

**Member Policy Day  
Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

**Afternoon Session 2.30pm – 5.00pm**

**Attendees:** Cllr Tonge, Cllr Bucknell, Cllr Reid, Cllr Crisp, Cllr N Phillips, Cllr A Phillips, Cllr Caswill, Cllr S Doubell, Cllr J Doubell, Cllr Greenman, Cllr Henderson, Cllr Allen, Cllr Hill, Cllr Groom, Cllr Scragg, Cllr Causer, Cllr Still, Laurie Bell, Delwyn Burbidge, Lachlan Robertson, Stuart McGregor.

**Evening Session 7.00pm – 9.30pm**

**Attendees:**

Cllr Tonge, Cllr Bucknell, Cllr Bodman, Cllr Boase, Cllr Meadows, Cllr Trotman, Cllr Berry, Cllr Ramsey, Cllr Sturgis, Cllr Clements, Cllr P Roberts, Cllr B Roberts, Cllr Vines, Cllr Henning, Cllr Plenty, Cllr Darby, Cllr Sanderson

**Notes:** Emma Mumford

Cllr Tonge introduced the sessions and explained what outcomes he hoped would be achieved based on work that had been undertaken by the Executive and CMB on where the Council may consider focusing its resources for the next 12-18 months. The sessions were intended to provide information and invite feedback and views on setting priorities.

The main points were:

- To start thinking ahead and looking at cost base and services.
- To evolve a Transitional Corporate Plan to include feedback from the sessions.

**Unitary Update**

Delwyn updated on the Unitary situation. A copy of the presentation was handed out.

A number of concerns and points were raised;

- If there is no election prior to Vesting Day then the transition will not be led by those who will be key players in the new authority.
- We will inevitably lose staff, some districts have already lost Senior Managers.
- A new CEO for the new council cannot be appointed until after the election – and an Acting CEO will not be appointed in the meantime.
- The Transitional Cabinet will shape the way the new authority will look.
- JIB is the Officer level board under the Transitional Cabinet, and will consist of WCC & District Officers – it was proposed that it should be a Senior Officer on behalf of NWDC and it was felt that HR MUST be represented.
- There will be restrictions on contracts i.e. Leisure
- It was hoped that Vision and Culture being mentioned would indicate significant change and a new way forward.
- There were concerns that the voice of the districts would be drowned by WCC, it was noted however, that some of the senior WCC Cllr's are also District Cllr's.
- It was asked if we could safeguard the monies associated with assets within a District, to continue to benefit that District. It was suggested that the answer would be no.
- With regard to Overview & Scrutiny, It was questioned whether the Districts & other parties should have a bigger say, and noted that WCC ordinarily have a member of the opposition as Chair of Scrutiny at the very least.
- LSP's – would there be a need for NWP? There will be a single LAA for Wiltshire.

- CAA (Comprehensive Area Assessment) – it has been decided that we do not have to go through this or the CPA assessments during the transition period.
- It has also been agreed with the Audit Commission not to go ahead with the Streetscene Inspection.
- Union consultations are already in place and national protocols. Members asked for more details regarding Union reps being involved in the Transition process, and whether staff have the right to complain at all. **(Action – Unison rep information for members, Elaine Orchard to provide.)**
- It was noted that the Officers at WCC appear to be in a better position than the Districts Officers, as most of the Senior positions for the Transition process are being held by WCC Officers.
- Workstreams were seen as highly important and it was felt that District Officers should have been given the opportunity to 'apply' for Lead Officer positions, but these had already been filled by staff from WCC.

The 4 main Workstreams are:

Frontline – Alan Feist (WCC)

Community & Governance – Nicky Lewis (WCC)

Business Management – Tim Gregory (WCC)

Resources – Steven Gerrard (WCC)

Members asked for detailed lists of all of the workstreams. **(Action EM)**

- Some areas may be ring fenced at Chief Officer level. i.e. Social Services & Education
- All staff except the CEO's and possibly the DCEO's (second tier officers) should be protected. Frontline staff are the most protected.
- The current restructure has become a hybrid structure and Delwyn gave details, also explaining that weekly meetings would take place at all management levels. It was noted that a new Transition Team has been created and that Lachlan Robertson was leading this. Members have asked for diagrams of the new hybrid structure. **(Action: Elaine Orchard)**
- Communications with staff have been arranged on a monthly basis to keep them informed and morale as high as possible, and senior managers are involved with a number of meetings with WCC & the other Districts.
- It was asked if there was agreement that the suggested May 2009 Election date was suitable and the general consensus was yes, although there were concerns that the long delay would add to the staffing issues.
- There is a clause within the Transitional documents on page 10 – Clause 24, that states that 'this is not a take-over' so there is support within the documentation for some of the concerns that Councillor's had.

## Action

It was agreed that a letter would be sent to WCC from the Leader and the Leader of the opposition to raise some of the above concerns. The following were decided as the main points for the letter and it was felt that it should be sent sooner rather than later.

- Staffing
- Golden handcuffs (loyalty bonuses)
- Redundancies
- Overview & Scrutiny
- Political Balance
- Perception of WCC take over
- Transition Cabinet - WCC dominating
- No district staff in key posts
- The ability to keep key officers.

## **Workshop Part 1**

Cllr Tonge introduced the workshop and explained that it would be facilitated by Laurie Bell. Members were asked to look at 3 key service areas that were currently in need of improvement. The need for improvement was based on a number of factors including work undertaken by the finance team to assess the service costs v performance and the transition to a new council.

Members were asked for their views on where improvements could be made in the 3 areas; –

Revenues and Benefits  
Cleaving & Amenities  
Customer Focus

### **Feedback**

#### **Revenues**

- To aim to be in the top quartile performance
- Spend to save to achieve efficiencies
- Bad debt collection needs to move faster

#### **Benefits**

- Improve processing speed & verification
- Ensure there is no backlog in any area
- Improve to national performance – introduce ‘Golden Ticket’
- Be less dependent on agency staff
- Remove delays
- Improve investigations into fraud
- Process benefits efficiently to reduce overpayment of HB
- Cross reference claims

#### **Cleaving and Amenities**

- Increase recycling – cans/plastics & food on a house to house basis
- Extend green waste
- Continue rounds review
- Take oil/batteries & other difficult to recycle items at mini recycling centres
- More education on litter & recycling
- More litter bins
- Consolidate grass cutting (Grounds maintenance)
- Enforce – litter, fly tipping, graffiti.
- Street Cleaning and grounds maintenance need scheduling
- Efficiency review should be undertaken

#### **Customer Focus**

- Website – be more interactive/management/links/info
- More local information on the website
- Improve abandoned phone calls
- Implement Corporate Customer Charter
- Improve quality of letter writing
- Improve monitoring/responding to complaints – more ownership of customers
- Switchboard/reception improve to look at being customer contact centre for new council

## **Workshop Part 2**

Members were asked to consider proposed changes to the current Corporate Plan (in light of the move towards one council) and to start to evolve a Transitional Corporate Plan reflecting areas of work of the Council for the next 12-18 months.

### **Community**

#### **Economy –**

- Bath Road, Chippenham Development – *Agreed that this development should be subject to discussion with WCC.*
- Phase 3 development – Phelps Parade, Calne – *members were of the view that this scheme should proceed.*

#### **Transport –**

- **Car Parking Strategy**

Delay long-term strategy until final decision on Unitary. Street works to be fast tracked in Wootton Bassett High Street and completed in Chippenham – *agreed*

- **Identify Rural and Community Transport Needs**

Defer recruitment of Transport Officer - *agreed*

### **Culture/Healthy Lifestyles**

- **Procurement of Leisure Provider**

No work to be undertaken to procure new leisure service provider until final Unitary decision know. Interim contract to be extended to date to be agreed.

Delay recruitment of strategic leisure Officer or Client Officer - *agreed*

Delay new Leisure/Culture Strategy - *agreed*

Review of capital investment in 4 leisure centres - *agreed*

Review and agree terms of reference for Leisure Provision Working Group - *agreed*

- **Cricklade Country Way**

Lottery decision expected this month. If approved, need to agree lead authority – *agree*

*Swindon BC was suggested by the majority of Members.*

- **The Pound Arts Centre**

Defer recruitment of Arts Officer – *agreed*

## **Environment**

### **Waste & Recycling –**

- **Alternate week collections**

No work to be undertaken on implementing alternate week collections - *agreed*

Scrutiny Task Group to review increasing recycling - *agreed*

- **Climate Change – Improving energy efficiency**

Only undertake improvements in the Monkton Park offices - *agreed*

and leisure centres if agreed as part of capital investment - *agreed*

- **Advice & guidance on climate change**

Continue to promote AWARE days - *agreed*

- **Cleaner Streets**

Need to review implementation of litter response teams to deal with grot spots/fly tipping etc. – *agreed*

## **Customers**

### **Training & Development –**

Implement training required preparing staff & members for transition to new Council - *agreed*

### **Implementation of Transition Team for new Council**

To work with WCC on smooth integration of services - *agreed*

## **Budget**

The Budget was the final part of the session and Stuart McGregor updated members on their views and feedback as well as informing them of the Transitional Corporate Plan which will also form the budget setting for this year.

The key message being that the budget for 2008/09 is currently deliverable but any proposals to increase services that lead to increased costs will require proposals to reduce costs or increase income.