



JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRANSITION BOARD

Minutes of the Special Meeting Held at County Hall – 5 August 2008

In Attendance

Members
Cllr Tony Molland (Chairman) WCC
Cllr Jeff Osborn WCC
Cllr Margaret Taylor WCC
Cllr Keith Humphries WWDC
Cllr Mike Hewitt SDC
Cllr Ray Parsons KDC

Also in attendance:

Tim Gregory, Deborah Griffin, John Shorto, Paul Kelly, Janine Gassmann WCC, Marie Lindsay WWDC

1. Apologies and Membership

Apologies were received from Ian West WCC, Chris Humphries WCC and Christine Reid NWDC.

Ray Parsons KDC substituted for Jonathon Seed KDC.

Margaret Taylor WCC substituted for Ricky Rogers WCC.

2. Resource Plans

The Resource Plans were adopted by WCC Cabinet on 15 July 2008 and would be considered by the IE on 27 August. The strategies set out the objectives for the last year of Wiltshire County Council and the first four years of the new authority, and would be reviewed annually.

The authors of the individual strategies attended the meeting to introduce the reports, which had been circulated previously along with a list of key issues, and respond to members' questions.

Resolved

- (1) To note that WCC Cabinet has approved the People, ICT and Property Strategies and ask that the IE takes into account and supports the views of JOSTB during its consideration on 27 August as set out in these minutes.**

- (2) To note that the strategies will be formally reviewed, updated and approved annually.**
- (3) To support the overall approach of the strategies and their importance to the success of the new council.**
- (4) To request the revised and updates strategies come back to a future meeting of the JOSTB early in 2009.**

(1) ICT Strategy

Tim Gregory, currently Head of ICT and recently appointed Service Director Procurement & ICT, introduced the strategy and tabled the appendices to the strategy at the meeting. It was highlighted how critical a functioning ICT system was for successful business operation. In the strategy, emphasis was therefore laid on developing business change, providing effective business continuity and enhanced customer focus.

The ICT Strategy was developed in conjunction with all departments of WCC and relevant departments in the districts to identify future requirements and to evaluate their affordability. The financial resources of £2.5m for ICT transition projects were considered sufficient to continue current levels of service, despite the WAN having gone £12k over budget to date. The Head of ICT further commented that the implementation of the infrastructure and applications transition requirements was proceeding satisfactorily.

In response to members' questions a number of points were raised, including:

- (a) Transformation: Tim Gregory warned the Board that significant ICT capital investment would be required for the successful transformation of services in the new authority.
- (b) Staffing issues: Migration from workstream to Corporate and Service Management was in hand, including a new steering group to manage and monitor strategic ICT issues. A working group of the Heads of ICT from the five authorities provided the foundation for good working relationships. The positions of Head of ICT and Head of Information Management would be appointed shortly. Although the overall number of ICT staff would reduce slightly after April 2009, very few voluntary redundancies were expected.
- (c) Member support: A new IT member support post would be established under the new ICT structure and a variety of training methods would offer both individual and wider training opportunities. It was intended that all members would be supplied with laptops and smart phones in the new council.
- (d) Customer care: Consideration would be given to expand helpdesk services, particularly for housing and social care. The contract for the support services would be renegotiated towards the end of the year.

After further discussion it was

Resolved

- (1) To highlight the importance that successful change can never be achieved by technology alone (page 4/22);**
- (2) To note that Steria has realised significant savings but may have underestimated the complexity and scale of the changes required (with a decision required on contract extension option) (page 5/6);**
- (3) To acknowledge that ICT will help the business to realise the benefits as long as change is driven through within departments – including use of departmental resources (page 7/9);**
- (4) To note that a key target for investment was infrastructure resilience, including investment in a second ICT server room (page 7);**
- (5) To support the importance of maintaining and enhancing ICT investment, especially in projects that have the greatest potential for delivering efficiencies and better public services (page 8);**
- (6) To recognise that a more effective change programme was required to deliver flexible and new ways of working across the new council (page 12);**
- (7) To request that the strategic plan for SAP available later this year be the subject of scrutiny as SAP would become the “hub” of the new council (page 13/18);**
- (8) To acknowledge that enabling the operation of the Community Area Boards may require ICT investment (page 14);**
- (9) To recognise the risk of the new council inheriting significant system, application and ICT support incoherence in all areas (page 17);**
- (10) To emphasise that clear priorities will need to be agreed (page 22);**
- (11) To acknowledge that ICT will be critical to the delivery of the vision and goals of the new council (page 22).**

(2) People Strategy

Deborah Griffin, Human Resources Operations Manager, introduced the strategy and emphasized that this was the organisation’s first such strategy with measurable actions. Over the next five years, this joined-up approach would provide the tools to develop and manage the workforce in terms of numbers, recruiting and retaining staff, and achieving a more representative cross-section of society in the workforce. The financial resources of £280k for implementing the strategy as agreed by WCC Cabinet were considered sufficient.

The Chairman, with his experience of personnel training at district level, raised concerns about the sufficiency of the allocated financial resources.

Members highlighted the importance of a genuinely corporate approach. Key stakeholders in all departments and across the five authorities had been consulted. Under the new arrangements there would also be a Shared Services Team and a Strategic HR Service to ensure the delivery of a corporate approach.

Members commented on challenges during and after the transition, particularly on staff reductions, job uncertainties, and the use of temporary and agency staff. Restricted external recruitment in order to retain staff from the existing councils was considered to be effective after initial uncertainty.

Furthermore, members remarked that innovative approaches could be beneficial, including offering clear career structures and options, and creating a strong profile of Wiltshire Council as an employer.

After further discussion it was

Resolved

To successfully implement the People Strategy, it will be crucial

- (i) that the strategy was owned and fully supported by the new CLT to ensure a genuinely corporate approach (page2);**
- (ii) to attract and retain the necessary additional financial resources (page 2 and appendix A);**
- (iii) to overcome the different cultures in the existing councils (page 5);**
- (iv) to continue scrutiny of customer focus and systems thinking (page 6);**
- (v) to endorse external input to “upskill” managers and staff for service redesign work (page 8);**
- (vi) to introduce 360 degree feedback (page 9);**
- (vii) to provide greater flexibility for managers to recruit and retain staff (page 11);**
- (viii) to establish succession planning (page 10), talent pool (page13) and apprenticeship schemes (page 11); and,**
- (ix) to ensure sensitivity on grade and pay amalgamation and reviews (page 15).**

(3) Property Strategy

John Shorto, Strategic Property Services Manager, introduced the strategy and highlighted key issues identified in the report which are crucial for a successful, long-term approach.

Members enquired about the office accommodation strategy in Salisbury, which had been endorsed by the IE previously, and the future of West Wiltshire District Council offices.

After further discussion it was

Resolved

To highlight the following key components and issues and to recognise that these will have to be addressed in the revised strategy document available at the end of the year:

- (i) work will need to be properly resourced and overseen at a corporate level (page 2);**
- (ii) potential for co-location with partners like PCT, Police and Fire (page 5/6/)**
- (iii) the combined property estate was probably unsustainable, inefficient and unsuitable to meet future service needs and legislation, particularly DDA legislation (page 5);**
- (iv) an over-arching, prioritised and funded action plan will be developed (page 6);**
- (v) impact of new ways of working (page 6);**
- (vi) master plan for County Hall (page 7);**
- (vii) Community Area Boards accommodation requirements (page 7), as well as libraries;**
- (viii) conclusion of frontline service reviews will generate property requirements (page 9);**
- (ix) impact of transfer of community assets/more sustainable communities (page 9);**
- (x) ongoing building maintenance requirements and backlog to be factored in;**
- (xi) property disposal plan and financial implications;**
- (xii) details on the amount of savings (and costs/investment).**

3. Next ordinary meeting – 29 August at Kennet District Council Offices

(Duration of Meeting: 9.30am – 11.45pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Janine Gassmann, Democratic & Members' Services, Wiltshire County Council. Direct line: (01225) 713597.