

Draft Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on Thursday 6 November 2008 at Monkton Park, Chippenham commencing at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillor R.L. Tonge..... in the Chair

Councillors R.M.H. Berry, C. Crisp, C.V. Ramsey and V.A. Vines.

Non-Executive Councillors Present:

Councillors J Doubell, S Doubell, P Doyle and C Caswill

Officers Present:

P Jeremiah (Legal Services Manager), S McGregor (Assistant Chief Executive) and M Todd (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

E68. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bucknell, H Greenman, I Henderson and R Sanderson.

E69. Public Question Time/Receipt of Petitions

No public questions or petitions were received.

E70. Questions from Non-Executive Councillors

The following question was received from Councillor C Caswill:

Without referring to information which is confidential, will the Leader of the Council provide an update on progress with the Bath Road site process, and in particular report on what information has now been given to the selected bidders, and whether the County Council have raised any objections to the steps being taken by this Council?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question as follows:

All seven short-listed developers have been advised that they are invited to submit a detailed scheme and tender to the Councils in January/February 2009.

They will be sent a Technical and Legal Pack - currently programmed to be completed on 14 November 2008. The delay is due to completing some of the statements and draft legal documents.

Each developer has confirmed that they intend to submit a detailed proposal. A Press Release will be organised by both Councils to coincide with the release of the Technical Pack.

The County Council Project Officer is working with the District Council and has accepted the recommendations from the Executive Minutes of 2 October 2008.

A meeting has taken place with representatives of the Chippenham Vision Group on 9 October and they have made comments of the Planning Statement which have been incorporated. The Technical Pack will also request that the Developers take the opportunity to meet and discuss their proposal with the Chippenham Vision Group.

It is anticipated that the Tender proposals will be considered by the Selection Panel in February 2009.

Councillor Caswill asked a supplementary question regarding the closing date for the submission of tenders. Officers agreed to send a written response.

E71. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 2 October 2008 were considered.

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on the 2 October 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

E72. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

E73. Leader's Announcements

The Leader asked Councillor P Doyle, Chairman of the Treasury Management Working Group, to make an announcement regarding investments in Icelandic Banks. Councillor Doyle informed members of the following:

1. The Treasury Management and Investment Working Group met on 23 October 2008.
2. Officers were able to confirm that the auditor is to recommend that the Audit Commission grant a letter of approval given that the impact of the Icelandic bank issue is not a material issue to North Wiltshire District Council and they are happy with the spread of investments and annual investment strategy.
3. Sector, the Council's financial advisers, are as confident as can be, that investment monies held in Icelandic deposits will be recovered over time as the official receiver has stated that assets essentially match the liabilities of these banks. The exposure risk thus essentially amounts to lost interest of about £180,000 up to end March 2009.
4. Sector reaffirmed that North Wiltshire District Council's strategy and the administration of investment funds had been and continued to be conducted in line with Central Government guidelines.
5. There has been no need for North Wiltshire District Council to borrow, and nor will there be a need to borrow, as a result of the Icelandic situation.
6. The Working Group, in discussion with Sector advisors, reviewed the existing portfolio of accounts held and, while no problems were identified, nevertheless decided to recommend the adoption of a slightly more risk averse strategy thus, in broad terms rebalancing the portfolio such that :
 - Overall holdings in UK Building Societies will be reduced

- Holdings in Irish Banks will be reduced
 - Holdings in UK Banks will be increased
 - Holdings in remaining international banks (there is only one - National Bank of Australia) will be returned to UK as contracts expire
 - Officers to use other UK-based investment vehicles (essentially UK Government such as Treasury Bills) as necessary for managing short term deposits of funds pending contract expiry/transfer to new investment
 - The above will be a gradual process, implemented as and when existing contracts expire but most of the existing portfolio will fall into this category over the next six months with the exception of the National Australia Bank which is a long term deposit expiring in March 2010.
7. Officers will operate in line with this revised strategy
 8. The rebalancing will ensure that while adopting a more risk-averse strategy, that North Wiltshire District Council Council taxpayers will continue to obtain a reasonable financial return on investments while safeguarding funds for transfer to Wiltshire Council in April 2009.
 9. Members should be aware that North Wiltshire District Council has agreement of Wiltshire County Council to operate the investment strategy such that contracts placed may overlap the demise of North Wiltshire District Council. Therefore North Wiltshire District Council will not be liquidising all of its assets prior to 31 March 2008.
 10. All of the above was agreed to unanimously by the four members of the Working Group.

E74. Revenue Budget Monitor 2008-09 – Month 6 – September 2008

Consideration was given to report no. 7 setting out a high level Revenue Budget Monitor for month 6 of the 2008-09 financial year, highlighting material known or anticipated variations in income and expenditure that could affect the Council by the end of the financial year.

Resolved that the report forecast under spend of circa £698k be noted.

E75. Capital Budget Monitor 2008-09 – Month 6 – September 2008

Consideration was given to report no. 8 informing the Executive of the latest position and forecast outturn on the 2008/09 Capital Programme.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- The resurfacing of the Emery Gate Car Park had now been completed.
- Some concern was expressed about the lack of detail in the report regarding risk assessment. Officers confirmed that the information provided related solely to financial risk and not the whole project.

Resolved that the following matters be noted:

- (1) The figures contained in Annex 1 in relation to the Capital Programme for 2008/09.
- (2) The information on Capital Schemes at Annex 2 of the report.
- (3) The Capital Risk Assessment contained in Annex 3 of the report.
- (4) That the Capital Programme is part of the ongoing consultation with Wiltshire County Council as a result of the Unitary proposal.

E76. Transitional Corporate Plan Progress Update – Second Quarter 2008/09

Consideration was given to report no. 9 which provided an update and exceptions report on the delivery and performance of the Transitional Corporate Plan for the second quarter of 2008/09. A copy of the most recent strategic risk register was also circulated.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- It was noted that the affordable housing target of delivering 300 homes was likely to be exceeded as 343 homes should be completed in the year.
- It was noted that 600 green waste bins had been ordered and these should be delivered in the next month. This would greatly increase the amount of recycling and composted waste collected.
- The Plan showing the land allocated for future housing development was available on the Wiltshire County Council website.
- It was noted that the high performance of the North Wiltshire District Council revenue and benefits team had been recognised on a recent visit by the County Council's Director of Resources. Members congratulated staff on their excellent performance.

Resolved that the second quarter exception report for delivery and performance of actions under the priority areas in the Transitional Corporate Plan be noted.

E77. Request for Affordable Housing Grant to provide Affordable Housing in the District

Consideration was given to Report No. 10 which sought authorisation to delegate the commitment of Affordable Housing Grant to the Housing Manager in consultation with the Housing Portfolio holder to enable affordable homes to be provided in the District.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- Members were keen to be informed of the location of any proposed affordable housing provision. The Leader confirmed that this information would be brought to future Executive meetings.

Resolved that:

- (1) Authority be delegated to the Housing Manager, in consultation with the Housing Portfolio Holder, for the commitment of Affordable Housing Grant of £547,999 to registered social landlords to provide at least 10 additional affordable homes within the district; and
- (2) Authority be delegated to the Legal Services Manager to agree a nomination agreement with the respective housing associations.

E78. Monkton Park Play Area, Chippenham

Consideration was given to report no. 11 which responded to the Notice of Motion to Council and advised the Executive of progress towards the improvement of facilities in Monkton Park.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- It was noted that the £65k which remained of the Section 106 contributions towards improvements at Monkton Park was for work on the play area improvements.
- Some concern was expressed regarding the poor condition of the park which was a historic site. The play area and entrance both needed to be improved and work was required to cut back some of the trees.
- There was also concern regarding caravans and cars parked close to the riverside.
- As far as other works to the park were concerned a consultant was being engaged to conduct an evaluation. Arrangements were also being finalised on the appointment of a design consultant. The brief was to progress the design and tendering of such works that could commence in February 2009 with a 4-6 week contract period.
- Some of the work would also be funded from the Cleansing and Amenities budget. However, until the consultants' design and tendering process had been completed the total cost would not be known.
- The officer capacity to manage further projects was not available within the life of this Council.
- The new unitary Council were intending to carry out a leisure review of the County facilities and the options for devolved responsibilities to Town Councils or other delivery organisation would form part of that review. Chippenham Town Council would be consulted on this matter.

Resolved that the process and steps being taken regarding the allocation of the Section 106 developer contributions for Monkton Park improvements be noted and that the Leader of the Council formulate a response to Councillor C. Caswill's Notice of Motion on the basis of the information set out in the report.

E79. Cash for Communities Update

Consideration was given to report no. 12 which provided a six month review of projects and awards from the 2008/09 Cash for Communities budgets.

Issues discussed during consideration of this item included:

- It was expected at this stage that all available funding would be spent by the end of the financial year.
- It was noted that Cricklade Town Council had now received planning permission for the extension of the car park adjoining the Town Hall. If the Town Council approached the District Council for financial assistance with this project then further consideration would be given to this request having regard to the particular history of this project.

Resolved that the progress of the awards process from the Cash for Communities budgets 2008/09 be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and concluded at 7.45pm.

There were no members of the public present.