

KENNET DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held in the Council Chamber, Browfort, Bath Road, Devizes on Tuesday 7th October 2008 at 2:15pm.

PRESENT:

Councillor C P G Hoddinott - Chairman

Councillor Mrs E Fogg
Councillor Mrs J M Giles
Councillor A Lake
Councillor Mrs L Mayes

Councillor Mrs N G Rawlins
Councillor J Seed
Councillor Mrs S Zweck

Apologies for absence:

Councillor R Parsons

PART 1

Items considered whilst the public were entitled to be present

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 8th July 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were none.

19. CORPORATE FINANCE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

The minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Finance Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 16th September 2008 were received and noted.

20. JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY UPDATES

Those councillors present who represented the Council on the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board (JOSTB) and the subsidiary Task Groups made verbal reports.

JOSTB

Councillor Seed spoke on this and, in the absence of Councillor Parsons, on the Development Control Task Group. He reported that two meetings of the JOSTB had been held since the last meeting of this Board. One of the main issues discussed had been the governance arrangements for

the unitary council in the period between 1 April next year and the coming into office of the newly-elected councillors.

He said that one particular area of concern was the arrangements for development control in this period. The original proposal had been for this to be dealt with by area committees, the membership of which would comprise Districts' current regulatory committees. This had fallen foul of an edict from the Department for Communities and Local Government regarding political proportionality.

The most recent proposal from the Implementation Executive (IE) was for the IE itself to deal with development control in this interim period. The JOSTB were unhappy with this proposal, not least because it contained no provision for call-in by members, and had asked the IE to reconsider the matter.

Councillor Seed reported that other issues considered by the JOSTB had included:

- clarification of staffing structures and of the process for appointing staff,
- arrangements for establishing community area boards, not all of which had yet been set up, and
- how the work of area boards might be scrutinised.

He concluded by referring to the future of overview and scrutiny (O&S) during the remaining life of Districts. It was understood that North Wiltshire District Council had abandoned O&S. Whilst this matter had not been formally considered by the JOSTB, it had been mooted that other Districts might do likewise. Councillor Seed said that in his view Kennet should not follow this line because:

- O&S was a legal and constitutional requirement,
- there needed to be a mechanism for dealing with matters called-in by members, and
- ceasing O&S work would not produce any saving in capacity or costs.

The Chairman and members fully endorsed Councillor Seed's comments, and it was

RESOLVED

THAT

- a) This Board is unanimously of the opinion that the current arrangements for O&S in the Council be not altered and that the remaining programme of Board meetings runs its course; and
- b) Should any formal approach be made to the Council to wind up its O&S work and to merge it with arrangements for the new unitary council, the Council be recommended to decline such a proposal.

Waste Task Group

Councillor Seed said that this Group was dealing with transitional arrangements. The Group wanted to look at transformation but was prevented from doing so until officer capacity became available. Meanwhile, decisions on harmonising the frequency of collections were unlikely to be made before the unitary councillors had taken office.

Customer Access Task Group

Councillor Lake said that there was no doubt that the new arrangements for customer access would be in place by 1 April next year, and he paid tribute to the work of the lead officer supporting the Group. The Group was now concentrating on how the arrangements were to be communicated to the public at large.

He went on to say that the target financial savings for customer access were, in the Group's view, achievable, but that much would depend on the methods by which members of the public themselves chose to contact the new council.

Housing Task Group

Councillor Giles reported on the work of this Group and tabled copies of the Group's interim report to JOSTB. One of the key issues discussed by the Group had been the Housing Service's budget for 2009/10 which the Group had felt to be "challenging". Other issues included:

- housing strategies, including social and affordable housing,
- capital commitments, and
- councillor representation on housing associations, the continuation of which the Group felt to be essential.

She said that the Group had two more meetings planned, and hoped to be able to make its final report in December.

RESOLVED

THAT Councillors Seed, Lake and Mrs Giles be thanked for their reports.

21. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT – QUARTER ONE REPORT

The Board considered a paper (C/11/08) by the Corporate Services Manager on key performance information for the first quarter of 2008/09.

RESOLVED

THAT the paper and key performance information for the first quarter of 2008/09 be noted.

PART 2

Items considered whilst the meeting was closed to the public

None

Chairman
2nd December 2008