JOINT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TRANSITION BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting Held at KDC Offices – 27 February 2009

In Attendance

Members
Cllr Anthony Molland WCC – in the Chair
Cllr Chris Humphries WCC
Cllr Jeff Osborn WCC
Cllr Ian West WCC
Cllr Jonathon Seed KDC
Cllr Christine Reid NWDC
Cllr Mike Hewitt SDC
Cllr Keith Humphries WWDC

Also in attendance:
Cllr Mollie Groom WCC
Cllr Anthony Lake KDC
Cllr Pat Rugg WCC
Cllr John Thomson WCC

Laurie Bell, Service Director, Policy, Research & Communications
Chris Franklin, Web and Media Manager, KDC
Ian Gibbons, Head of Legal and Democratic Services
John Rogers, Customer Focus Lead
Parvis Khansari, Service Director for Major Projects
Steve Milton, Area Board Development Manager
John Shorto, Head of Strategic Property Services
Richard Woodroofe, Assistant Director - LGR Staff Transition
Philip Whirly, Mace, Director
Craig Morrison, Mace, Project Manager - Office Rationalisation

Support Officers Scrutiny:
Paul Kelly, Ceri Williams WCC
Marie Todd, Julia Densham NWDC
Marie Lindsay WWDC
Paul Trenell SDC

1. **Apologies and Membership**
   Cllr Ricky Rogers WCC.

2. **Minutes of Previous Meetings – 23 January and 17 February 2009**
   Cllr Osborn stated that he was present at the meeting of JOSTB on 17 February 2009 but not listed as present in the minutes. Subject to this amendment the minutes for the meetings of 23 January and 17 February were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. **Property Strategy**

The Board received a presentation from Parvis Khansari (Service Director for Major Projects) and representatives of Mace, the consultants leading on the office rationalisation project.

Members discussed the proposals and the comparisons with Hertfordshire CC. The potential implications of the delayed Waterside Project and the costs of the Bourne Hill development were also raised.

Members expressed concern that the second phase of work at County Hall had been deferred, meaning it was now scheduled for 2013 which was a long way off and in an election year.

Resolved
1) **To note the update;**

2) **To recommend that no major construction work at County Hall is carried out during an election period.**

4. **Application of the Appointments Procedure**

The Board considered a report by Richard Woodroofe (Assistant Director, LGR Staff Transition) which had been prepared for the Implementation Executive meeting on 28 January 2009. Updated staffing figures to reflect changes since that date were tabled at the meeting. Richard Woodroofe introduced the report and highlighted that 85% of staff had now been notified of their position in the new authority, but that 400 staff had yet to be notified. Around 75 staff were not matched to any role and therefore would be subject to the redeployment process for 6 months from 1st April.

Members asked for a regular update on staffing figures so that they could monitor the progress of the appointments process. They also reminded the Assistant Director of the previous request for details of the cost of the severance arrangements.

The Board thanked the Assistant Director for his efforts and noted that whilst there were still some areas of uncertainty a lot of placement had been achieved in a relatively short timespan.

Resolved
1) **To note the update;**

2) **To request that regularly updated staffing figures be circulated to JOSTB until the completion of the appointments process;**

3) **To request that details of the cost of the severance arrangements be circulated to JOSTB members as soon as possible.**

5. **Task Groups**

(1) Pilot Area Boards

The Chairman of the Task Group, Cllr Mike Hewitt, presented the final report to the Board. He stated that there were still issues to be resolved and requested the Board's

consent for the Area Board Task Group to meet again before the Implementation Executive considers the 'Determination of the Area Board Boundaries' in March.

Members debated recommendation B, which expressed support for the Implementation Executive's decision that Area Boards should have a minimum of four members. It was felt, particularly with reference to Tidworth and Pewsey, that this might not allow the necessary flexibility to achieve arrangements which satisfied local communities. Members agreed to recommend a trial period whereby 3 members is the quorum for an Area Board, to be reviewed after 12 months. This would be the subject of an informal meeting was taking place with interested parties this afternoon to consider options to inform the IE paper.

The Board debated recommendation K. Members felt that it was not desirable to have a meeting serviced by representatives of an external organisation, and agreed that recommendation K should be removed.

The Board felt that members of the Executive should not be allowed to chair Area Boards as this would concentrate too much power in the hands of one individual. It was also felt that members of the Executive would be too busy to dedicate the necessary time to chairing an Area Board. The Board heard that the proposal was for the chairmen to be elected on full council day on 16 June.

Members felt that recommendation E should be targeted at the Service Director for Corporate Communications as well as the Corporate Director for Community Services in order to achieve effective publicity.

Recommendation G was changed by the Board to direct responsibility to the Corporate Director for Economic Development, Planning and Housing.

Recommendation H was amended after discussion to ensure Area Board performance and risk was owned by the Department of Community Services.

During further general debate, Jonathon Seed mentioned continuing concern about the alignment of certain parishes between Trowbridge and Melksham community areas. It was also confirmed that no fee was being paid to Southampton University as they were contributing to the project for research purposes.

Resolved
1) **To request that the IE ensures that each of the frontline services produces a detailed plan outlining how they will work with Area Boards and for this to be submitted to the Corporate Director, Community Services by 31 March 2009 to support the evaluation phase of the Area Boards project;**

2) **To recommend to the IE that a trial period be undertaken whereby 3 members is the quorum for an Area Board meeting, to be reviewed after 12 months;**

3) **To congratulate the Project Team on the production of the Area Board Handbook to date and to recommend to the Corporate Director, Community Services that once completed, secondary versions are produced specifically for elected members and the public;**

4) In relation to staffing, to ask the Corporate Director, Community Services to meet with the Chairman of the Area Board Task Group to discuss
   • the proposed team structure for the Area Board team
   • the support network arrangements proposed for the team;

5) To request that the Corporate Director, Community Services and the Service Director for Corporate Communications ensure that the evaluation of the project includes development of a consistent approach towards publicising and marketing to ensure maximum public participation;

6) To consider the outcome of the evaluation phase of the project at JOSTB on 20 April 2009;

7) To request that the Corporate Director, Economic Development, Planning and Housing ensures that the Statement of Community Involvement provides a policy base for the Area Boards to influence some section 106 agreements before its submission to the IE on 1 April;

8) To request that the Corporate Director, Community Services works with the Service Director Community Leadership & Governance to develop:

   a. A performance framework for measuring the effectiveness of the Area Boards
   b. An agreed approach towards managing the health and safety issues related to hosting public meetings across the county

9) To request that the Head of Democratic Services produces a note outlining the mechanics for electing the Chairmen of Area Boards, to be incorporated into the Area Board handbook;

10) To request that the Corporate Director, Community Services as part of the Area Board induction programme ensures that a meeting takes place between the Area Board Managers and their respective area members during June 2009;

11) To recommend to the IE that members of the Executive should not be allowed to chair Area Boards;

12) To grant the Area Boards Task Group consent to meet again ahead of the March meeting of the IE.

<u>(2) Customer Access</u>

The Chairman of the Task Group, Cllr Anthony Lake, presented the final report to the Board in conjunction with John Rogers (Customer Focus Lead).

Members expressed a strong desire that councillors elected to the new authority must be granted direct access to officers, and not forced to go through the council's switchboard.

Members were keen that it was as easy as possible for the public to access contact information for their local councillor through the new website.

The board sought assurance that the new authority's website was prepared for high volumes of traffic. The officer stated that the website was designed to cope with more traffic than is anticipated, but undertook to raise the issue with officers in IT.

The Board commended the Task Group and supporting officers on a thorough and helpful report.

Resolved – To:

1.   **Endorse the final report of the Customer Access Task Group;**

2.   **Note that the following commitments set out in the Access to Service Strategy will be in place by 1 April 2009:**
   i.   **a consistent face-to-face service covering both district and county services at each of the main locations;**
   ii.   **one main contact number plus 'golden numbers' that will access certain services directly;**
   iii.   **a new web-site that is an effective channel for customer transactions;**
   iv.   **an email service that will go to service inboxes, including where appropriate, e-forms that will capture transactional information at the earliest opportunity;**

3.   **Consider as a future scrutiny topic, the transformational aims of the *Customer Access to Services Strategy* as set out in paragraph 29(a)-(d) of the report;**

4.   **Recommend the implementation of high quality interface software to enable smooth loading of customer addresses from the property gazetteer NPLG to LAGAN to improve customer experience, reduce the time taken in transactions, and increase the accuracy of records;**

5.   **Consider investigating, as a transformational aim, alternative methods of Customer Access via technological means located at area hubs, for example, Webcams and 'hot phone' links, for hard-to-reach customers and areas;**

6.   **Recommend the redesign of the County Hall reception area in Trowbridge to present a more customer-friendly image in its provision of services;**

7.   **Recommend the review of opening hours for service by both face-to-face and telephony channels to better match customer preference and demand;**

8.   **Recommend the provision of a plan for providing face-to-face services to the Council's most vulnerable service users, from 1 April 2009;**

9.   **To forward the review and recommendations to the Implementation Executive and the relevant Portfolio Holder with a request for a written response.**

(3) Housing

It was reported that the Task Group last met on 13 February when the following matters were considered and discussed with the IE Member for Housing/Community Services and lead officers:

(i)   2009-10 budget update, including information on revenue budget levels and capital funding for the new housing service next year, and regarding the rent levels for the Salisbury housing tenants.

(ii)   A series of policies which need to be harmonised by 1 April 2009, including the rent arrears for council managed temporary accommodation, the rent deposit guarantee scheme and removals and storage; these are to be approved by the IE on 26 February.

(iii) A key issues and risks update, which listed the majority of risks to housing services in moving to one council (and as identified for 2009-10) as of medium likelihood/business impact. These risks mainly concern:

  - the maintenance of service performance
  - compliance with new IT requirements, i.e. SAP
  - staffing pressures
  - the homelessness strategy not being ready in time for the anticipated Comprehensive Area Assessment in October 2009
  - the economic downturn

(iv)   A quarter three performance update which illustrated good performance, with the exception of 23 people currently registered as homeless, which the IE member stated he was actively pursuing as an area for improvement.

(v)   Feedback on the separate scrutiny exercise to consider a new Accommodation Strategy for Older People. A consultation phase for which will be launched at the end of February.

The Task Group's next meeting is due to take place on 12 March, when members will discuss further updates in relation to the housing project plan, risk register, policy harmonisation and options for affordable housing projects in 2009-10. The Task Group's final report will be submitted to the JOSTB on 27 March 2009.

Resolved – To note the update.

(4) Change Management
It was reported that the Change Management Task Group met on 28 January to consider progress against:
  -   BMP (Business Management Programme)
  -   ICT
  -   Shared Services

The executive had strong representation and the message in relation to BMP was clear. The project would go live on 1 April and predicted savings would be delivered. The payroll element of BMP was the only area of concern but contingency arrangements were in place to manage this risk.

The ICT project was on track and the Head of ICT plus the three team leaders had been appointed. The WAN was live between the County Council, North Wiltshire and Kennet. Salisbury would be linked by 5 or 6 February and West Wiltshire the following week. The link between Salisbury and Devizes would shortly be completed by BT, two months ahead of schedule. The new web site was ready and would be available to view and comment by the end of February. Members were reassured that all co-opted members would retain equipment and existing e-mail accounts during the pre-election period.

The Shared Services project was seen as low risk. 700 staff had been trained on SAP and the chief financial officer was providing support whilst the Shared Services Head of Finance role was being evaluated for appointment.

Resolved – To note the update.

(5) Waste

The Task Group will next meet on 5 March.

Resolved – To note the update.

(6) Critical Path

The Chairman of the Task Group, Cllr Christine Reid, presented an update to the Board. A DVD had been produced by Chris Franklin (Web and Media Manager, KDC) to publicise the new authority. The DVD was screened to the Board who commended the officer for his work and suggested that the DVD be screened at as many Pilot Area Boards as possible.

It was confirmed that the reception area at County Hall was to be refurbished by 1st April.

The group was currently producing their final report and recommendations for the new authority and their last meeting was scheduled for 23 March 2009.

Resolved – To note the update.

6.   **Electoral Services and Members' Support – Rapid Scrutiny Exercise**

A report was circulated from the Scrutiny Support Officer WCC summarising the 26 January meeting. In addition the lead member, Mr Jonathon Seed, provided a verbal update on the 3rd meeting which had taken place prior to JOSTB on 27 February. The group had been provided with the information they had requested in relation to structures, election timetables and allowances but had concerns in relation to the IT facilities available for members using the hubs. They also wished to be assured that members would be able to forward e-mails from their council e-mail accounts to their personal e-mail addresses. Cllr Keith Humphries undertook to raise these issues with the relevant officers through the Change Management Scrutiny Task group.

The Officer-Member Protocol was currently being produced and would be brought to the JOSTB at their meeting on 27 March. Members also felt that the Planning Protocol

should be subject to scrutiny and agreed that it be brought to JOSTB on 27 March. It was requested that the Planning Protocol be circulated to members as soon as possible for their consideration and comment.

Resolved

1) **To note the previous decision JOSTB - 6(1) in relation to the potential use of Parish/Town Clerks or other part time staff to manage peak demand.**

2) **To ask the Change Management Scrutiny Task Group to seek clarification on the auto-forwarding of e-mails and the ICT facilities available for members at the hubs.**

3) **That JOSTB consider the officer-member protocol at their meeting on 27 March 2009.**

4) **That JOSTB consider the Planning Protocol at their meeting on 27 March 2009.**

7. **Executive Member Attendance at Overview & Scrutiny Committees in the New Council**

The JOSTB considered a report by the Scrutiny Manager WCC.

Resolved
1) **To endorse the proposed wording in paragraph 4 for inclusion in the Constitution;**

2) **That the draft Overview and Scrutiny article and procedure rules proposed for the new constitution be considered in their entirety by JOSTB at their meeting on 27 March 2009.**

8. **Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements for the New Council – Consultation Responses**

The JOSTB considered a report by the Scrutiny Manager WCC.

Resolved

(1)   To note the replies to the consultation and agree the actions in response as set out in Appendix C to the report;

(2)   To note the next steps as set out in the report; and,

(3)   To finalise the O&S arrangements (as reported at the last meeting – summary chart at Appendix A to the report) subject to the above for recommendation to the new Council in June.

9. **Towards One Council – Progress Report**

Board members received the most recent Progress Report.

Resolved **– To note report.**

10. **Implementation Executive Minutes**

Resolved **– To receive the IE minutes of the meetings on 28 January and 11 February.**

11. **Outline Work Programmes**

(1) JOSTB Work Programme
The Board noted that consideration of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure rules and the Planning Protocol were to be added to the JOSTB agenda for their meeting on 27 March 2009, and that consideration of the evaluation phase of the Area Boards project was to be added to the JOSTB agenda for their meeting on 20 April 2009.

Resolved **– Subject to the additions above, to approve the outline work programme for the Board.**

(2) IE Work Programme

Resolved **- To note the IE Work Programme.**

12. **Next Ordinary Meeting – Friday 27 March 2009 at 10.30am at Kennet District Council Offices**

(Duration of Meeting: 10:30 – 13:35)

The officer who has produced these minutes is Paul Trenell, Democratic Services, Salisbury District Council. Direct line: (01722) 434250.