COUNCIL

21 MAY 2019
(7.00 pm - 9.15 pm)

PRESENT:
Councillor Bob Rudd (Chairman)

Councillors Val Armstrong, Martin Barker, Michael Baynham, Richard Beacham, Robert Bisset, Tom Blackmore, Keith Board, Paul Bowers, Matt Bryan, Kate Cernik, Robert Cernik, Mandy Clare, Ste Collings, Andrew Cooper, Razia Daniels, Andrew Dawson, Martyn Delaney, Lisa Denson, Samantha Dixon, Paul Donovan, Simon Eardley, Gillian Edwards, Mike Edwardson, Charles Fifield, Carol Gahan, Malcolm Gaskill, Lynn Gibbon, Louise Gittins, Gareth Gould, Graham Heatley, Phil Herbert, Myles Hogg, Jill Houlbrook, Mike Jones, Adam Langan, John Leather, Gina Lewis, Sheila Little, Phil Marshall, Nicole Meardon, Joanne Moorcroft, Eveleigh Moore Dutton, Sam Naylor, Nathan Parfod, Margaret Parker, Stuart Parker, Patricia Parkes, Trish Richards, Lynn Riley, Diane Roberts, Paul Roberts, Peter Rooney, Karen Shore, Mark Stocks, Neil Sullivan, Helen Treeby, Christine Warner, Elton Watson, Gill Watson, Helen Weltman, Peter Wheeler, Andy Williams, Mark Williams, Paul Williams, Rachel Williams and Norman Wright

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hugo Deynem, Brian Jones and Harry Tonge

Officers in attendance:
Andrew Lewis
Vanessa Whiting
Charlie Seward
Delyth Curtis
Mark Wynn
Penny Housley
Lyn Brown

Chief Executive
Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer
Deputy Chief Executive (Place)
Deputy Chief Executive (People)
Chief Operating Officer
Governance Manager
Democracy and Elections Officer

12 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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<th>Members</th>
<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>Councillor</td>
<td>Item 7 / Notice of Motion</td>
<td>In the interests of openness and transparency, following advice from the Monitoring Officer, he stated he benefitted from a number of Government subsidies in relation to electric</td>
<td>Remained in the Chamber and took part in the debate and the vote.</td>
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<td>Andrew Dawson</td>
<td>Minute 17 – Climate Emergency Declaration</td>
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cars, charging points and solar panels.

Councillor Neil Sullivan

Item 7 / Minute 17 – Notice of Motion – Climate Emergency Declaration Motion

Pecuniary Interest as his family own a manufacturing business which produces products aimed at sustainability and low carbon building.

Remained in the Chamber and took part in the debate and the vote.

Councillor Richard Beacham

Item 7 / Minute 17 – Notice of Motion – Climate Emergency Declaration Motion

Outside Body interest as a member of Friends of the Earth.

Remained in the Chamber and took part in the debate and the vote.

13 CHAIRMAN’S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman made the following announcements to Council:

- welcomed all new and returning Members elected to Cheshire West and Chester Council following the borough elections on 2 May 2019;

- announced the outcome of the Council’s Children’s Services Ofsted Inspection undertaken in March which was “Good” in all areas and congratulated everyone involved;

- announced that the new Household Waste Recycling Centre for Chester was a regional finalist in the Civic Amenity Site of the Year category of the Awards for Excellence in Recycling and Waste Management. The site had also been shortlisted in the Local Authority Success category in the National Recycling Awards next month, recognising the innovative partnership approach with our contractor HW Martin;

- reported the sad news that Magda Cumberford had passed away following a short illness. Magda had been a key member of the team based at Great Boughton Library since 2003 and was a popular and valued colleague across the service. Magda loved her job, her help, support and exceptional customer service was truly valued by customers and colleagues and she would be greatly missed. Members stood in silence in Magda’s memory.

14 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME/OPEN SESSION (INCLUDING PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS)

There were two members of the public who wished to address Council during
Public Question Time / Open Session and a third member of the public wished to present a petition to Council. A question had also been received from a member of the public unable to attend the meeting and a written response would be provided.

Dr Katherine Fallon, a GP, spoke in relation to agenda item 7, a Notice of Motion on Climate Emergency Declaration. She urged the Council to declare a climate and ecological emergency and to start taking the necessary actions straight away, including the appointment of a “climate champion” to ensure that the commitment to reduce carbon emissions to net zero was embedded across all local authority actions and plans without delay. She hoped this person would also produce a publicly available annual report on progress made.

Rahima Ahmed, representing the West Cheshire Interfaith Forum, spoke in relation to agenda item 8, a Notice of Motion on a Compassionate Council. She called for partnership working across communities and organisations to bring about a compassionate borough with the maturity, however uncomfortable, to be able to address negative issues across the borough. This would make residents feel inclusive and safe and encourage sustainable and resilient communities. She urged councillors to visit: [www.charterforcompassion.org](http://www.charterforcompassion.org) which contained a variety of tools showing how organisations can work together and weave compassion into their policies.

Tony Jones presented a petition to Council on behalf of Chester Retired Firefighters with over 6,300 names, to see the return of Chester’s second fire engine and objection to the proposed spending of £5m/£5.5m on a replacement fire station. He felt the inadequate level of fire cover would have a detrimental effect on the city which had a University and relied heavily on tourism. He urged members of the Cheshire Fire Authority to rethink building a new fire station and felt that refurbishment of the existing station would be more viable so that the money could be better spent on a second fire engine.

The Chairman received the petition and said it would be dealt with in accordance with the Council’s Petition Scheme. He thanked all the public speakers for their contributions.

15 MINUTES
DECIDED: That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 February 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 NOTICE OF MOTION - ELECTED MEMBERS PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY
Council agreed to debate a motion submitted by Councillor Samantha Dixon and seconded by Councillor Margaret Parker.

Council debated the motion and noted that a parental leave policy would give certainty to councillors when they needed to take time off for the birth, fostering or adoption of a child. The lack of parental leave should not be a barrier to someone becoming a councillor and this would be a first step in overcoming this. The motion received widespread cross-party consensus.
DECIDED:  That

Local Government is the cornerstone of our democracy; delivering services that people rely on and serving our communities. Like all colleagues on this newly elected council, we are proud of the difference we can make.

One barrier however is the absence of parental leave for elected members in local authorities. Just 4% of councils across England have a formal Parental Leave Policy in place for elected members and we know this impacts on the likelihood of women standing for Council and is a barrier to fulfilling their role.

Analysis of the 2018 Local Election results by the Fawcett Society found that only 34% of councillors in England are women, up 1% since 2017. Of the seats that were up for election in 2018, 38% went to women, up just 3 percentage points on 2014 when these seats were last contested.

The role of a councillor should be open to all, regardless of their background, and that introducing a parental leave policy is a step towards encouraging a wider range of people to become councillors, and is also a step to encourage existing councillors who may want to start a family to remain as councillors. Parental leave must apply to parents regardless of their gender, and that it should also cover adoption and fostering leave to support those parents who choose to adopt or foster.

This Council notes that Cheshire West and Chester Council does not currently have a policy relating to Parental Leave for elected Members. At present there is no legal right to Parental Leave for those elected to public office.

It is proposed that this Council should consider adopting a Parental Leave Policy for elected Members.

This council resolves to set up a working group to consider policy proposals on Parental Leave.

17 NOTICE OF MOTION - CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION MOTION

Council agreed to debate a motion submitted by Councillor Matt Bryan and seconded by Councillor Paul Bowers.

Council debated the motion and noted the vital and important work undertaken by the Chester Sustainability Form and Transition Northwich. The motion exceeded the requirements of the IPCC by five years and was felt to be a sensible place to start in order to make a difference. The actions of young people for future generations were recognised and it was felt this issue should be at the heart of decision-making going forward.

DECIDED:  That

The Council notes that:

a) Climate Change remains an existential threat to Cheshire. Global Warming and increasing climatic events (periods of heatwave, periods of intense rain, unsettled seasons) are an increasing threat to our farming community, and
threaten built areas prone to flooding. Climate Change will enhance conflict and migration from stricken areas, threatening our own stability long term.

b) The Paris Agreement to which the UK is a signatory, sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by “limiting global warming to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5°C” above pre-industrial levels.

c) The IPCC’s Special Report, published in October 2018, states that we have just twelve years to limit global warming to a 1.5°C. This can only be achieved with ambitious action from national and local government, the private sector and local communities, and requires that CO2 emissions fall from their 2010 levels by 45% by 2030, reaching net zero by 2045.

d) All governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to limit the negative impacts of climate breakdown, for the benefit of the population for which they are responsible. Therefore UK Councils need to commit to aggressive reduction targets and seek to achieve carbon neutrality as quickly as possible.

e) This Council committed to addressing climate change in October 2012, and has built many policies into the Local Plan. Notable examples are the Carbon Reduction Strategy, and the supporting Carbon Management Plan enacted in 2016.

f) Carbon emissions from the council have reduced from 54,356t to 36,472t between 2014/15 and 2016/17 (CW&C Annual Monitoring Report 2018), but over a similar time frame total CO2 emissions across the borough have remained roughly consistent at 4,075,000t to 4,054,000t (BEIS Stats).

g) 56 Councils in the UK have already responded to the IPCC 1.5°C report by declaring a ‘Climate Emergency’ and are committing resources to address the issue. As an example of good leadership, 30 of these Councils have committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030, which is the date when the IPCC predicts that we will reach a warming of 1.5°C.

In light of the above, the Council therefore agrees to:

1. Join the growing number of councils in declaring a ‘Climate Emergency’.

2. Direct the Chief Executive to produce a report to Council within six months to determine the earliest date before 2045 that CW&C and the borough as a whole can be carbon neutral, and revise its targets to meet that date (ideally 2030 to demonstrate leadership in the borough). These targets to be managed through the CW&C Annual Monitoring Report, business Carbon Management Plans, the Green House Gas Emissions Directive of 2019 and whatever other appropriate means become available.

3. Send a copy of this motion to CWAC MPs and the Secretary of State for the Environment.

To enable this council to meet its targets, and the rest of the UK to halve its carbon emissions by 2030, and to reach net zero before 2045, we call on national government, industry and regulators to implement the necessary changes with
funding, transformed national infrastructure, policy, new technologies and legislation, including:

1. Ending CO2 emissions from electricity generation across the country.

2. Investing in energy-efficient public transport across the country.

3. Ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars and vans from 2030 and make cleaner vehicles more accessible.

4. Establish a long-term nationwide Warm Homes strategy with adequate investment for energy-efficiency measures.

5. Develop a strategy for all UK businesses to be net zero carbon by 2045.

This will mitigate the damage caused by climate change and will also create a strong green economy with new jobs, less waste and with sustainable growth.

18 NOTICE OF MOTION - A COMPASSIONATE COUNCIL

Council agreed to debate a motion submitted by Councillor Louise Gittins and seconded by Councillor Nicole Meardon.

Council debated the motion and noted the following:

- The Charter for Compassion, now in its tenth year, had global commitment.
- Recent events in the news and on social media showed that society was currently divided and people felt frustrated that they were not being listened to.
- Compassion should be at the heart of politics and, despite differing views, people should be able to treat others with dignity and respect.
- The need to work with all partners to empower local people to be at the heart of decision-making.

DECIDED: That

Cheshire West and Chester Council recognises the importance of compassion and believes a Compassionate Borough is possible where every person treats others as they wish to be treated: with dignity, equity and respect.

We believe all people are born with the capacity for compassion and it must be cultivated for us to survive and thrive. We recognise the work around Compassion of the West Cheshire Interfaith Forum and Cheshire West and Chester SACRE group and commit to working with them, our partners and other organisations to meet the principles of the Charter For Compassion.

Our vision is for a compassionate Cheshire West and Chester. To be the best Borough in the country and to this end, will be one that is compassionate and caring with a strong economy. Cheshire West and Chester should be ambitious, creative and fun for all: a Council residents can be proud of.

Our plan for building Stronger Communities will be at the heart of our work. Against the background of Austerity we need to rebuild the safety nets eroded by cuts. We
will create services based on social value not just financial value. We will strive to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities and be fair and sustainable: tackling discrimination, promoting equality and fighting prejudice. Residents should feel safe on their streets and secure in their homes.

We will empower local people and communities to be at the heart of decision making. Local Services will be resilient and there when our communities need them. We need to help build Community resilience so residents can face the challenges ahead and go forward with hope and optimism.

We will be a Compassionate Council building Stronger Communities in the interests of the many.

**Supplementary information: The Charter For Compassion**

The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

**19 NOTICE OF MOTION - REMEMBERING SREBRENICA**

Council agreed to debate a motion submitted by Councillor Nicole Meardon and seconded by Councillor Paul Donovan.

Council debated the motion and, in addition to the genocide in Srebrenica, highlighted the horror of the terrorist attacks in New Zealand and Sri Lanka earlier this year. There was overwhelming consensus that hatred and intolerance should not be accepted, should be challenged and that everything should be done to ensure atrocities such as these do not happen again. The positive work being undertaken in schools to complement International Holocaust Day were also
highlighted and it was felt we must learn as a society from past mistakes and challenge hate and division where we see it.

DECIDED: That

This Council:
- Notes that 2019 is the twenty-fourth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which saw over 8,000 Muslim men and boys killed by Serbian nationalist forces.

- Notes that in 2009 the European Parliament passed a resolution that 11 July should be recognised as the day of commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide all over the EU; and in 2015 urged the development of educational and cultural programmes that promote an understanding of the causes of such atrocities and raise awareness about the need to nurture peace and to promote human rights and interreligious tolerance. All UK political parties have supported the work of Remembering Srebrenica in this regard.

- Applauds the work of those involved in the pursuit of justice for the victims and their surviving relatives, including the International Commission of Missing People (ICMP) and the Mothers of Srebrenica, whose courage and humility in the face of unthinkable horror is an inspiration to us all.

- Commends the work of the charity, Remembering Srebrenica, in raising awareness of this tragic and preventable genocide and working in communities across Britain to help them learn the lessons of Srebrenica.

The Council resolves to:
- Offer support to Remembering Srebrenica delegates from Cheshire West and Chester who visited Bosnia on the ‘Lessons from Srebrenica’ education programme and have been working tirelessly in the community to raise awareness of the genocide and learn the lessons of Srebrenica.

- Support Srebrenica memorial events in July each year throughout Cheshire West and Chester as part of the UK-wide Remembering Srebrenica Memorial Week.

- Support the work of Remembering Srebrenica in communities across Cheshire West and Chester to learn the lessons from Srebrenica to tackle hatred and intolerance to help build a better, safer and more cohesive society for everyone.

- Support the work of schools and education providers to bring the lessons of Srebrenica to young people across Cheshire West and Chester.

NOTICE OF MOTION - NOTICES OF MOTION

Council considered the following motion submitted by Councillor Andrew Dawson and seconded by Councillor Lynn Gibbon.

“The council’s constitution provides in section B4 paragraph 4.7 the following provision regarding Notices of Motion:
"If Notice is given of any Motion which, in the opinion of the Chairman (and on the advice of the Monitoring Officer) is deemed to be inappropriate or illegal, the Chairman shall be at liberty to decline to include it on the agenda. If a Motion is declined, the Member(s) who gave Notice will be informed why."

This provision has been applied several times in the past preventing motions from being debated.

If misapplied this provision can have the unwelcome and undesirable effect of stifling legitimate democratic debate.

We seek to ensure greater fairness and transparency in the application of the rules relating to Notices of Motion and in particular the justifications for refusing to include them on the agenda. Therefore, we propose the following changes to section B.4 of the Constitution:

Paragraph 4.6 change ' at least 6 working days prior' to 'at least 7 working days prior'.

Delete paragraph 4.7 and replace it with the following:

'4.7 (a) If a Notice is given of any Motion which, in the opinion of the Chairman (and on the advice of the Monitoring Officer) is considered to be inappropriate or illegal the Chairman will immediately inform the Member(s) proposing and seconding the motion advising them that he is minded to decline to include the motion on the agenda, the reasons why and what, if any steps could be taken readily to change the proposed Motion so as to make it acceptable.

(b) The Member(s) proposing and seconding the motion will then be given 1 working day either to:

(i) persuade the Chairman why their Motion should be included on the agenda; and / or

(ii) make such amendments to their proposed Motion so as to cure the objection(s) taken to it.

(c) After having given the Member(s) the opportunity to be heard and after having considered any representations made and any revised wording submitted the Chairman will determine whether or not to include the notice of motion on the agenda.

(d) The Chairman will cause to be included on the agenda for noting only a list and description of all Notices of Motion submitted for inclusion on the agenda that have, for any reason, been considered inappropriate or illegal along with the reason(s) for declining to have them included for debate."

The motion was not debated and was referred to Audit and Governance Committee.

**DECIDED:** That

the motion be referred to Audit and Governance Committee for consideration.
NOTICE OF MOTION - CAR PARKING

Council considered the following motion submitted by Councillor Razia Daniels (a change to the published agenda) and seconded by Councillor Helen Weltman.

"At a time when:
- the retail sector on the High Street is struggling; and
- other councils are removing or reducing car parking charges;

rather than taking steps to support and promote our local shops and business this council is introducing car parking charges.

Taking more money from the Borough’s motorists or those visiting us can only act as an incentive:
- to shop on-line; or
- where car parking is free;

and act as a disincentive to shop in those areas where this council controls much of the parking facilities.

Car parking charges hurt some of the most vulnerable in society such as those with impaired mobility that do not qualify for a ‘blue badge,’ pensioners and others on fixed or low incomes. Car parking that supports public transport such as at railway stations and for park and ride needs to be encouraged and supported not penalised or discouraged such as through higher costs and charges designed to reduce demand.

Given this we seek the following resolution from this council:

This council resolves:
1. to stop immediately any new car parking charges being introduced or any existing car parking charges being raised at any council owned or controlled car park anywhere in the Borough;

2. where there are already car parking charges at council car parks supporting retail centres that the charging scheme is changed (where necessary) so as to ensure that there is a minimum of 3 hours free car parking available each day for motorists so as to encourage more people to visit and shop in our local stores; and

3. that it will identify all council owned or controlled car parks in the Borough that support public transport links (such as at Railway Stations) and that it will build additional capacity within the next 24 months so as to meet the present and expected demand over the next 10 years both to encourage the use of public transport and discourage the diversion of car parking onto residential streets”.

The motion was not debated and was referred to Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
DECIDED: That
the motion be referred to Places Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

22 NOTICE OF MOTION - AIR QUALITY
Council considered the following motion submitted by Councillor Andrew Dawson and seconded by Councillor Lynn Riley.

“This Council has both a legal and a moral duty to monitor air quality and air pollution throughout the Borough. Several real time and static monitors are currently operated by the Council in locations where air quality is known or suspected to be poor. Air quality across the borough is generally considered to be good most of the time, however elevated pollution concentrations do occur in many locations and at levels that compel this council to take action.

With growing scientific evidence and public awareness about the harmful effects of poor air quality on health, our residents should be entitled to expect this Council to do all it can to safeguard everyone’s health and improve the local environment for all communities.

Councillors for Frodsham, concerned about traffic pollution, industrial developments and the effects of incinerators in the the area have prioritised air quality monitoring in Frodsham and the surrounding area since 2007-8. Several air quality monitors have been installed in Frodsham directly on their initiative; some have been funded through members’ grants. With concerns regarding the likely installation and commissioning of incinerators locally, both at Ince and at Runcorn, through their initiative an independent study of air quality was commissioned. That study revealed that there were air quality concerns in Frodsham - and that they were traffic related.

Following this study, and part funded by the council, by industry and by their members’ grants the Councillors for Frodsham had comprehensive air quality monitoring equipment installed at Manor House School, Frodsham. This was ahead of the incinerator at Ineos (which burns Greater Manchester’s waste) being commissioned.

Much has been learned about local patterns of pollution from this and the other air quality monitors in Frodsham. This work led directly to the council being compelled to declare an Air Quality Management Area (‘AQMA’) in Frodsham as air quality was compromised by traffic pollution. However notwithstanding the declaration of this AQMA and the attendant legal duties this imposes on the council this council has not implemented any measures to alleviate air pollution in Frodsham.

Given the above:

1. This Council resolves to make Cheshire West and Chester a centre of excellence for:

   (i) air quality monitoring;
   (ii) the dissemination of up to date and real time information to the public regarding their air quality;
the implementation of effective measures that will alleviate air pollution and improve air quality throughout the Borough but in particular in the vicinity of schools, care homes, hospitals and health care institutions, shopping streets, all AQMAs throughout the Borough and in any location where people are likely to exert and exercise by December 2021.

This council further resolves to:

2. ensure that effective measures to improve air quality have been implemented at and in all areas within currently declared AQMAs by 31 May 2020.

3. expand and enhance air quality monitoring throughout the Borough such that the council will be able to demonstrate that it has detailed and comprehensive air quality data in all locations where traffic is habitually congested by 31 May 2021.

4. establish a Borough wide air quality think tank to open up the opportunities for broad base involvement and drive innovations to improve air quality. This could include mobile monitoring, wearable technology and digital tools to raise awareness of the damage to public and personal health and to engage the wider public in crowd sourcing effective pollution maps for the borough.

5. co-create with others already delivering in this area, a programme of education to be offered to all schools across the borough regarding the importance of air quality and the measures that need to be taken to safeguard it”.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Karen Shore and seconded by Councillor Matt Bryan.

DECIDED: That

This Council has both a legal and a moral duty to monitor air quality and air pollution throughout the Borough. Several real time and static monitors are currently operated by the Council in locations where air quality is known or suspected to be poor. Air quality across the borough is generally considered to be good most of the time, however elevated pollution concentrations do occur in many locations and at levels that compel this council to take action.

With growing scientific evidence and public awareness about the harmful effects of poor air quality on health, our residents should be entitled to expect this Council to do all it can to safeguard everyone’s health and improve the local environment for all communities.

Given the above:

1. This Council asks Cabinet to:

   (i) review air quality monitoring across the borough;

   (ii) work to implement the actions identified in the recently published Low Emission Strategy, including the enhancement of real time information; and

   (iii) consider measures to improve air quality throughout the borough and in particular, outside of schools following the model of ‘Active Streets’ and ‘Healthy
School Streets’ initiatives and working with schools, Community Safety Partnership and others to include a programme of education across all schools.

This council further resolves to ask Cabinet to:

2. appoint a Leader’s Champion for Climate Change at the next meeting of Cabinet to oversee and drive forward policy in this important area of responsibility;

3. set up a cross-party task force for Climate Change, which will be led by the appointed member (as above) to oversee a range of areas of policy across the council to include air quality and will provide political oversight and accountability in this area; and

4. to work with partners in the public, private and voluntary sector to improve health outcomes for residents across the borough.

23 RECOMMENDATION FROM THE INDEPENDENT MEMBERS REMUNERATION PANEL

Council considered the report of the Director of Governance concerning the recommendation made by the Independent Members Remuneration Panel (IMRP) following meetings with Councillors Martin Barker, Paul Donovan, Margaret Parker and Lynn Riley.

DECIDED: That

the recommendation of the Independent Member Remuneration Panel (IMRP) for an extension to the current scheme until 31 December 2019, or until a new scheme is approved by Council, whichever is the later, be agreed.

24 NON-CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONS

The Director of Governance had received notice of 8 questions under Council Procedure Rule 10.

The questions, answers and supplementary questions and answers are attached as Appendix A to these Minutes.

25 MINUTES OF CABINET, COMMITTEES AND PANELS

DECIDED: That

the Minutes of the Cabinet, Committees and Panels included in the Minute Book published on the Website and listed in the Agenda be received and noted.

26 ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT THAT MAY BE DEALT WITH IN THE PUBLIC PART OF THE MEETING

There was no business under this item.
Chairman

Date
ITEM 14: NON-CONFIDENTIAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Question 1
From Councillor Lynn Riley to the relevant Portfolio holder

With High Streets facing unprecedented challenges, we in this Council must do all that we can to encourage and facilitate every opportunity for new and existing businesses to invest in our local retail centres.

Will the Cabinet Member agree with me that it is now a matter of urgency to address the long standing issues in the Planning Department that is failing to determine applications within the statutory timescales and in some cases requiring applicants to wait many months before a case officer is even assigned?

Answer 1

I don’t profess to have all the answers in this portfolio. It’s large and it is diverse and comes with a range of complex challenges. I’m a big believer in many heads being better than one. If any members in the chamber have got any ideas, I’m always happy to hear them, can’t always promise to agree but I am happy to listen with that in mind I agree entirely that supporting Town Centres and high streets is a priority for this Council. The Council is committed to regeneration programmes in towns across Cheshire West which through cross party working groups are being progressed. Additionally all the research shows that there is a wide range of smaller opportunities that we need to cease on if we want to support high streets and businesses that are on them.

I am really interested in how this Council can work with communities to curate our High Streets making them experience lead with events and activities that encourage people to come, to stay and to enjoy. To compete in the digital world we have to create opportunities to interact with others in ways that would not be possible online, I am also really interested in how this council can work with retailers to understand the challenges they face in a rapidly changing retail environment. The government’s response through its future high street fund is welcomed and I know the Council has bids in for this and is planning one for the recently announced heritage dimension of the funding. Planning is one of the areas where reform at Government level is key for regeneration. Parliament’s recent enquiry into high streets identified more flexibility in the change of use guidance for success and failures into towns in the first guidance and speed and cost of CPOs in areas where work needs to be undertaken. Additionally as business rates regime that potentially penalises businesses for investing in their properties with increased rates is also in dire need of reform. The report also identified the correlation between local government cuts and the impact on staffing numbers in planning teams for causing delays with applications. I think we all recognise our own planning service.
The Planning service plays a critical part in supporting the delivery of high quality development in the borough, including within our town centres. I want to assure members that there is a robust and effective management system in place to manage the workload of the service. In recent month the service has faced staff resource challenges however the management team have responded and put measures in place to resolve issues. A successful recruitment drive has been completed, and three new senior planning officers will shortly join the team. This new resource coupled with a robust workload monitoring and performance framework will help to ensure that the service continues to meet customer expectations and support development in the Borough.

Supplementary Question 1

What will the Cabinet Member do to fast track planning applications that bring new businesses into empty premises on our local high streets and town centres?

There are quite a few suggestions in the Conservative Party’s manifesto including a package of measures including reducing and removing car parking charges as well as fast tracking planning applications.

Supplementary Answer 1

I will consider those points, thank you.

Question 2

From Councillor Helen Weltman to the relevant Portfolio holder

Now that we have the first electric taxi in the borough, will the portfolio holder consider installing electric car charging points at taxi rank locations around the borough?

Answer 2

Work is ongoing to determine the most appropriate commercial model to adopt to maximise the delivery of electric vehicle infrastructure and uptake while delivering value for money for Council Tax payers. A purely commercial model for providing electric taxi infrastructure is currently highly unlikely given there is only one such vehicle in the fleet.

It is recognised that the transition to electric taxis cannot occur until there is sufficient supporting infrastructure. Electric taxis will require rapid chargers which have the ability to charge vehicles up to 80% within 40 minutes depending on battery capacity. Fast chargers that may take over four hours to deliver the same result are clearly not suitable.

Rapid chargers are very expensive to install and maintain and require the nearby presence of high voltage power cables and available capacity in the local power network. Dedicated taxi-only rapid chargers are unlikely to be installed in the short
term as it is expected that rapid chargers for public use will have sufficient capacity to accommodate both initial electric taxi demand and public demand. As demand increases there is likely to be a tipping point where either a further expansion of the public rapid charging network is required or else taxi-only rapid chargers are either installed or else allocated. Again there will be a need to consider whether this is likely to be delivered by the private sector.

Should dedicated electric taxi rapid chargers be advanced then rank locations are not necessarily considered to be suitable as not only may there be electricity supply issues that prevent the installation of rapid chargers but also because rank space is often limited and operation of the rank may be disrupted. Nearby charging points which are easily accessible to taxi drivers and private hire vehicles and which may serve multiple ranks and do not require extensive civil works are believed to present a better commercial option and value for money.

Supplementary Question 2

Do you have a rough timeframe?

Supplementary Answer 2

Within the term of this administration but as soon as reasonably practicable.

Question 3
From Councillor Charles Fifield to the relevant Portfolio holder

Can the Cabinet Member update Council as to the progress of the Cross Party Motion on Defibrillators in Schools, unanimously agreed by Council on 10 December 2015 (Item 57), which I raised again on 21 July 2016 and 17 July 2018 and was discussed further in a meeting on 21 November 2018, to create a definitive register and map of all defibrillators across Cheshire West & Chester in cooperation with the North West Ambulance Service.

Answer 3

Cheshire West and Chester Council localities team have been working with the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) to create a definitive list of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) across the local authority area. All the AEDs that are known or have been discovered have been recorded by NWAS and they hold the list which they will supply to us on request.

NWAS use the list to direct people in an emergency. The Localities team have also been working with NWAS to identify areas where there are gaps in provision which will help to target resources to supply additional AEDs; some Elected Members have used their Member budgets to purchase an AED.

Localities also helped to produce a list of schools that have an AED(s); this was undertaken in April 2018.
In addition to this, Mark Simmons from the Council Localities team runs the Cheshire West Heartstart group which has two objectives. Firstly to supply AEDs in to the community, so far 77 AED’s have been purchased through the Heartstart scheme. The second is to provide free training in emergency life support skills e.g. CPR, there has been 1,785 people trained in emergency life support skills since the scheme began in September 2013 with all training provided by qualified volunteers.

On 20th March 2019, the Health and Wellbeing board also received the Peoples overview and scrutiny review on the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS). As part of the meeting, the Board heard the development and growth of the community defibrillator programme, including the increases in trained first response volunteers.

NWAS reported that over 120 community public access defibrillators (which are externally located defibrillators) are now in place or planned. A further 380 public access defibrillators (located internally but with restricted access) are now located across Cheshire West and Chester.

The Board welcomed the increased number of defibrillators in rural communities which alongside the volunteer community first responders, helps support the ambulance service in getting assistance to, for example, cardiac arrest patients as fast as possible.

It has been agreed in discussions between Council officers and North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) that NWAS are the experts in this area and are therefore responsible for the definitive list and mapping across the North West. This will enable them to direct members of the public to a defibrillator in an emergency situation. Cheshire West and Chester Council has provided NWAS with the most accurate data on locations within the Council area and continue to work with them to ensure this is up to date and NWAS are in the process of mapping this. We do not have a timescale, but will be happy to furnish Cllr Fifield when it has been agreed by NWAS.

Supplementary Question 3

Thank you. Do we have sight of the draft map in relation to where the locations are? The reason for this is a couple of areas in my ward expressed an interest in relation to defibrillators and there has been a slight argument as to where they are. Whilst it is important that NWAS takes the lead on this, as Councillors we are involved in our local communities it would be a great tool if we were to circulate it together with whatever caveats are required.

Supplementary Answer 3

Yes - I can ask NWAS for that information and that data. That is the plan that we have that mapping exercise that we can identify gaps across the Borough so we can make sure every area is covered by a defibrillator and hopefully an emergency responder as well.
I have asked officers to get together and make sure this happens. There is a group of officers dedicated to this task – I’m sure they will be in touch with you when that’s done.

Question 4
From Councillor Charles Fifield to the relevant Portfolio holder

A decade ago, a Eurostar report stated the UK had one of the worst per capita rate of pedestrian fatalities in Europe, with 90% of these occurring away from pedestrian crossings, can the portfolio holder confirm the number of new pedestrian crossings installed in the Borough since 2009?

Answer 4
As Highway Authority the Council does not routinely record the location of all pedestrian crossings across the Borough. There are a number of crossing points, both controlled (through traffic signals) and uncontrolled (through the provision of dropped kerbs) and the Council has a detailed inventory of electrical installations at controlled crossing points; currently there is little information available on uncontrolled pedestrian crossing facilities.

Using information contained within our asset inventory there has been a total of 92 signalised pedestrian phases installed across the Borough since May 2009. In addition, there have been 14 new zebra crossings installed.

Supplementary Question 4
Thank you. Would the Cabinet member consider looking at the issue of more pedestrian crossings as a way to help with issues such as climate change and air quality? Would the Portfolio holder consider some survey work in relation to that for a pedestrian crossing that is proposed and already funded through section 6 in my ward which is Cuddington and Sandiway?

Supplementary Answer 4
I would be interested to talk to you about the crossing in your ward actually. I definitely will do that.

In terms of improving the safety of our roads, one of the best things we’ve done is introduce 20mph zones particularly in built up areas and around schools. That’s been our commitment and our pledge which we have delivered. Thank you.

Question 5
From Councillor Andrew Dawson to the relevant Portfolio holder

When will we finally see action in Frodsham to improve air quality along the A56 in general and in the AQMA in particular?
Answer 5

The measures that have been recommended in the Air Quality Action Plan are been assessed against traffic data that has been collected to determine which proposals would have a positive impact on the Frodsham Air Quality Management Area at the junction of Fluin Lane and the A56.

Air quality monitoring within the AQMA confirms that nitrogen dioxide levels are continuing to fall with all monitored locations in the AQMA compliant this year. This continued improvement is believed to reflect the tightening of vehicle emissions limits for new vehicles. If this is the case, it is predicted that levels will continue to fall without any intervention. Further improvements will be delivered within the context of the borough-wide measures contained in the Low Emission Strategy.

Question 6
From Councillor Andrew Dawson to the relevant Portfolio holder

Howey Lane in Frodsham remains in a deplorable state. Frodsham’s annual downhill run takes place in just over a month? Will the road be repaired by then or should the organisers look for an alternative route?

Photographs showing the state of this road will be posted on frodshamторies.blogspot.com

Answer 6

The section of carriageway on Howey Lane between Beechlands Cottage and No. 39 was resurfaced during September 2018. As part of our regular highway inspection programme other highway defects have been identified and repairs were undertaken in February 2019. The highway team utilised the February 2019 closure to undertake other works which included drainage repairs, road sweeping, road edging and gully cleansing.

A further section of Howey Lane is programmed to be resurfaced this financial year.

Supplementary Question 6

In my judgement Howey Lane is too dangerous to run on, gravel and severe pot holes. Is it going to be repaired before 7 July?

Supplementary Answer 6

It is in the programme for this financial year, if we can bring it forward we will but I will need to discuss this with officers.
Question 7
From Councillor Andrew Dawson to the relevant Portfolio holder

Ashton Drive, Frodsham remains in a shocking state. Why has this road not been repaired notwithstanding countless referrals to the Council’s Highway team and even the Chief Executive being shown the want of repair on a personal tour?

Photographs showing the state of this road will be posted on frodshamstories.blogspot.com

Answer 7

Planned highway patching at Ashton Drive is programmed for this financial year.

The Council, as Highway Authority, will continue to inspect the highway network and undertake repairs where required.

Supplementary Question 7

Does the Cabinet member have confidence in her inspection team? It shouldn’t take me to raise these issues; surely her team should be on top of them.

Supplementary Answer 7

Yes, I do have confidence in the Highways Inspection Team.

Question 8
From Councillor Lynn Gibbon to the relevant Portfolio holder

Are you able to provide the total number of commercial and industrial properties owned by the Council in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford and the % of these properties currently vacant awaiting tenants for periods 1 to 3 years, 3 to 6 years and over 6 years?

Answer 8

In total there are 783 properties listed on our commercial portfolio of which 3.7% have been vacant for less than 12 month, 2.8% for between 1 and 3 years, 0.5% for between 3 and 6 years and 1.2% over 6 years. It is usual to have vacancies within a complex and diverse estate such as ours to allow for natural ‘churn’ of tenants and the inevitable gap between a tenant leaving and a unit being refitted, marketed and let to a new tenant. Some units are also held due to the need for refurbishments or repair. In total 8.2% of the estate is vacant which according to external advisors CBRE who would expect between 5-10% for a mixed portfolio such as ours.
Supplementary Question 8

Would the Cabinet member agree that marketing is crucial and be prepared to review these findings to address these concerns to a small task group?

Supplementary Answer 8

I’m told as a Council we currently market our vacant properties on our website, Rightmove, Co-Star Property Showcase and a quarterly publication commercial property register.

Officers have looked into some of the lengths of voids that we have at the moment. Some of the fewer than one year ones that we have at the moment seem to be in the main brand new properties or properties that have just been handed back to us. The majority of the others are in the process of being redeveloped or in the process of being part of a development which is going forward at the moment. They are being reviewed. It is like everything – we can always do better and I’m sure that in the coming four years we will be seeking to do better with this.