

Community & Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel

Minutes

6.00pm, Wednesday 2 July 2003
Committee Room 1, The Council House
Salisbury

Present

C & H Panel Members

Councillor Mrs M I Evans (Chairman)
Councillor P J Leo (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Mrs P J Bissington
Councillor Mrs P Brown
Councillor Mrs E A Chettleburgh
Councillor B E Dalton
Councillors Mrs J A Green
Councillor Mrs J M Greville
Councillor M J Osment
Councillor P V H Paisey
Councillor B M Rycroft

In Attendance

Debbie Dixon (Policy Director)
Arabella Davies (Democratic Services Officer)
Derek Streek (Head of Housing Management)
Robin Townsend (Principal Leisure & Community Officer)
Mark Wareham (UNISON Branch Administrator)

Maureen Taylor, PMP Consultancy

Apologies – Councillor R H Bojdys

Resources Panel Members

Councillor I C West (Chairman)
Councillor Miss M A Tomlinson (Vice-Chairman)

Cabinet Members

Councillor J M Cole-Morgan (Portfolio Holder, Community and Housing)
Councillor A G Peach (Deputy Portfolio Holder, Community and Housing)

Tenants Panel

Councillors F D Bissington and M Hewitt, Mrs J Fazackerley, Mr A Hardiman, Mr J Hinnis and Mr Watkins

Minutes

3. **PUBLIC QUESTION/STATEMENT TIME** – There were no public questions or statements.
4. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** – That the minutes of the last ordinary meeting held on 11th March 2003 and the Special Meeting held on 19th May be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – There were no declarations of interest or whipping arrangements.
6. **REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT OPTIONS FOR LEISURE SERVICES**
The Panel considered the previously circulated report, together with the summary report of the Principal Leisure and Community Officer circulated under letter, dated 25th June 2003. The Panel noted that the appendices were separate from the open report as they contained exempt business.

The Panel then received a presentation from Maureen Taylor of PMP Consultancy on the Management Options appraisal for leisure and arts services.

The following issues/points were raised:-

- Westwood St Thomas School should be included in the further consideration of the Not for Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO).
- Will the WISECARD need to be restructured as a result of any changes? Presumably benefits will continue as before?.
- Points raised by Durrington Swimming Pool:-
 1. Could there be a guarantee that all savings to SDC made as a result of a transfer will be reinvested into Service Development. The Cabinet minute of 4th June indicates that "some or all" of the estimated £217,00 could be spent on improving sports provision across the district? The process should be about securing the future of leisure facilities, not reducing the current contribution.
 2. What is the anticipated cost of standardising staff terms and conditions i.e. if a privately administered facility were to be transferred to the trust, their conditions may be different. We do not think this issue has been addressed.
 3. The report assumes £25,000 from grants. Can we trust these figures or are they a guesstimate?
 4. The report recommends that Sports Development should be transferred to the trust. Will this happen and if not, why not?
 5. We are concerned about the running of Amesbury Sports Centre, which is under the control of the County Council. If the County relinquishes control, it is imperative that the District Council does not pick up the bill.
 6. Given that the success of a possible transfer depends upon the financial accuracy of the projected figures, should these figures not be updated in accordance with the actual turn-out figures for 2002/03 which are now available?
 7. What protection will the Trust have against having management fees reduced by SDC in order to meet any future financial problem.

In relation to the above points the Principal Leisure and Community Officer informed members that a report detailing the comments made throughout this consultation process would be brought back to this Panel in September, prior to its consideration by the Cabinet later that same month.

- If staff move to a Trust will they still be able to access central services, e.g. payroll, personnel, IT and Legal?

Maureen Taylor explained that the issue of central service costs was a complex one. Usually a new trust will continue to work within existing arrangements, certainly for the first couple of years. Thereafter, most trusts negotiate their own arrangements in the future. These points would be investigated in further detail during the second stage of the review, which would include a business plan.

Mark Wareham, UNISON Branch Administrator informed the Panel that UNISON would be producing a more detailed report in response to the consultation process. UNISON'S main concern related to the terms and conditions for staff, especially pensions.

- Some rural areas have limited access to leisure facilities, would surpluses generated by the Trusts enable improved provision in the outlying areas of the District?

Maureen Taylor replied that the Trusts, if successful, should generate surpluses. Thus the Trust and the Council will be able to decide how to reinvest these surpluses e.g. new provision, extension of existing provision, outreach provision to rural areas.

- Would it be possible to link bus fares with leisure facilities prices, in a discounted way?

Maureen Taylor agreed that this could be an attractive marketing initiative and added that there were examples of such agreements around the country between leisure trusts and local bus companies.

The Principal Leisure and Community Development Officer informed Members that the next stage of this review process would include a detailed business plan, information relating to grant funding agreements, lease agreements, negotiations with Wiltshire County Council and the implications surrounding the transfer of staff. The final submission would be considered by the Cabinet in March 2004 and thereafter would go to Full Council for ratification since this matter represented a key decision.

The Chairman thanked the Panel members for their contribution to this item.

7. UPDATE ON MAXIMISING EXTERNAL FUNDING TO MEET THE COUNCIL AND COMMUNITY'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Panel considered the previously circulated update report prepared by the Principal Leisure and Community Officer, circulated under letter, dated 25th June, together with the previously circulated report as considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 25th June 2003.

Members noted that a detailed Service Development Bid was to be drawn up in relation to the establishment of the post of "Corporate External Funding Officer" and that this would be considered at the appropriate time in line with the Corporate Planning and Review Process.

8. REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY AND HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL 2002-2003

Work undertaken by the Scrutiny Panel in 2002-2003

The Policy Director explained that last year the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel completed two Best Value Service Review – (a) Leisure Facilities in Salisbury District and (b) Services to Older and Vulnerable People. This second review was due to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd July.

The Policy Director added the Panel had undertaken three scrutiny reviews:-

- (1) Creating more affordable homes in Salisbury District
- (2) Maximising External Funding to meet the Council and Community's strategic priorities (as detailed above and in the previously circulated report in connection with Agenda Item 6)
- (3) Improving the Council's contribution to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

Improving the Council's Contribution to Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

The Panel then went on to consider the report of the Head of Housing Management, circulated under letter dated 25th June which detailed the progress of the Scrutiny Review on Improving the Council's contribution to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour.

The Head of Housing Management informed Members that a report had been prepared and would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 23rd July on Housing Benefit Sanctions and Anti Social Behaviour. He added that the Scrutiny Review group may wish to consider this matter in further detail.

AGREED –

- (1) That the Working Group scrutinising the Council's contribution to tackling anti-social behaviour be extended to include the following members:-

Councillors Mrs Bissington, Mrs Chettleburgh, Dalton and Mrs Greville.

(NOTE: Full Membership of the Working Group is therefore as follows:- Councillors Mrs Bissington, Mrs Chettleburgh, Dalton, Mrs Evans, Mrs Greville, Osment and Rycroft, Mrs Fazackerley and Mr Southey, both from the Tenant's Panel and Mrs Welsh (who was a member of the working group last year and would like to continue her involvement, despite retiring as a District Councillor in the May 2003 Elections).

- (2) That a separate meeting of this working group be convened to discuss current issues and work up a programme for the remainder of this scrutiny exercise, e.g. invite the Police to explain the work currently being undertaken in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour.

Other related issues

(a) Health Scrutiny

This Panel is chaired by Councillor Hewitt and the panel liaises with Wiltshire County Council on the scrutiny of health. This year the Health Scrutiny Panel will be investigating what the Council can do to work with Hospitals to free up bed spaces occupied by elderly patients.

(b) Stock Option Appraisal Group

This working group is currently investigating the best way to manage the Council Housing Stock in the future. Options include status quo (i.e. Council continues to manage housing stock); transfer; a private finance initiative or an arms length managing organisation.

(NOTE: Membership of this Panel is as follows: Councillors Mrs Chettleburgh, Cole-Morgan, Mrs Evans, Fear, Mrs Green, Mills, Paisey, Mrs Peach, Mr Peach and Wren, together with Mr Hinnis and Mr Southey, both from the Tenant's Panel)

What worked well in 2002-2003?

- External visits
- Acting as a participative panel and not as a committee
- No whip
- Opportunity to learn
- Co-operative working with the Portfolio Holder
- Flexible Approach
- Inclusion of the Panel as an example of good practice in the District Auditor's Report

9. PROPOSED WORK PROGRAMME 2003-2004

This year the work programme of the Community and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel would include:-

- Best Value Review of Balanced Housing Markets and Decent Homes.
(NOTE: Councillors Dalton, Mrs Green, Mrs Greville, Osment and Paisey indicated that they would like to be involved in this Best Value Review).
- Completion of the Review on the Council's contribution to tackling anti-social behaviour
- Completion of the Stock Option Appraisal

Members were invited to consider additional topics for review/scrutiny in 2003-2004 with a view to discussing these ideas at the next meeting in September.

10. FUTURE MEETING DATES

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the Panel be held on Tuesday 2nd September, commencing at 6.00pm in Committee Room 1.

Thereafter meetings will be held on 3rd Wednesday of every month, commencing at 6pm. Dates therefore as follows:-

15th October

19th November

17th December

21st January 2004

(18th February – FULL COUNCIL – so date for C & H Panel in February to be confirmed)

17th March

21st April

(NB. These are provisional dates – if there is no business, the meeting will be cancelled)

The meeting closed at 8.25 p.m.