

West Wiltshire District Council

Minutes

- Minutes of the:** Scrutiny Committee
- Held on:** Wednesday 16 July 2008
- Held at:** Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge
- Present:**
- Councillors:** Cllrs Brown, Chivers, Clark (Chairman), Ezra, Griffiths, Hedley, Humphries, Jenkins, Mudge, Osborn H, Osborn J, Parks, Ridout, and Walker.
- Also in attendance:** Cllrs Carbin, Conley, and Mounde.
- Officers:** Financial Accountant (AB), Policy Officer (HC), Policy Officer (DJ), Policy Officer (ML), Member Support Officer (HP), Housing Register & Accommodation Team Leader (LY)

75. Apologies and Membership of the Committee

Apologies were received from Cllr Carr, Cllr Denison-Pender, and Cllr King.

Cllr Brown substituted for Cllr King for one meeting only.

76. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were received.

77. Announcements from the Chairman

Following the Committee's Task and Finish Group on Partnership Working, the recommendations have been sent to Wiltshire Police and the County Council. A reply from the police has already been circulated. There has now been a holding response from the County Council, saying the letter will be discussed at the next Wiltshire Community Safety and Drugs Partnership Delivery Management and Performance Group.

The Chairman reported back on a response he had received from Legal Services regarding which Committee has the remit to consider Ombudsman reports, now that Scrutiny Committee can no longer do so. The solicitor replied that the Ombudsman only issues reports when an investigation is completed

and there is a finding of maladministration. Under the Constitution, the Council considers reports from the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman also issues letters containing decisions called local settlements. (This is when the Ombudsman discontinues an investigation because the Council agrees to take some action which is considered by the Ombudsman to be a satisfactory outcome for the complainant.) Under the Constitution these are not required to be reported to Council (and were not previously required to be reported to Scrutiny either). The Council has had two local settlements this year, one relating to a community garden, the other to a council tax complaint.

78. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

79. Housing Portfolio Holder - Update on Issues and Challenges

Cllr Fortescue introduced a report updating the Committee on several aspects of the housing service.

Following a query from Cllr Chivers, Cllr Mounde reported that the proposed building of affordable housing on Bradford on Avon golf course was unlikely, as such a development would probably be contrary to Council policy.

Cllr J Osborn expressed concern that the current 'credit crunch' could lead to developers not meeting the affordable housing commitments made in their Section 106 agreements. He asked what work is being done to predict the scale of such a shortfall, and what contingencies are being put in place to soften its impact.

Cllr Fortescue reported that a recently departed full-time member of the housing department has been replaced by two part-time agency staff.

There was concern about the cost and slow speed of some Disabled Facilities Grant work.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The Scrutiny Committee requested a report detailing how many sites with Section 106 agreements currently have planning permission, on how many has work not commenced, and what would the deficit in affordable housing be (compared to current projections) if these sites' Section 106 obligations remained unfulfilled;**
- 2. The Scrutiny Committee requested that internal audit investigates the value for money provided by Council contractors with regard to disabled facility grants.**

80. Section 106 Agreement Obligations

Cllr J Osborn gave a verbal update on the position regarding all current and outstanding Section 106 agreement obligations.

A definitive, computerised record of Section 106 agreements is being created, which will be accessible to legal, financial and enforcement departments. A temporary member of staff has been recruited to transfer the historic backlog of 240 paper records onto the system, with only 35 left to enter.

RESOLVED that:

The Scrutiny Committee noted the update.

81. Update on Joint Overview and Scrutiny Transition Board

Cllr Humphries reported that the JOSTB last met on 4 July. At the request of the WWDC Scrutiny Committee the Board considered a report on the transition programme for leisure centres. JOSTB members expressed some concern about the emphasis on short term transition and a further report is being considered by JOSTB on 31 October.

The Scrutiny Committee member sitting on each task group gave an update on its progress.

Cllr Parks (Development Control Task Group) presented the Group's Final Report. The report contains a total of 28 recommendations was endorsed by the JOSTB on 4 July and the IE on 9 July. Cllr Parks thanked the policy and performance manager (PM) and policy officer (ML) for their extraordinary work on this issue. These sentiments were echoed by the Committee.

Cllr Ridout (Housing Task Group) reported with regret that the Housing Task Group's July meeting was cancelled due to the work requested not having been completed. The task group will next meet on 1st August.

Cllr Hedley (Waste and Recycling Task Group) reported his frustration that no further information has been forthcoming. In light of the need for savings to be made by the unitary council, Tim Darsley (Corporate Director) will be attending the Task Group's meeting on 28th July to report on how this Council introduced alternate weekly collections.

Cllr Walker (Community Area Boards Task Group) reported that the task group has been meeting monthly and expects to continue its review into the new Council. The pilot Community Boards will be reporting back to the task group.

The update on the Customer Access Task Group was presented in the agenda papers. (Cllr Carr had given his apologies to the meeting).

RESOLVED that

The Scrutiny Committee:

1. **Noted the progress made by each of the task groups;**
2. **Reconfirmed Cllr Bill Parks as West Wiltshire District Council's representative on the proposed follow-up Development Control Task Group to scrutinise the implementation of the development control recommendations;**
3. **Will continue to provide policy officer resource from this Council to support the work of the Development Control Task Group;**
4. **Made the following recommendation to JOSTB: "In the light of the current housing problems nationally and locally, greater priority must be given to this task group and it must be properly resourced."**

82. Financial Monitoring – April-June 2008 – First quarter

The Financial Accountant (AB) introduced a report informing members of the Council's financial position for the period ending 30 June 2008.

RESOLVED that:

The Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

83. BT Plans to Remove 36 Phone Boxes – Second Stage of Consultation

The Policy Officer (DJ) reminded the Committee of the procedure and time scale for the consultation, and distributed requests received from town and parish councils for this Committee to adjust the recommendations agreed at its previous meeting.

The Committee agreed to the following amendments to those recommendations:

	Location	Recommendation Suggested CHANGE in bold & capitals	Reason(s) (responses to second consultation in bold)
5	1pco, Junction of Silver St. Lane & Kingsdown Rd, Trowbridge BA14 0LB	Object	1. This is a fairly deprived area. Many residents have low incomes and rely on this box. 2. Residents object to the loss of this well-used phone box: 556 calls p.a. is quite high for a suburban area.
12	1pco, Corsham Rd, Whitley , Melksham SN12 8QD	OBJECT	1. Many older residents of Shaw and Whitley have neither a landline nor mobile phone. They need this box for emergency (and other) calls and have no easy access to another phone box.

	Location	Recommendation Suggested CHANGE in bold & capitals	Reason(s) (responses to second consultation in bold)
			<p>2. Located on a lay-by of busy road in centre of Shaw, very close to junction of A365 with main Corsham road from Melksham. Box is very clearly visible from A365. Both Corsham and Bath roads are very busy and have accident records. Near bus stop.</p> <p>3. Communities need at least one public phone for emergencies. A few years ago a child was killed in Shaw while crossing the road. Also, this is the only box near the very well-used Shaw Play Area. Safety signs at the playground direct users to this phone in the event of an emergency.</p> <p>4. The parish council believes the number of calls (2 p.a.) is so low because it is a card-only phone; it would prefer to see the box changed to take coins and cards.</p> <p>5. Phone box is sited outside school and church. If it is removed, there is no alternative nearer than Melksham, to which bus links are poor, especially in the evenings.</p> <p>6. Parish council offers to take over painting and maintenance of the box.</p>
16	Centre of Village, Pco1, Lower South Wraxall , Bradford-on-Avon BA15 2RR	CONSENT	(Reasons previously given for Objection should, instead, have been cited for Box 17 in South Wraxall)
17	Pco1, South Wraxall, South Wraxall , Bradford-on-Avon BA15 2RL	OBJECT	<p>1. Social housing nearby.</p> <p>2. Extremely poor mobile network coverage (on Virgin, Orange & Vodaphone) because of village's isolation.</p> <p>3. Sited on dangerous, well-used road linking Bath and Bradford-on-Avon. Could be needed for emergency calls.</p> <p>4. If South Wraxall's other phone box (see above) is removed, this one will be needed even more.</p>

	Location	Recommendation Suggested CHANGE in bold & capitals	Reason(s) (responses to second consultation in bold)
27	Corner Wilson Square (barracks) Imber Road, Warminster BA12 9DQ	CONSENT	
32	1pco Gentle Street Horningsham Warminster BA12 7LD	OBJECT	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very poor reception for mobile phones 2. Next to a well-used footpath 3. In an isolated area of Horningsham 4. Low use partly because it is now a card-only box. Changing the box to coin use would increase use.
33	1pco, O/s The Post Office, Kingston Deverill Warminster BA12 7HE	Object	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relatively-isolated village with poor transport facilities. Shearwater ward has a low population density, with only 2,546 people living in the ward (2001). 2. No mobile reception at all over a wide area. 3. There is much horse-riding in the area, and emergency services may need to be contacted after an accident.

RESOLVED that:

1. **The Scrutiny Committee confirmed the recommendations agreed at its June meeting, with the amendments listed above, and will pass them to the Portfolio Holder for Communities for approval, after which the Final Notification will be drawn up, published and sent to all appropriate parties by the deadline of 8th August 2008.**
2. **The Scrutiny Committee asks the Portfolio Holder for Communities to write to BT informing the firm that the phone box it plans to remove in Coulston is not within 400 metres of another phone box, and therefore should not be removed without consultation.**

84. Health Services in Wiltshire Update

Cllr Mudge gave an update on health services in Wiltshire.

Cllrs Ridout and J Osborn expressed concern that the PCT will not be able to attend every Community Board meeting, unlike the police and fire services.

Cllr Ezra expressed concern that a Healthcare Commission report recently included Wiltshire PCT amongst the worst-performing trusts for hygiene standards. Cllr Mudge expressed his intention to follow this up closely.

RESOLVED that:

The Scrutiny Committee noted the update.

85. Update on Graffiti on Private Property

The Policy Officer (DJ) gave an update summarising the six recommendations agreed by Cabinet concerning graffiti on private property.

Cllr Conley (Portfolio Holder for Environment) expressed her intention to continue to 'firm-up' the agreed measures.

RESOLVED that:

The Committee noted the update and thanked the Portfolio Holder for attending and for her efforts in this area.

86. Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan

Cllr Hedley expressed concern at two recent reports of the Customer Service Unit (CSU) giving inaccurate information to customers.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The Scrutiny Committee requested a brief written report for its September meeting about the training CSU staff are given, what happens when mistakes are made, and lessons that have been learned;**
- 2. The Scrutiny Committee agreed the Scrutiny Committee Forward Work Plan.**

87. Cabinet Forward Work Plan

RESOLVED that:

The Committee noted the Cabinet Forward Work Plan

88. Date of Next Meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Wednesday **17 September 2008** in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge at **7pm**.

(7.00pm – 9.20pm)

These minutes were prepared by Henry Powell, Member Support Officer
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