

**Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008 at Monkton Park, Chippenham commencing at 7.00pm.**

**Present:** Councillor R.L. Tonge ..... in the Chair

Councillors R.M.H. Berry, V.H. Greenman, C.V. Ramsey, R. Sanderson and V.A. Vines

**Non-Executive Councillors Present:**

Councillors C.J. Caswill, S.K. Doubell, P. Doyle, I.J. Henderson, A. Phillips, A. Wannell and C. Wannell

**Officers Present:**

D. Burbidge (Chief Executive), C. Couzins-Short (Cleansing & Amenities Interim Manager) S. McGregor (Assistant Chief Executive), and L. Pullin (Democratic Services Officer)

**E27. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.M. Bucknell, C. Crisp and N.M. Phillips.

**E28. Public Question Time/Receipt of Petitions**

There were no public questions nor petitions received.

**E29. Questions from Non-Executive Councillors**

There were no questions from Non-Executive Councillors received.

**E30. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 19<sup>th</sup> June and 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2008 were considered.

**Resolved** that the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on the 19<sup>th</sup> June and 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**E31. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **E32. Leader's Announcements**

The Leader made the following announcements:

#### **Calne Phase 3 Update**

The start on site of Part 1 of the project which is the new shops and homes will begin on Monday 28 July, with demolition commencing on 11 August and taking about 4 weeks. Woolworths fit out starts end July 2009, and completion of Part 1 is due to end October 2009.

Work on Parts 2 (refurbishment of Phelps Parade) and 3 (New Square) is set to commence on site in January 2009 with substantial completion as Part 1. A planning application for Part 4 - the private development is expected within a month.

#### **Change to Agenda Order**

With the agreement of the Executive I intend to move Agenda Item 12 (Improvements to Play Areas) to be considered as Agenda Item 7.

*Admin Note – This was agreed by the Executive.*

### **E33. Improvements to Play Areas**

Consideration was given to Report No. 12 (circulated with the Agenda) which set out a number of improvements which could be made to play areas within the District of North Wiltshire.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The welcoming of access and facilities for disabled users of play areas;
- The current standard of the Monkton Park play areas and the possibility of using Section 106 monies to make improvements to the second play area;
- When was the last time that monies were spent on improvements at the Monkton Park play areas; and
- That Members had received a presentation prior to the meeting from young adults from Wootton Bassett with a request to fund a scheme via the Town Council.

**Resolved** that the Executive:

- 1) Endorse the principle of improving areas within North Wiltshire District and allocate funds resulting from the projected underspend forecast for 2008/09 as follows:-
  - NWDC Play Areas – Appendix A - £85,000
  - Wootton Bassett proposal – Appendix B - £24,776

- Town/Parish grants for Disability inclusive play equipment - £70,224.
- 2) Delegates authority to the Assistant Chief Executive to work in conjunction with the Assets, Design and Regeneration Team to deliver the improvements as per Appendix A within the confines of the allocated funds. To grant the funds for the scheme set out in Appendix B, plus successful bidders from Towns and Parishes against the £70,244.

**E34. Revenue Budget Monitor 2008/09 – Month 2**

Consideration was given to Report No 7 (circulated with the Agenda) which set out a high level revenue budget monitor for Month 2 of the 2008/09 financial year, highlighting material known or anticipated variations in income and expenditure that could affect the Council by the end of the financial year.

**Resolved** that the Executive note the report forecast under spend of circa £500k.

**E35. Capital Budget Monitor 2008/09 – Month 2**

Consideration was given to Report No. 8 (circulated with the Agenda) which informed the Executive of the latest position and forecast outturn on the 2008/09 Capital Programme and to note change to the Risk Assessment Table.

**Resolved** that the Executive:

- (1) Note the figures contained in Annex 1 in relation to the Capital Programme for 2008/09 and the contents of this Report;
- (2) Note the information on Capital Schemes at Annex 2;
- (3) Note the Capital Risk Assessment contained in Annex 3; and
- (4) Note that the Capital programme is part of the ongoing consultation with Wiltshire County Council as a result of the Unitary proposal.

**E36. Final Report of the Rural Unitary Task Group of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Consideration was given to Report No. 9 (circulated with the Agenda) which considered the final report of the Rural Unitary Task Group of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

A revised copy of the recommendations as agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008 was circulated at the meeting.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- That thanks should be recorded to the Members of the Task Group and the Officers involved;
- That the report received unanimous support from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee;
- The call in arrangements for planning applications within the new Unitary authority and that the Implementation Executive would be revisiting this;
- The importance of having a senior presence in the Area Offices; and
- That Citizens' Link booths should be investigated as a possibility for the new authority.

**Resolved** that the Executive endorse the revised recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the appropriate Committees as detailed below:

**(a) Implementation Executive**

1. The Task Group did not find a unitary authority of comparable size and geography<sup>1</sup> from which direct evidence could be drawn about the Wiltshire move to Unitary status. Members were however able to have the benefit of evidence and ideas from the three rural unitary authorities which they visited.<sup>2</sup>
2. From its enquiries the Task Group concluded that the new Council will be breaking new ground in terms of its proposals for devolved working in a large rural space.
3. Distances and communication will be important. For example, it is a 48 mile round trip from Malmesbury to Trowbridge, 50 from Marlborough, 58 miles from Purton, and 68 from Cricklade.<sup>3</sup>
4. The distances underline the importance of careful planning of local services and information.
5. The Task Group supports the principle of identifying a few appropriate benchmarks against which the new authority's success can be measured. It RECOMMENDS that these should if possible take account of the large rural geography of the new authority. As the collection of local authority performance data is itself

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<sup>1</sup> Wiltshire is 3485 sq km, with a current population of 635,300. East Riding, one of the largest current unitaries, is 2479 sq km, with a population of 587,100.

<sup>2</sup> East Riding, Hereford and Monmouth

<sup>3</sup> According to Via Michelin

currently in transition, and because the Task Group did not have the resources to do this work itself, it RECOMMENDS that the Implementation Executive and / or the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board set up a working group to look into this and provide a list of 10-12 key performance indicators for the new authority which:

- Can draw on existing data (e.g. Best Value Performance Indicator Surveys) benchmarks
- Reflect the best performance areas of the five existing Councils
- Capture the challenges of a large scale rural authority

Examples from the limited data available to the Task Group are the general satisfaction levels in the Citizens' Panel and in District BVPI surveys, contact with the council, planning services, local decision making, waste and recycling, housing services, parks and open spaces and litter.

**(b) Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board**

The Task Group RECOMMENDS that a single asset register should be produced and that this matter be included on the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board workplan.

**(c) Area Boards Task Group**

1. The apparent lack of exemplary devolved arrangements in large rural authorities underlines the importance of the planned Area Board experiments, and of careful learning from those experiments. The Task Group RECOMMENDS that those experiments be subject to independent comparative monitoring, and that this audit should be carried out by an external team, perhaps by an academic unit specialising in local government work.
2. The Task Group also RECOMMENDS that the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Task Group keeps in close touch with these developments.
3. The Task Group notes that 'area forums' have struggled in some places, and have just been abandoned in East Riding. None had attempted the degree of local working which seems to be foreseen for Wiltshire Community Boards, and this may have contributed to their difficulties. But the mixed results elsewhere highlight the need for effective working at the interfaces between Community Boards and Community Partnerships and with other partners

4. There are lessons to be learnt about community leadership in large rural areas from the East Riding 'Local Area Team' (LAT) initiative. This brings together the Council, the police, the PCT and other local actors under the auspices of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – as part of the Council's community leadership role. However this initiative has only just been launched and the Task Group RECOMMENDS its progress be reviewed at the end of this year. The Task Group also suggests that a better name for an initiative of this kind could be Community Delivery Team.
5. The Task Group visits have shown the importance of high level championship and management of area working. Given the significance of the Community Boards and their innovative ambitions, the Task Group RECOMMENDS that they should be an explicit responsibility of one person in the political leadership (i.e. in a Cabinet portfolio) and in the Council's management (i.e. at Director level).

**(d) Customer Access Task Group**

1. The provision of local services will be a significant challenge for the new authority, given Wiltshire's size and the distribution of its market towns and rural communities. All three rural authorities that the Task Group visited provided wide ranging information and services through 'one-stop shops', information centres or customer service centres in their market towns. There were interesting variations between them but all had in common a good quality environment, a central location, and professional staff trained to answer a range of queries and to provide access and signpost to information.
2. From the Task Group's observations it RECOMMENDS providing Wiltshire Council information centres in the town centres of all the market towns and main urban areas.
3. These and other local services should take advantage of the new high-speed 'wireless area network' (WAN) between the District and County Council offices, which is being introduced in the run-up to the unitary authority.
4. The Task Group RECOMMENDS that the option of locating information centres in or alongside libraries should be positively encouraged, with obvious possible benefits to both services. Leisure centres are another possibility, where they are in the town centres.

5. The Task Group RECOMMENDS that the information centres in the main areas of population should be led at sufficiently senior level to allow for integration of the senior staff with local community organisations and for easy access to Council management.
6. The Task Group also RECOMMENDS early investigation of the 'citizens' link' mechanism for communication with rural areas, as currently being used in the East Riding, with a view to its adaptation to Wiltshire needs.
7. The Task Group RECOMMENDS that responsibility for effective local information services be located managerially alongside the support for Community Boards, and preferably in 'democratic services' or its equivalent department

**(e) Development Control Task Group and Implementation Executive**

1. The Task Group believes that recommendations in this area should be channelled through the Joint Scrutiny Task Group on Development Control. One of the members is also a member of that group, which facilitates this process.
2. The Task Group was impressed by the case made to it on one of the visits that changes to policy and practice after transition should be made gradually, to avoid disruption. Members heard of one authority where radical changes had been made early in the unitary council's life, and where the process had not settled down some 10 years down the track.
3. For example, there is a good case for beginning by locating Development Control in the four District areas and then considering the case for new geographical arrangements at a later date.
4. In a County of the size of Wiltshire, there is anyway a strong case for retaining at least front line planning services in the current District Council offices, to provide good access to the public. Consideration should also be give to planning officers visiting local information centres for regular 'planning days'.
5. The Task Group RECOMMENDS that Planning Officers should be located in different areas around the County and not based in one central location.

6. The Task Group RECOMMENDS that Highways engineers should also be located in the local planning teams to ensure that they work with the Planning Officers from an early stage.

### E37. Environmental Grants

Consideration was given to Report No. 10 (circulated with the Agenda) which recommended payment of grants from the Environmental Grants budget for 2008/09 to the Executive.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- A suggestion that the North Wessex Downs AONB should received the full amount of grant requested.

**Resolved** that the Executive approve the payment of grants to organisations as detailed below:

<b>Name of organisation</b>	<b>Recommended Grant 2008/09</b>
Cotswolds AONB	£7,417
N. Wessex Downs AONB	£6,847
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust	£10,000
Wiltshire & Swindon Biological Records Centre	£4,613
Great Western Community Forest	£4,000
Cotswold Canal Trust	£550
Wilts & Berks Canal Trust	£1,500
BTCV	£700
<b>Total</b>	<b>£35,627</b>

### E38. Cleansing & Amenities Improvement Plan – Quarterly Update

Consideration was given to Report No. 11 (circulated with the Agenda) which updated Members on the improvements being undertaken by the Cleansing & Amenities Service Improvement Board.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The progress made at the depot, especially in terms of performance;
- As part of the training package staff would be undertaking NVQ's;
- The need to embed the new policies and procedures; and



- That thanks should be passed on to Officers for the way the recent strike action was handled and that only minimal disruption was encountered.

**Resolved** that the Executive:

- 1) Endorse the work undertaken within Cleansing & Amenities and the improvements, which are beginning to be implemented; and
- 2) Request that a future update report be submitted to the Executive in October 2008.

### **E39. Cricklade Car Park Proposal**

Consideration was given to Report No. 13 (circulated with the Agenda) which set out the consideration given to a scheme proposed at Full Council as a suggested addition to the budget for 2008/09 for a Car Park at Cricklade.

**Resolved** that the Executive:

- 1) Note that an underspend scenario has arisen, therefore the scheme has been considered; and
- 2) Agrees that due to planning issues the scheme could not be delivered during financial year 2008/09. Therefore should not be pursued further under this action from Full Council.

### **E40. Update on the Carbon Trust Report**

Consideration was given to Report No. 14 (circulated with the Agenda) which advised on a number of projects and proposals which focus on reducing the dependency of this council and its successor authority on fossil fuels. It also gave details of the works that are underway which will produce continuing energy savings, reducing the energy footprint of the authority resulting in savings of offset increasing energy costs, enabling resources to be devoted to other uses.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- That the Council expect to produce a 20% saving in electricity usage following “housekeeping” changes at the Monkton Park offices; and
- That improvement works at the Council owned Leisure Centres will be implemented, including the Lime Kiln Leisure Centre in Wootton Bassett, although the details for the works have not yet been drawn up.

**Resolved** that the Executive:

- 1) Review and approve the proposals for energy saving works at various Council owned

properties as listed in Appendix 2 to the report;

- 2) Endorse the actions of officers in implementing the energy efficiency measures identified in the report; and
- 3) Authorise the Asset, Design and Regeneration Manager to procure the works listed in Appendix 2 subject to budgetary provision.
- 4) Request a report on similar works and energy savings for the Lime Kiln Leisure Centre.

#### **E41. Support for the Cotswolds Conservation Board**

Consideration was given to Report No. 15 (circulated with the Agenda) which considered whether or not it would be appropriate to support the Cotswold Conservation Board in its discussions in on future funding arrangements.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The history of the Cotswold Conservation Board;
- Comparisons of the grant received by the Cotswold Conservation Board and other Conservation Boards and AONB's;
- The wish for this area to receive it's fair share of funding; and
- That North Wiltshire are the first authority in the area to consider the funding inconsistencies, although it was hoped that the others would follow.

**Resolved** that the Executive

- 1) Endorses the Cotswold Conservation Board Report entitled 'Comparison of purposes and resources between Conservation Boards, AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities'; and
- 2) Expresses its view to Natural England, DEFRA, the relevant Secretary of State and the MP for Wiltshire, that the criteria for applying funding to the Cotswolds Conservation Board in exercising its responsibilities for the stewardship for the AONB be made clear and transparent and that funding provision for the Cotswolds Conservation Board should be made fair in comparison to other AONBs, whether constituted as Partnerships or Boards.

#### **E42. Recommendations from the Car Parking Working Group**

Consideration was given to Report No. 16 (circulated on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2008) which considered recommendations made by the Car Parking Working Group following their

meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2008 in relation to the Proposed Traffic Regulation Order Changes across North Wiltshire.

The recommendations of the Car Parking Working Group was circulated as an addendum to Members at the meeting.

**Resolved** that

- (1) That a letter be sent to Wiltshire County Council formally agreeing the changes to the Traffic Regulation Orders as proposed above; and
- (2) Request that a review where necessary is carried out in one year's time.

**E43. British Telecom's Proposal to Re-align Payphones Provision in the District**

Consideration was given to Report No. 17 (circulated on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2008) which considered British Telecom's (BT) proposals to re-align payphone provision within the District. The BT proposal will see the removal of 55 public call boxes from areas throughout the district. North Wiltshire District Council is required to submit a formal response by the 15<sup>th</sup> August 2008.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The wish for the Unitary Council to consider whether the telephone and electricity access points should be retained for use in the future;
- That Town and Parish Councils have been asked to share their objections to BT with us so that we can support them;
- The qualification used by British Telecom to determine that a payphone should be removed from an area;
- The possibility of the phone boxes being converted to customer access points or internet phones in the future;
- The use of the Council's veto power; and
- The effect the removal might have on a rural area, especially where mobile phone coverage is poor.

**Resolved** that the Executive:

- (1) Object to the removal of those payphones where objections have been raised by residents and local parish and Council Members, on the grounds that the Executive has insufficient information from British Telecom to justify their removal.
- (2) Request that the Implementation Executive consider the phone boxes as future access points and ask British Telecom to delay making a

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decision pending an investigation by the new authority into the possibility of Community Access Points in future.

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and concluded at 8.10pm

There were 10 members of the public were present.