



JOINT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TRANSITION BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting Held at KDC Offices – 26 September 2008

In Attendance

Members
Cllr Jeff Osborn WCC (Vice Chairman) – in the Chair
Cllr Ian West WCC
Cllr Mollie Groom WCC
Cllr Margaret Taylor WCC
Cllr Alan Hill NWDC
Cllr Keith Humphries WWDC
Cllr Jonathon Seed KDC
Cllr Mike Hewitt SDC

Also in attendance:

Cllr Peter Davis WCC
Cllr Tony Deane WCC
Cllr Pat Rugg WCC
Cllr Denis Brown SDC
Cllr Janet Giles KDC
Cllr Ray Parsons KDC
Laurie Bell, Service Director, Policy, Research & Communications
Tracy Carter, Service Director, Operations
Mark Smith, Service Director, Amenities & Leisure
Caroline Bee, Head of Financial Planning
Chris Major, FLS Project Manager Parking
Ian Cook, Programme Officer Manager
Charlotte Moore, National Management Trainee

Support Officers Scrutiny:

Paul Kelly, Ceri Williams, Janine Gassmann WCC
Marie Lindsay WWDC
Karen Scott KDC

1. Apologies and Membership

Apologies were received from Chairman Tony Molland WCC.

Mollie Groom WCC substituted for Chris Humphries WCC.

Margaret Taylor WCC substituted for Ricky Rogers WCC.

Alan Hill NWDC substituted for Christine Reid NWDC.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 29 August

The minutes for the meeting on 29 August were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman updated the Board on the three outstanding Service Director positions, interviews for which were taking place at present.

4. Overall Governance Arrangements

The JOSTB considered a report by the Service Director, Policy, Research & Communications which clarified the respective transitional roles of the IE, WCC Cabinet, CLT and JIT within the overall governance arrangements. The Programme Office Manager introduced the report and stressed that more responsibility was to shift towards the IE, with meetings to be held on a more regular basis.

Members highlighted the impact of this on the work of transitional Overview and Scrutiny across all five councils. There appeared to be little officer capacity, and district council member capacity would be explored, especially in the light of NWDC having suspended their O&S activity. Following a suggestion from SDC, members also discussed if a district portfolio holder could serve on transitional scrutiny and came to the conclusion that this might blur transparency and , however, legal opinion was being sought.

The Vice Chairman of JOSTB reported that during debate at the IE he agreed to write to the Leaders and Chief Executives regarding the potential of aligning a remaining scrutiny activity under a single work programme coordinated by JOSTB.

Further elaborating on capacity issues, members commented on the increasing workload of the IE and efficient future management of business which should be coordinated with scrutiny activities.

Concerning the interregnum period from April to June 2009 and appropriate governance arrangements during that period, members raised queries on the anticipated

- executive arrangements, especially with regard to the representativeness of the IE;
- overview and scrutiny arrangements in order to hold the executive to account;
- arrangements for the newly elected council to scrutinise and review previous decisions taken by the IE, and appointments made during the April-June 2009 period.

Resolved

- (1) To note that the Vice Chairman would be writing to all Leaders, Chief Executives and Chairmen of O&S in each of the five authorities suggesting a more coordinated approach to transitional scrutiny;
- (2) To seek a response to the members' queries regarding the governance arrangements during the interregnum period.

5. Towards One Council – Progress Report

The JOSTB considered the report of the Programme Director which outlined the main activity that had occurred since the last meeting. The Programme Office Manager updated members verbally at the meeting on the progress made with the organisational structures which would be released on the extranet on 26 September and be communicated to all staff shortly.

The Vice Chairman felt that the Critical Path and Day one Plan should be the subject of closer scrutiny but felt that this was better done outside of the Board meetings. He suggested that Cllr Christine Reid would be effective in this role but would also seek another member to join her. Cllr Alan Hill agreed to pursue this in her absence. A report by exception would be made back to the JOSTB as necessary.

Members felt that the performance monitoring information to April 2009 should also incorporate the County Council.

Resolved – To note the Progress Report and agree that the Critical Path and Day One Plan should be scrutinised by Cllr Christine Reid and another member outside the meeting.

6. Financial Update

(1) Financial Update

The JOSTB considered the report of the Chief Financial Officer which included information on top line figures and the One Council for Wiltshire budget line as requested by the IE on 27 August. The Head of Financial Planning introduced the report and stressed that work was still being undertaken to generate information on the district councils' budgets.

Members enquired about the costs compared to budget provision for early departures and redundancies bearing in mind the £1m already saved due to staffing vacancies and productivity. Negotiations with trade unions were still ongoing regarding the appointments process and a clear picture and more information was anticipated to be available by late December. Regarding the harmonisation of staff's terms and conditions and redundancy procedures after 1 April, negotiations with trade unions were likely to be finalised by 30 September.

Concerning the harmonisation of fees and charges, members requested that transitional scrutiny consider the matter before a decision was made.

Members also referred to potential implications of the current economic climate on estimated income levels. The Head of Financial Planning reported that this was being considered.

Resolved

- (1) To note the Financial Update;**
- (2) To note that further information on all district councils' budgets was likely to be included into the next budget update report;**
- (3) To request a report on the latest costs for early departures and redundancies to the January meeting of the JOSTB;**
- (4) To request that the proposals on the harmonisation of fees and charges come to a future meeting of the JOSTB prior to a final decision being taken.**

(1c) Service Level Budget 2009-10

A report by the Chief Financial Officer was circulated for members' information. This report had been prepared for the IE BWG meeting on 23 September. Service level budgets would be adjusted during the budget setting process.

Resolved – To note the report

(1d) How to Overview the Budget Setting Process 2009-10

A report considered by the WCC Budget Scrutiny Task Group on 15 September was circulated for members' information.

The Budget Scrutiny Task Group would scrutinise the budget setting process in detail while the JOSTB would consider periodic reports at key milestones in the development of priorities and the budget for the new council. Members were invited to engage with budget scrutiny either at Task Group or Board level, with some issues still potentially also being considered at district level.

Resolved – To note the report

(1e) Council Tax Equalisation

The Board considered a report by the Chief Financial Officer which had been prepared for the IE BWG meeting on 23 September. The Head of Financial Planning introduced different options for the equalisation of the council tax during the transformation and corrected figures in table (b).

Members were concerned about a potentially negative public perception in the light of achieving One Council savings and yet increasing council tax. The Head of Financial Planning reported that there were implications from

a low revenue grant settlement and high cost pressures. There was also no additional funding from government to compensate transitional costs.

Resolved – To note the report

(2) One Council and Business Management Programme Cost Reduction Targets

The Board considered a report by the Corporate Director, Resources. The Head of Financial Planning introduced the report which had been previously considered by the IE and the Change Management Task Group.

Cllr Tony Deane, Chairman of the Task Group, updated the Board on anticipated BMP savings which the Task Group had considered at their meeting on 19 September. Mr Deane informed members that he had met personally with the Corporate Director, Resources since the Task Group meeting and confirmed that savings were on target, there was enthusiasm among staff for the BMP although the extent of procurement being transferred to Shared Services was an issue for further scrutiny.

Resolved – To note the report

7. Follow Up to Questions Previously Posted

The JOSTB considered a report by the Programme Office Manager in response to a number of queries raised at the last JOSTB meeting.

Members noted that a single asset register would not be created outside of SAP which would be finalised by the end of March. NWDC Overview and Scrutiny Committee had previously recommended to the Board that a single asset register should be produced and that this matter be included on the Board's work plan.

The last outstanding response from the Head of Economy Regeneration & Intelligence had been circulated to members electronically prior to the meeting and was also tabled on the day.

Resolved – To note the report

8. Parking Enforcement

The Board considered a report by the FLS Project Manager Parking who emphasized that a successful installation of software and connection to the WAN was critical to the project. A joined-up database was already running which would be accessible from all local offices in the county. The system would have a resilient back up.

Additional funding of £25k had been secured from the Programme Office to further pursue the procurement of digital cameras. Members commented on the potential difficulty to ensure sufficient digital storage.

The Service Director, Sustainable Transport was currently working on the budget setting which would have to incorporate challenges such as the £0.5m deficit in the Park+Ride scheme and decreasing income from parking charges due to fewer residents using town and city centre car parking. No changes in local parking charges were anticipated after 1 April and local variances would be taken into account when harmonising fees and charges in the transformation. The potential to ring-fence revenue for the sustainable transport budget was also under consideration.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager WCC stated that the NWDC scrutiny report on the impact of the loss of free car parking had been circulated to IE lead members, project managers, and the Town & Parish Councils Project Manager for reply.

Resolved – To note the report

9. Task Groups

(1) Development Control

Peter Davis, Vice Chairman of the Task Group, reported that the Task Group considered the further officer report on 10 September. The report circulated for the IE meeting on 23 September incorporated the views of the Task Group. The report was deferred again by the IE on 23 September to address further queries, including the selection of members to serve on area committees, amendments to delegations in appendix 1, compulsory training, and the relationship between unitary councillors and town and parish councils regarding development control matters.

The Task Group would continue to scrutinise the progress made with the future Development Control service but no further work was required at present.

Resolved

(1) To note the Task Group's update.

(2) To retrospectively endorse the Task Group's views which were incorporated into the further officer report considered at the IE on 23 September, and to note the IE's subsequent decision seeking further information.

(2) Waste

The Service Directors, Operations and Amenities & Leisure introduced the report of the Corporate Director, Transport, Environment & Leisure which was submitted at the request of JOSTB in response to the issues of concern raised by the Task Group in its interim report. The Directors emphasized that the activities between now and 1 April would focus on a smooth transition and keeping service provisions at their current levels. Work to plan the transformation of the waste services was ongoing. The Directors stressed that

the five councils had already been working towards transformation via the Wiltshire Waste Partnership.

Alan Hill, Chairman of the Task Group, highlighted that the public might notice discrepancies in the levels of council tax and service provisions across the county soon after 1 April. Therefore, preparatory work needed to be undertaken during the transition in order to have a consistent service provision across the county as soon as possible after Vesting Day. It was the view of the Task Group members that the new service would be driven by recycling rates and the avoidance of LATS fines, and AWC would inevitably be a factor in these considerations.

Members identified the vital importance of communicating with the public on expectations for Day One and beyond. The Service Director, Policy, Research & Communications was currently developing a transformational programme identifying priorities during the first three years of the new council which would include the areas of waste and recycling.

Resolved

- (1) To note the report;**
- (2) To thank the Chairman and members of the Task Group for the work they have done so far;**
- (3) To suspend the operation of the Task Group until more information on the transformation of the waste services was available;**
- (4) To request a report by the Service Director, Policy, Research & Communications on transformational priorities to the meeting of the JOSTB on 28 November.**

(3) Area Boards

Mike Hewitt, Chairman of the Task Group, expressed his concern about the inconsistent approach taken by area managers in setting up individual pilot area boards. In order to address the democratic deficit as envisaged in the original bid, meaningful budgets would have to be allocated and parishes and partners engaged soon. He and members of his Group planned to attend some of the pilot meetings.

Work was currently being undertaken to finalise the proposals of allocating individual community areas to area boards to ensure that there was at least a minimum number of members serving on a board.

The IE had agreed a number of recommendations regarding area boards on 23 September, most of which had been covered by the Task Group. Recommendations 8-10 of the report (Planning Gain and Section 106 Contributions) would be considered at the Task Group meeting on 10 October with an invitation extended to members of the Development Control Task Group to contribute to discussions on this point as appropriate.

Resolved – To note the update

(4) Customer Access

Mollie Groom, member of the Task Group, reported that Deborah Farrow, Lean Systems Implementation Manager, attended the last meeting of the Task Group which was very content with the progress made to date.

Members commented that in the light of rising costs, the consideration of innovative technologies might be beneficial, e.g. web cameras in local offices to reduce travel cost and time.

Resolved – To note the update

(5) Housing

Janet Giles, Chairman of the Task Group, reported that the Task Group's interim report had been considered by the IE on 23 September. The IE requested further information to be included in the Task Group's final report due in December. The Task Group was concerned that current levels of service provision would not be maintained with the cash-freeze position but would be better informed when budget details were known.

Resolved – To note the update

(6) Change Management (Incl. ICT Transition) – WCC

Tony Deane, Chairman of the WCC Change Management Task Group, reported that Tim Gregory, Service Director, Procurement & ICT attended the last Task Group meeting on 19 September and referred to the recently approved ICT Strategy.

The group was concerned about the contract negotiations with the ICT support provider and the implication of this on staffing, as well as budget implications for the revised BT solution concerning the WAN link between Devizes and Salisbury.

Regular meetings between Tim Gregory, Keith Humphries and the Task Group were envisaged.

The Chairman had earlier reported on BMP and Shared Services matters.

The Change Management Task Group would next meet on 12 November. Representatives from WWDC and NWDC already served on the Task Group and appointments from SDC and KDC were being pursued.

Resolved – To note the update

10. Implementation Executive Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the IE held on 27 August 2008 were circulated, and the minutes of the meeting on 23 September tabled at the meeting.

Resolved

To receive the minutes of the IE meetings on 27 August and 23 September.

11. Outline Work Programmes

The Board received its outline work programme and the future work programme of the IE.

In order to efficiently coordinate the workloads between the executive and scrutiny, the Service Director, Policy, Research & Communications and the Overview and Scrutiny Manager WCC would liaise. Part of this would depend on the response of the five councils to the written suggestions of better coordination of a single scrutiny work programme.

Resolved

- (1) To approve the outline work programme for the Board;**
- (2) To note the IE Work Programme.**

11. Next ordinary meeting – 31 October at County Hall

(Duration of Meeting: 10.30am – 14.05pm)

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