

**Draft Minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday 27 March 2008
in Committee Rooms A, B & C, Monkton Park, Chippenham.**

Present:

Chair: C.J. Caswill

Councillors: P.C.B. Coleman, P.J. Doyle, J.M. Hartless, A.K. Hill, R.B. McGregor, SG Parker, C. Reid, ML Singlehurst and JP Thomson.

Other Members Present: DB Allen and SK Doubell.

Officers Present: P Jeremiah (Legal Services Manager), S McGregor (Section 151 Officer) and M Todd (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

O126. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

O127. Membership

There were no changes to the membership of the Committee.

O128. Public Question Time/Receipt of Petitions

(a) Dr N Brown, Chippenham

Dr N Brown spoke to the Committee about his concerns regarding the Primary Care Trust (PCT) proposals for hospital bed closures. It was noted that there were now likely to be 20 beds available at Chippenham Hospital which would mean a loss of 33 beds. Over the last six months the occupancy rate at the Hospital had been 94%. The PCT had stated that no closures would take place until alternative arrangements had been put in place for patients. Dr Brown did not believe that adequate alternative provision had been put in place. He hoped the PCT would make its plans public and that they would provide viable alternatives.

It was noted that Wiltshire County Council had appointed a re-enablement team which would provide an intensive six week period of care and support for people who were about to leave hospital but who were not yet ready to return home. The team would provide transitional support to enable people to regain their independence.

It was also noted that the PCT would be attending a Special Interest Group in Chippenham on 7 April to discuss various health issues including bed closures.

Committee members shared Dr Brown's concerns and supported the need for alternative bed accommodation. The Committee was informed that the Wiltshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee was being asked to look again at the PCT bed policy and that they had the power to ask for the policy to be revised. It was therefore agreed to refer the Committee's concerns to that body.

Dr Nick Brown was thanked for his efforts on behalf of Chippenham Hospital and for his efforts to reduce bed closures in the North Wiltshire area.

The officers undertook to write to the Chairman of the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee setting out this Committee's concerns regarding bed closures in the North Wiltshire Area and the current lack of alternative provision. They also agreed to request that this matter be discussed at the next meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee's representative on the Wiltshire Health Scrutiny Committee undertook to report back on the discussions regarding bed closures and alternative provision. Officers also agreed to request that copies of the Wiltshire Health Scrutiny papers for the next meeting be sent to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to Dr Nick Brown.

NOTE: Councillor Christine Reid declared a personal interest in the above discussions regarding the PCT as she was a member of the PCT Board. Cllr Reid remained in the meeting but took no part in the discussion on this matter.

(b) Mr CS Ewins, Chippenham

Mr Ewins submitted a letter outlining his concerns in relation to the Council's affordable housing policy and requesting a reconsideration of the proposed changes. Mr Ewins expressed concerns that the charges introduced by the new policy would mean that new build projects in rural areas of North Wiltshire would virtually cease due to the fact that developers would make a loss if they were to proceed.

Members noted that this matter had been discussed both at the Spatial Planning Advisory Group and also at the last meeting of the Executive. Some members expressed concern regarding the new policy. It was agreed that the policy should be reviewed in six months time to find out how it was working.

The officers undertook to prepare a report on the effectiveness of the new affordable housing policy in six months time.

O129. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 February 2008 were considered.

Resolved that the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 February 2008 be signed as a correct record.

O130. Declarations of Interest

Please refer to the note under minute O128.

O131. Chair's Announcements

(a) Website

The Chair informed members that he was still hoping to make improvements to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee website pages to ensure that they were easier for the public to access and still waiting for the proposed publication template.

(b) Sue Pangbourne

The Committee noted, with regret, that Sue Pangbourne, Deputy Chief Executive, would be leaving the authority very soon. Members wished to record their thanks and appreciation to Sue for all she had done both for North Wiltshire District Council and for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

O132. Action Report

Members noted report No. 7, circulated with the Agenda, which provided an update on actions from the meeting held on 28 February 2008.

O133. Section 106 Briefing Note

Consideration was given to report No. 8, circulated separately from the agenda, which set out the information currently available in respect of Section 106 agreements and sought clarification on the required content of the final report.

It was noted that officers had recently met to discuss the process for Section 106 agreements and that the procedure had now been tightened up.

Members requested that, in addition to the matters listed in paragraph 2.4 of the report, the following information should also be included in the report to the next meeting:

- Time limits
- The relationship with Town and Parish Councils
- The process for dealing with outstanding Section 106 agreements during the transition to the new unitary authority
- The review process for such agreements (e.g. how and where the money is spent)
- The role of elected members and the community in the allocation of funds
- The procedure for allocating funding to the maintenance of open spaces
- The availability of information relating to Section 106 agreements.

Resolved to request the Development Control Manager to prepare a report on Section 106 Agreements for consideration at either the meeting on 1 May or 12 June 2008.

O134. A Programme of Work for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Consideration was given to report No. 9, circulated with the Agenda, which set out the forward work plan for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and asked Members to consider its priorities for the forthcoming year.

Members considered the possibility of setting up new Task Groups and put forward suggestions for these.

Resolved:

(1) To set up two new Task Groups as follows:

- To consider the processes by which CCTV was financed and installed in public places and the role which a local council should play in those

processes (proposed by Councillor Ron McGregor)

- To consider the impact of the abolition of the one hour free parking on local businesses in market towns (proposed by Councillor Christine Reid).

- (2) To request that the Chief Executive attends a future meeting of the Committee to talk about the management of North Wiltshire District Council business during the transition phase (proposed by Councillor Chris Caswill).

Officers were asked to inform all Councillors about the establishment of the two Task Groups and invite backbench Councillors to participate. It was agreed that work on these Groups could begin in advance of the next meeting but membership would need to be formally agreed at the next meeting. Terms of reference would also be for the Committee to decide.

O135. Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board Update

The Chairman reported on the following matters that had been considered by the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Board:

- Five Task Groups had now been set up, on Community Area Boards, Customer Access, Development Control, Housing and Waste. Following a trawl for volunteers a North Wiltshire District Councillor had been appointed to each of these groups.
- Councillor A Hill had been appointed Chair of the Waste Task Group.
- One meeting of the Business Management Programme Group had taken place.

Councillor Peter Doyle reported that he had not been invited to the meeting of the Business Management Programme Committee, though he was the Council's agreed nominee. The Chair agreed to take this up with officers at the next JOSTB meeting which was on the following day.

The meeting finished at 9.10pm.

There were two members of the public present.