

**THESE MINUTES WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING ON 12
SEPTEMBER FOR APPROVAL AS A CORRECT RECORD**

WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the: **WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
(EXTRAORDINARY MEETING)**

Held on: **WEDNESDAY 8 AUGUST 2007**

Held at: **COUNCIL OFFICES, BRADLEY ROAD, TROWBRIDGE**

Present: Councillors Alford, Binding, Blakemore, Brown, Bryant, Burden, Carbin, Chivers, Coop, Davis, Denison-Pender, Eaton, Fortescue, Fuller, Griffiths, Hawker, Hedley, Humphries, March, Mounde, Mudge, Newbury, H Osborn, J Osborn, Parks, Payne, Phillips OBE, Repton, Ridout, Swabey, Walker, While and Wiltshire

Officers: Chief Executive (AP) Head of Democratic and Legal (NM) Member Support Officer (KH)

81. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bolwell, Carr, Conley, Ezra, James, King, Martindale and Seager.

82. Declarations of Interest

Declaration

Personal interest – Member may be affected by loss of significant allowances

Personal Interest – Member serves on the County Council

Personal interest – Member may be affected by loss of significant allowances. Also Member serves on the County Council.

Councillor

Eaton, Fortescue, March, Mounde, Osborn H, Payne, Phillips OBE & Wiltshire Chivers

Davis, Newbury, Osborn J, Swabey & While

83. Announcements from the Chairman

The Chairman announced that it may be necessary to move to a closed session sometime during the discussions and if so members of the press and public would need to leave the chamber.

84. Implications of the Secretary of State's decision – Local Government Reorganisation in Wiltshire

Open Forum: Mr Francis Morland

Chief Executive Andrew Pate presented his report to:

- Provide members with background information relating to the Secretary of State's recent decision about the structure of local government in Wiltshire
- Seek a decision about whether the Council wishes to continue to oppose the reorganisation decision by maintaining its support for the judicial review being led by Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council.
- Start to prepare for work involved in the planning for unitary authority.
- Start to prepare for changes in priorities and service plans for West Wiltshire District Council between now and vesting day for unitary authority

The Chief Executive referred to other areas and the apparent inconsistencies in the Secretary of State's decisions.

In particular Somerset, a neighbouring county was highlighted. The reasons given were that there was a lack of support from the stakeholders for a Unitary Council.

Cumbria was also highlighted. The reason given to not implement a unitary structure was that Cumbria has a geographical division with a mountain range, similar, however can be said of Wiltshire and the Salisbury Plains.

A debate ensued whereby support was expressed for a judicial review, and the following key points were raised:

- The decision by the Secretary of State was 'A Blow for Democracy'
- Little local decision making will lead to lower level of services for West Wiltshire
- If a Unitary Council were to proceed there should be equal opportunities between County and the Districts.
- To watch the Shrewsbury and Atcham judicial process closely as outcome will provide us with a good idea of what to expect.

Cllr George Batten from WCC answered questions regarding the Unitary proposal.

He stated that elections and implementations will occur in either 2008 or 2009, but that a view on timelines had to be expressed to CLG by the end of September, and that they will be seeking the District's views.

He also stated that the Districts and County will need to work closely to ensure a smooth transition and that the Districts will need to be flexible in what is a difficult situation. The work has to continue assuming that Unitary proposal will go ahead, even if this means work has to be aborted down the line, should the decision be overturned.

A further debate ensued after Cllr Battens presentation and the following key point was made that:

- We need the best opportunity to put forward the viewpoint of WWDC and more measured debate is needed, for which more time is required.

It was

RESOLVED:

- **That Council continues to support Shrewsbury and Atcham with their judicial review of the Secretary of State's process for Local Government Reorganisation and, in addition recommends, in principle, to Cabinet to pursue separate legal action.**
- **That it is the view of West Wiltshire District Council that the Elections for the Unitary Council should be held in May 2009 with a vesting date in August 2009.**
- **That Council note the implications of the Local Government review process for the Council's projects and service plans and request Cabinet to review these matters in detail.**
- **That Council note the potential role of the Scrutiny Committee, the Staffing Committee and the Local Strategic Partnership and request them to positively assess the roles that they can play to support the change and integration process.**

RECORDED VOTE:

Councillors Davis, Osborn H, Osborn J, Swabey and While requested that their abstention from the vote to support and pursue a judicial review be recorded.

These minutes were prepared by Karen Hart, Member Support Officer, who can be contacted on telephone number 01225 776655 ext. 242 or email khart@westwiltshire.gov.uk

(19.00 – 21.45)