

# WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

## MINUTES

Minutes of the: **Cabinet**

Held on: **Wednesday 7 January 2009**

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

Present:

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

Also present: Cllrs Carbin, H Osborn , J Osborn, and Mr Barry Hughes (Chief Executive of Selwood Housing)

Officers: Finance Service Manager (AB), Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer (TD), Corporate Director and Head of Paid Services (IG), Corporate Director (Chief Finance Officer) (IJ), Head of Legal Services (NM), Member Support Officer (HP), Housing Services Manager (NS) and Waste and Recycling Manager (LS)

### **61. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Tom James.

### **62. Declarations of Interest**

None were received.

### **63. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

### **64. Announcements from the Leader**

The Leader made the following announcements:

- In light of the recently announced closure of Marks & Spencers in Trowbridge, a meeting with local business leaders has being scheduled

in order to discuss how this Council can assist businesses in the current economic climate.

## **65. Delivery of affordable housing**

The Leader welcomed Barry Hughes, Chief Executive of Selwood Housing to the meeting. Mr Hughes gave a presentation on the impact that the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) has had on the delivery of affordable housing since its inception. He then answered members' questions.

Cllr Wiltshire agreed that developments containing a mixture of affordable and standard housing tends to be more successful.

Cllr Phillips OBE asked how Selwood plan to help meet the need for affordable housing given the large number of people now on the housing register. Mr Hughes replied that although the 450 affordable homes Selwood have funding for is a significant number, this will make only a small dent in the 5,000-strong housing register. However, other Housing Associations were also building in the District and the PFI project would also make a significant contribution. He added that the main challenges facing housing societies include finding suitable land at an appropriate price, and finding funding. He emphasised that housing societies must be wary of overstressing themselves financially.

Cllr Davis asked if Selwood can generate revenue by selling land they originally purchased for affordable housing, and if they can, would they do so. Mr Hughes replied that they would probably need permission from their regulator to take such a step, which they have no plans to do.

Cllr Fortescue asked how many of the 170 houses Selwood already have funding for in 2010-2011 will be funded by the Housing Communities Agency (HCA). Mr Hughes replied that 120 have confirmed funding from the HCA, and hopefully there will be further opportunities to fund the remaining 70 in 2009.

Cllr Osborn expressed concern that the fiscal stimulus measures from central government tend to be directed toward the conurbations at the expense of more rural areas. He suggested a more coordinated approach is needed from local authorities and central government in the provision of affordable housing. Mr Hughes agreed with this point, adding that Selwood Housing have banded together with several other medium-sized housing associations to form a stronger, more unified voice.

Cllr Payne asked if the current size of the Selwood Housing portfolio is sustainable given this country's current credit problems. Mr Hughes replied that when housing associations command portfolios over a certain size they tend to become primarily developers and neglect their duties as landlords. He stated that there is no evidence to suggest that mergers between housing associations produced significant savings and pointed out that the highest rated association nationwide is only slightly larger than Selwood.

The Leader thanked Mr Hughes for an interesting and helpful presentation.

**RESOLVED that:**

- **Slides from the presentation will be included in the next Members' Information Sheet.**

**66. Financial Monitoring 2008-09**

Cllr While introduced a report informing Cabinet of the Council's financial position for the period ending 30 November 2008.

Cllr Phillips OBE asked what provision is being made for redundancy payments within the life of this Council. Cllr While replied that these would be covered by the £205k surplus, the £100k contingency fund and the £200k from general fund reserves.

Cllr Payne asked why thus far only £9k of the £95k allocated to play area repairs has been spent. The Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer (TD) replied that the majority of the financing was now committed, with orders placed, and that all of the works will be completed or underway by 1 April.

**RESOLVED that:**

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

**67. Waste Review Progress Report**

Cllr Conley introduced a report on the progress made from the Waste Review, the work plan of which was agreed by Cabinet in December 2007. She also drew attention to the Loo Of The Year awards recently held in Birmingham, from which this Council took seven awards, including the national award for access to WCs.

Cllr Payne asked when Wiltshire will adopt a roadside collection service for plastic and cardboard (and a resolution was added to this effect). Cllr Wiltshire pointed out that the recent drop in the value of recyclable waste may hinder such a measure.

The Waste and Recycling Manager (LS) assured members that there is still a demand for West Wiltshire's recycled materials because of their high quality.

Cllr Fortescue asked why plain cardboard, which is compostable, cannot be placed in green bins. The Waste and Recycling Manager (LS) replied that when this arrangement had been in place residents tended to fill their green bins almost entirely with cardboard, which resulted in a mixture that did not compost well.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet:**

- 1. Notes the work that has been carried out so far as a result of the Review and approves the Next Steps; and**
- 2. Requests the new Wiltshire Council to consider, as a matter of priority, the introduction of a kerbside collection service for cardboard and plastic.**

**68. Update on Local Government Reorganisation**

Cllr Eaton gave the following update:

- Staff losses at this Council remain steady at around 3 full-time workers per month;
- A new series of road shows will be held across Wiltshire in the coming months to increase awareness of the transition amongst Wiltshire residents;

Cllr Phillips OBE gave the following update:

- The bids for capital expenditure are projected to be £270M, with the likely allocation being only £125M;
- It appears likely that central government will not be reimbursing Wiltshire County Council and North Wiltshire District Council the money lost in the Icelandic banking crisis;
- Representatives on the Implementation Executive continue to receive meeting papers on the day of the meeting.

Cllr Payne added that no clarification has been received from Cllr Jane Scott regarding the proposed 'harmonisation' of the four districts' council tax and rates. The Corporate Director and Head of Paid Services (IG) added that a letter to the relevant parties requesting clarification on this issue is now being drafted .

**RESOLVED that:**

- **Cabinet notes the update.**

**69. Cabinet Forward Work Plan**

The latest version of the Cabinet Forward Work Plan for March 2009 was presented.

**RESOLVED:**

- **That Cabinet approves the Forward Work Plan.**

**70. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of Cabinet is scheduled for Wednesday 4 March 2009 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, at the Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge.

(7.05 – 8.40pm)

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](mailto:hpowell@westwiltshire.gov.uk).