

WEST WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES

Minutes of the: **CABINET**

Held on: **WEDNESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2004**

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

Present:

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

Also present: Cllrs Brice, Marion Clegg, Content, Davis, Hames, James, Mudge, Osborn and Repton

Officers: Chief Executive, Peter Woodcock, Sharon Larkin, Ian Jamieson, Bryan Walker, Kate Beckinsale-Smith, Karol Jakubczyk, Chris Waters and Melanie Stimpson

398 APOLOGIES

No apologies for absence were received.

399 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2004 were approved by Cabinet on the proviso that the Chief Executive acknowledges Cllr Osborns request regarding the resolution of minute number 396. Also with the amendment to minute number 390, second paragraph, to read 'Andrew Pate, Chief Executive, gave a presentation'.

400 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Clark declared a personal interest in the item on Choice Based Lettings – minute no. 405 refers and informed Committee that he would be abstaining from voting on this item.

401 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE LEADER

There were no announcements from the Leader

402 UPDATES BY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Councillor Fortescue informed Cabinet about the following:

Temporary Accommodation Review

Housing will be putting a planning application forward for residential development at the rear of Ethandune. The Council has received bids from agents to manage its sale and an agent will be selected in the New Year. The Council has authorised essential repairs to the roof including cutting down the ivy and talks have been arranged with the conservation officer in order to identify essential remedial work. A procurement project group has been set up to investigate the Council's temporary accommodation requirements. This will be a major project and details of the project will be reported to the January Cabinet.

Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy was scheduled to be brought to the January Cabinet however it is unsure when the Government Office will be able to agree the revised draft. Consequently it is being put back on the forward work plan until the Government Office has given the Housing Strategy the green light.

Bed and Breakfast Update

Currently only one person is residing in bed and breakfast accommodation. This is a vulnerable person who had to be given accommodation today. Prior to that no one was staying in bed and breakfasts.

ODPM Homelessness Funding

The ODPM announced the level of funding for homelessness work for 2005/6. West Wiltshire will receive £75,000, which is the same as 2004/05. This is significantly higher than any of our neighbours in Somerset and Wiltshire and reflects the good preventative work that is being carried out in the district.

Homelessness Mediation Service

One new method of prevention is the family mediation services that will start in the New Year. An independent mediator will work with families where a young person is being threatened with eviction from the family. This service will only be offered where it is safe to do so.

Government Allocations for Affordable Housing

This week the government proposed a 43% increase to £193 million in housing funding available to the South West, between 2005/06 and 2007/08. This will be the second biggest increase for any region. Much of the money will be directed towards the Principal Urban Areas.

Councillor Mounde updated Cabinet on **Affordable Housing - Private** and encouraged all members to attend the Seminar meeting of Council on 17 December. Councillor Mounde also updated Cabinet on the progress of the preparation of OFBC.

Councillor Bower updated Cabinet on the LSP, health inequalities and the co-operation with County LSP.

The Leader invited Councillor Hames, as Chairman of the External Overview Committee, to brief the Cabinet on the work of the committee in relation to the proposed post offices closures under the Urban Network Re-invention Programme. One of the key findings by the External Overview Committee was that the Council had not taken the opportunity to oppose the closures and suggested an apology be appropriate. The External Overview realised that the Council did attempt to engage the post office by requesting a post office representative to attend a Council meeting it is and it is also recognised that an opportunity for a more co-ordinated response with Parish and Town Councils was missed. As a result of these findings a new draft protocol for dealing with consultation issues such as this was considered by Corporate Management Team on 8 December.

The protocol will now be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 12 January 2005 thus enabling the Council to move forward. Councillor Hames urged the Council to adopt the new protocol.

The Chief Executive explained that whilst one consultation letter had not had a reply the Council had already conveyed its concern at the proposed closures. Past experience indicated that the Post Office is unresponsive to any form of feedback and had also failed to attend the meetings when invited, however they are now more willing to attend a meeting if requested.

KEY DECISIONS

403 REVIEW OF CAR PARKING FEES AND CHARGES

Councillor Wiltshire reported back to Cabinet the results from consultation of the proposed increase in car park charges. The public consultation was carried out through the press, of which 217 replies were received, Town Councils were consulted through joint and individual meetings, Parish Councils were written to, individual letters sent to Chambers of Commerce and members of West Wilts Economic Partnership.

Michael Williams, Chief Executive of the Wessex Chambers of Commerce expressed concerns over the recommendations and the detrimental effect they will have on retail. Mr Williams felt that there was no recognition of his past comments in today's recommendations and there were vast monetary cost increases. He suggested that parking be charged at 40p for the first 2 hours, then every hour afterwards 40p to a maximum of £2.50.

Councillor Mounde felt that people would adjust to the changes over time.

Councillor Wiltshire stated that there had been no changes to fees since May 2000 and that even with the increases WWDC charges would still be lower than other areas

It was stated that the discussions tonight were purely to allow WWDC to make the Parking Order and there would still be time for negotiation.

Councillor Content informed Cabinet that public she had spoken to are unhappy because the Council workers are not going to have to pay for parking and asked if that was a possibility for the future. The Chief Executive said that it was a radical proposal and felt it did not apply to WWDC as it was not a town centre site and if it was enforced that it would have a big impact on the workforce, therefore would require careful consideration.

Councillor Davis urged the Council when installing the new machines that consideration was given so that the machines were self explanatory and easy to use. Chris Waters acknowledged this and said he would raise this when meeting with the manufacturers.

RESOLVED:

That:

- 1 the authority continues consultation through the publication of a Draft Car Park Order incorporating the following:
 - A pay and display tariff of 40p one hour, 80p two hours. £1.60 four hours, £3.50 all day

- Annual season tickets £450, six months £250. Existing residents tickets £150, £112.50 where no charges are levied in a short term car park
- Excess Charge Notices remaining at £60 reduced to £30 if paid within 14 days, but no provision be included for a £4 accidental overstay charge.
- Charging hours amended to 08.00 to 18.00 Monday- Saturday.
- For car parks with a maximum stay of four hours or less or a free hour any anytime of day, no return within four hours.
- Restricting parking to private or private/light goods vehicles with a maximum gross weight of 3,500 kg which fit wholly within a marked parking bay other than a bay marked out for a coach, bus, or heavy goods vehicle. A coach, bus, or heavy goods vehicle may park in specifically designated space.
- Stallards, Bradford Road Trowbridge. Free for two hours maximum except for holders of Residents Permits
- A free hour in selected car park(s) in each of the five towns at any time of the day.
- Exemption from charging where there are overriding practical issues and in the event of agreement with town councils for additional free parking periods.

2. That Cabinet retains the right to increase charges above inflation

Statement of reasons for key decision	The option selected is the best fit within the constraints and members' wishes
Options considered and rejected	Other options as detailed in the report presented.
Date of Implementation	1 April 2005

404 DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT

Councillor Wiltshire delivered a report on the above explaining that it would be a very expensive operation. Councillor Brice enquired if the report included on street parking enforcement. Peter Woodcock explained that it has been agreed at national level that police shouldn't be dealing with parking enforcement's and that County Councils should. Therefore the County Council have approached the Wiltshire Council to assist them in implementing the new policy and want the District Council to fund the operation as well.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Cabinet declines further negotiations on an agency as it is clear the District Council has neither the financial nor human resources required at present. However a watching brief will be maintained and co-operation offered to ensure, as far as practicable, the efficiency and consistency of enforcement procedures, and the allocation of, and charging policy in, parking spaces within our town centres.

- (2) That the Council approach the Police to enquire what steps can be taken now to deal with parking enforcements.
- (3) Tony Phillips to raise issue with Jane Scott of Wiltshire County Council.

Statement of reasons for key decision	No progress has been made on the key issues and the consequences of not participating are acceptable
Options considered and rejected	Continued negotiations, Not co-ordinating enforcement
Date of Implementation	Autumn 2006

405 **CHOICE BASED LETTINGS**

Councillor Fortescue informed Cabinet that since Cabinet on 29 September the proposed scheme is now ready for approval. Investigations have shown the Choice Based Lettings Scheme to be a fairer system. It puts the onus on the applicant to place their interest in a property with it generally being awarded to the longest registration date. The current policy does not take into account the length of time an individual has been on the register.

West Wiltshire Housing Society have been heavily involved in the proposed scheme and have paid for the services of a consultant, Michael Guest to carry out in depth consultation to statutory, voluntary agencies and applicants of the housing register.

Kate Beckinsale-Smith stated that there are two amendments to be made. The first amendment was on page 46, fifth paragraph, fourth sentence – ‘ “ Examples could include additional information” ’ information needs amending to proof. The second amendment was again on page 46, last paragraph, second sentence – ‘ “ Each registration will be” ’ registration needs amending to application.

Councillor James raised several queries including item 11 of the proposal and asked if ‘except for good acceptable reasons’ could be written into the policy. The officer agreed to make this amendment.

Open Forum: Sarah Cardy enquired about the measures in place for those who have difficulty in bidding and that the Citizens Advice Bureau is happy to work in partnership with the Council.

The officer responded that there will be a certain level of discretion for those ineligible to bid due to rent arrears and that there will be staff on hand to help those who have difficulty bidding.

RESOLVED:

- (1) **That Cabinet approve Choice Based Lettings Scheme to enable the launch to take place at the end of March 2005**
- (2) **The policy be monitored and reviewed on a quarterly basis until it is fully established**

406 GROUND AND CLEANSING – A MEDIUM TERM STRATEGY

Peter Woodcock introduced the report and explained that it was decided not to go ahead with the tender process for grounds and street cleansing after only two contractors were interested. If it were decided to proceed with a new tendering process the earliest start date would be April 2007 as there is much work to do to be able to specify what needs doing.

Councillor Payne commented that there were doubts that purchasing was better than leasing. Ian Jamieson confirmed that the Council's previous experience in leasing had not been good and had been very costly due to penalties for extra mileage, the cost of repairing the machines before returning them to the rental companies etc.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet approve the continued implementation of the improvement plan for the grounds maintenance and cleansing services which enable:**
 - **Good progress towards best value to commence immediately and consequently an improvement in house service**
 - **A strategic review of procurement options for the whole service in late 2006 with a further report to Cabinet**
 - **New contracts commencing in January 2008 if that is later judged to be the option most likely to produce best value.**
- (2) Note the extension to the central ground area maintenance contract with English Landscapes and the need to review this again by September 2005**
- (3) Request the Chief Executive to report in two months time on the management lessons learnt in arriving at the current position.**

407 HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGY

Sharon Larkin introduced the report and gave a presentation to Cabinet of the draft human resources strategy 2005 – 2010.

The presentation explained that the Strategy had been developed with regard to the Corporate Plan, the CPA and the Government's Pay and Workforce Strategy. It also had taken into account an extensive consultation exercise on which the views of the staff were sought.

Sharon explained that West Wiltshire District Council has a lean staff structure therefore if a member of staff is absent due to illness etc it puts additional stress on other staff. The presentation also gave various facts and figures, such as, currently West Wiltshire District Council employs 322 staff and that in terms of the numbers of staff employed compared to other Councils WWDC was the fourth worst off. The staff turnover rate up to 30/09/04 was 14.5%, the government indicator mark being 14%. During the period 01/04/04 – 30/09/04 WWDC had 46 new employees start employment with 86% of vacancies filled first time.

Councillor Phillips was keen to point out that all vacancies were not all due to staff leaving the council they were also due to internal promotions and the WWDC is very eager to develop,

promote and retain existing staff. Councillor Phillips also informed Council that the Investor in People assessor had told him that WWDC was in the top 10 clients he had assessed this year.

RESOLVED:

- (1) **That Cabinet adopt the HR Strategy covering the period April 2004 – March 2010**
- (2) **That the Head of Human Resources in consultation with the Leader be authorised to make minor alterations or amendments to finalise and complete the strategy prior to publication.**

408 WILTSHIRE LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2

Councillors Mounde and Wiltshire informed Cabinet of the proposed Local Transport Plan II consultation and asked Cabinet for their response. Cabinet could choose to agree or amend the list of priorities as appropriate before submitting the report to County Council as the District Councils formal response.

Councillor Wiltshire asked that urban as well as inter urban cycleways should be encouraged as should quiet lanes and bridleways and this be included as an amendment. This was moved by Councillor Mounde and seconded by Councillor Wiltshire.

Francis Morland asked to speak on this particular item

RESOLVED:

That the portfolio holder shall have the delegated authority to amend the response in Appendix 1 of the report to reflect the comments of Councillors.

409 FINANCIAL MONITORING AS AT 31 OCTOBER 2004

Councillor While informed Cabinet of the Council's financial position for the period ending 31 October 2004.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

410 BUDGET UPDATE 2005/06

With permission of the Leader Sarah Cardy was allowed to speak but both her and Cabinet were informed that this item was not a presentation of the budget it was only an update and that where the budget is introduced to members there are likely to be major difficulties in funding and certain services are going to have to be reviewed to ensure the Council can provide adequate funding.

Councillor While introduced the report and informed Cabinet of the Local Government Finance Settlement and of the progress on the draft revenue budget and draft Capital Programme for 2005/06.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet notes the progress on the draft revenue budget and draft capital programme.

411 CABINET FORWARD WORK PLAN

Cabinet received its Forward Work Plan for the period December 2004 to May 2005. Cabinet noted that the Housing Strategy would remain on the Cabinet forward workplan but would not feature on the January agenda

RESOLVED: That the Work Plan be adopted.

Date of Next Cabinet Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of Cabinet has been arranged for Wednesday 12th January 2005 to be held in the Council Chamber, at the Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge at 7.00pm.

(7.00pm - 10.20pm)

These minutes were prepared by Melanie Stimpson who can be contacted on 01225 770322 or email mstimpson@westwiltshire.gov.uk