

Draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on Thursday 11 December 2008 at the Council Offices, Monkton Park, Chippenham, commencing at 7.00pm

Present:

Councillor C Reid (Chair)

Councillors A Clements, J Doubell, SK Doubell, PJ Doyle, G Greenaway, MEM Groom, J Hartless, R MacGregor, H Plenty and ML Singlehurst

Other Members Present:

Councillors S Parker, R Sanderson and R Tonge

Officers Present:

S McGregor (Assistant Chief Executive) and M Todd (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

O49. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

O50. Membership

The following changes to membership were reported:

Councillor to be replaced	Replacement	Political Group
Councillor P Darby	Councillor R McGregor	Liberal Democrat
Councillor P Coleman	Councillor J Doubell	Liberal Democrat
Councillor C Caswill	Councillor S Doubell	Liberal Democrat
Councillor S Parker	Councillor M Groom	Conservative
Councillor A Hill	Councillor A Clements	Conservative
Councillor N Phillips	Councillor G Greenaway	Conservative
Councillor J Thomson	Councillor H Plenty	Conservative

O51. Public Question Time/Receipt of Petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

O52. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 September 2008 were considered.

Resolved that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 September 2008 be approved and signed as a correct record.

O53. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Sheila Parker declared a personal interest in item number 7 (Draft Annual Governance Report) as Chairman of the Final Accounts and Audit Committee who had previously considered this matter.

O54. Chair's Announcements

(a) Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board (JOSTB)

The Chairman asked members to confirm that they were now receiving the agendas and minutes from the JOSTB meetings. Some members could not recall receiving these documents and officers agreed to pursue this with the County Council.

(b) Car Parking Task Group

The Chairman reported that a response to the findings of the Car Parking Task Group had been received from the County Council. However neither she nor the Leader of the Council were happy with this response. It was agreed that an e-mail should be sent to the Chief Executive of the County Council bringing this matter to his attention.

O55. Annual Governance Report

Consideration was given to report no.7 which presented the Draft Annual Governance Report, as produced by the Audit Commission.

The following issues were discussed:

- It was noted that the report had been signed off, unqualified by the District Auditor.
- The Assistant Chief Executive explained that there had been no weakness in relation to propriety or efficiency and that the direction of travel was good.
- High staff turnover had led to some presentational mistakes in the accounts this year. These errors were not material.
- The Finance IT system was also weak which had caused some problems.
- There had been a delay in signing off the accounts this year which was due to the Icelandic Banks situation.
- Members had some concerns regarding the errors in some of the financial statements. The Assistant Chief Executive explained that all the errors mentioned had now been rectified.
- It was confirmed that all funds had been spent on the purpose for which they were intended.
- It was important to ensure that a smooth handover of the accounts to Wiltshire Council took place.

- It was noted that a new Section 151 officer had now been appointed for the new authority and would be taking up his position in January.

Resolved:

- 1) To note the Annual Governance Report as accepted by the Final Accounts and Audit Committee.
- 2) To support the retention of all North Wiltshire District Council financial staff until 31 March 2009 to enable a smooth and efficient closedown of the accounts.
- 3) To recommend the Implementation Executive to request its Budget Working Group to consider the closedown of the accounts and successful integration of the accounts into the new unitary authority and to review the staffing levels for the finance function.
- 4) To recommend the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board that, in view of the concerns regarding the handover of financial transactions, to consider setting up a small Task Group to investigate this issue particularly in the light of the action plan attached as Appendix 4 to the report.

O56. Update on Current Position and Preparation for Unitary Council

The Leader of the Council informed members that business at North Wiltshire District Council would continue as usual up until 31 March 2008 with the three priority areas set out in the Corporate Plan. Work on grants and play area improvements was continuing.

The Leader then went on to inform members that the Implementation Executive was considering a variety of issues such as those set out below:

- The Budget for the forthcoming year – a low settlement had been received.
- Discretionary Rate Relief which was being rationalised.
- The Council Tax Base
- Corporate Branding
- Business Continuity
- Local Development Scheme and Spatial Planning
- Supported Living Framework
- Wiltshire Alcohol Strategy
- Benefits/Improvements/Savings
- Financial Updates

It was noted that more and more issues were now being considered by the Implementation Executive.

Most senior staff appointments had now been made. The majority of staff would transfer to Wiltshire Council although some would be placed in a pool waiting to be

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allocated suitable posts. There was some concern regarding staff terms and conditions because the County Council terms and conditions were currently the least favourable.

The meeting finished at 8.10pm.

There were no members of the public present.