

## **CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

held on Monday, 16th March, 2020 at Committee Suite 1,2 & 3, Westfields,  
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor JP Findlow (Chairman)  
Councillor M Hunter (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors S Akers Smith, L Braithwaite, J Buckley, T Dean, A Farrall,  
P Groves, S Hogben, C Leach and K Parkinson

In attendance

Councillor C Browne-Deputy Leader of the Council  
Councillor L Crane-Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste  
Councillor N Mannion-Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration  
J Bakewell-Director of Governance and Compliance  
P Bayley-Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services  
G Bubb-Transport Manager, TSS  
M Davenhill-Contract Asset Manager  
S Davies-Operations Manager, Maintenance and Localities  
R Hibbert-Interim Head of Transport  
C Hindle-Head of Infrastructure  
R Kemp-Head of Environmental Services  
A Ross-Director of Highways & Infrastructure  
P Skates- Director of Growth & Enterprise

Visiting Councillors

Councillor D Brown  
Councillor J Clowes  
Councillor S Corcoran  
Councillor H Faddes  
Councillor A Gage

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chairman asked for clarification regarding meetings in the current crisis and what if any advice was there in relation to Coronavirus for Members and the public.

The Director of Governance and Compliance advised that

#### **66 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Brookfield and D Jefferay.

## **67 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

### **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the deletion of Councillor L Crane as Vice Chairman and replaced with Councillor M Hunter and subject to it being noted that Councillor S Hogben was a substitute.

## **68 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor M Hunter declared a pecuniary interest in respect of item 8' Review of TSS Commissioning including Flexi-Link Service by virtue of the fact that he had recently been appointed as a Director of TSS. In accordance with the Code of Conduct he left the room prior to consideration of the item.

## **69 WHIPPING DECLARATIONS**

No declarations of a party whip were received.

## **70 PUBLIC SPEAKING/OPEN SESSION**

Two statements submitted by ADAPT and Gawsworth Parish Council were read out by the Democratic Services Officer.

The statement by ADAPT related to items 6 and 7 on the agenda. In respect of item 6 ADAPT's Transport Group wished to request reconsideration of the proposal to discontinue precautionary gritting on Coole Lane and Longhill Lane, near Audlem. With support from Cheshire East Council, the group had been progressing the development of a safer all-year cycle link between Audlem and Nantwich to enable connectivity with the Cheshire East cycle network, which was at the heart of Cheshire East's cycling strategy. Coole Lane was a key part of this route. Alongside this Longhill Lane was an integral part of the only bus service serving Audlem. Discontinuing the Winter gritting of these roads would reduce the practicality of sustainable travel options in the area under Winter conditions.

In respect of item 7, they were encouraged that the response had stimulated a comprehensive redraft of the policy but were concerned that the highlighting of Priority Actions with delivery dates did not appear in the latest draft. The removal of dates was at odds with one of the main acknowledged outcomes from the consultation, namely the call for greater urgency. The removal of the annual status reporting from the strategy was considered to be another step backwards in relation to the urgency of the matter which could potentially threaten the achievement of the 2025 carbon neutrality ambition. It was suggested that these points be addressed prior to adoption of the Strategy by the Council.

The statement submitted by Gawsworth Parish Council related to item 6 on the agenda. The Parish Council considered that the Well Managed Highway consultation was inadequate when it came to the decision to cut gritting routes. The Parish Council considered the consultation thoroughly but did not recall suggesting that routes would be cut from rural areas. It was felt that there should have been proper consultation with parish and town councils in advance of the decision to change gritting routes, and whilst the Parish Council were made

aware of proposals in late 2019 through the area highways group (and had lodged a request for meaningful engagement to understand the rationale behind changes) the council was not consulted. It was considered that for changes such as these, consultation with the parish and town councils was essential.

The Parish Council was also concerned that a number of roads were either not gritted or had been removed from the gritting schedule and urged the Council to reconsider the decision and undertake a meaningful consultation with parish and town councils to identify the most important gritting routes in their areas.

## **71 CALL IN OF CABINET DECISION-CE19/20-17 WELL MANAGED HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE**

Consideration was given to the call in of Cabinet decision-CE19/20-17 Well Managed Highway Infrastructure.

The Chairman introduced the report. Councillor J Clowes who was the spokesperson then explained the reasons for the call in which focused on the adequacy of the consultation processes conducted prior to the Cabinet decision to approve the Well-Managed Highways Infrastructure Strategy and the impact on Cheshire East Highways Gritting Policies. In addition she raised concerns that information which should have been disseminated to partners in a more effective manner was not done so and therefore crucial information was not made available to Members and partners which included the availability of a grit bin policy and the Risk Assessment scoring criteria which determined which roads were to be gritted.

Councillor C Browne, the then Portfolio Holder at the time the decision was made outlined the reasons for the decision. He explained in detail the consultation processes which had been undertaken from 2018 to present as well as the legal and financial impact on the Council as a result of the delay in implementing the decision made by Cabinet back in February 2020. Councillor L Crane the current Portfolio Holder supported the case of Councillor C Browne stating that when she had been a Member of the Committee there had been no requests to rerun the consultation process at any point during the periods the Committee had considered the matter.

Members of the Committee then asked a number of questions of Councillor C Browne which were responded to relating to:-

- The consultation process with particular focus on the removal of gritting routes located near to primary and secondary schools and whether or not local Councillors should have had more involvement in the removal of these routes;
- General lack of local Member involvement in the consultation process;
- Lack of a single document containing the methodology;
- The £230,000 financial pressure within the place directorate;
- Further scope for Ward Councillors to challenge the scoring criteria which officers used and applied;
- The criteria for removing winter gritting routes;
- Cabinet Member awareness of on going consultations;
- Attendance at Area Highways Group and why Parish/Town Councils weren't invited;

- Possibility of holding further Area Highways Group meetings with invites to these meetings being extended to all schools and Parish/Town Councils to discuss the routes without going out to a full consultation.

Visiting Members, Councillors S Corcoran and D Brown attended the meeting and made a number of comments. Councillor Corcoran reiterated that each criteria had been assessed in detail and there had been no objections to the consultation process previously. In addition he stated that the Area Highways Groups had been given the opportunity to make comments and changes had been made as a result of the feedback.

Councillor M Simon, one of the call in Members then made a statement which reiterated the concerns of Councillor J Clowes stating the first she was aware of the consultation process was back in June 2019 which left only one week to feedback any comments before the consultation closed. She considered that local knowledge was vital and that Cabinet should be urged to contact all those Ward Councillors impacted by the reduction in gritting routes.

Further questions were then raised asking for clarification if there would there be a further delay should the Committee offered advice to Cabinet, how long the consultation process would take, how would it be undertaken if the call in was successful given the current situation with meetings being cancelled and would it be appropriate to make use of CHALC?

Councillor J Clowes confirmed she was happy to consider a streamlined consultation process, however she emphasised it was critical that people were aware that it was happening. She agreed that the link with the Area Highways Groups would help to satisfy the need for further consultation.

The matter was then opened up for debate. The Committee considered the two options available to them, which was to either offer no advice in which case the decision could be implemented, or offer advice, which would be submitted to Cabinet for a decision to be made on the matter.

Following consideration of the issues raised in the call in request, the responses given, Members felt it appropriate to offer the following advice to Cabinet:-

Given the delay already to implementing the policy there would be sufficient time for a further streamlined consultation process with the Area Highways Groups and Town/Parish Councils to be undertaken as part of the Well Managed Highways Infrastructure annual review process.

## **RESOLVED**

That Cabinet be advised to:-

- (1) To undertake a further round of streamlined consultation on the winter service element only as part of the annual review of the Well Managed Highways Infrastructure annual review process;
- (2) That this annual review process be carried out through the Area Highways Groups, including the involvement of all Parish and Town Councils and relevant community/cycle groups as appropriate, with supporting information to be supplied to the AHG's in advance of the meetings and shared with all schools;

(3) That a letter be sent to all schools within the Borough informing them of this additional round of consultation as part of the first annual review;

(4) That all schools be given an appropriate amount of time to respond to the consultation as part of the first annual review.

The meeting was adjourned for lunch from 12.20pm until 1.00pm).

## **72 ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY AND CARBON ACTION PLAN**

Consideration was given to a report on the Environment Strategy and Carbon Action Plan.

Members raised the following matters:-

- (i) Active travel/sustainable travel was not given sufficient consideration throughout the document.
- (ii) There was a lot to be welcomed from the strategy, however the Council could and possibly should do more, not least to have a chance of achieving carbon neutrality by 2025. Only two other Councils in the country had gone for a 2025 target date;
- (iii) The plan needed to be more specific on what the 'inset' actions were or would be;
- (iv) A consultation with Members would be undertaken as agreed prior to the publication of the Bus Strategy;
- (v) More needed to be done to support cycling around the Borough and making it safer. It was important to think cycle in everything that was done and opportunities had been missed to improve the cycling network Capital Funding might be needed to achieve this and currently there was insufficient money allocated in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, however for the Borough to be compliant by 2050 then further financial contributions would need to be included;
- (vi) There should at least be a timeline of what the Council was going to do in terms of projects up until 2025 and an annual review of where the Council was, what it had achieved, what it said it was going to do and what it hadn't done;
- (vii) No public electric charging points in Macclesfield and this needed addressing;
- (viii) The programme was too ambitious and the professional view was that a target date of 2025 was unachievable and that 2034 would be more realistic;
- (ix) Scheme or expo for electric cycles to be spearheaded by the Council or some other body;
- (x) The 2025 target would help the Council to focus;
- (xi) No reference to wildflower planting;
- (xii) Measures identified to contribute to a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> levels, some good ideas but not specific enough;
- (xiii) Inclusion of a measure for the length of cycleways built each year;
- (xiv) Had a reduction in the frequency of roadside verge maintenance to promote wild flower growth been considered within the strategy;
- (xv) More pressure needed to be placed on central Government by local MPs with regard to the funding of electric buses.

**RESOLVED**

1. That the draft Environment Strategy and Carbon Action Plan be noted.
2. That the above comments be reported back to Cabinet for their consideration.

### **73 REVIEW OF TSS COMMISSIONING INCLUDING FLEXILINK SERVICE**

Consideration was given to a report on the delivery and performance of the FlexiLink service.

Visiting Councillor, Councillor H Faddes attended the meeting and spoke in respect of the FlexiLink Service with a specific request for the service to be increased.

Members queried when the bus strategy would be published and could they comment on it once it was made public. Concerns were raised that the service was limited to Cheshire East and that it was important to lobby MP's so that there was more cross boundary liaison whereby expanding the service out of the Borough could be looked at. It was suggested that the local MP's did meet regularly with the Leader and therefore this matter could be raised at one of their meetings.

The Deputy Leader suggested that the bus strategy and charging structure for cancellations was something that the Committee may wish to look at in the future. Currently users were not charged for cancelling the service on the day.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the report be noted.

(Prior to consideration of the following item the meeting was adjourned for a short break).

### **74 PERFORMANCE SCORECARD**

Consideration was given to the performance data for services within the Council's Place directorate for quarter 3 of 2019/20. Particular focus was given to any areas of poor or worsened performance.

In respect of Performance Indicator PEN024, concerns were raised that it was difficult to reconcile the target of 45% (which until it was explained appeared to be low) with the narrative.

95% of the Council's residual waste went to energy from waste. It was suggested it would be simpler for this KPI to be the % of residual household waste sent for energy recovery for which the target could then be 95%.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the performance scorecard be noted.

### **75 FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the areas of the Forward Plan which fell within the remit of the Committee.

**RESOLVED**

That the Forward Plan be noted.

**76 WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the work programme.

It was agreed that the Bus Strategy and Charging structure for the Flexi-Link Service be included on the work programme.

**RESOLVED**

That the work programme be approved subject to the addition of the Bus Strategy and the Charging structure for the Flexi-Link service be included on the work programme.

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 2.43 pm

Councillor JP Findlow (Chairman)