

# West Wiltshire District Council

## Minutes

**Minutes of the:** Scrutiny Committee

**Held on:** Wednesday 11 February 2009

**Held at:** Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge

**Present:**

**Councillors:** Cllrs Clark (Chairman), Hedley, Humphries, Jenkins, Osborn H, Osborn J, and Ridout

**Also in attendance:** Cllrs Brown and Carbin

**Officers:** Policy Officer (HC), Policy Officer (ML), Policy and Communications Service Manager (PM), Finance Service Manager (AB), and Member Support Officer (HP)

### **141. Apologies and Membership of the Committee**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Burden, Carr, Ezra, Hawker, King and Mudge.

### **142. Declarations of Interest**

None were received.

### **143. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2009 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

### **144. Announcements from the Chairman**

The Chairman 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.

### **145. Overview and Scrutiny arrangements for the new Wiltshire Council**

The Policy and Communications Service Manager (PM) introduced a report inviting the Scrutiny Committee to comment on proposals concerning overview and scrutiny arrangements for the new Wiltshire Council.

Cllr Humphries emphasised the importance of ensuring that members of the executive are required to attend scrutiny meetings, and expressed concern at the number of officers and Members required to support and populate the four scrutiny committees proposed.

Cllr J Osborn emphasised the importance of gaining public involvement in the scrutiny process and local government in general, suggesting that this might be achieved through Area Boards.

Cllr H Osborn requested further information on the role of Area Boards in providing local challenge, and their relationship with the overview and scrutiny function of the Council (as described in Appendix D of Agenda Item 5 – Appendix 3).

**Resolved that:**

- **The Scrutiny Committee expressed their general satisfaction with the proposed arrangements and structure for overview and scrutiny in the new Wiltshire Council, but highlighted the following concerns:**
  - **The need to hold Cabinet / Executive members to account directly**
  - **The large number of members who may be required to sit on the four select committees and task groups**
  - **The need for greater engagement with the community and the public**
  - **The resources available to support the committees and task groups may not be sufficient**

This resolution will be forwarded to the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board (JOSTB) for consideration at their next meeting on the 27 February 2009.

**146. Joint overview and scrutiny transition update**

Cllr Humphries introduced a report on the work of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board (JOSTB). He provided the following updates:

- There is major concern regarding the proposed level of staff support for unitary councillors and area boards;
- There is concern that there is only one member of staff in the Elections department with extensive experience of running large-scale elections;
- Contrary to previous advice, it seems there will be no provision for candidates to hand their election papers in at local hubs, and therefore all candidates from across the county will be required to travel to

Chippenham to do this. They may have to do this twice, once to get their papers checked, and once to submit the finished version.

- Cllr Humphries has requested an accurate timeline of the transition as there seem to be several contradictory versions in existence;
- Officers are assembling a guidance pack for One Council Members that will be given to successful candidates after the count;
- There is some concern regarding where Members will be located in the County building when not in meetings;
- British Telecom have installed a data cable between the hubs ahead of schedule;
- All One Council Members will receive a laptop and smart phone, but will have to pay the telephone bill as they will already receive reimbursement for telephone calls within their allowance;
- There are concerns regarding the SAP system being behind schedule. There will be two versions running simultaneously on vesting day until the system has been implemented in full.

Cllr J Osborn expressed concern regarding the number of West Wiltshire staff who still do not know their post or location after vesting day.

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 there will be a meeting to discuss the proposed homelessness strategy on Friday 13 February, therefore there was no update to give.

Cllr Hedley (Waste) reported that the Waste task group's January meeting was cancelled by County officers due to the newly appointed Head of Waste and Recycling not having had time to write a report. All members were deeply unhappy with their lack of involvement in this decision. Cllr Hedley also questioned why a Head of Waste and Recycling was not appointed sooner when each of the current authorities arrangements for waste and recycling are so different and need to be harmonised.

Cllr Jenkins expressed concern at the lack of progress on arrangements for waste and recycling, especially given the contentiousness of the issue.

Cllr Walker (Area Boards) was not present at the meeting, therefore no update was received.

Cllr Carr (Customer Access) was not present at the meeting, therefore no update was received.

Cllr Humphries (Change Management inc. ICT Transition) reported that he will ask the Business Management Programme team for a further update on any delays and will report these at the Scrutiny Committee's next meeting.

**Resolved that:**

- 1. The Scrutiny Committee noted the report; and**
- 2. Expressed concern at the number of West Wiltshire staff who still do not have details of their future working arrangements confirmed, and requested that Cabinet review the latest position.**

**147. Performance Monitoring 2008-09 Quarter 3 - Oct-Dec 2008**

Cllr Ridout introduced a report summarising the Council's performance in the third quarter of 2008-09.

Cllr Jenkins asked what is causing the sudden increase in fly-tipping in the district. Cllr Hedley suggested that we need to know whether the fly-tipped waste is domestic or commercial in order to answer this question. The Policy Officer (HC) agreed to investigate whether data is collected on the make-up of fly-tipped waste and to update members with more information.

Cllr J Osborn suggested that a coordinated look at fly-tipping was required. The Policy and Communications Service Manager (PM) replied that the Corporate Management Team had recently reviewed the work done to tackle fly-tipping with a view to improving its effectiveness. Some changes have been made to increase surveillance and education. However, both will take some time to have a positive effect on reducing the number of fly-tipping incidents.

**Resolved that:**

- The Scrutiny Committee noted the report; and**
- Concerns about the increasing level of fly-tipping in the district be raised with the relevant service director of Wiltshire Council, with a request that it is given the necessary priority in planning future service delivery.**

**148. Financial Monitoring 2008-09**

The Finance Service Manager (AB) introduced a report informing members of the Council's financial position for the period ending 31 December 2008.

Cllr Jenkins asked if the projected year-end surplus would transfer to Wiltshire Council on vesting day. The Finance Service Manager (AB) confirmed that it would.

Cllr Ridout reported that she considered the recently agreed severance costs were being funded from inappropriate sources. The Finance Service Manager (AB) replied that a number of sources were being used to cover the severance costs. It was also indicated that the final year end surplus and any remaining balances to be transferred to Wiltshire Council would be the same irrespective of what sources were used.

Cllr Clark asked if the costs associated with planning appeals (currently estimated at £150k) would be paid this year or could they be carried over to the new Wiltshire Council. The Finance Service Manager replied that he suspected most of these costs have already been paid, but agreed to come back to the Scrutiny Committee with further information.

**Resolved that:**

- **The Scrutiny Committee noted the report; and**
- **The Chairman would ascertain the position on the sources used for severance through appropriate channels and report this back to the committee**

**149. County Health Scrutiny update**

A written update was tabled at the meeting.

**Resolved that:**

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

**150. Scrutiny Committee forward work plan**

**Resolved that:**

- **The Scrutiny Committee noted the forward work plan.**

**151. Cabinet Forward Work Plan**

The Member Support Officer reported that since publication the Melksham and Westbury Conservation Area Character Appraisal items have been removed from the work plan.

**Resolved that:**

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

**152. Date of next meeting**

The next and final ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee will be held on Wednesday **18 March 2009** in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge at **7pm**.

(7.00pm – 8.20pm)

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

who can be contacted on 01225 776655 ext. 242 or via  
[hpowell@westwiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:hpowell@westwiltshire.gov.uk)