

Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive held on Thursday 23rd November 2006 in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham commencing at 6.30pm.

Present: Councillor C. O’Gorman, Leader in the Chair

Councillors P. G. Allnatt, H. M. Dixon, S. K. Doubell, D. J. E. Evans, R. J. Henning, D. M. Moore, G. Offord and O. J. Thomas

Non-Executive Councillors Present: Councillors P. R. Davis, M. E. M. Groom, M. P. Hatton, J. R. Ireland, A. S. R. Jackson, S. D. Meadows, T. J. A. Northey, N. M. Phillips, C. Reid, J. H. Rooke, T. R. Sturgis, R. L. Tonge, A. J. Trotman, S. R. Walls, and C. Wannell

Officers Present: L. Bell (Strategic Manager - Community & Environment), D. Burbidge (Chief Executive), P. Hawley (Chief Accountant), P. Jeremiah (Legal Services Team Leader), P. Lancaster (Press and Media Officer), L. May (Policy & Democratic Services Assistant), S. Pangbourne (Strategic Manager Corporate Services), D. Stirling (Asset, Design and Regeneration Team Leader), P. Timmins (Interim Section 151 Officer), and G. Wilson (Customer and Business Support Team Leader)

E109. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

E110. Public Question Time/Receipt of Petitions

A Petition was received bearing 1471 signatures to the following statement:

“All the signatures below represent people who voice their concerns regarding the proposed closure of the White Horse Leisure Centre. They all support the concept of the continuance of the local sports centre that provides all the present facilities including swimming, squash, badminton, gym and studio for aerobics, kick football, etc.

None of the above facilities are being catered for in the proposed football stadium on the outer perimeter of Calne. The government proposed investments to be made in the limited facilities do not support the government’s initiative for “Sports for all” and “Sport for life”. So why is the local council investing 1.75 million pounds in this limited facility and considering closing the White Horse Leisure Centre”

A large number of public questions were received prior to the meeting and a questions and answers sheet, providing as many answers as possible was circulated at the meeting.

Those present at the meeting were assured that their comments and views would be taken into account and that the questions and answers sheet would also be circulated to all those who had raised a question for the Executive and were not able to be present at the meeting.



Further public statements and questions were received at the meeting as follows:-

B. Atfield, Cricklade Town Council - Cricklade Town Council had raised funds to establish and support Cricklade Leisure Centre. Resources needed to be spread over the district rather than being concentrated in the south.

C. Wilce, Cricklade Town Council stated that - There had been a leak of information to the press and we know what your recommendations are - Cricklade is on a list for possible closure. We hope that you don't walk away from us and that you will formulate some sort of rescue package for us.

A representative from Calne asked - "How did the Council reconcile the closure of a leisure centre with sustainable communities?"

Councillor D. Moore responded that no decisions had yet been made.

A representative from Calne Alpha 4 stated that a competition leisure pool was required by the 150 children of the group and that they needed to swim in lanes which was not available at the Olympiad, these children had potential for competing in future Olympics.

M. Cuthbert from Calne stated that he was long Leisure Centre user and that it was not feasible to consider closing the White Horse Leisure Centre as it had implications for youth groups and schools. The needs of the community needed to be addressed and not the balance sheet.

A. Hall from Corsham stated that Corsham was fully used by the swimming club which had 500 members and the schools and that it was important to teach children swimming.

Councillor C. O'Gorman stated that the Council was advised that the level at which the Council was being asked to fund the leisure centres was unsustainable, and that this was the most difficult issue which the Council had had to face during her time as Leader. Decisions would not be taken lightly and all the representations made both verbally and in writing would be taken into account.

E111. Questions from Non-Executive Councillors

Questions/statements from Non-Executive Councillors were received as follows:

Councillor A. J. Trotman - "Why have the Centres been allowed to run down under North Wiltshire Leisure Limited and Wycombe Leisure?"

The Lead Member, Councillor D. Moore responded that the management of the Leisure Centres was the responsibility of North Wiltshire Leisure Limited.

Councillor T. R. Sturgis questioned why the meeting was going to be held behind closed doors and that it was unreasonable for the debate not to be shared with the public.

P. Jeremiah (Council's Legal Services Team Leader) responded that the report contained exempt information under paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

Councillor C. Wannell - "If as according to the Gazette and Herald newspaper today the Wootton Bassett Leisure Centre is to close - where will the school children and clubs who use the Centre go to? Have the Wootton Bassett Town Council been consulted?"

Councillor C. O’Gorman responded that no decision had yet been made.
Councillor S. R. Walls stated that the County Council relies on the swimming pools as part of the school curriculum and that Swindon could not supply the shortfall. The diving facilities at Wootton Bassett were required.

Councillor J. R. Ireland questioned why the problems with North Wiltshire Leisure Limited were not picked up sooner?

The Lead Member, Councillor D. Moore responded that the Working Group had been working very hard to try and solve the problems and had considered all the options.

Councillor T. J. A Northey asked why the Council had been reducing the grant to North Wiltshire Leisure Limited since 2000.

The Lead Member, Councillor D. Moore responded that the Council had asked North Wiltshire Leisure Limited if they were able to manage with reduced funding and they had said that they could.

Councillor N. M. Phillips stated that the population in North Wiltshire was increasing and so would the demand for leisure facilities.

Councillor M. E. M. Groom asked if North Wiltshire Leisure Limited were thoroughly investigated?

The Lead Member, Councillor D. Moore responded that this question could not be answered in the public part of the meeting.

Councillor S. D. Meadows asked how the Healthy Lifestyles pledge would be met if leisure centres were to close.

The Lead Member, Councillor D. Moore responded that leisure provision would continue to be looked at by the Leisure Provision Working Group.

Councillor M. P. Hatton questioned that when the District Council took over the Cricklade Leisure Centre it was run by an association that was a registered charity and that we had to give an assurance to the Charity Commission that it would continue to provide leisure facilities.

P. Jeremiah (Council’s Monitoring Officer) responded that if a decision was made to close the Centre at Cricklade the legal aspects would be duly considered.

Councillor P. Allnatt wished to clarify for the members of the public present the reasons why the subject needed to be debated and considered when the meeting was not open to the public and that they should be reassured that the Executive would take their views into account.

Councillor M. E. M. Groom stated that areas in the east of the district were being deprived and the leisure centres within Swindon were operating at capacity and that decent facilities for children were required.

Councillor R. L Tonge asked when would the public hear about any decisions that are made at the meeting.

The Lead Member, Councillor D. Moore responded that North Wiltshire Leisure Limited would be informed of any decisions following the meeting and then a statement would be issued to the press and public.

Councillor C. Reid stated that her work as a member of the Leisure Provision Board had been the most difficult she had had to undertake as a District Councillor and that North Wiltshire Leisure Limited had repeatedly requested very large sums of money from the Council which they could not continue to provide. If the Council did continue to support them as required this would result in a massive increase in the Council Tax and this would lead to the Council being capped. The Board were trying to make the best decision that they could for the community.

E112. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Executive (Budget) held on 16th November 2006 (circulated with the agenda) were considered.

Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive (Budget) held on 16th November 2006 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

E113. Declarations of Interest

Executive Members

Name	Item	Type	Nature	Action
P. G. Allnatt	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber
H. M. Dixon	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	County and Parish Councillor	Remained in Chamber
S. K. Doubell	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town and County Councillor	Remained in Chamber
D. J. E. Evans	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Parish Councillor	Remained in Chamber
R. J. Henning	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town and County Councillor	Remained in Chamber
D. M. Moore	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber
G. Offord	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber
C. O' Gorman	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber
O. J. Thomas	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber

Non Executive Members

Name	Item	Type	Nature	Action
P. R. Davis	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town and County Councillor	Remained in Chamber
M. E. M. Groom	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	County Councillor and School Governor	Remained in Chamber
M. P. Hatton	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber
J. R. Ireland	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber
A. S. R. Jackson	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber
S. D. Meadows	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Parish Councillor	Remained in Chamber
N. M. Phillips	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber
C. Reid	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber
J. H. Rooke	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town and County Councillor	Remained in Chamber
T. R. Sturgis	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	County Councillor and Shareholder of North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Remained in Chamber
R. L. Tonge	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Parish Councillor	Remained in Chamber
A. J. Trotman	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town and County Councillor	Remained in Chamber
S. R. Walls	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor	Remained in Chamber
C. Wannell	8 - North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Personal	Town Councillor and School Governor	Remained in Chamber

E114. Leader's Announcements

There were no announcements.

E115. Exclusion of Press and Public

To consider and, if appropriate, pass the following resolution:

That in accordance with Regulation 21 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the following item of business involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as follows and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Agenda item/Report name	Paragraph(s) of the Act / Schedule describing the exemption
Item 8 – North Wiltshire Leisure Limited	Paragraphs 3 and 5

E116. North Wiltshire Leisure Limited

Consideration was given to Report No.8 (circulated at the meeting) which considered the current financial position of North Wiltshire Leisure Limited and the future of leisure provision.

The Lead Member, Councillor D. Moore gave an introduction to the report and the background of the issues.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The facilities that are required by local schools;
- The level of funding that would be required to secure the future of North Wiltshire Leisure Limited;
- The financial position of North Wiltshire Leisure Limited and related issues;
- The extent of the leases and legal agreements between the Council and North Wiltshire District Council
- Issues of confidence;
- Viability of the Leisure Centres:
- The extensive work undertaken by the Leisure Provision Board;
- The future of leisure provision; and
- The proposed communications and publication of the decision.

Resolved that

1. In response to a request from North Wiltshire Leisure Ltd (NWLL) and having taken financial, legal and leisure consultants advice, the Council agrees to vary the Services which NWLL provide under the contract relating to the management and operation of six leisure centres within the district by removing any requirement to provide the Services at Cricklade Leisure Centre, the Lime Kiln Leisure Centre, Wootton Bassett and the White Horse Leisure Centre, Calne and that these centres be mothballed in a manner satisfactory to the Council.
2. North Wiltshire Leisure Limited be advised to submit their proposed recovery and business plan for 07/08 by the end of December 2006, as per the terms set out in the contract.
3. In light of the current financial position, no further grant funding to North Wiltshire Leisure Limited be approved over and above that already agreed for 2006/07.
4. Subject to a Business Plan from North Wiltshire Leisure Limited, an advance payment be approved from the 2007/08 management fee budget to enable North Wiltshire Leisure Limited to continue to trade until end March 2007, and that authority be delegated to the Council's Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Lead Member to release as necessary.
5. That the agreed annual management fee for later years does not exceed the approved base budget provision.
6. The cost of auditors carrying out a full financial audit of North Wiltshire Leisure Limited's accounts as referred to in paragraph 7.13 of the Report be underwritten by the Council.
7. A further report be prepared on any additional costs which relate to closures, as referred to in paragraph 7.14 of the Report.
8. That the Leisure Provision Working Group continues its work and submits further reports by end March 2007 to the Executive to cover the following:-
 - Recovery Plan and Enhancement Plan for the centres that are to remain open;

Executive Minutes – 23rd November 2006

- Disposal Plan and options for centres proposed for closure;
- Proposals for testing the market and procurement of future service provider.

Admin Note - Councillor P. G. Allnatt requested that his vote against the recommendations be recorded.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.55pm.

There were 28 members of the public present.