating measures had been included in 2015/16 budget to relieve pressures connected with increased caseloads for adult social care.

The Committee was informed that the Health and Adult Social Care Committee had recently received presentations from the two CCGs in the borough about the challenging financial circumstances projected over the next four years which would lead to both CCGs having to make significant efficiency savings. The Committee expressed its concern that there may be consequences for this Council in future years.

The Committee raised the following additional points in relation to the final outturn report:

- The Committee acknowledged the £1.9 million overspend in children services which related to increased and continuing demand as more children came into care. The Committee noted that whilst additional funds had been included in the 16/17 budget to stem those pressures, it requested additional information about the actual spend on SEND costs for placements outside of the Borough;
- The number of fixed penalty notices issued for littering and dog fouling offences during the year appeared to be low. However, the Committee was pleased to hear that the number of enforcement officers employed by the Council was under review and that plans for an education programme were in place;
- The reduced reliance on agency staff was welcomed but the Committee felt that efforts should be made to reduce the number further particularly in relation to children's services in Crewe, however the committee also acknowledged that the Council's 'grow your own' initiative was on the right trajectory and should alleviate reliance on agency staff in future years;
- That plans should be developed to identify potential risks resulting from the outcome of the referendum for the UK to exit the EU;

- The progress in reducing slippage in the Capital programme and future plans to better reflect the phased spend on capital schemes was welcomed;
- The Committee supported the continuing review of the situation regarding the increased number of schools becoming academies, specifically in relation to the level of support required from the Council;
- That additional information should be provided to explain in full what the objectives of the Council's ASDVs would be in future years.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the report be received;
- (b) That the forecast underspend be noted and the Committee's congratulations be conveyed to all those involved;
- (c) That Cabinet be requested to consider preparing contingency plans to mitigate any risks identified arising from the referendum result to exit the European Union;
- (d) That Cabinet be requested to submit a draft efficiency plan in connection with the Government's four year spending settlement proposals to this committee prior to it being considered by Cabinet by October 2016, or earlier if available;
- (e) That the work currently being carried out by South and Eastern CCGs to address their individual reduced spending allocations for the next four years be acknowledged and Cabinet be requested to consider contingency plans to prepare for any consequential additional pressures that this may place on the Council's own budget;
- (f) That whilst the Committee acknowledges that spending within Children Social Care is demand led, the Committee nevertheless wishes its concern to be placed on record that there is a projected overspend in Children Services;
- (g) That Cheshire East Residents First (CERF) be requested to provide detailed information to this Committee on the ASDV objectives referred to in appendix 12 of the report.

7 BUSINESS PLANNING PROCESS 2017/20

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Operating Officer on the Council's business planning process for 2017/18 to 2019/20.

A key part of the business planning process in 2016 was the production of an efficiency plan in October 2016. The plan would enable the Council to secure the four year fixed funding deal that the Government had offered as part of the Local Government final settlement for 2016/17 announced on 8 February 2016.

RESOLVED – That the report be received and the Business Planning process for 2017/20 and availability of officers throughout the process be noted.

8 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee reviewed its work programme.

RSOLVED –

- (a) That the Scrutiny Manager be requested to obtain information from the Council's new bailiffs about the company in advance of the September meeting;
- (b) That the item listed as a potential item relating to Member Facilities/Accommodation/culture be added to the list of essential items and the following members be appointed to a task and finish group to investigate the matter:

Chairman – Councillor Margaret Simon
Councillors Mo Grant, Dorothy Flude, Hayley Wells-Bradshaw

9 FORWARD PLAN

The Committee reviewed the forward plan.

RESOLVED – that the forward plan be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 1.55 pm

Councillor M Simon (Chairman)