

**TOWARDS ONE COUNCIL**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 9**

**JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRANSITION BOARD  
30 MAY 2008**

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NEW COUNCIL**

**Purpose**

1. JOSTB has as one of its terms of reference the responsibility to lead on proposals for the OS arrangements for the new council. The Chairman has asked that a “marker” is put down at this meeting in terms of an approach.

**Approach**

2. It is intended that the work on this will start in earnest in the autumn however some initial preparatory work can be done. As a starting point the current overview and scrutiny arrangements in each of the 5 councils will need to be documented including commentary from experience (both members and officers) on what works well and what not so well. With Kennet DC being a forth option council this will also have implications.
3. Knowledge of OS arrangements in other good performing councils should also be considered. This could include existing unitaries and those authorities in a similar position of transition to Wiltshire. The Centre for Public Scrutiny holds a wealth of relevant information which can be drawn down. In addition the benefit of external input and assessment to help shape and test proposals would be valuable. This is likely to be in some form of consultancy although very much responding to the wishes and thinking of the Joint Board rather than a blank canvass approach. The interface would be managed by WCC OS Manager and funded from the transition budget.
4. One very important aspect will be the inclusion of “enhanced scrutiny” required by the LGPIH Act in the proposals made. This is best described as “local scrutiny” (including councillor call for action) and most likely delivered through the community area boards, and “strategic scrutiny” primarily of the LAA and partners. Guidance from Central Government is still awaited on these matters (expected by the end of the year) but what is clear is that OS is being seen as an increasingly vital and prominent part of the “strong and prosperous communities” agenda. It will be important therefore that the new council is well placed to respond to these enhancements. This will need to tie into the work of the Community Leadership and Governance Workstream.

5. JOSTB also needs to be aware of the activities and thinking taking place within the Transition Resources Workstream and its Democratic Services Project. An OS service redesign team has been established which will look at the support arrangements necessary to deliver the OS function in the new council. Some of its early research may complement the work of the Joint Board and the officers who support it. There is some common membership so a close working relationship will exist.
6. Another important component of this will be the views of the leading OS members across the 5 councils who will be standing for election to the new council and the senior officers with line management responsibilities for OS support in the new council when appointed.
7. The Chairman has indicated his intention to be closely involved with this work and will lead on reporting developments to JOSTB and other parts of the transition process as appropriate.

### **Proposal**

7. JOSTB is recommended to:
  - (1) note its responsibilities to lead on proposals for OS arrangements for the new council, and the intended role of the Chairman;
  - (2) ask that initial preparatory work is undertaken as described in paragraphs 2 and 3;
  - (3) approve the engagement of a suitable consultant;
  - (4) note the links to the work of the Community Leadership and Governance Workstream and the Resources Workstream.

Paul Kelly  
OS Manager  
Wiltshire CC