



# COUNCIL

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**Minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on Thursday 14 June 2007 at the Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham.**

**Present:**

Chairman.....Councillor C Crisp

Councillors DB Allen, RMH Berry, CMR Boase, S Bodman, AM Bucknell, CJ Caswill, RL Cinnamond, AC Clements, PJ Doyle, GR Greenaway, MEM Groom, JM Hartless, MP Hatton, IJ Henderson, JR Henning, PJ Hutton, HT Jones, J. Lay, E Marston, SB Meadowcroft, SD Meadows, SG Parker, JA Phillips, N Phillips, A Pier, HR Plenty, CV Ramsey, C Reid, PS Roberts, WF Roberts, RF Sanderson, JR Scragg, ML Singlehurst, SJ Still, TR Sturgis, JPSS Thomson, RL Tonge, AJ Trotman, VA Vines and C Wannell.

Officers Present: D. Burbidge (Chief Executive), P. Jeremiah (Team Leader Legal Services), S. Pangbourne (Deputy Chief Executive) and M. Todd (Senior Policy and Democratic Services Officer).

**C16. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors RAC Causer, PR Darby, JP Doubell, SK Doubell, H Greenman, AK Hill, RB MacGregor, JA Scott and AM Wannell.

**C17. Declarations of Interest**

The following Members declared personal interests relating to minute number C20 and remained in the Chamber during the consideration of this item:

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Nature of Interest</u></b>
Cllr D Allen	Member of Chippenham Town Council



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Cllr C Boase	Member of Calne Town Council
Cllr S Bodman	Member of Cherhill Parish Council
Cllr A Clements	Member of Cricklade Town Council
Cllr P Doyle	Member of Wootton Bassett Town Council
Cllr G Greenaway	Member of Purton Parish Council
Cllr M Groom	Member of Wiltshire County Council and Lydiard Millicent Parish Council
Cllr J Hartless	Member of Box Parish Council
Cllr M Hatton	Member of Cricklade Town Council
Cllr I Henderson	Member of St Paul Malmesbury Without Parish Council
Cllr R Henning	Member of Wiltshire County Council
Cllr E Marston	Member of Corsham Town Council
Cllr S Meadows	Member of Stanton St Quintin Parish Council
Cllr S Parker	Member of Box Parish Council
Cllr A Phillips	Member of Chippenham Town Council
Cllr N Phillips	Member of Chippenham Town Council
Cllr A Pier	Member of Calne Town Council
Cllr H Plenty	Member of Calne Town Council
Cllr C Ramsey	Member of Calne Town Council
Cllr P Roberts	Member of Wootton Bassett Town Council
Cllr W Roberts	Member of Wootton Bassett Town Council
Cllr R Sanderson	Member of Malmesbury Town Council
Cllr J Scragg	Member of Chippenham Town Council
Cllr S Still	Member of Tockenham Parish Council
Cllr T Sturgis	Member of Wiltshire County Council
Cllr J Thomson	Member of Wiltshire County Council
Cllr R Tonge	Member of Colerne Parish Council
Cllr A Trotman	Member of Calne Town Council

Cllr V Vines	Member of Dauntsey Parish Council
Cllr C Wannell	Member of Wootton Bassett Town Council

**C18. Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

**C19. Public Question Time/Receipt of Petitions**

(a) Mr Bruce Matthews, Longwell Green, Bristol

Mr Matthews asked the following questions on behalf of UNISON:

- (1) Bearing in mind this Council's commitment to Government policy for the maximum consultation with the public on matters of community interest, do Members of this Council feel that not to consult the public, hold a referendum, or otherwise engage the community on the major issue of the abolition of this Authority, is a significant lapse in the democratic process and something to be highly regretted?
- (2) During the recent District Council elections, newly elected Members of this Authority had a clear opportunity to campaign on the question of the formation of a unitary authority for Wiltshire, if they failed to make it clear that if elected, they would advocate the abolition of North Wiltshire District Council, do such Members feel they have a mandate from their electors to vote for unitary status at this meeting?
- (3) Recently this Council was engaged in a controversial exercise to reduce leisure centre provision in North Wiltshire for financial reasons, what message does it send to the good people of Calne and Cricklade that a vote for unitary status will see nearly £50 million of assets transferred to the County without any guarantee that these assets will be re-invested in North Wiltshire?
- (4) The general verdict from the professional district council officers who have examined the unitary proposals based on their specialist and expert knowledge and experience, is that much of the anticipated savings will not be achieved, for example it is calculated that benefits and council tax systems alone will cost £10 million and take five years to integrate, in these circumstances, do Members feel confident that the County has enough skills, resources and experience to organise change on such a large scale, and do they agree with Mr William Hague MP who says "that claimed financial savings through re-organisation rarely materialise? "
- (5) It is highly regrettable that nowhere in the County's papers has the most important issue been addressed, namely the climate change crisis, the proposed structure and organisational framework of the unitary authority will generate a minimum of 50,000 new and extended car journeys by the public, councillors and staff and is clearly an anti-green measure, as the County does not know its own current carbon footprint or the footprints of the District Councils and has also failed to

undertake an environmental audit on its proposals, how can a new unitary authority contribute to the Government policy of climate change reduction?

- (6) Is this Council aware that many District Council staff regard the unitary proposals as unnecessary, wasteful, inefficient and that they consider that they will be second class employees in a continuing authority and that the unitary proposals will lead to disruption to careers and family life, in such circumstances, as staff will be leaving their present jobs as soon as possible, with the best ones leaving first, are Councillors aware of the severe impact unitary proposals will have on current and future services?
- (7) On pages 49 and 50, Appendix 4, of this meeting's agenda, a statement is made that a unitary council will be "a completely new organisation", this statement has already been over ruled by the Chief Executive and Leader of the County Council who have informed staff that they wish to ask the Secretary of State that Wiltshire County Council should be a continuing authority, if the County Council can change its pledges so easily and so blatantly, how can councillors, the public and UNISON Members trust any documentation or assurances emanating from the County Council?

The Leader of the Council stated that a written response would be sent to Mr Matthews.

- (b) Mr Philip Allnatt, Kington Langley

Mr P Allnatt asked the following questions:

- (1) About seven years ago Councillor Peter Doyle, sitting next to you, intervened in a debate about the "fair or unfair" funding distribution of expenditure across the District. He suggested that Area funding should be on a *per capita* basis. This was rejected by the Leader, Cllr Mrs Coleman. Is the new Leader willing to reconsider this innovative idea? Would he regard it as one way in which any future move to reorganise local government could be forced to underpin the importance of local choice, flexibility and accountability?

The Leader of the Council responded to this question stating that the new administration was currently getting to grips with the financial position of the Council. There were many considerations to be taken into account and changes would not happen overnight. The question of Area funding would be taken into account by the Executive when considering the Council budget.

- (2) On 17 January this year Council was given the opportunity on the basis of a "free vote" to support or not the County Council bid for "unitary" status, at which time support was given by all Conservative, UKIP, Independent, Labour and some LibDem Councillors present. Can the Leader confirm whether at that time his group had a free or "whipped" vote and what is the situation at tonight's meeting?

The Leader of the Council responded to this question stating that the Conservative Group had discussed this matter and had agreed a way forward for this meeting.

(c) Petition – Mr P Allnatt

Mr P Allnatt presented a petition regarding the proposals for unitary structures which stated that the petitioners believed it to be a mistake, at this stage, to reverse the policy of Council.

**C20. Proposals for Future Unitary Structures: Stakeholder Consultation**

Consideration was given to Report No. 5 giving the Council an opportunity to respond to the Government's stakeholder consultation document on proposals for future unitary structures, which invited responses by 22 June 2007.

A letter from Wootton Bassett Town Council was circulated. The letter informed Members that Wootton Bassett Town Council was not persuaded by the Wiltshire County Council arguments in favour of unitary status and believed that this may lead to a more centralised and bureaucratic Local Government that would be less responsive to local needs. The Town Council was also concerned that its interest in retaining a separate identity from Swindon would be better served by North Wiltshire District Council rather than a larger Wiltshire unitary authority.

Councillor P Doyle moved and Councillor C Wannell seconded the following motion:

“Following discussion with constituents during the May 2007 local election campaign North Wiltshire District Council withdraws its previously expressed support for a possible new unitary authority for Wiltshire.”

Councillor C Caswill then moved and Councillor D Allen seconded the following amendment:

“(1) To add a comma after “campaign” on line 2, followed by “and taking account of:

- (a) the confused arrangements for public consultation, and
- (b) the lack of convincing evidence of public support.

(2) In line 3, replace “a possible” with “the current proposal for a”.

The following issues were discussed:

- The public had not been consulted on the unitary proposals.
- There was no evidence of public support for a unitary authority.

Councillor A Bucknell moved and Councillor R Tonge seconded that the vote on the amendment be now put.

This was put to the vote and was carried.

The Council then voted on the amendment and this was lost.

Councillor A Bucknell moved and Councillor P Roberts seconded that the vote on the original motion be now put.

This was put to the vote and was carried.

It was therefore:

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**Resolved** that following discussion with constituents during the May 2007 local election campaign North Wiltshire District Council withdraws its previously expressed support for a possible new unitary authority for Wiltshire.

The meeting started at 7pm and finished at 7.30pm.

There were 7 members of the public present.

Signed:.....

Date:.....