

*North
Wiltshire
District
Council*

Corporate Services
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COUNCIL

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THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND THE MEETING

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Tuesday 31st January 2006 at the Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham, commencing at 7.00pm.

Present:

Chairman.....Councillor C. Crisp

Councillors D.B. Allen, P.G. Allnatt, A.R. Baines, H.R. Barton, T.A.P. Briggs, N.S. Bryant, A.M. Bucknell, C. R. Coleman, A.L. Davis, P.R. Davis, H.M. Dixon, K.A. Dixon, S.K. Doubell, D.J.E. Evans, P.J. Goldstone, P.G. Green, G.R. Greenaway, M.E.M. Groom, M.P. Hatton, R.J. Henning, J.R. Ireland, A.S.R. Jackson, H.T. Jones, R.B. MacGregor, N.T. Maidment, S.D. Meadows, T.J.A. Northey, C. O’Gorman, G. Offord, N.M. Phillips, J.M. Read, C. Reid, P.S. Roberts, J.H. Rooke, M. Rousell, S. L. Scruton, T.R. Sturgis, O.J. Thomas, J.P.S.S. Thomson, R.L. Tonge, A.J. Trotman, S.R. Walls, C. Wannell, M.J. West and J.M. Wood.

Officers Present: D. Burbidge (Chief Executive), P. Jeremiah (Team Leader Legal Services), J. Watling (Policy & Democratic Services Team Leader). L. Bell (Strategic Manager Community & Environment), A. Davies (Strategic Manager Planning Services), N. Fenwick (Strategic Manager Customer Services) and S. Pangbourne (Strategic Manager Corporate Services), D. Hodges (Team Leader Finance Services) and A. Lane (Spatial Plans Officer).

C72. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors S. R. Coy, D. Darby, V. H. Greenman, I.J. Henderson, D. M. Moore, and J.A. Scott.

C73. Minutes

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 22nd November 2005 were considered.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 22nd November 2005 be confirmed and signed as a correct record

C74. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.



C75. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman made the following announcements:

Civic Carol Service

This year's Civic Carol Service was held on the 18th December at St Andrew's Church, Chippenham. Some 280 people attended, including the High Sheriff of Wiltshire, Mr Margesson, for which the Council has received a personal thank you letter. James Gray MP also attended. Many compliments were received.

The collection raised £465.41, of which £365.41 will go to the Chairman's Charity, Springboard Opportunity Playgroup. The remainder will go to the Church to help with ongoing costs.

One of the highlights of the service was the participation of children from the Abbeyfield School's Soul Band - this was an unusual twist to traditional carols and was extremely well received.

C76. Public Question Time/Receipt of Petitions

(A) The following question had been submitted by Bryony Graves:

How much has the chairwoman raised for charity this year so far? How much of officer time is spent administering the charity and what is the cost to date over the past year. Is running the charity a compulsory service?

The Chairman responded:

The amount of money raised from April 2005 to January 2006 is £1,611.01. Officer's time is spent on supporting the Chairman and managing her diary in connection with her Civic Duties as the public face of the Council. Some of these events result in money being raised for the Chairman's chosen Charity 2005/06, Springboard Opportunity Playgroup, such as the collection from the Civic Carol Service which was £365.41. Each month, NWDC staff take part in a Dress Down Day with the collection from this going to the Chairman's Charity. The Christmas Cards were made in-house this year which was more cost effective.

It is not compulsory that the Chairman chooses to raise funds for a charity but there is the opportunity to help people and worthwhile causes within North Wiltshire which should not be missed.

Specific work connected with the Chairman's Charity is not included in any officers' job description. However, many officers give their own time to support the Chairman's fundraising activities and this is greatly welcomed by me.

(B) The following question had been submitted by Janice Fortune from the North Wiltshire CVS

Ms Fortune welcomed the State of the Area discussions held by the Council, and asked for the ongoing involvement of Local Strategic Partnerships and others in the process.

The Leader of the Council replied that she was very pleased to recognise the valuable role of LSP's, and she would be delighted to involve them in any way she could.

C77. Question Time

The following questions were received:

(A) Councillor J. M. Wood - Minute Book page 362 C68. (Respect for People)

This minute states that members and officers would be given a work book and asked to take an interactive test. Respect for People is an important policy and members and officers should undertake the training programme without delay. Could the Lead Member say when this "interactive test" will be available to members?

Councillor Offord responded:

Most Members who were included in the first phase of the Respect for People programme have now successfully completed the test. Workbooks are being issued this evening to all other Members, who should complete the interactive test by the end of February.

I am delighted to inform Members that because of the progress made in this area over the last 18 months or so, the Council has now achieved Level 1 of the Equality Standard. This is a remarkable achievement (delivered ahead of schedule) although there remains a great deal to be done in this crucial area.

(B) Councillor R. J. Henning - Minute Book page 400 O.107. (Toilets at Timber Steet, Chippenham)

Can the Leader confirm that the requirement to demolish the waiting room toilets at Timber Street is a result of the safety requirements of the bus operators and the County Council, and that the Leader is committed to providing a modern replacement in the future.

The Leader of the Council replied that a risk assessment at the premises had concluded there was an unacceptably high risk of serious injury. This, coupled with a major incident in 2005 involving the Health and Safety Executive, had led to the present situation. She also confirmed that she was committed to providing a modern replacement in the long term, subject to the work being done by the Public Conveniences Task Group.

In response to a supplementary question about the use of Capital, the Leader explained that running costs were another matter. For that reason, the results of the Task Group's work were awaited.

(C) Councillor T. R. Sturgis - Minute Book page 367 E118. (2006/07 budget)

Will provision need to be made in the 2006/07 budget for additional posts?

Cllr S. K. Doubell, as portfolioholder, confirmed this was the case.

In response to a supplementary question from Cllr Sturgis about the detail, she explained she was reluctant to quote grades and precise figures verbally at short notice, but would be happy to provide a written answer.

(D) Councillor T. R. Sturgis - Minute Book page 368 E118. (Finance seminar)

When will the seminar be held to present budget draw downs from balances and the 2005/06 projected outturns?

The Leader explained this had been overtaken by the production of an information sheet available to councillors.

(E) Councillor T. R. Sturgis - Minute Book page 369 E119. (Car parking strategy)

Will the further report mentioned at resolution 1) be available in time to inform the budget process?

Cllr Allnatt explained that he would be happy to discuss this further with Cllr Sturgis, although he was still waiting for further information from external sources. It was his intention to provide the information in good time for the budget discussions, and he had already drafted a note for distribution to Councillors, which could be released once the relevant information had been obtained.

(F) Councillor T. R. Sturgis - Minute Book page 375 E127. (Audit Commission review)

The Audit Commission partner review and evaluation tool for evaluating partnerships is due in January 2006. Will this be in time to inform the budget?

I understand that other District Councils have put their Interim Annual Audit and Inspection letter in the public domain, as this has been produced to inform budgets. When will the council make this document available?

The Leader of the Council confirmed that it would be available in time to inform the budget process.

(G) Councillor T. R. Sturgis - Minute Book page 399 O.103 (Carbon Trust)

It is disappointing that no action has been taken by the Executive on the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny committee. Will provision be made in the budget for these recommendations to be carried out?

The Leader of the Council said there would be further meetings of the Executive in February, with another in March. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been kept fully informed.

(H) Councillor N. M. Phillips - Minute Book page 400 O.107. (Bus station toilets at Chippenham)

In view of North Wiltshire District Council's Equalities and Diversities policy, and the fact that the Council is apparently supposed to be concerned with the wellbeing of the residents of North Wiltshire, will the portfolio holder please comment on the all-embracing policy which the Executive is not employing by not replacing the toilets at the bus station?

Cllr Offord, as portfolio holder agreed to provide a written answer.

Cllr O'Gorman indicated that the primary concern was the health and safety of members of the public.

C78. State of the Area Debate and Budget Consultation

Consideration was given to Report No.7 (circulated with the agenda) which provided Council with data to help inform the State of the Area Debate and the formation of the Budget for 2006/07.

Resolved

- (1) that a full response be given in the budget to the consultation information; and
- (2) that the process and timetable for setting priorities and addressing budget challenges for next year be reviewed fully by the Overview and Scrutiny committee to make it more inclusive.

C79. North Wiltshire Local Development Framework, Core Strategy – Issues and Options Document, Including the Sustainability Appraisal

At its meeting on 5th January 2006 the Executive considered the North Wiltshire Local Development Framework, Core Strategy – Issues and Options Document, Including the Sustainability Appraisal and had made recommendations to Council (minute E142 refers).

Resolved:

- (1) that the Core Strategy Issues and Options document be approved for consultation; and
- (2) that the supporting document, the Sustainability Appraisal, be approved for consultation.

C80. Draft Calendar of Meetings 2006/07

Consideration was given to Report No.9 (circulated with the agenda) which sought approval of the draft calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2006/2007.

Resolved that the draft calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2006/2007 be approved, subject to the following amendments:

- (1) that the meeting of the Development Control Committee provisionally listed for 26 July be deferred to the following week, i.e. 2 August;
- (2) that the Council meeting on 27 June be identified as the provisional date for the State of the Area debate; and
- (3) that the 26 July date, freed by the decision to defer the Development Control Committee, be taken up by the Cricklade and Wootton Bassett Area committee meeting scheduled for the following day.

C81. Financial Regulations Review

Consideration was given to Report No.10 (circulated with the agenda), together with additional information (circulated at the meeting), which asked Members to consider the review of the Council's Financial Regulations.

Members concluded that whilst the measures outlined in the report were very satisfactory, it was important to embed in the process the provision that any significant decisions taken under delegated authority should be effectively communicated to Councillors.

Resolved

- (1) that the proposed changes to monetary limits set out in Report No.10 - Attachment 'C' are approved to take effect from 1st April 2006; and
- (2) that financial regulations and monetary limits are reviewed every 2 years as required by the Constitution.

C82. Questions from Councillors – Council Procedure Rule 14

The following question had been received in writing from Councillor M. P. Hatton (circulated with the agenda) in accordance with Procedure Rule 14:

Provision of Cemeteries

1. What was the response from North Wiltshire District Council to the Department for Constitutional Affairs consultation paper on Burial Law and Policy in the 21st Century?
2. What help can North Wiltshire District Council give to the Town and Parish Councils towards meeting the need for burial space through the Local Planning process and financial assistance?

The following response from Councillor H. M. Dixon to the question had been circulated at the meeting:

- (1) The consultation paper was not considered to be a priority piece of work, as this Council does not manage burial grounds
- (2) Town and Parish Councils are probably better placed to recognise the need for burial space and to identify suitable locations within their local communities. As the local planning authority, the Council is in a position to guide the Town and Parish Councils through the planning process. Presently there are no policies within the existing or proposed North Wiltshire Local Plans on this specific issue. Any proposals for new provision will of course be subject to the general policies of those Plans.

A possible source of funding may be through the Community Area capital budget.

Cllr Hatton welcomed the response, as this was of particular concern locally, and shared by a number of other local Councils.

C83. Notices of Motion – Council Procedure Rule 15

There were no new motions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 15.

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The meeting ended at 8.10pm.
There was one member of public present.

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