

WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the: **Cabinet**

Held on: **Wednesday 4 March 2009**

Held at: **Council Chamber, Bradley Road, Trowbridge**

Present:

Councillors: Payne (Leader), Conley, Davis, Fortescue, March, Mounde, Phillips OBE, While and Wiltshire

Also present: Cllrs Clark and J Osborn

Officers: Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer (TD), Corporate Director and Head of Paid Services (IG), Corporate Director (Chief Finance Officer) (IJ), Corporate Director (Head of HR and Customer Services) (SL), Head of Legal Services (NM), Member Support Officer (HP), Housing Options Team Leader (AR), Revenues and Benefits Services Manager (SS) and Homes4Wiltshire Project Manager (LY).

71. Apologies

None were received.

72. Declarations of Interest

None were received.

73. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

74. Announcements from the Leader

The Leader thanked officers and Cabinet members for all their hard work and wished them luck for the future. He also hoped that the promises made to the people of Wiltshire regarding the transition to One Council are kept.

75. Recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Clark introduced a report presenting to Cabinet the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee concerning the Wiltshire Council appointments process and the level of uncertainty that still exists for West Wiltshire District Council staff.

Cllr Payne echoed the Scrutiny Committee's concerns and reported that a letter has been drafted to Cllr Jane Scott (WCC) expounding these.

The Corporate Director (Head of Human Resources and Customer Services) (SL) reported that as at December 2008, 69% of West Wiltshire District Council employees had received a letter informing them whether they had ownership of a post or not. This figure is now 79%. She reported that the Finance, ICT and Legal departments have the highest proportion of staff who do not know their future working arrangements.

RESOLVED that:

- **Cabinet notes the Scrutiny Committee's concerns about the continued uncertainty facing West Wiltshire District Council staff.**

76. Write-off report

Cllr While introduced a report proposing the writing-off of various debts as at 31 January 2009. He noted that the current figures reflect the determined efforts made by Revenues and Benefits staff in recent months to pursue debtors.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- 1. Notes the action of the Section 151 officer in writing-off the debts under £500 totalling £136,983.71.**
- 2. Approves the write-off of the debts over £500 totalling £381,580.24.**
- 3. Notes that the total amount of debt written-off from the proposals above equals £518,563.95.**

77. Financial Monitoring 2008-09

Cllr While introduced a report informing Cabinet of the Council's financial position for the period ending 31 January 2009.

The Corporate Director (Chief Finance Officer) (IJ) agreed to supply Cllr Phillips OBE with updated figures 7 days before 31 March 2009.

Cllr Wiltshire asked if the Council's backlog of Section 106 agreements had now been resolved. The Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer (TD) confirmed that the project to computerise the Section 106 records system is now complete and that all Section 106 agreements are being closely monitored.

RESOLVED that:

- **Cabinet notes the current financial position and the projected likely out-turn.**

78. Housing and Council Tax benefits take-up

Cllr While introduced a report informing Cabinet of the impact of recent road shows, other benefits work and the economic climate on housing and council tax benefit take-up. It also provided details of the department's case load, staffing, and performance at the end of the last financial year.

The Revenues and Benefits Services Manager (SS) reported that her team have been working hard to speed-up the processing of claims without sacrificing accuracy or quality of service to the customer.

Cllr Payne congratulated the Revenues and Benefits team on their much-improved performance.

Cllr Mounde added that the recent Credit Crunch Clinic he attended had been very successful and had received many positive comments.

RESOLVED that:

- **Cabinet notes the report.**

79. Performance monitoring 2008-09 - Quarter 3 Oct-Dec 2008

Cllr Davis introduced a report summarising the Council's performance in the third quarter of 2008-09.

RESOLVED that:

- **Cabinet notes the report and the specific comments of the Scrutiny Performance Group and Scrutiny Committee.**

80. Updates on the Council's Housing Register and the new Homes4Wiltshire Choice Based Lettings Scheme

Cllr Fortescue introduced a report updating Cabinet on the number of applicants on the Council's housing register and on the new Homes4Wiltshire Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

The Housing Needs Team Leader (AR) confirmed that over 1,000 of the letters sent to housing register applicants have been returned as 'not known at this

address', and therefore the actual number of live applications on the register is 4,432.

81. Update on Local Government Re-organisation

Cllr Phillips OBE provided the following update on the transition to One Council:

- At the Implementation Executive's (IE) recent budget meeting Council tax rates were set, with the Police receiving a 4.9% increase in contributions and the Fire Authority an increase of 4.5%;
- Some staff in the Resources directorate have been advised they may not know their future working arrangements until June;
- The new Salisbury Parish has been approved by Central Government and the new authority;
- A proposal has been put forward to introduce uniforms for library staff, at a reputed cost of £35k;
- There has been widespread concern that Unitary Members will be required to undergo daytime training through much of June;
- Wiltshire Council's constitution has been agreed and, due to its size, an abbreviated version may be produced for Members.

(7.00 – 7.50pm)

These minutes were prepared by Henry Powell, Member Support Officer, who can be contacted on tel: 01225 776655 ext. 242, or email: hpowell@westwiltshire.gov.uk.