



JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRANSITION BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting Held at County Hall, Trowbridge – 31 October 2008

In Attendance

Members
Cllr Anthony Molland – in the Chair
Cllr Jeff Osborn WCC
Cllr Ian West WCC
Cllr Mollie Groom WCC
Cllr Ricky Rogers WCC
Cllr Christine Reid NWDC
Cllr Jonathon Seed KDC

Also in attendance:

Carlton Brand, Corporate Director, Resources
Ian Gibbons, Service Director, Legal & Democratic Services
Ian Cook, Programme Officer Manager
Lucy Chivers, Transitional Communications Officer

Support Officers Scrutiny:

Paul Kelly, Janine Gassmann WCC
Marie Lindsay WWDC
Julia Densham, NWDC

1. Apologies and Membership

Apologies were received from Keith Humphries WWDC and Mike Hewitt SDC.

Molly Groom WCC substituted for Chris Humphries WCC.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 26 September 2008

The minutes for the meeting of 26 September were signed as a correct record subject to an amendment replacing the third recommendation under minute number 9(2) (Waste Task Group) as follows:

“To authorise the Task Group to continue its work once the conditions were met which had previously been agreed by JOSTB.”

3. Chairman’s Announcements

(1) The Chairman reported that the next meeting of the JOSTB would be held on 21 November and not, as currently scheduled, on 28 November.

- (2) The Chairman also reported that there would be a special meeting of the JOSTB on Tuesday, 17 February at 10.30am in the Council Chamber to allow all non-Executive members to comment on the Leader of the IE's budget proposals for 2009-10 before County Council sets the budget on 24 February.
- (3) The Vice Chairman was thanked for chairing the last meeting of the JOSTB.

4. Towards One Council

(1) Progress Report

The JOSTB considered the report by the Service Director, Policy, Research & Communications. The Programme Office Manager introduced the report and highlighted that activity currently focussed on finalising organisational structures and generating staffing lists from all five authorities, including identifying potential budget implications and allocating staff to directorates. It was anticipated that staff would be contacted and consulted in the week commencing 10 November.

In response to members' questions on existing and future terms and conditions for district staff, the Corporate Director, Resources reported that the budget would be built up on the current costing, and that the harmonisation of terms and conditions would commence by October 2009 based on last year's pay reform scheme within the County Council. This was fundamental to delivering efficiencies in the bid. The originally anticipated three-year protection period for existing terms and conditions had been legally challenged elsewhere on the basis of inequality of pay, and the position required renegotiation with trade unions.

Members felt that there was potential risk for staff retention and morale in the near future over offers of employment in the new authority if district staff were currently employed under better terms and conditions than County Council staff.

Resolved – To note the Progress Report.

(2) Arrangements in the Interregnum Period

At the last meeting of the JOSTB, three questions in relation to Executive and Overview & Scrutiny arrangements in the interregnum period were raised.

The Service Director, Legal & Democratic Services tabled a briefing note setting out the provisions relating to the questions posed. He pointed out that O&S arrangements in the interregnum period would fall to the WCC O&S Management Committee on the basis that the County Council was a continuing authority.

Members were of the view that JOSTB and its task groups, where appropriate, should continue their work as currently constituted until June

2009 as there was ex-district member representation on the IE during the interregnum period. The Service Director, Legal & Democratic Services agreed to bring back a report to the next Board meeting setting out provisions including those for voting co-opted members.

As part of the discussion, members commented on the interim arrangements for development control. Jonathon Seed KDC moved that democratic representation and the ability to call-in should be retained during the interregnum period, especially with regards to householder applications. This was seconded by Christine Reid NWDC and supported by the Board.

Marie Lindsay, support officer from WWDC, pointed out that on 26 September JOSTB had considered a report prepared for the IE meeting on 23 September, entitled "Developing the Development Control Service", which dealt with call in procedures during the interregnum period. At the same meeting the Board also considered the Development Control Task Group's comments on this report. No objections to any parts of both papers had been received and the Board agreed to retrospectively endorse the Development Control Task Group's views.

Resolved

- (1) To note the position;**
- (2) To request a report to the next meeting on the provisions allowing JOSTB to continue as currently constituted until June 2009.**
- (3) To recommend to the IE that call-in should be retained during the interregnum period, especially of householder applications, in order to maintain democratic involvement in the planning process.**

5. Appointments Procedure

The JOSTB considered a report by the Assistant Director, LGR Staffing which was prepared for the special meeting of the IE on 6 October. The IE had decided to commence the implementation and population of staffing structures as soon as possible rather than after April 2009 (as per option 1 in the report).

Members commented on the sufficiency of the £7m budgeted for severance procedures. The Corporate Director, Resources was confident that this sum was more than adequate bearing in mind past experience and members noted that a report on this was on the Board's work plan for January. Members also emphasised the importance of transferring district staff to the new authority in order to keep area expertise and corporate intelligence in the future.

The Corporate Director, Resources further reported that the trade unions were involved in the job evaluation process and that if their engagement was not forthcoming, external accreditation of the outcomes of the process would be sought.

Resolved – to note the report.

6. Organisational Structure – Roles and Responsibilities

The JOSTB considered the revised organisational structure chart which incorporated the Board members' comments made on 25 July. The Programme Office Manager tabled a further updated version of the structure chart and drew members' attention to the changes made.

The Board had previously identified the risk of duplication of work in several areas in the draft structure. Although this was addressed in the responses received, members still recognised a potential overlap where different directorates were to cover similar areas of work and appropriate communication and coordination would have to be ensured.

Members also commented on capacity issues within the draft structures, and especially within the Democratic Services and Elections teams as well as the support for members in the districts during the nomination period. It was felt that a rapid scrutiny exercise would be beneficial to address specific issues and gain the necessary assurances.

Resolved

(1) To note the updated position;

(2) To undertake a rapid scrutiny exercise on the draft structures for the Democratic Services and Election teams before the next Board meeting.

7. Financial Update

Members noted that the report identified a schedule of finance activity between now and January 2009, rather than containing a financial update with figures. This would be available again in November.

The Corporate Director, Resources reported that the first staffing structures were now being costed and migrating into SAP. He also drew the Board's attention to his paper entitled "Business Management Programme & Shared Service Team: Confirmation of Cost Reduction Plan and Year One Achievements" which was considered by the IE on 29 October and contained the latest figures on BMP and SST savings.

Resolved – To note the Financial Update and that the Change Management Task Group had been involved in the scrutiny of BMP and SST.

8. Task Groups

(1) Development Control

The Board noted that no meetings of the Task Group were currently scheduled and future activity depended on the content of the further report which would be considered by the IE on 13 November.

Resolved – To note the update.

(2) Waste

The Board's current position was reported.

Resolved – To note the update.

(3) Area Boards

In the absence of both the Chairman of the Task Group and the Scrutiny Support Officer, it was reported that a meeting had been set up with all Chairmen of the pilot area boards and the Service Director, Community Leadership and Governance on 4 November.

Members raised concerns in the following areas:

- Inconsistency across the County, e.g. involvement of and partnership with parish councils and their members as well as pilot boards being at different stages in their development;
- Potential difficulties in the future development of area boards in areas which are not currently being developed as pilots;
- There was currently no clear definition of the relationship between Area Boards, Community Area Partnerships and Community Area Forums;
- Current insufficient officer support of pilot area boards in the light of existing problems in specific areas.

Members also commented that the original bid for unitary local government in Wiltshire was fundamentally based on strong and resilient area arrangements. Members were not confident that this would be established within the five remaining months to Vesting Day considering the existing difficulties and time pressures.

Members noted that the lead IE member for Community Leadership & Support and the Service Director, Community Leadership & Support had previously attended Task Group meetings.

Resolved – To note the update and to seek an interim report from the Task Group to the next meeting with an invitation to the IE lead member to respond to the Board.

(4) Customer Access

Julia Densham, support officer from NWDC, reported that the delivery of the project was on track and the Task Group's final report would be submitted to the JOSTB in due course.

Resolved – To note the update.

(5) Housing

The Board received the update. Members raised concerns about the future of affordable housing, the future management of the housing stock in Salisbury and the situation of the housing revenue account.

Resolved – To note the update and the issues raised.

(6) Change Management (Incl. ICT Transition) – WCC

It was reported that the Change Management Task Group would next meet on 12 November.

Resolved – To note the update.

9. Scrutiny of the Critical Path and Day One Plan

Since the last meeting, four members had volunteered to scrutinise the Critical Path and Day One Plan documents in detail and a meeting with the Programme Manager would now be set up in advance of the next meeting of the JOSTB on 21 November.

The Scrutiny Manager WCC reported that support officers would meet with representatives of the Programme Office on 5 November to initially align past, current and future transitional scrutiny business on the Critical Path and Day One Plan documents. The meeting with members was expected to throw up a number of topics for future scrutiny.

Members commented on the potential benefits of utilising external support for the task. The Scrutiny Manager WCC reported that external consultants were already being used for various purposes within the transitional work and consideration would be given to this if needed after the initial meeting.

Resolved – To note the update and to receive a report back from members after their meeting with the Programme Manager.

10. Review of Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector

The Vice Chairman of the Board reported that he, together with Tony Molland and John English WCC, had undertaken a rapid scrutiny exercise on the report on the Voluntary and Community Sector prior to consideration of this by WCC Cabinet on 21 October. Cabinet endorsed the findings, including a recommendation to the IE to maintain funding next year at the current level.

Members commented on the future of the Community Safety Partnership grants and how they would be pulled together in the future.

Resolved – To note the position.

11. Implementation Executive Minutes

The minutes of the special meeting of the IE on 6 October 2008 were circulated, and the minutes of the IE meeting on 29 October tabled.

The Chairman updated the Board on the IE meeting on 29 October.

Resolved – To receive the minutes of the IE meetings on 6 and 29 October.

12. Outline Work Programmes

The Board received its outline work programme and the future work programme of the IE.

Members commented on the frequency of meetings in the next year in the light of increased transitional activity of the IE. This would partly be subject of the report of the Scrutiny Manager WCC at the next meeting.

Resolved

(1) To approve the outline work programme for the Board.

(2) To note the IE Work Programme.

13. Next ordinary meeting – 21 November at North Wiltshire District Council Offices

(Duration of Meeting: 10.30am – 1.20pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Janine Gassmann,
Democratic & Members' Services, Wiltshire County Council. Direct line:
(01225) 713597.