



IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2009

In Attendance

Wiltshire County Council (WCC)

Mrs Jane Scott – Leader – in the Chair
Mr John Thomson – Deputy Leader
Miss Fleur de Rhé Philipe
Mrs Mary Douglas
Mrs Bridget Wayman
Mr Toby Sturgis
Mr Mark Baker
Mr John Noeken

Kennet District Council (KDC)

Mr Lionel Grundy – Leader

West Wiltshire District Council (WWDC)

Mr Tony Phillips – Deputy Leader
Mr Rod Eaton

North Wiltshire District Council (NWDC)

Mr Dick Tonge – Leader
Mrs Allison Bucknell – Deputy Leader

Salisbury District Council (SDC)

Mr Paul Sample – Leader

Also in attendance: Mr M Hewitt, Mr A Molland, Mr W Moss, Mr J Osborn, Mr A Roberts, Mr F Westmoreland

168. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr Brown, Mrs Bryant and Mr Fear.

169. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2008 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

170. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman reported that agenda items 6, 13 and 14 would be considered towards the end of the meeting to allow Mr Sample, who was delayed, to contribute to the debate.

171. Members' Interests

No interests were declared.

172. Public Participation

None.

173. Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Arrangements in the New Council

The Implementation Executive considered the reports of the Local Government Consultant and the Scrutiny Manager WCC which presented proposals for the O&S arrangements for the new authority. The Implementation Executive was asked for its views on the proposals as part of the consultation period.

Mr Molland, Chairman of the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Transition Board (JOSTB), explained the proposals, which had been developed together with the independent consultant, and reported that extensive consultation with members of all five authorities and corporate and service directors was taking place until 2 February 2009. The proposals were intended to be fit for purpose for the early stages of the new authority and were likely to be reviewed in the light of experience.

Resolved:

To support the proposals in principle, subject to the outcome of the consultation and decision of the new Council.

Reason for Proposal:

The Joint Overview & Scrutiny Transition Board (JOSTB) are consulting on the draft proposals for O&S arrangements in the new authority until 2 February 2009.

174. Housing and Council Tax Benefits: The Local Scheme

The Implementation Executive considered the report of the Chief Financial Officer which proposed the introduction of a Wiltshire Council local scheme which would enable War Pensions Schemes or Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation Schemes to be disregarded for the purposes of calculating entitlement to housing and council tax benefit.

The Deputy Leader introduced the report and emphasised that the scheme would replace and continue the current district councils' policies. The financial implications of this had been accounted for in the budget at an estimated cost of £320,000 in 2009-10.

Resolved:

To adopt a scheme across Wiltshire Council and to continue to disregard war pensions and armed forces compensations schemes for the purposes of calculating benefit.

Reasons for Proposal:

The agreement of a local scheme has to be adopted by resolution of the Council and is a scheme which goes some way to recognise the sacrifice made by a small decreasing number of claimants across the county.

175. Joint Direction of Travel Assessment for the Wiltshire District Councils

The Implementation Executive considered the report of the Chief Executive WCC and the draft internal Audit Commission report which set out its findings with regard to the Direction of Travel of the four Wiltshire District Councils.

Melanie Watson, CAA Lead, and Bridget Downton, Performance Specialist at the Audit Commission, introduced the report and highlighted that key strengths and weaknesses, as well as transition arrangements and delivery towards the LAA targets, had been assessed in the four district councils.

Two members highlighted a couple of areas where a small number of cases affected the overall performance of the authorities.

Mr Molland reported that the Audit Commission's draft report would be considered at the meeting of the JOSTB on 23 January.

Members also noted that all district councils had been consulted on the draft internal report which would be finalised in February.

Resolved

To note the draft internal report by the Audit Commission and members' comments.

Reason for Proposal

The provision of the draft internal report by the Audit Commission during this transition period is a helpful opportunity for the IE to consider the summary progress of the district councils as set out in the appended report, and to consider how the highlighted key challenges should be addressed.

176. North Wiltshire Leisure Contract Harmonisation

The Leader reported that the report on the North Wiltshire Leisure Contract Harmonisation had been withdrawn as it required further work on the contractual arrangements and compliance with EU procurement rules. A further report would be prepared for consideration at a future meeting of the IE.

177. Establishing an Audit Committee for Wiltshire Council

The Implementation Executive considered the joint report of the Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Chief Financial Officer. The report highlighted the role of audit committees as an increasingly critical component in the overall governance process. In recognising this growing importance, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) had developed a set of principles and guidance for audit committees in local government,

which had been widely adopted in recent years. The CIPFA guidance emphasised that audit committees should be in place in all principal local authorities.

The Chief Financial Officer highlighted that Wiltshire County Council currently had no separate Audit Committee but best practice from other authorities suggested the establishment of such a committee.

The Leader reported that the County Council's Final Accounts and Audit Committee supported the establishment of an Audit Committee for Wiltshire Council and had agreed that the Chairman should be independent of the Executive and that the Leader of the Council or the Cabinet Member responsible for Finance and Governance should be a non-voting member.

Mr Roberts commented on the possibility of appointing an independent Chairman and other independent members to serve on an Audit Committee. The Leader responded that different options had been considered but that this was a matter for the new Council to decide.

Resolved:

a) To recommend the establishment of an Audit Committee for Wiltshire Council, in accordance with the membership and terms of reference shown in the Appendix to the report, and the views of the Final Accounts and Audit Committee as outlined in paragraph 6 of the report, in order to satisfy the key elements of the CIPFA principles and guidance as outlined in paragraph 3 of the report.

b) To establish the Audit Committee as independent from the executive and scrutiny functions, reporting directly to full Council.

Reason for Proposal:

It is important for Wiltshire Council to have strong governance arrangements, and be able to demonstrate these to the people it serves. Establishing an effective audit committee will be a key component of these arrangements, and is seen as an essential element of good governance in the new council.

178. Contract Renewal with Steria

The Implementation Executive considered the report of the Corporate Director, Resources which highlighted that the only practical way of implementing a coherent and integrated ICT service for the new Wiltshire Council by 1 April 2009 was to extend the County Council's existing ICT Support Services contract to cover the whole of the new authority.

Mr Noeken, one of the IE lead members for ICT and Procurement, introduced the report and highlighted that officers from all five authorities had been working together on establishing consistent future ICT arrangements for Wiltshire Council. He also reported that the legal implications outlined in the report had been resolved with Steria and that the maximum cost for transformation projects were £1.179m and not as stated on page 1 of the report.

Mr Molland reported that this report would be considered by the JOSTB's Change Management Task Group at their next meeting.

The Leader asked that all IE lead members for ICT and Procurement should be consulted by the Corporate Director, Resources before the final contract was signed.

Resolved:

- a) To approve the extension of the Steria ICT Support Services contract to cover ICT support to the new Wiltshire Council from 1 April 2009.**
- b) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Resources, in consultation with all IE lead members for ICT and Procurement, to sign the renegotiated contract with Steria Ltd, within the agreed cost bracket.**

Reason for Proposal:

Wiltshire's existing councils currently have five disparate sets of ICT support arrangements and there is a need to put in place a consistent set of arrangements for the new Wiltshire Council. The only practical way of doing this is by extending the County Council's existing ICT Support Services contract to cover the whole of the new authority.

179. Salisbury Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 Year Business Plan

The Implementation Executive considered the report of the Head of Housing Management SDC which presented the HRA Business Plan as a strategic planning document to assist officers and members working together with tenants and leaseholders in the management and maintenance of the council housing stock over the next thirty years. It also set out how the council intended to resource and achieve the government's Decent Homes Standard target by 2010 and set service standards. This report needed approval by the IE prior to being sent to the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) for a fit for purpose assessment.

Mr Thomson, one of the IE lead members for Housing, introduced the report and highlighted significant risks and challenges contained within the report which had not been addressed sufficiently. In particular, Mr Thomson emphasised that a large deficit would be built into the budget over 30 years which would also have knock-on effects on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). He also highlighted that Government was to announce their proposals for future HRA funding in the near future. He suggested that this information be incorporated into the Business Plan after it became known.

Mr Thomson questioned if the Business Plan was fit for purpose for the new authority for the reasons outlined above and if the document would satisfy the fit for purpose criteria set by GOSW. He suggested that GOSW be informed of the current position.

Mr Roberts, portfolio holder for Finance SDC, pointed out that this was a long-term plan which would inevitably have to change over time and could therefore incorporate changes at the appropriate time in the future. Not approving the document would send an alarming message to tenants and housing associations with regard to problems in future funding.

The Leader and fellow IE members were of the view that further work was required to develop a robust and deliverable Business Plan for the new Council which would address the issues raised before the Business Plan could be approved.

Resolved:

- a) To not approve the Business Plan as set out in Appendix A as fit for purpose.
- b) To request an annual update report on the Business Plan to full Council and Overview & Scrutiny once the Plan is implemented.
- c) To request further work on the affordability and deliverability of the Business Plan and for this to be informed by the Government's revised proposals for HRA funding to ensure the Business Plan was fit for purpose and that the funding gap was closed.
- d) To request that discussions take place with the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) to ensure that the final Business Plan was deliverable by the new Council.

(N.B. Mr Sample requested that his dissent from the above decisions be recorded.)

Reason for Proposal:

As a housing stock holding authority Salisbury District Council were required to submit a 30 year HRA Business Plan to the GOSW for a fit for purpose assessment. The Business Plan as set out in Appendix 1 had been approved by Salisbury District Council Cabinet following extensive work by a Project Board consisting of members from all parties, officers and tenants following the tenants vote to reject transfer to a newly formed Housing Association which had been the recommendation of a stock option appraisal undertaken in 2005.

180. Salisbury District Council Sunday Car Parking Charges

The Implementation Executive considered the report of the Service Director, Sustainable Transport which set out reasons to reject Salisbury District Council's proposal to reduce car parking charges in the City of Salisbury on Sundays.

Miss de Rhé Philipe, one of the IE lead members for Sustainable Transport, responded on behalf of the IE and emphasised that a County-wide review on car parking charges should be undertaken early in the new Council and that individual changes should not be pursued at present in order to implement a consistent County-wide policy in the near future. The Leader supported this position and reported that this change in car parking charges would create additional expenditure of approximately £50k.

Mr Eaton expressed his support for Salisbury District Council's proposal as it would reduce the cost for motorists.

Mr Roberts, portfolio holder for Finance SDC, reported that the change would have minor budget implications as the reduction in VAT had not been incorporated in the car parking charges in Salisbury. The Chief Financial Officer SDC confirmed that this had produced an estimated additional income of £70k which would cover the change in the car parking charges.

Mr Sample stressed that local churches and businesses supported the proposed change.

Fellow IE members confirmed that they supported the position expressed by Miss de Rhé Philipe and the Leader and highlighted that the SDC report was not consistent with the views expressed by its members.

Resolved:

To reject Salisbury District Council's proposal to reduce car parking charges in the City of Salisbury on Sundays.

Reason for Proposal:

Pending the development of a coherent parking strategy for the City that has due regard to the economic needs of the City and the wider parking strategy, including Park & Ride, the proposal by SDC Cabinet would run contrary to the agreement position proposed in the report on the parishing of Salisbury.

181. Salisbury Vision: Funding Arrangements and Update on the Market Place Project

The Implementation Executive considered the report of the Project Director: Salisbury Vision which updated the Implementation Executive on the proposed funding arrangements for the Salisbury Vision, and the Market Place project in particular. The Project Director highlighted that it was difficult at present to identify the funding for the entire Vision.

A statement from the Chairman of the Resources Overview & Scrutiny Panel SDC regarding the Salisbury Market Square project had been circulated at the beginning of the meeting who raised concerns over the affordability of the Vision.

At Mr Sample's request, three letters from the Salisbury Civic Society, the South Wiltshire Economic Partnership and the Chairman of the Salisbury City Centre Management were circulated at the meeting which supported the immediate delivery of the Salisbury Vision projects.

Miss de Rhé Philipe, IE lead member for Major Projects and Economy & Enterprise, responded on behalf of the IE and emphasised that there was overall support for the Salisbury Vision but concerns remained around the timing and phasing of the projects which was regarded as critical for the Vision's affordability and successful delivery. The current challenging economic conditions meant that the value of assets had changed and therefore, she also questioned the affordability of the financial contribution from Salisbury District Council. She also endorsed the concept of Vision capital receipts being reserved for Vision projects in the future. Miss de Rhé Philipe also emphasised that funding might be more urgently needed for other priority projects in the light of the current economic situation.

Mr Moss, local member for Winterslow, also expressed his concern over the financial contribution from Salisbury District Council and the availability of assets to fund the projects.

Mr Roberts, portfolio holder for Finance SDC, confirmed that his council's financial contributions were deliverable. He pointed out that officers had undertaken work in conjunction with the County Council and different funding options were available.

The Leader emphasised that the overall Vision was supported, including the proposals for the Market Place. However, the issues of timing and how the projects were funded were important. The result of the consultation on the design competition was also needed. The Leader therefore requested that more work be undertaken on the transport study and the details of the current value of assets in Salisbury and those that had retained their value, their saleability and availability for release. She also stressed that the timing and phasing of the individual projects would have to be carefully considered.

Mr Sample reported strong local support for the immediate delivery of the Salisbury Vision and that the Vision would function as a strong signal for the local economy in times of the economic downturn.

Resolved

a) To note the report.

b) To reaffirm support for the Salisbury Vision, including delivering the major projects as a priority, i.e. the Maltings/Central Car Park, Churchfields and the Market Place, and to note that the timing, funding and phasing of the individual projects required further consideration.

c) To request a further report by the Service Director, Economy & Enterprise on 11 March 2009 on the Salisbury Vision as a whole, including

- **the outcome of the consultation on the design competition;**
- **the transport study;**
- **progress on the Maltings/Central Car Park redevelopment and Churchfields;**
- **the current value of assets in Salisbury, their saleability and availability for release, in order to establish their suitability for funding the Salisbury Vision.**

(N.B. Mr Sample requested that his dissent from the above decisions be recorded.)

182. Outline Work Programme

The Implementation Executive received the Outline Work Programme for future business.

The meeting closed at 6.00pm.