

West Wiltshire District Council

Minutes

Minutes of the: Scrutiny Committee

Held on: Wednesday 14 January 2009

Held at: Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge

Present:

Councillors: Cllrs Burden, Carr, Clark (Chairman), Ezra, Hedley, Humphries, Jenkins, King, Mudge, Osborn H, Osborn J, Parks, Ridout and Walker

Also in attendance: Cllrs Brown, Carbin and Mounde

Officers: Property and Commercial Services Manager (JF), Policy Officer (DJ), Policy Officer (ML), Regeneration Manager (AN), Member Support Officer (HP), Parking Manager (RS), and Interim Development Control Manager (RY)

129. Apologies and Membership of the Committee

Apologies received from Cllr Parks.

Cllr Conley, Environment Portfolio holder, also sent her apologies for being unable to attend item 5 (minute 134).

130. Declarations of Interest

None were received.

131. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2008 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

132. Announcements from the Chairman

There were none.

133. Update on Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board (JOSTB)

The Scrutiny Committee noted Cllr Humpries' agreement to continue to serve as West Wiltshire's representative on the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board (JOSTB) and Cllr Park's agreement to sit on the Critical Path and Day One Plan task group.

Cllr Humphries introduced an update on the work of JOSTB.

Cllr Humphries asked Members to note that a special meeting of JOSTB will be held on Tuesday 17 February 2009 at 10.30am at Wiltshire County Council to consider the 2009-10 budget proposals. All non-executive members from across the five councils are invited to attend this meeting.

He added that Electoral Services are still unable to start work on the electoral roll because the Boundary Committee is yet to announce its final recommendations. Contrary to previous suggestions, it also appears that all candidates for the new Wiltshire Council will have to deliver their election papers to Electoral Services in Chippenham.

The Policy Officer (MS) reported that Cllr Molland, Chairman of JOSTB, is consulting the five existing authorities on the proposed arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny in the new Wiltshire Council. This Council's Scrutiny Committee will be discussing their response, but members are also invited to submit their individual responses if they wish. Details of the proposals can be found in the Members Room or alternatively a copy can be obtained from the Policy Officer (ML). Comments on the proposals should be sent to Marie Gondlach at Wiltshire County Council, email mariegondlach@wiltshire.gov.uk by Monday 2 February.

Members of the JOSTB task groups each gave a verbal update:

Cllr Parks (Development Control) was not present at the meeting, however the task group has completed its work at present.

Cllr Ridout (Housing) reported that the Housing task group will not meet for two weeks, therefore there was no update to give.

Cllr Hedley (Waste) reported that the Waste task group's meeting is scheduled for the end of January, therefore there he will be able to give a more detailed update at the next Scrutiny Committee meeting on 11 Feb.

Cllr Walker (Area Boards) reported she was unable to attend the last meeting of the Area Boards task group. Cllr Ridout reported that the recent meeting of the pilot Warminster Area Board was well attended but that no representative of the health, fire or housing services were present. She added that a representative of the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) had attended the recent pilot Trowbridge Area Board meeting, but had attended on the proviso she would not be asked any questions.

Cllr Humphries suggested that the Area Boards are moving in the right direction but that two separate meetings may be necessary; one to deal with strategic matters and one for items of greater interest to the public.

Cllr Mounde suggested members make use of the next two months by becoming more involved with the Area Boards and by requesting briefings from the CAB project team.

Cllr Carr (Customer Access) reported that arrangements for customer access are progressing well for a seamless transfer.

Cllr Humphries (Change Management inc. ICT Transition) referred members to the written update in the report.

Resolved that the Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Noted the report; and**
- 2. Added the following item to its forward work plan for 11 February 2009: consider the Committee's response to the consultation by JOSTB on the overview and scrutiny arrangements in the new council.**

134. Update on Civil Parking Enforcement after six months' operation

The Parking Manager (RS) provided a verbal summary of the tabled report updating the Scrutiny Committee on Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in West Wiltshire after six months of operation.

Cllr Mudge asked who is responsible for identifying and removing parking restrictions that were installed for historical reasons but may no longer be applicable. He also asked who is responsible for pruning hanging flower baskets when they begin to obscure parking signs. The Parking Manager (RS) replied that the County Council are in the process of carrying out town centre reviews with the aim of identifying areas suitable for residents' parking schemes, as well as any locations where restrictions need amending, adding or removing. He added that the hanging baskets are installed by the town councils who need to appropriately position and maintain them, but District Council Civil Enforcement Officers do monitor them, reporting problems when they arise, and the parking team are aware of the issue.

Cllr J Osborn asked if the districts will retain their current parking charges after the transition. The Property and Commercial Services Manager (JF) replied that he and the Parking Manager (RS) have been involved in working groups looking at the transition to One Council but that no final decision has yet been taken on charges. He added that the current priority is ensuring all systems are operational on Day One.

Cllr Carr asked what the deadline is for submitting requests for on street residents' parking schemes. The Parking Manager replied that he was

unaware of any deadline but as the introduction of resident schemes is a lengthy process it was likely to be a matter of months rather than weeks.

Cllr Brown asked how Gary Smith is progressing with the Bradford on Avon residents' parking scheme, as she had made contact with him but received no response. Cllr Brown also expressed concern over one of the Next Steps in the report, which read "To assist the County Council and other Districts with the transition to carrying out CPE under the One Council." Cllr Brown had hoped that the service would be operational on Day One, that there would be no transition period and requested confirmation that this is the case. The Parking Manager (RS) replied that because Gary Smith is a consultant employed by Wiltshire County Council he was not aware of the scheme's progress and could therefore not answer the question. He added that Wiltshire County Council have previously advised of their programme and is not aware of any changes to that. He also stated that all critical tasks would be complete prior to vesting day and the transitional period would involve important changes but not ones critical to operations on Day One.

Resolved that:

- **The Scrutiny Committee noted the update.**

135. Development Control performance update – April to December 2008

Cllr Mounde introduced a report summarising the performance of the Development Control Service in the previous three quarters i.e. from April-December 2008. The Interim Development Control Manager (RY) then summarised his report and performance tables and then answered questions from members.

Cllr J Osborn asked whether the recent Vanguard analysis had been effective. The Interim Development Control Manager (RY) replied that some benefits had been taken from the process, including improved staff training and some streamlining of processes, but that some of the analysis's results had been misinterpreted e.g. that targets were less important. He added that planning officers were responsible for their own caseload and were fully aware of the need to meet the respective National Indicator application targets. Considerable progress had been made in reducing the case backlog by 55% since early October 2008 . At the same time performance has steadily improved . West Wilts' Development Control Service was now statistically the best performing in the county which was a considerable achievement taking into account the backlog reduction. Appeals performance had also been above target for the last quarter. The enforcement service was also being more performance managed with the support of the team.

Cllr J Osborn also requested the number of agency staff currently employed in the Development Control Service. The Interim Development Control Manager (RY) replied that there are two agency staff covering for absent permanent

staff, one full time agency worker, one agency consultant, and one mid-ranking planning officer recruited to help clear the application backlog.

The Scrutiny Committee gave their congratulations to the Interim Development Control Manager (RY) and his team for the scope and detail of his report and the dramatic improvements they have made in the department's performance.

Resolved that:

- 1. The Scrutiny Committee noted the update; and**
- 2. A letter be sent from the Scrutiny Committee congratulating the Interim Development Control Services Manager and his team on the improvements made to the department's performance (copied to the Leader).**

136. Update on Issues and Challenges – Regeneration Service

Cllr Mounde introduced a report updating the Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Regeneration Service and how it can best use the remaining time and other resources for the long-term benefit of the five towns. The Regeneration Manager (AN) then answered members' questions.

Cllr H Osborn asked how the Shires Gateway project is progressing given that only three of the main retail units have been let, and asked what will happen to the existing Shires once the new Gateway is complete. The Regeneration Manager (AN) replied that the fourth unit is likely to be confirmed soon and the Shires Gateway is on course to open in May/June. He added that the difficulty in attracting prestige retail outlets to Trowbridge is still due to their negative perception of the town.

Cllr Ridout asked if the figures included in the report take into account Trowbridge's soon-to-close Marks & Spencers store. The Regeneration Manager (AN) confirmed that they do, adding that the closure was a blow to the town but one that had been anticipated for some time.

Cllr Mounde reported that the outlook for the Waterside Project remains good despite its funding deficit, and as a flagship project it retains strong support from Wiltshire County Council.

The Regeneration Manager (AN) reported that with investment of approx. £35M in the Shires Gateway and of £30-40M approx. in the town's new Sainsbury's store, Trowbridge is in a strong economic position.

Cllr Mounde offered his thanks and congratulations to the Regeneration Manager (AN) and to the Community Development Officer (KG) for their remarkable work. He also thanked Mr Len Turner, Manager of the West Wiltshire Economic Partnership (WWEP) for acting as a crucial link between the Council and the private sector. He reported that Virgin Mobile and HSBC

are now recruiting in the area and that 200 of the 400 Woolworths redundancies have already found new employment.

Resolved that:

- **The Scrutiny Committee noted the update.**

137. County Health Scrutiny update

A written update from Cllr Mudge was circulated. This is appended to these minutes (Appendix 1).

Cllr Humphries expressed concern that due to the closure of the Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) in Warminster, those who do not own a car are forced to take a taxi, costing £55, to the unit in Trowbridge.

Cllr Ezra expressed concern that Westbury only has a GP service for 4.5 days per week and that people who ring the out of hours service are told if they cannot get to the hospital themselves, they may have to wait need to wait 6-7 hours for a doctor to visit.

Resolved that:

- **The Scrutiny Committee noted the update.**

138. Scrutiny Forward Work Plan

Resolved that:

- **The Scrutiny Committee agreed the Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan, with the addition of two items:**
 - **11 February – Consultation on the proposed Overview and Scrutiny arrangements in the new Wiltshire Council**
 - **18 March – Update on the identification of gypsy and traveller sites.**

139. Cabinet Forward Work Plan

Resolved that:

- **The Scrutiny Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Work Plan.**

140. Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee will be held on Wednesday **11 February 2009** in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge at **7pm**.

(7.00pm – 8.30pm)

These minutes were prepared by Henry Powell, Member Support Officer,
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