Minutes of a meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on Thursday, 6th June, 2019 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor J Clowes (Chairman)
Councillor B Murphy (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors S Brookfield, B Evans, JP Findlow, R Fletcher, M Hunter,
A Moran, J Saunders, M Simon and L Wardlaw

PORTFOLIO HOLDERS IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor J Rhodes, Portfolio Holder for Public Health and Corporate
Services
Councillor A Stott, Portfolio Holder for Finance, ICT and Communications

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mark Taylor, Interim Executive Director of Corporate Services
Alex Thompson, Director of Financial and Customer Services
Paul Bayley, Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Bratherton.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED –

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 April 2019, be
approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

There were no members of the public present.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

5 DECLARATION OF PARTY WHIP

No declarations of a party whip were received.
The Acting S151 Officer and Head of Finance and Procurement presented the item to the committee, which covered the council’s 2018/19 financial outturn as well as an overall review of performance.

Members asked questions and made comments in relation to:

- The considerable budgetary swings experienced in 2018/19, what the causes of these were and how they were resolved;
- How the statistic of 88% of Cheshire East schools being rated good or outstanding compares to other authorities or areas;
- Whether the new administration had discussed altering the 2019/20 budget, for example, in relation to the planned Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS);
- Concern at the potential negative implications if the council did not adopt a locality model for any future work with the New Homes Bonus;
- How effectively the council’s funding into projects supporting children whose first language is not English;
- How the council, is a significant corporate body in the area of Cheshire, is pushing for more carbon neutrality across the borough;
- How sustainable the council’s homelessness projects were that had been funded by government grants;
- The context behind the improvement in the council’s improvement in handling Freedom of Information (FOI) requests;
- Concern at the 11% annual turnover rate of council staff; and
- More information relating to some of the regeneration projects noted in the report.

The committee was advised that officers would provide the additional information requested by members and also provide more thorough, detailed responses to some of the members’ questions outside of the meeting.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the report and supporting appendices be noted.

2. That Cabinet be asked to consider the following comments and recommendations raised by the committee:

   a) That Cabinet ensures that pragmatic actions are taken to resolve unexpected financial pressures that may impact on the Council’s approved budget for 2019/20.

   b) That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee be involved in any consultation process undertaken for new, proposed ways that the Council may implement the New Homes Bonus (Phase 2).
c) That consideration be given to the air quality and pollution implications arising from motor traffic and highways, as part of any environmental improvement strategies.

d) That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee be kept informed of any review undertaken of, or modification to, the Medium Term Financial Strategy Reserve (or central contingency.)

7 FLY-TIPPING GROUP

The Chairman updated the committee on the background to the initiation and development of the Fly Tipping working group, which had originated as an overview and scrutiny task and finish group before being established as a Cabinet-approved working group, led by the 2018/19 Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care Integration.

RESOLVED

1 That, in view of recent changes to Cabinet portfolios and the allocation of chairmen of the overview and scrutiny committees, Cabinet be requested to consider whether the Fly Tipping Working Group should continue in its existing form, but with a new lead member.

2 That, subject to Cabinet’s decision in respect of the Fly Tipping Working Group, it consider which new portfolio within the new Cabinet it should fall under, and subsequently advise as to which overview and scrutiny committee that it should report to on the performance and activity of the working group.

8 ORACLE (BEST4BUSINESS)

Consideration was given to a verbal update provided by the Interim Executive Director of Corporate Services on the progress of the Best4Business programme. The committee was provided with a background of the project, as well as the joint working arrangements established with Cheshire West and Chester Council to oversee this work.

Members were advised that both councils were working towards achieving a solution within the next 12 months; there is an understanding that both councils have to be absolutely assured that the new system can replace the current system and provide the additional functionality agreed to in the original business case.

Members expressed concern that deadlines for this project had previously been missed and that its suggested date of completion had continued to be put back to a later date; were keen for the item to continue as a standing item.
RESOLVED –
That this matter remain as a standing item on all agendas of this committee and a further update be presented at its next meeting on 5 September 2019.

9 FORWARD PLAN
Consideration was given to the council’s forward plan.

RESOLVED –
1 That the committee receive the draft Economic Strategy – being formally considered by the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee – for information only.
2 That the decision ‘CE 18/19 – 62: Next Generation WAN Contract’ be added to the committee’s work programme.

10 WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT
Consideration was given to the committee’s current programme of work. The following comments or suggestions were made by members;

- That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman hold further discussions in respect of the committee’s review of the council’s communications protocol at its next internal liaison meeting with senior officers and portfolio holders;
- That the members of the Members’ Facilities, Accommodation and Culture Task and Finish Group meet to discuss the current position, and future plans, for the group;
- Future meeting agendas could be arranged so that items pertaining to the same issue, for example, ICT-related matters, are on the same meeting agenda. It was felt that this might help to improve the focus and quality of the scrutiny undertaken; and
- That officers explore whether this committee could be kept abreast about the progress of the Constitution Committee in respect of its investigation of potential committee system governance arrangements that the council could put in place from 2020/21.

RESOLVED –
That the supporting Scrutiny Officers take responsibility for contacting the relevant officers about the points raised by the committee, and liaise with the Chairman between now and the committee’s next meeting on 5 September, 2019.
The meeting commenced at 11.00am and concluded at 1.15pm

Councillor J Clowes (Chairman)