



**TRANSITIONAL WASTE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP
REPORT OF A MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 28th JULY 2008
AT COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE**

Present:

Task Group: Mr Alan Hill (NWDC), Mr Dennis Brown (SDC), Mr Graham Hedley (WWDC), Mrs Paula Winchcombe (KDC), Mr Tony Deane (WCC)

Officers: Ceri Williams (Scrutiny Officer), Mark Smith (Programme Lead), Adrian Hampton (Head of Operations – Kennet District Council)

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Jonathon Seed, who was substituted by Cllr Paula Winchcombe.

2. Report of the Previous Meeting

Whilst noting the report, the Chairman highlighted that he had written to the Chairman of the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Board (JOSTB), voicing concern at the speed of transformation of the waste service. The JOSTB Chairman had raised this at the Implementation Executive and was told that transformation would take place post-vesting day, where the new council could determine the service it wished to provide and suitable resource would be available for delivery of the change.

3. Project Team Update

Mark Smith the newly appointed Service Director for Amenities and Leisure briefed the task group on his background and the immediate project priorities.

Responsibilities for project implementation now sat within the directorate. A new project team had been formed, which Adrian Hampton Kennet DC managed. The focus for the team was transition with the aim to ensure a seamless service post April 1st 2009, which was viewed as the critical project risk. Transformation to provide one waste service for Wiltshire would take place in the new council, due to officer capacity and the requirement for the unitary council to determine the service it wished to provide.

Members voiced concern that focusing on transition rather than transformation seemed unreasonable. The task group anticipates that the public would expect service provision across the County to be equalised as soon as possible after Vesting Day, with the public being dissatisfied with parts of the county receiving a weekly service and the other parts AWC. It was felt that these arrangements would generate complaints as people would be paying the same council tax bills but receiving different levels of service. The task group feels that WC might get away with saying it takes time to change these things for 6 months or so, but then questions will be asked and the fact that no forward planning had been done due to lack of Officer resources will not go down well with the public. Whilst Members understand that the decision regarding service provision will be for the WC to make, it was felt that work should start now so that a report has been prepared for the new Portfolio holder immediately after Vesting Day so that he/she has an analysis of where we are now regarding service provision, options regarding changes to level of service in accordance with best practise, costings and recommendations.

Members also explored the impact of operatives being paid a different rate for doing the same job in different Districts. No doubt that will apply to the various layers of Management too. Again, the comment relating to forward planning not having been done due to lack of Officer resources will not go down well. The task group felt that staff would want an equality of remuneration to be introduced quickly, and with potential union support, industrial action was a risk.

During discussions the task group raised questions about the linkages with the contact centres when dealing with public queries and the staffing implications of moving to the new council. Members were also concerned about the impact delaying transformation may have on LATS fines and Landfill Taxes.

The task group was then given a powerpoint presentation by Adrian Hampton, outlining the current project position. In respect of transition; the key work areas were completion of the work plan and identification of budget requirements.

Members raised questions about the savings for the service, questioning if the 240k they had been told previously was still relevant. The Director for Amenities and Leisure for 09-10 told the task group he would be working to a cash-freeze budget, which was extremely challenging when considering pressures such as rising fuel costs. The task group had been advised previously that there would be savings during the first years of the WC, although these would be modest until transformation was well advanced. It had been suggested that savings would be about a quarter of a million pounds the first year increasing to 3 million for the third year. Members expressed their disappointment at being told that even these modest savings would not be achieved. Members voiced their concern that the concept of Unitary was 'sold' to the public on the grounds of

savings and it seemed that this new information contradicted this message. A considerable amount of information in the foyer area at County Hall informs the public that savings of £15million per annum are available through Unitary; it will not be long before the public starts asking where those savings are.

Agreed

- To thank the officers for the briefing
- The scrutiny officer to liaise with the Customer Access Task Group in relation to preparation for dealing with Waste enquiries from the public.
- The scrutiny officer to supply members with the 1C4W savings attributed to Waste Services.

4. Transformation of the Service

At its last meeting the task group identified Alternate Weekly Collections (AWC) as an area for further review. In response Mark Smith and Adrian Hampton gave a presentation outlining the experiences of introducing AWC in the Kennet District.

A number of key factors which determined the success of scheme emerged:

- a) The need for support from members and senior staff
- b) The importance of communicating the change to the public
- c) Necessity for a well resourced team to respond to the large number of public enquiries generated by the service change
- d) That thorough planning is undertaken with all options explored
- e) That policies are understood by collection crews

Agreed

- To thank the officers for the briefing
- For the task group to meet in August to discuss what it would like reported to the August 29th meeting of the JOSTB

5. Date of Next Meeting

August 18th 9.30 am County Hall