

## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ORGANISATION AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE

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### DRAFT MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ORGANISATION AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2012 AT COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRADLEY ROAD, TROWBRIDGE.

#### Present:

Cllr Peter Doyle, Cllr Charles Howard, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr Jeff Osborn (Chairman),  
Cllr Mark Packard, Cllr Pip Ridout (Substitute), Cllr Bill Roberts, Cllr Judy Rooke and  
Cllr Jonathon Seed

#### Also Present:

Cllr John Brady, Cllr John Noeken and Cllr John Thomson

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#### 1. Apologies and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillors Nick Fogg, Nigel Carter and Christopher Devine (substituted by Councillor Pip Ridout).

#### 2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2011 were approved and signed as a correct record with the following amendment:

##### **200. Apologies and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Nick Fogg and Bill Roberts.

#### 3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 4. Chairman's Announcement

The Chairman explained the reasons leading to the change of date for the meeting and offered his apologies for any inconvenience this may have caused. Cllr Jonathan Seed was particularly concerned about changing scheduled

meetings of main committees and the apparent disregard of the Overview and Scrutiny functions.

The Chairman took the opportunity to remind members of the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Select Committee meeting on 9 February to consider the draft budget for 2012/13. The meeting would start at 10.30am at the Trowbridge Civic Centre.

## 5. **Public Participation and Councillors Questions**

There were no public participation or questions from Councillors.

## 6. **Budget Monitoring**

With the assumption that members had considered the information provided the Chairman opened up discussion to the floor and points including the following were made, comments and responses were provided by the Director of Finance, Service Director, HR and Organisational Development and the Corporate Director.

Concerns were raised at the fact that the information for consideration at the meeting was for the period ending on 31 October 2011, when SAP was meant to have enabled more up-to-date reporting. It was explained that the reporting turnaround was about four weeks; two weeks for the service holder to process, one week for CLT to consider and one week for further internal discussion. It was currently taking half the time it would have taken the previous year to compile the information and would further improve in the future.

The potential impact on services of controlling budgets by maintaining staff vacancies was questioned. It was explained that each services had to manage vacancies in a different way, as part of day to day management. Vacancies and the use of temporary staff for short term deliveries were reviewed when services themselves were reviewed. This was a normal approach which had been followed for a number of years. Each service had a vacancy target within its budget and an assumed turnover. The monitoring accountant and budget holder would assess whether or not the vacancy should be held, taking into account any restrictions from HR.

This led the Committee and attending councillors to raise their concerns over the current staffing of the Overview and Scrutiny Team and the potential risk to the efficient delivery of the function. It was explained that it would be the responsibility of the senior manager to balance the risk and recruit appropriately, bearing in mind the need to manage the risk of redundancy through maintaining vacancies; however it was confirmed that Overview and Scrutiny had not been identified as an area for further savings. The Deputy Leader expressed his support for the necessary appointment(s) to be made to ensure the efficiency of Overview and Scrutiny. Finally it was clarified that the

recruitment process had started for one vacancy, whilst the outcome of the Overview and Scrutiny review would determine how the second vacancy would be handled.

Queries were raised over the meaning of the second paragraph of the report (agenda page 13 refers), specifically “structural problems on business rates”, it was explained at the meeting that there was a typographical error but the matter would be investigated and clarification provided after the meeting.

Following questions about the Business Services forecast overspend of £0.100 million the following update was provided:

- Most Wiltshire Academies were now purchasing services from Wiltshire Council. It could be assumed that schools had wanted to wait until they knew what their budget was before making a decision;
- The shortfall on insurance was being managed and was expected to be cleared by the end of the financial year;
- Wiltshire Council was currently trading with Berkshire, Somerset and North Somerset and consideration should be given to the extent to which Wiltshire Council wishes to trade services and the associated economic benefits, as well as establish whether Wiltshire Council wished to be a provider or purchaser.

With regards to the Legal and Democratic Services overspend an action plan had been presented to Cabinet members and the Corporate Leadership Team. The technical overspend should be shown as resolved in the next budget monitoring report. The recruitment process, in response to the increase in DCE cases, was being progressed, in accordance with the normal procurement process.

**Resolved:**

- 1) To note the information provided;**
- 2) To thank Cabinet members and officers for their attendance and participation;**
- 3) To include a policy paper on the role of the Council as a provider and/or commissioner of services including the current traded services in education, in the forward work plan for this committee;**
- 4) To support the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Scrutiny Manager progressing the recruitment process for the Overview and Scrutiny team.**

## 7. **Corporate Management Restructure**

The Corporate Director presented the report and made the following amendments:

- Wiltshire on line and the Digital Inclusion progress should have been included in the themes (page 63 of the agenda refers);
- Partnerships would also include military and civilian inclusion (line 12 of page 63 of the agenda refers).

He was pleased to confirm that the new corporate leadership model had been in operation effectively since the beginning of September 2011 and had led to positive changes such as increased visibility of the management team and reducing the divide between officers and Cabinet members. The three Corporate Directors were working well as a team.

It was accepted that the new model had meant changes for a number of Service Director (delegation from Corporate Director and a bigger corporate element to the post), Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, and there was an awareness of the general risk on capacity and workload, and the impact was being monitored.

Members of the committee were offered reassurance that all aspect of the responsibilities previously held by the Chief Executive post were being covered.

### **Resolved:**

- 1) To thank officers and Cabinet members for their participation;**
- 2) To receive regular progress updates;**
- 3) To add monitoring of progress to the forward work plan for this committee;**
- 4) To note the report.**

## 8. **Wiltshire Online Project**

The Cabinet member, Adult Care, Communities and Housing gave an overview of the Wiltshire Online Project and a brief update on the progress of the Procurement Programme as detailed in the report. In doing so he drew the committee's attention to the proposal to appoint a representative from Overview and Scrutiny to sit on the Project Board responsible for the delivery of the project.

The Strategic Project Manager explained that since the report had been published the following had happened:

- The Procurement stage of the framework had progressed;
- The final bid should be made in the week following this meeting;
- The Project Manager was involved with the bidders interviews;
- It was hoped that the framework would be awarded by the first week of April 2012.

In responding to questions asked the following was clarified:

- Wiltshire Council would ensure the project was not delayed by including other Councils in the Procurement Process;
- Exchanges post and network would be upgraded, and the Project Board was looking at the different solutions available and costs;
- It had to be accepted that it was not possible to supply superfast broadband to every home and business across the County, however problematic areas had been identified and specific solutions could be looked into. It should also be remembered that options such as rural grant funding were available for remote Parishes;
- Town and Parish Councils had already been informed of the outline of the project. Once there was more clarity about the details of the project the information would be communicated widely via the Area Boards, and work would start with communities to resolve any issues;
- There had been a widespread public consultation with a high level of response which created a clear picture of the needs for businesses. It should be noted that some larger businesses would install their own superfast broadband system to meet their particular needs.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to nominate a representative to sit on the Project Board and felt that the most productive option would be for the representative to be the Unitary Councillor for an area known to have difficulties with broadband provision and speed.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman would contact councillors matching that profile; in the meantime Councillors Peter Doyle and Pip Ridout volunteered to be representatives should no other councillors be available for which they were thanked by the Chairman.

**Resolved:**

- 1) To thank officers and Cabinet members for their participation;**
- 2) To accept the opportunity to have a representative on the Project Board;**
- 3) That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman would contact Councillors and confirm the name of the representative as soon as possible.**

*Note: Following the meeting it was confirmed that Councillor George Jeans, Unitary Councillor for Mere, would be the representative on the Project Board.*

**9. Task Group Update**

The Chairman introduced the update report included in the agenda. The following additional information was provided:

Review of ICT Provision Task Group

The Fact Findings meetings had taken place and the outcome had been reported to the task group at its 15 December 2011 meeting. The task group was moving forward with its work plan and considering areas such as Planning. Sharepoint would be considered again in the near future.

Campus and Operational Delivery Programme (CODP) Task Group

The task group had a full agenda for its next meeting and most projects were on target for the meeting.

Procurement and Commissioning Task Group

The Procurement Board was due to meet the week following this meeting. Following changes to the governance of procurement there would have to be changes to the procedural rules included in the Wiltshire Constitution. There should be an improvement to the visibility of the minutes of the Procurement Board.

Member Support in the Locality Task Group

The framework, style and proposed contents of the new Councillor's Handbook would be considered at the meeting of the task group in April 2012.

10. **Scrutiny Representation on Project Boards**

**Revenue and Benefits Project Board**

The committee received a verbal update at the meeting. The system, as a whole, had been live for six weeks. The transition and system transfer seemed to have been well managed and there had been very few complaints.

There was a six and a half week backlog for Benefits, in the main part due to the four weeks switch off in October; a strong prioritisation system had been put in place. There had also been some teething problems with document management and communication between IT softwares. Additional resources had been authorised to address the issues.

There had been an overachievement in collections and cash flow was £1.6M ahead of schedule.

11. **Forward Work Programme**

**Resolved:**

**To note the Forward Work Programme provided and amend it to include the following:**

- 1) Policy paper for trading education services, as a provider and as a commissioner;**
- 2) Monitoring of progress of the Corporate Management Restructure.**

12. **Date of next Meeting**

5 April 2012.

13. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items for consideration.

(Duration of meeting: 12.00 - 2.15 pm)

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