



CABINET

MINUTES of a MEETING held at COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE on 16th December, 2008.

Mrs JA Scott	Leader of the Council
Mr J Thomson	Deputy Leader and Member for Community Services
Mr ML Baker	Member for Staffing and Customer Care
Mrs NS Bryant	Member for Education and Youth Development
Miss MF de Rhé-Philipe	Member for Environment, Transport & Economic Development
Mrs MJ Douglas	Member for Culture, to include Libraries and Heritage
Mr JC Noeken	Member for ICT, Procurement and Partnerships
Mr TR Sturgis	Member for Planning & Waste
Mrs B Wayman	Member for Children and Families

Also in attendance: Mr A Molland in respect of minute no. 123 & 124
Mr WR Moss in respect of minute no. 128
Mr AN Deane in respect of minute no. 122

118. **Apologies**

All members were present.

119. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2008.

120. **Announcements from the Leader**

The Leader welcomed representatives of Donhead St Mary Parish Council who attended to present a petition (minute no.122 refers) and Charlotte Moore and Rachel Goff, graduate trainees who were attending the meeting for information to gain an insight into how Cabinet operated.

121. **Members' Interests**

No interests were declared.

122. **Public Participation**

Petition – A30 Pedestrian Crossing – Charlton Crossroads, Donhead St Mary Parish Council

Mrs J Barnes Chairman of Donhead St Mary Parish Council presented a petition and supporting documentation on behalf of the Parish Council which called for a pedestrian crossing along the A30 at Charlton Crossroads.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Transport and Economic Development responded, details of which were circulated. The Cabinet Member explained the history of this proposal and commented that whilst she had every sympathy with the Parish Council, the proposal did not have sufficient priority when compared with other proposals to be allocated Local Transport Plan (LTP) funding during 2008/09. A technical assessment of the site was currently being undertaken and the proposal would be reconsidered for LTP funding in 2009/10 and it was pointed out that there were many competing similar requests and that the capital budget prospects were not promising.

Mr AN Deane supported the proposal as local Member.

In the discussion which ensued, officers were asked to explore alternative sources of funding, including R2 funding when consideration could then be given to match funding by this Council for which there was a small budget within the LTP.

123. **Budget and Service Standard Monitoring – August 2008**

(a) Revenue Budget

Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Financial Officer which informed Members of the current revenue budget monitoring position as at the end of October 2008.

It was noted that the projected variation on the 2008/09 revenue budget stood at an overspend of £385,000 an increase of £160,000 compared to the September 2008 position and that available general balances were estimated to be £7.806m as at 31 March 2009. Portfolio Holders were confident that the increase in the overspend position would be addressed.

Resolved:

That Cabinet

- (i) note that the projected variation on the 2008/09 revenue budget is estimated as an overspend of £385,000 and**
- (ii) note the estimated level of balances of £7.806 million as at 31 March 2009.**

Reasons For Proposal

To inform the Cabinet of the current 2008-09 budget position service standards and the implications for the general fund balances.

(b) Capital Budget

Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Financial Officer which updated Members on the current position on the Capital Budget as at 31 October 2008 and included details of the use of delegated powers for the period since the last meeting.

In response to a query on the amount of variation, officers explained that this was due to items having been included in the budget in accordance with the priority attached to them, but had been the subject of slippage due to a number of factors which in some cases, included the current economic climate. Officers were asked to include more detailed explanatory notes to clarify reasons for slippage from the budget in future reports.

Resolved:

That Cabinet

- (i) note the variation in the capital programme of £11.180 million, of which £10.416 million is due to reprogramming of expenditure, £808,000 for schemes unable to proceed, and a small projected overspend of £43,000 and £808,000 for schemes unable to proceed and**
- (ii) note the use of delegated powers in relation to the capital programme as detailed in Appendix B of the report presented.**

Reasons For Proposal

To inform the Cabinet of the current budget position, spending pressures and the implications for general balances

124. Interim Report on Treasury Management Strategy 2008-9

In accordance with the Treasury Management Strategy, Cabinet considered an interim report of the Chief Financial Officer on the 2008/09 Strategy for the period 1 April to 30 September 2008.

Reference was made to the Treasury Management Strategy Update report considered by Cabinet on 21 October 2008 when Cabinet recommended amendments to the Annual Treasury Management Strategy for 2008/09 in light of the Icelandic banking situation. These amendments were adopted by Council at its meeting on 11 November 2008. In considering a related notice

of motion from Mr West, Council had also agreed that the Strategy be reviewed by a Scrutiny Committee.

A Budget Scrutiny Task Group met on 12 December 2008 to scrutinise the Strategy, the conclusions from which were presented by its Chairman, Mr A Molland as follows:

1. To confirm the task group's confidence in the council's treasury management strategy and advice given by officers and Sector (as the treasury management advisers), mindful of the rising pressures associated with optimising return on investments whilst also minimising the risks.
2. To note with concern the challenges which the council will face in the short to medium term, as a consequence of falls in investment income and increases in the cost of borrowing.
3. To note with some scepticism the reasons behind the government's advice to local authorities not to make provision in the 09/10 budget for the bad debt generated from the frozen assets of Heritable Bank, mindful that this could lead to increased pressures on council taxes and funding of services.
4. To ask the Chief Financial Officer to provide further information as part of the budget setting process, to illustrate the implications of making different degrees of provision for the Heritable Bank losses in the 09/10 budget.
5. To request that the new council's governance arrangements ensure that the review of the treasury management strategy is carried out at least quarterly, until the economic downturn has subsided and risks are considered to have diminished.

Cabinet was happy to take on board points 1 – 3 above. In relation to point 3, it was noted that a Government directive had required Councils to only include an explanatory note but not reflect such bank losses in their accounts. Cabinet did not feel that point 4 was appropriate and in respect of point 5, considered that the frequency of reviewing the Strategy should be a matter for the new Council to determine. It was noted that the Implementation Executive would consider the Treasury Management Strategy for 2009/10 as part of the budget setting process for that year.

Resolved:

- (a) **That Cabinet note the contents of the report presented in line with the Treasury Management Strategy**
- (b) **That the external auditor's views be sought on the Government directive not to include details of the Heritable Bank plc losses in its accounts and that the response be brought to the attention of members of Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

Reason For Proposal

The report is a requirement of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

125. Performance Update: Local Agreement for Wiltshire to September 2008

Cabinet considered the report of the Assistant Director, Performance and Risk, with regard to progress made against the ambitions and actions set out in the Local Agreement for Wiltshire and the targets negotiated with Government for the Local Area Agreement.

The report had also been considered by the Performance and Scrutiny Task Group on 18 November 2008, the comments from which were circulated.

The Leader explained that the Council would be struggling to fulfil all of the ambitions contained within its Local Agreement due to a poor level of support grant and the need to focus on the delivery of Council services.

In response to the Leader requesting a close monitoring of the economic situation for the County and its inhabitants, the Chief Executive explained that Mr G Bright, former Chairman of the West Wiltshire Economic Partnership had been commissioned to monitor the situation. Mr Bright would be asked to provide regular monitoring reports to the Council to assess the likely impact and action that could be taken to address some of the local effects of the economic situation as early as possible.

Resolved:

That Cabinet note progress against the Local Agreement for Wiltshire.

Reasons for Proposal

To inform Members of progress against the Local Agreement for Wiltshire and the Local Area Agreement.

126. Joint Area Review of Children's Services 2008

Cabinet considered the report of the Director for Children and Education on the outcome of the Wiltshire Joint Area Review and Enhanced Youth Service Inspection.

The Director gave a detailed presentation on the key points of the Review and its findings which had concluded with the following judgements:

- Safeguarding - adequate
- Looked After Children and Young People - adequate
- Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities - adequate
- The impact of the partners' strategy on reducing

- the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training - good
- The impact of partners' strategy in reducing the teenage pregnancy rate - good.
- The management of services for children and young people - adequate.
- Capacity to improve further - adequate.

The Director confirmed that work was progressing on implementing an action plan drawing from previously identified actions.

Members thanked the Director and her Department for their work and noted that the Review had stated that 'the Director for Children and Education provides coherent and effective leadership'.

The Head of Youth Development presented the findings of the inspection into the Youth Development Service. It was noted that the Inspectors had praised many sections of youth services especially young people's involvement in decision making and also highlighted areas for improvement, details of which were presented.

Resolved:

To note the contents of the report.

Reason For Proposal

The report is a key judgement for children's services and its findings will set a baseline for future inspections within the County.

127. The Coroner for Wiltshire & Swindon

Cabinet considered the report of the Solicitor to the Council regarding the post of Coroner for Wiltshire and Swindon. The current postholder had indicated his intention to retire from the post at the end of December 2008, although he had agreed to remain in the role until the end of March 2009 whilst the Council secured a replacement.

The Coroner's retirement presented an opportunity for the Council to review the configuration of the post and it was suggested that the appointment becomes a full-time position. This would have the advantage of controlling the budget and provide greater accountability over expenditure. Details of Coroner's Circular No. 48 regarding Coroners' pay which would apply and was population based were presented.

Resolved:

i) To agree to the appointment of a full time Coroner

ii) That Mr M Baker be nominated to serve on the interview panel.

Reason for Proposal

To effectively widen how the Coroner Services are delivered and operated, to widen the pool of applicants for the position and provide greater financial accountability and control.

128. Rural Services Advisory Group

Cabinet considered the report of the Director of Environmental Services with regard to the continuing review of the sustainability of rural services and the monitoring of the outcome of the Essex County Council initiative to reopen Post Office branches. As previously requested, details of the paper published by Salisbury District Council entitled "Sustainable Rural Communities: a Review of Rural Issues in Wiltshire" were also presented.

Mr Moss, Chairman of the Rural Services Advisory Group attended to convey the views of the Group. Mr Moss sought appropriate funding to progress the work of the Group. The Leader thanked Mr Moss and his Group for its valuable work and suggested that the initiatives highlighted in the report would need to be picked up by the new Council. She also considered that rather than focus on specific funding for specific areas, the Council should look to embed the initiatives mentioned across the organisation.

Resolved:

That Cabinet:

- (a) note the work of the Rural Services Advisory Group since its previous report and**
- (b) that officers be requested to prepare a briefing note for circulation to Cabinet members highlighting the important issues and priorities in respect of rural services between now and 1 April 2009 which could be used to inform the new Council in its deliberations of this subject.**

Reason for Proposal

The Rural Services Advisory Group has identified a number of actions which it believes would support the retention of services for rural communities. These are discussed in Appendix 1.

(Duration of meeting: 11.30 am – 1.35 pm)

Please note that matters defined as 'Key' decisions and included in the Forward Plan are shown thus ⚙.

These decisions were published on 19 December 2008 and will come into force on 31 December 2008.
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The Officer who has produced these minutes is Yamina Rhouati, of Democratic & Members' Services, direct line 718024 or e-mail yaminarhouati@wiltshire.gov.uk
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