

# **WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

Minutes of the: **CABINET**

Held on: **WEDNESDAY 24 SEPTEMBER 2003**

Held at: **COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRADLEY ROAD,  
TROWBRIDGE**

Present:

Councillors: Phillips (Leader), Clark, Mounde, Newbury, Payne, Wiltshire and While.

Also present: Councillors Brice, John Clegg, Marion Clegg, Knight, Osborn, Lewis, Viles

Officers: Corporate Officer (Democratic Services), Head of Strategy, Head of Financial Services, Electoral Administrator, and Member Support Officer (YR)

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### **138 APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies from members of the Cabinet. However, it was noted that Councillors Chivers and Wells had hoped to be at the meeting but were unable to do so.

### **139 MINUTES**

The minutes of the special meeting held on 27 August 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader, subject to an amendment at Minute No 130 – Land joining Leighton Sports Centre, Westbury, resolution(b) sixth line down to replace the word 'content' with consent and in the last line to correct a typographical error read ... at the absolute discretion of the seller.

### **140 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

### **141 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader reported that he had that day circulated a letter to all Members of the Council regarding the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) in order to make Members fully involved in the process. He urged all Members to read the document with a view to reporting back their views at the Seminar for all Members on 29 September 2003. Please also refer to Minute No 150 below.

## **142     UPDATES BY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

### **Arc Theatre, Trowbridge**

Councillor Clark reported that earlier this year, the Council had awarded a grant of £6,200 to the Arc Theatre in Trowbridge. In accordance with his delegated powers as Portfolio Holder, he had approved an additional £2,500 subject to funding from the Arts Council.

### **WWHS set up costs**

Councillor Mounde reported that on 22 September 2003 officers of the District Council and the West Wiltshire Housing Society had a very constructive meeting in an effort to resolve the issue surrounding the set up costs. Although there were still some issues to be resolved, it had been a very productive meeting. The Head of Financial Services reported that it was hoped that a joint report from the financial officers of the District Council and the Housing Society would be prepared by the end of September which would be considered by this Council's Cabinet and the Board of WWHS. Members were pleased with the progress being made on this issue.

## **143     RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW COMMITTEES**

It was noted that no recommendations had been received.

<b>KEY DECISIONS</b>
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## **144     A PILOT SCHEME FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT BY- ELECTIONS**

Councillor While presented a report, which sought Cabinet's approval for making an application for forthcoming Local Government by-elections to be run on an all-postal basis.

It was noted that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was currently drafting legislation to roll out all postal voting for all Local Government elections. It was proposed that this Council apply applied to run any local government by-elections as an all-postal pilot scheme until this legislation came into force. The report presented explained how such an application would be made. It was noted that for an application to be successful it would require broad cross party support, together with support by the relevant Parish Council as appropriate.

In terms of cost, it was noted that it was anticipated that there would be an increase in costs per election for town councils of between £500 - £1500 but smaller parishes could experience some savings

All-postal schemes had been shown to increase turnout in elections.

During the course of discussion it was agreed that Wiltshire County Council should also be consulted on this proposal.

## **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

Cabinet recommends to Council the drafting of an application for forthcoming local government by-elections to be run on an all-postal basis

### **RESOLVED:**

**That Cabinet approve the consultation with all Members of West Wiltshire District Council; Wiltshire County Council and all local Parishes, the nature of the consultation to be decided between Officers and the Portfolio Holder.**

<b>NON KEY DECISIONS</b>
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**145    NOTICE OF MOTION NO 4 – VOLUNTARY IDENTIFICATION SCHEME**

The following Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Chivers and Barker was presented to Council on 10 September 2003 when it was referred to Cabinet for further consideration and report back to Council.

“In an effort to improve Community Safety within the West Wilts area this Council investigates the possibility of a voluntary identification scheme for all candidates taking part in elections within West Wiltshire during the election period”

Councillor While presented a report which dealt with the implications of the proposed motion. The report presented explained that it would be very difficult to provide the resources necessary, both in terms of money and the time needed to implement such a scheme. It was noted that consultation had taken place with the Council’s community safety officer and the Electoral Commission. Their concern was that such a scheme could be seen to represent official endorsement of a particular candidate which might affect the perception of the voters. If the costs of the scheme were passed on, they could potentially disadvantage the smaller political groups and independent candidates. The report suggested that the proposal would do little to minimise any risks to the public posed by bogus callers. In addition, it would be time consuming and expensive.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (a) That Cabinet does not approve the introduction of a Council based identification scheme.**
- (b) That Cabinet notes the Community Safety implications and encourages political parties and Independent candidates to seek the advice of the Community Safety Officer.**

**146     APPROVAL OF STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2002/2003**

Councillor While presented a covering report together with the Statement of Accounts for 2002/03 which had been prepared to meet the Council's statutory responsibility to present the financial statements to a representative group of members within 6 months of the financial year-end.

To comply with the statutory deadline, the accounts presented were subject to audit. Any material changes to the statements would be reported to members at a later date.

The detailed audit work has been completed and awaiting review by the District Auditor. The only significant issue being the resolution of the Set up costs.

**RESOLVED:**

- (a)    That the Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2003 be approved subject to Audit.**
- (b)    That the Head of Financial Services and his team be thanked for the speed in which these statement of accounts had been prepared.**

**147     TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2002/2003**

Councillor While presented a report which detailed the treasury management activity for the year ended 31 March 2003 which had been produced in accordance with the Council's Treasury Management Policy.

The information was reported during the year as part of regular financial monitoring to Cabinet and Internal Overview and reviewed by Internal Audit.

The Council's investment income came in very close to budget, £932k against £940k and the fund at the year end stood at £10.8m.

Short term borrowing was undertaken during the year to manage cash flow particularly towards the year end incurring interest of £94k. There was no long term debt outstanding at the year end.

**RESOLVED:            That Cabinet note the report**

**148     FINANCIAL MONITORING 2003/2004**

Councillor While presented a financial monitoring report for the period ending 31 August 2003.

The Capital Programme for 2003/04 after slippage was £4.429m. Expenditure to the end of August was £0.844m. Investment income – the average amount invested was £13,292,599 with a total return of £227,666, which gave a rate of return of 4.09%.

The projected outturn in respect of work services was at break even.

The base budget on the general fund for 2003/04 was £11.639m with expenditure to 31 August at £8.415m compared to the profiled budget, the overspend was at £0.065m.

The projected outturn on general funds was £11.894m, taking into account the increases in homelessness costs, please refer to Minute No 149 below and waste collection.

The increase on the waste collection was due largely to the use of the industry standard index namely the Baxter Index rather than RPI. In response to a question from Councillor Payne, the Corporate Officer undertook to inform Councillor Payne on which indices were used in the evaluation of the tenders for the waste collection contract.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the report be noted.**

**149     HOMELESSNESS UPDATE**

Cabinet was reminded that it had previously agreed a number of measures to address the usage of bed and breakfast accommodation and the impact this was having on the overall Council budget. Councillor Mounde presented a report to update Cabinet on the performance of the Council's homelessness section against the number of key performance indicators.

It was noted that whilst the measures agreed by Cabinet were being implemented and the number of people staying in bed and breakfast accommodation had reduced, the costs on bed and breakfast expenditure had in fact increased in August. The reasons for this were currently under investigation by officers from the housing and finance sections, the findings of which would be reported to Members

Members suggested that a mechanism should be put in place in order to avoid this happening and to predict the demand and therefore costs to the service of providing bed and breakfast accommodation over a 3, 6, 9 and 12 month period. It was accepted that whilst this could be done, there could be external factors such as increase in mortgage interest rates that could affect this.

Mention was also made of the provision of accommodation under the Supporting People programme and the knock-on effect this would have on the preferred supplier. The Head of Strategy reported that officers were working more closely with other partners eg social services in order to be more accurate on the anticipated need.

Information was sought on the figures for homelessness at home and prioritising housing need to include the percentage of lone parents and families where the parents were teenagers.

**RESOLVED:**

**(a) That Cabinet notes the monitoring report presented.**

**(b) That a full report on the homelessness budget be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet as a result of the questions raised at this**

**meeting. Such a report would also include details of the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan.**

**150     PREPARATIONS FOR COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA)**

The Leader presented a report, the aim of which was to agree with Cabinet a process for the further development of the self-assessment and a number issues regarding this approach.

The report suggested that Cabinet saw CPA as an opportunity for review and improvements and consulted widely on self-assessment involving staff, Members, partner organisations and the Councils Overview Committees. The Members Seminar on 29 September would ask Members to comment on the draft and seek their ongoing involvement in the process. Melanie Watson from the Audit Commission would be attending the Seminar to explain the process in more detail, particularly the role of Members. Melanie Watson had also agreed to brief Cabinet Members prior to the Seminar in the Leader's office at 6pm. A timetable for the CPA process was also presented.

**RESOLVED:**

**That Cabinet:**

- (a)     Note the timetable for the CPA process as attached at Appendix A to the report presented.**
- (b)     Adopt the CPA process as an opportunity to identify areas for improvement and for drawing up a Council wide improvement.**
- (c)     Seek the views of both the Council's Internal and External Overview Committees in the preparation of the Council's self-assessment.**

**NOTE:**

**An informal meeting of the External Overview Committee to offer it's views on the CPA process would be held on Thursday 9 October 2003 at 7pm.**

- (d)     The draft Self-Assessment be considered an "Open Draft" and a wide range of individuals and bodies be invited to comment and contribute to its further development.**

**151     URGENT BUSINESS – REPORTING BACK**

There was no urgent business.

**152     REVIEW OF CABINET FORWARD WORKPLAN**

Cabinet reviewed its Forward Workplan for the period September to December 2003. The following changes were noted.

The following item had been removed for the time being:  
Sustainability Programme – update  
West Wiltshire Physical Activity Action Plan  
Additional arts funding to the Arc Theatre (See Minute No. 142 above)

Vision for Trowbridge - 19 November 2003.

Items scheduled for September now being considered in October/ November

Decriminalised parking

Additional items:

New vision, principles and corporate objectives of the Council – as referred from Council (10.09.03 – 22 October 2003)

West Wilts Matters – Notice of Motion No 7 – as referred from Council 10.09.03.

Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Management Plan - 22 October 2003.

(7.00pm – 8.20pm)

These minutes were prepared by Yamina Rhouati, Member Support Officer  
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