

## AGENDA ITEM NO. 2



### **JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRANSITION BOARD**

#### **Minutes of the Meeting Held at NWDC Offices – 4 July 2008**

##### **In Attendance**

<b>Members</b>
Cllr Tony Molland (Chairman) WCC
Cllr Jeff Osborn WCC
Cllr Ian West WCC
Cllr Chris Humphries WCC
Cllr Christine Reid NWDC
Cllr Keith Humphries WWDC
Cllr Jonathan Seed KDC
Cllr Mike Hewitt SDC

Also in attendance:

Cllr Peter Davis WCC  
Bobby Chettleburgh SDC  
Cllr Fred Westmoreland SDC  
Brad Fleet KDC  
Robin Townsend SDC  
Paul Kelly, Janine Gassmann WCC  
James Chamberlain SDC  
Paul Mountford WWDC  
Marie Todd NWDC  
Karen Scott KDC

#### **1. Apologies and Membership**

Chris Humphries had permanently replaced Robert Hall as one of WCC's representatives on the Joint Board.

#### **2. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 30 May**

The minutes were confirmed as a correct record.

#### **3. Chairman's Announcements**

(a) Boundary Review

The Chairman reported that Wiltshire County Council's submission to the Boundary Committee was broadly adopted. The Boundary Committee has accepted the County Council's proposal for a council size of 98. The changes to the original submission involve alterations in the boundaries of only two divisions in the County Council's scheme.

(b) Appointment of Corporate Directors and Service Directors

The Chairman updated members on the migration of officers from workstream management to Corporate and Service Director Management. Since the last meeting of the JOSTB the five Corporate Directors had been appointed and the appointment of Service Directors was ongoing. The Chairman welcomed the newly appointed Service Director for Development, Brad Fleet, to the meeting.

#### **4. Task Groups**

##### **(1) Development Control**

Fred Westmoreland, Chairman of the Task Group, presented the Group's final report. The Chairman highlighted that the Task Group undertook a policy development rather than a traditional scrutiny role and identified a workable basis for the new development control structures in the new council within an extremely tight timescale. He also stressed that the recommendations in the report represent a broad consensus among members of the Task Group, members who attended the two seminars held by the Task Group, and among town and parish councils.

Members recognised that further work needed to be done on the details contained in the recommendations after the principles of the new structure have been agreed.

Members commented on the individual recommendations in the report (paragraph 66) as follows:

**Recommendation (a):** Members agreed the principle of one area hub based in each of the present localities. Members further stressed the importance of a consistent approach across the areas in advice and application processing whilst appreciating individuality of different areas.

**Recommendation (b):** Members agreed the principle of delegation by exception and recognised the need for further work to establish a clear delegation agreement setting out the criteria for the type of applications to be considered by the Strategic Planning Committee and area committees. Members noted the direct relationship between the level of delegation, number of committees and service performance described in the report.

**Recommendation (c):** Members agreed the principle that call-ins should be made by one unitary councillor. Members considered the high public interest in development control and the importance of local communities to

be engaged in the process. Members also recognised the importance to develop a process which ensured that single member call-in was done on planning grounds and that in the event of a dispute a form of arbitration was available through the chairman of the relevant committee.

**Recommendation (d):** Members expressed concern over the legality of the Strategic Planning Committee having powers to call in decisions made by area committees. Members agreed that area committees should rather be able to refer applications to the Strategic Planning Committee for decision as necessary.

**Recommendation (e):** Members expressed concern over the wording in the recommendation and agreed that a representative selection of members should sit on the committees.

**Recommendation (f):** Concerning other recommendations in paragraph 55 of the report, members particularly commented on the currently incompatible IT systems. The need for harmonised ICT systems was considered as crucial, including an appropriate online presentation of planning applications at WWDC. Members also considered the suggested time for committee meetings to commence at 6.00pm.

**Recommendation (h):** The possibility of continuing with the task group to scrutinise further work on development control was discussed. WWDC officers would be content to support the group again.

**Recommendation (i):** Members recognised the importance to establish suitable arrangements for determining applications during the interim period between the abolition of the district councils in April 2009 and the appointment of members by the new council in June 2009.

The Chairman then tabled a motion, amended to reflect the comments made, which was carried.

### **Resolved**

- (1) To thank the Chairman and the members of the task group for the work they had done on this topic and the officers of WWDC (Paul Mountford and Marie Lindsay) in supporting the task group and compiling the report.**
- (2) To recognise the tight timescale given to the review especially in light of the challenging policy development role requested by the Leader of the IE.**
- (3) To endorse the report and recommendations in paragraph 66 for submission to the IE on 9 July and in particular to highlight:**

- (i) the high level of engagement by elected members of the five councils at the two seminars;
  - (ii) the need for consistency across the planning services delivered from each of the area hubs;
  - (iii) the direct relationship between the level of delegation, number of committees and service performance;
  - (iv) the need for further work to be done to establish a clear delegation agreement setting out the criteria for the type of applications to be considered by the Strategic Planning Committee and area committees, and most importantly how the committees related to each other operationally, including that area committees should be able to refer applications to the Strategic Planning Committee for decision as necessary (change to the Task Group's recommendation (d));
  - (v) the importance to develop a process which ensured that single member call-in was done on planning grounds and that in the event of a dispute a form of arbitration was available through the chairman of the relevant committee;
  - (vi) JOSTB's support for the proposal to invest in respect of full online access to applications in West Wiltshire during 2008/09 in preparation for the new council;
  - (vii) the need for the IE to establish suitable arrangements for determining applications during the interim period between the abolition of the district councils and the appointment of members by the new council;
  - (viii) a representative selection of members should sit on the strategic planning and local area planning committees (change to the Task Group's recommendation (e)); and,
  - (ix) that flexibility should be allowed for each committee to determine its own start time (change to a recommendation under (f)).
- (4) To approve ongoing non-executive member engagement with Development Control and therefore authorise the Task Group to continue at the appropriate time with revised terms of reference to scrutinise the implementation of the report's recommendations, initially focusing on those activities in preparation for 1 April. This was to be done in consultation with the newly appointed Corporate Director for Economic

**Development, Planning and Housing and the Service Director for Development.**

- (5) To highlight the importance to local communities of good planning services which should be seen as a priority for the new council and, in doing so, to strive to maximise the efficiencies of combining current arrangements.**

**(2) Waste**

The Board members noted the Waste Task Group's update.

**Resolved – To note the update**

**(3) Community Area Boards**

Mike Hewitt, Chairman of the Task Group, commented that due to the ongoing consultation at present and a lack of communication and information available there is very little work for the group to scrutinise currently.

Members commented that a consistency of approach in setting up the community area pilots only allows for very little variation and individuality in the areas. Members were also concerned over the progress until September with few meetings of pilot area boards being held and the summer break to commence soon.

**Resolved – To note the update**

**(4) Customer Access**

Anthony Lake, Chairman of the Task Group, attended the IE meeting on 16 June where the Customer Access Strategy was resolved. The Board was confident that the workstream and Task Group activities would progress satisfactorily.

**Resolved – To note the update**

**(5) Housing**

It was reported that James Chamberlain SDC, the group's officer support, was leaving on 11 July. Karen Linaker WCC is taking on his role in supporting the Task Group.

The Task Group scheduled a meeting for 11 July where members will consider how the Task Group will proceed.

Members recognised the importance of amalgamating housing services during the transition effectively. Services have to be in place on 1 April

2009, especially in terms of providing affordable housing and support for the homeless.

**Resolved – To note the update**

**5. Members' Interests**

Keith Humphries WWDC, lead member for ICT, reported that he meets regularly with Tim Gregory, ICT Lead Officer. He was satisfied with the progress to date. There was positive progress on the Risk Register, where several items had turned from red to green.

Keith Humphries also reported that a rapid scrutiny exercise on the telephony system would be needed shortly; early amalgamation of ICT support will commence soon; and the structure of the new ICT department was in place.

**Resolved – To note the member update**

**6. Leisure Centres**

Robin Townsend, Lead Officer for Cultural Services, introduced his report. At present, focus was on establishing baseline data and a seamless transition. A new Service Director for Amenities and Leisure had just been appointed.

With Wiltshire's aspiration to be the healthiest county by 2012, members stressed the importance of ensuring the best provision of leisure services as a whole across the county. At present, these are provided by various means. The future of existing leisure contracts would be looked at early under the new council which means that relevant data would have to be gathered.

**Resolved**

- (1) To recognise the variations in current service delivery and the desire to maintain these beyond 1 April but in doing so to express a view that some preparatory transformation work should be done so that the new council is well placed to undertake appropriate early dialogue with contractors and stakeholders.**
- (2) To request that a progress report on leisure services as a whole is prepared for the Board's meeting on 31 October in the light of these comments, and that the new Service Director for Amenities and Leisure would also have had time to influence events. This report to include baseline data in respect of current service provision including contract arrangements and costs.**

## **7. Towards One Council – Progress Report**

The Joint Board considered the latest transition programme progress report prepared for the IE meeting on 17 June, along with oral updates from the just circulated report for IE on 9 July.

**Resolved – To note the report**

## **8. Finance Update**

The JOSTB considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer prepared for the IE on 17 June. The report identifies a draft schedule of key finance activity which needed to take place between now and January 2009.

Members noted that the report did not contain an update on the financial development or movement towards savings.

**Resolved – To note the report**

## **9. Implementation Executive Minutes**

The minutes of the last meeting of the IE held on 17 June 2008 were circulated.

**Resolved – To receive the minutes**

## **10. Outline Work Programmes**

The Board received an outline work programme, the future work programme of the IE and a recommendation from WCC regarding scrutiny of parking enforcement. In agreeing to include this for the next meeting, JOSTB were made aware of a review on parking charges by NWDC scrutiny.

**Resolved**

- (1) To approve the outline work programme for the Board;**
- (2) To note the IE Work Programme;**
- (3) To seek a report to the next meeting on the progress made in application of the civil parking enforcement for the new council.**

## **11. Next meeting – 25 July at Kennet District Council Offices**

(Duration of Meeting: 10.30am – 12.55pm)

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