

WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the: **CABINET**

Held on: **WEDNESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2003**

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

Present:

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

Also present: Councillors Brice, Brown, John Clegg, Marion Clegg, Cunliffe-Jones, Fortescue, Manasseh, Mudge, Oldrieve, Osborn, Squires and Wells.

Officers: Corporate Officer (Democratic Services), Head of Strategy, Head of Financial Services, Legal Services Manager, Planning Policy Manager, Senior Planning Policy Officer, Conservation Officer, ICT Manager, Corporate Communications Manager, Housing Strategy and Partnerships Manager, Electoral Administrator and Member Support Officer (AB)

153 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies from members of the Cabinet. However, it was noted that Councillor Chivers had hoped to attend the meeting but was unable to do so.

154 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Leader.

155 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

156 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

The Leader referred to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Peer Review which had taken place earlier in the day. Copies of the feedback from the Review would be given to group leaders.

157 UPDATES BY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Recycling

Councillor Wiltshire referred to a seminar to be held on the 21 November 2003 to discuss recycling. The meeting would start at 7pm and all Members were welcome to attend.

Planning Delivery Grant

Councillor Newbury reported that interviews had been held that day for the posts created within Development Control to deploy the Planning Delivery Grant. It was likely that appointments would be made to the two temporary positions but it had not been possible to appoint the post of Heritage Officer.

CCTV

Councillor Clark reported that a grant of £1,000 had been awarded to Bradford on Avon and Melksham for a CCTV system. In accordance with his delegated powers as portfolio holder he had approved an additional £500 for Bradford on Avon and £1,000 for Melksham.

KEY DECISIONS

158 **AFFORDABLE HOUSING - POTENTIAL BIDS FOR HOUSING CORPORATION FUNDING 2004-05**

Councillor Mounde presented a report requesting Cabinet approval for a provisional list of schemes, which the Housing Development Team intended to propose for housing corporation funding. These bids would compete with ones from other Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords in Wiltshire for a proportion of a county-wide pot.

Whilst the exact criteria for the bidding round had not yet been released, the Housing Corporation had advised that emphasis was likely to be placed on scheme deliverability and partnership working, as in recent years. The support Local Authorities gave to bids was one of the main factors which affected Housing Corporation decisions on allocations.

The list of bids was only provisional and might change. New bids might be submitted and some might not eventually come to fruition. Delegated responsibility would be important if the Housing Development Team was to be flexible and have the chance to maximise the opportunities of attracting funding to the district.

- RESOLVED:**
- (a) **That approval and support be given to the potential bids for the Housing Corporation Annual Development Programme as listed in appendix A of the report presented.**
 - (b) **That the Housing Services Manager and the Housing Portfolio Holder be given delegated responsibility to amend potential bids as required, following the issue of the bidding round criteria.**

Statement of reason for the key decision	The recommendations contained in this report are essential for the success of bids for the Housing Corporation funding and successful provision of the development programme in 2004/05
Option Considered and Rejected	All schemes in the development programme were considered and those suitable for bids were earmarked in regard to suitable timeframes and anticipated Housing Corporation criteria.
Date of Implementation	Letters of support for bids will be composed following a provision of Housing Corporation Annual Development Programme bidding round criteria, when firm details of bids have been submitted by Registered Social Landlords

159 **CAPITAL RESOURCES**

Councillor While presented a report which identified the availability of capital resources and sought guidance on the level of future capital programmes to assist with the service and financial planning process.

In particular, the ability to deliver affordable housing required capital resources of around £2m over a two year period. The use of resources was shown in appendix 1 of the report and included an option for affordable housing expenditure. For comparison purposes the original spending plan was shown and a revised plan with no social housing spend. All of these options assumed no capital receipts from 2004/05 and did not take into account the impact of the Prudential Code (minute number refers 169)

RESOLVED: **That Cabinet indicates outline capital programmes for 2004/05 and 2005/06 in line with option A of the graph in appendix A of the report presented.**

NON KEY DECISIONS

160 **POLLING DISTRICT REVIEW**

Councillor While presented a report seeking Cabinet's approval for changes to polling districts, following West Wiltshire Housing Society's request that the Council cease to use their premises as polling stations where suitable alternatives could be found.

As a result of this the Council had no convenient polling stations in two cases and needed to amend two other polling districts.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That polling districts in Trowbridge College and Bradford on Avon wards be amended and the publication of relevant maps be approved, unless West Wiltshire Housing Society allow continued use of the venue (s).

161 DISTRICT PLAN 1ST ALTERATION: PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS

Councillor Newbury presented a report requesting Cabinet to endorse the proposed modifications to the West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration and recommend their approval to Council.

A Public Local Inquiry into outstanding objections to the emerging District Plan 1st Alteration was held between March and September 2002. The Council had received the report of the independent Inspector who conducted the Inquiry. The report contained a number of recommendations for changes to the Plan.

The Council is required to consider the report and to decide what action to take on each of the recommendations. Where the Council proposes modifications to the plan it must prepare a list of proposed modifications and the reasons for making them. Where the Council chooses not to accept a recommendation, it must provide clear and cogent reasons for not doing so.

The main issues for which modifications were proposed were:

- Town Policy Limits
- Housing Supply - Allocations
- Phasing
- Overall Housing Supply
- Affordable Housing
- Employment Allocations
- Overall Employment Supply
- Transport - Road Proposals
 - A350 Westbury Bypass
 - Melksham Bypass
 - A36 Codford-Heytesbury Improvement
 - Hilperton Relief Road

The recommended proposed modifications would be considered at a meeting of Council on 30 October 2003. Following Council's approval, a further six week period of public consultation was required to allow representations on the proposed modifications.

Members felt that there were some discrepancies in respect of the town policy limits and that these should be reconsidered.

Further traffic modelling information was circulated at the meeting and it was noted that discussions on these technical matters were ongoing.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- a) **That the proposed modifications and accompanying statements, as set out in appendices A to C of the report presented, be approved for the purposes of development control and for the purposes of public consultation, subject to town policy limits being reconsidered prior to the special Council meeting on 30 October 2003.**
- b) **That the period of public consultation, from 12 November 2003 to 24 December 2003, be approved.**

NOTE: Five members of the public made open forum presentations in respect of the above matters.

162 CRANBORNE CHASE & WEST WILTSHIRE DOWNS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY MANAGEMENT PLAN 2004 – 2009 - CONSULTATION DRAFT

Members were asked to consider a report giving details of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Draft Management Plan, in order to provide a response by the 27 October 2003.

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, Local Authorities were required to publish management plans for their Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) areas before 1 April 2004. The District Council along with other partners had worked together to prepare a single management plan for the whole AONB, which had been put together following extensive consultation. The issues that generated most comment were agriculture, nature conservation and local services. A draft management plan had been circulated to key officers within the Council and their comments were reflected in the proposed response at appendix A of the report.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet endorses the proposed comments on the consultation draft of Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs AONB Management Plan so that a response may be made by the deadline of 27 October 2003.

163 CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT SCHEMES

The last conservation enhancement programme commenced in 1998 and had now finished. Over the district seven schemes were successfully implemented and there was therefore a need to consider a new programme for the next five years. All parish and town councils were consulted earlier in the year and were invited to submit projects they wished to be considered in the new programme.

RESOLVED: That the proposed rolling programme project set out in the report presented be implemented within the next five years commencing November 2003, subject to funding availability.

164 IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT STATEMENT 2003

Councillor While presented a report requesting Cabinet to consider and approve the Council's Implementing Electronic Government Statement 2003.

The Government had set a target that all relevant local government services should be available electronically by the end of 2005 and all Councils were required to submit an annual Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) statement. This year's statement had to be submitted by 10 November 2003.

- RESOLVED:**
- (a) **That the draft IEG Statement for 2003 be approved.**
 - (b) **That the Statement be finalised in consultation with the Corporate Portfolio Holder and submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by 10 November 2003.**

165 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

Councillor While presented a report requesting Cabinet to consider the budgetary implications of the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations on Members' allowances.

Due to a change in legislation the Council must review its Allowances Scheme before 31 December 2003. As required, an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) was established to make recommendations on the levels of allowances.

The IRP had prepared a report, a copy of which had been sent to all Members. The IRP recommendations, if accepted by Council, required an increase in the current Members' Allowances budget. The Cabinet was therefore given an opportunity to comment on the budgetary implications.

The IRP had recommended two schemes of Allowances. The first scheme could be afforded within this year's budget if it was implemented from 1 January 2004. The Panel also recommended a scheme which it believed paid Members what they deserved. That scheme would cost an additional £73,265 per year. The Panel accepted that given the Council's financial position the scheme may have to be implemented in stages.

- RESOLVED:**
- That Cabinet notes the report and submits it to Council for full debate with a recommendation that there be a free vote.**

166 WEST WILTS MATTERS - NOTICE OF MOTION NO. 7

The following Notice of Motion, submitted by Councillors Newbury and Clark, was presented to Council on 10 September 2003 when it was referred to Cabinet for further consideration and report back to Council:

"With a view to achieving savings, Council agrees that West Wiltshire Matters should include appropriate advertising and that its printing, publication and distribution should be put out to tender"

Consideration was given to a report giving details of the options available.

- RESOLVED:**
- (a) **That the introduction, at the earliest opportunity, of advertising, to ASA standard, into West Wilts Matters be approved.**
 - (b) **That West Wiltshire Matters be put out to tender to interested parties, with editorial control being retained in-house, for publication at the earliest opportunity.**
 - (c) **That the position be reviewed after the first year.**
 - (d) **That the establishment of a Policy Project Group to assist with the development of a Corporate Communications Strategy be approved.**

167 QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Councillor While presented a report giving a quarterly update on key performance indicators and all other performance indicators by exception.

- RESOLVED:**
- (a) **That the monitoring information for the quarter ending 30 September 2003 be noted.**
 - (b) **That Cabinet notes that the information presented will be considered by the Internal Overview Committee on 29 October 2003.**

168 FINANCIAL MONITORING AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2003

Councillor While presented a report giving financial information for the period ending 30 September 2003.

- RESOLVED:** **That the report be noted.**

169 PRUDENTIAL CODE FOR CAPITAL FINANCE

Councillor While presented a report advising on the impact of the new Prudential Code being introduced from 1 April 2004. The present complex regulatory framework would be replaced by a new system based largely on self-regulation. This was potentially the most significant and positive change in Local Authority finance for many years.

The basic principle was that local authorities would be free to invest so long as their capital spending plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable. This would be decided by reference to a number of indicators measuring expenditure, debt and interest rate.

The Council still had the ability to finance its capital programme from resources. However, opportunities now existed to use borrowing as a source of finance provided these were also affordable, prudent and sustainable.

RESOLVED: **That the report be noted.**

170 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY AND BUDGET UPDATE

Councillor Mounde presented a report briefing Members on the progress made in implementing the Homelessness Strategy and reducing the cost of Bed and Breakfast. The report also set out the financial structure within which the Council could adopt a "spend to save" approach for future years.

Currently there were only 40 households in Bed and Breakfast of which only two were families who had been in Bed & Breakfast more than 6 weeks and only 13 families in total. This was good progress and the targets set were being exceeded. However, whilst the newly arising expenditure was within the targets set in July, officers had now identified £80,000 worth of Bed and Breakfast expenditure incurred prior to the service coming back in-house which has been paid during the current year. Financial Services was therefore recommending that the provision made for Bed and Breakfast expenditure in July should now be increased by £50,000.

In order to consolidate the improvements and switch to a "spend and save" preventative approach, it was proposed that the Council adopt the principle from 1 April 2004 onwards of having a housing options budget to replace the Bed and Breakfast budget. Bed and Breakfast payments would come out of the options budget but the Council would also use the budget for preventative measures as outlined in the Homelessness Strategy implementation update presented in the report, such as a rent deposit scheme and family mediation service. It would be seen from that update that considerable work was already taking place on implementing a very full action plan.

In addition to the work already taking place the Council had also submitted a bid to the office of the Deputy Prime Minister for a £90,000 grant to provide:

- A Housing Benefit Officer working with the Homelessness Team on prevention work.
- An extra Housing Advisor to expand home visits.
- A contribution towards the cost of a family mediation service.
- A contribution towards the development of our pilot One Stop Shop in Warminster.
- The cost of developing a 'Homelessness Survival Kit'.

RESOLVED:

- (a) **That the good progress made in reducing Bed and Breakfast use and cost be noted.**
- (b) **That the provision of the cost of Bed and Breakfast be increased by £50,000 to take account of charges incurred last year but paid this year.**
- (c) **That Cabinet notes the good progress in implementing the Homelessness Strategy and agrees to the principle of a 'spend to save'**

**housing option budget to replace the existing
Bed and Breakfast budget from 1 April 2004.**

- (d) That the recent bid for ODPM funding
submitted on the 1 October 2003 be
endorsed.**

NOTE: VOTE TO CONTINUE

During this item Members voted to continue the meeting after
10pm, in accordance with the Constitution.

171 LAFARGE MONITORING GROUP

Council at its seminar meeting on the 1 October 2003 received a presentation from the Environment Agency on the application by Lafarge to use recycled liquid fuel. Council agreed a formal response to the consultation by the Environment Agency. Council also requested Cabinet to establish a working group of Members to monitor the situation at Lafarge.

**RESOLVED: That a working group be established to monitor the
situation at Lafarge with the following Member
representation:**

**Members for Ethandune, Summerham and
Southwick and Wingfield wards**

**Additional representation to be decided by the
Environmental Services Portfolio Holder in
consultation with the Leader as follows:**

**2 Members from Central Area Committee
2 Members from Northern Area Committee
2 Members from Southern Area Committee**

172 URGENT BUSINESS - REPORTING BACK

There was no urgent business.

173 REVIEW OF CABINET FORWARD WORK PLAN

Cabinet reviewed its Forward Work Plan for the period October 2003 to January 2004. The following changes were noted:

Conservation Strategy and associated matters – due to be considered October 2003, deferred to November 2003.

Decriminalisation of Parking – deferred until probably February 2004.

Cultural Strategy – deferred in order to consider in context of service planning review.

Conservation Enhancement Schemes – additional item October 2003.

Additional items:

Victoria County History – November 2003

Housing Strategy Policy Project Group – November 2003

Hostels – December 2003

PFI – November 2003

West Wilts Housing Society setup costs – November 2003

(7.05pm – 10.05pm)

These minutes were prepared by Anna Browne, Member Support Officer
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