

# REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

## CHESHIRE EAST COUNCILLORS' REPORT



<b>Report Reference</b>	C-21-14
<b>Meeting Date</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> September
<b>Agenda Item</b>	7
<b>Prepared by</b>	Cllrs Tony Dean and Stewart Gardiner

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### REPORT OF CLLR TONY DEAN

#### GENERAL

As I stated to the Town Clerk in July, the new Committee system makes specialists of us all, with fewer full Council meetings as the Committees take delegated powers in many areas. This report will therefore naturally focus on the areas where I represent Knutsford residents in committee - for me it is the **Environment and Communities Committee**, which covers all Environmental areas of our work as well as everything to do with planning policy and operations, community issues such as parks, public spaces, anti-social behaviour enforcement (dog poo mostly) and licensing. A full description of the responsibilities of the various new committees can be found on the CEC website.

I also sit on the **Northern Planning Committee**, but that committee has no policy role, it merely applies current policies to those planning applications which are 'called in' by a CEC Councillor or are referred to it by officers under the current CEC rules.

#### RECENT ACTIVITY AND ISSUES IN ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES

There has only been one initial virtual meeting to set out our responsibilities and the details of how the different functions for which we are responsible work, lay out our future work programme and to answer any queries. This was followed by one substantive face to face meeting in July. The next meeting is September 9th.

In the full meetings so far the committee has:

- been informed of the likely effect of the Environment Act (currently going through Parliament) on Cheshire East's waste services. The Act, in its current form, requires separate collection of food waste on a weekly basis, and also separate kerbside collection of the different recyclables. The effect on CEC alone would add up to millions in increased collection rounds and an increased number of (different specification) vehicles required. We were informed that most Councils had responded to the consultation strongly against national conformity in this way, and so have the major waste companies who have invested heavily in recyclable separation systems. Watch this space.
- Approved a new Contaminated Land Strategy for CE
- Approved a consultation on a new Sustainable Drainage (SUDS) supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- Approved two Enforcement Policies, one on anti-social behaviour (on which we work with Cheshire Police) and one on Waste Management - fly-tipping issues mostly.
- Agreed the delegation of less important decisions to various senior officers

- Been given a quick overview of the Committee's budgets in the remainder of the five year Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The item which caused the most discussion was the budget item, where the majority of members felt that the detail available to us was no way near enough for us to see clearly where overspends and underspends were occurring. Also, our ability to set and adjust our future budgets was non-existent due to the way the CE Committee system had been set up. Budgets are set centrally by the Finance Sub-Group, which reports to the Policy Committee. This means the Policy Committee holds all the power to make meaningful change in any Committee area, and is a de-facto 'Cabinet', albeit with a mixed political representation. *Plus ça change plus c'est la meme chose.*

## UPCOMING ITEMS

Please comment with the Town Council's views and requests on these items.

The committee will consider in September:

- The Draft Minerals and Waste Development Plan going out to consultation (this will become the third and final piece of the CE Local Plan).
- Adoption of a Connected Communities Strategy
- A draft Bio-diversity Net Gain SPD (supplementary planning document) going out for consultation
- A draft Developer Contributions SPD going out for consultation
- Feedback from the Houses of Multiple Occupation SPD public consultation (interestingly, one policy in this draft document effectively prohibits 'sandwiching' a dwelling house between two HMOs, which is what has just happened in Knutsford (on Manchester Road) after an appeal against CEC's refusal)
- Feedback from the Housing SPD public consultation
- A draft Jodrell Bank SPD going out for consultation

The Committee will consider in November:

- A Food law Enforcement Plan
- The CE Air Quality Annual Status Report
- The ESAR Annual Report
- A mid-year Finance Review

I look forward to receiving any comments on the line the Town Council would like me to take on any of the above issues - I appreciate it is difficult without knowledge of what the new Plans and SPDs are likely to say - they only come out just before the meetings - but any strongly held views on what they should say would be welcomed.

## REPORT OF CLLR STEWART GARDINER

### COMMITTEE SYSTEM

The New Committee System is still experiencing some teething issues, which has necessitated additional committee meetings, if this persists it is probable that the 'neutral' budgetary position of the committee system (as opposed to the Cabinet) claimed by the Administration will not be achieved; with financial consequences for services, council tax payers or both.

## **JULY FULL COUNCIL**

The Administration chose to cancel the Meeting of Full Council scheduled for July, claiming that there was no business to be enacted. The next meeting is not until mid-October.

However, a few weeks later I was asked to approve (as the de facto Leader of the Opposition) an emergency item regarding the urgent virement of expenditure because there was no meeting of the Full Council at which this could be approved. I was, however, unable to support the proposition for several reasons. Had the matter been fully debated at a meeting of Full Council, with an opportunity to question the reasoning for the proposition I may have determined otherwise.

It should be noted that had the administration chosen to do so they could have reconvened the July Committee under the Council's urgent powers to consider this and a second item of similar financial importance, but they chose not to do so.

## **HIGH LEVEL APPOINTMENTS**

In August I was involved in the recruitment process for two new Directors for Children & Families and Health & Adults Services. No formal announcement regarding these appointments (or for the Director of Place) has yet been announced, but this is anticipated shortly and hopefully the successful candidates will be in post by late Autumn.

## **GYPSIES & TRAVELLERS**

At the August meeting of the Strategic Planning Board a planning application for a 10-plot transit site for Gypsies & Travellers was approved. The new site should be ready for use sometime in 2022. This is significant because once the Council has a functional transit site, it affords significant powers to the Police in dealing with illegal encampments.

In a nutshell if a group of travellers arrives on a piece of land the Police will be able to direct them to the transit site, and if they refuse to go to this site, then they must leave the Borough. There are only 10 double-plots (so a family can house two caravans on each), but once these are full the Police will have powers to move the travellers to beyond Cheshire East's borders.

## **PLANNING**

In an attempt to deal with a backlog of Major Planning Applications additional meetings of the Strategic Planning Board are proposed; the first of these additional meetings will be in September. It is possible that the application regarding the land at Longridge may be considered at one of these meetings, but nothing is certain at this stage.