

THESE MINUTES WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE NEXT MEETING OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 11 OCTOBER 2006 FOR APPROVAL AS A CORRECT RECORD.

West Wiltshire District Council

Minutes

Minutes of the: Scrutiny Committee

Held on: Wednesday 6 September 2006

Held at: Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge

Present:

Councillors: Phillips OBE, (Chairman), Conley, Cunliffe-Jones, Fortescue, Hames (part), Lewis (part), Manasseh, March (part), Mudge, Oldrieve, and While.

Also in attendance: Cllrs Brown (part) and James (part)

Officers: Interim Commercial Services Manager (KG) (part), Management Accountant (SH) (part), Housing Needs Manager (AL) (part), Housing Services Manager (NS) (part), Policy & Scrutiny Officer (ML), Member Support Officer (MS)

65. Apologies and Membership of the Committee

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bower, Mounde, Oakman and Payne.

The following temporary change to the membership of the committee was made:

Cllr Payne was replaced by Cllr Mudge.

66. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

67. Announcements from the Chairman

The Scrutiny Committee had previously discussed its concerns and issues regarding the role of the Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Audit Committee. These would be addressed in the 'Memorandum of Understanding' which would hopefully be agreed at the next meeting of the Audit Committee on 28 September.

Cllr Hames, Chairman of the Audit Committee, agreed that the Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee had different functions. The Audit Committee did not intend to be involved in all matters concerning numbers.

The Chairman hoped that Cllr Hames and himself could look forward to working in partnership.

68. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

69. Housing Portfolio Holder – Update and Responses to Questions from Scrutiny Committee

Cllr James, Housing Portfolio Holder, presented responses to questions raised by the Scrutiny Committee and delivered a presentation on Housing Services achievements and the challenges that it would face until 2010.

Following the presentation Members raised a number of queries, which were addressed by officers. These included:

- Homes were allocated in terms of 'core need'. Not all applicants on the housing register had a 'core need'. Those without a 'core need' would have a reduced chance of obtaining property.
- Housing Services were keen to prevent homelessness. An important part of this was prevention via education.
- By 2010 there would not be a Private Sector Leasing Scheme. Until then Housing Services would work with tenants in such accommodation to find alternative accommodation.
- The average length of stay at Hillside was 22 weeks. However, if circumstances dictate, people could stay in hostels for up to 2 years. There were no plans to build new hostels.
- Housing Services had noticed that those eligible to bid for retirement homes were not bidding for them. Therefore Housing Associations, in consultation with the Housing Services, had to address this by redeveloping sites to enable others to take advantage of these properties. A compromise would have to be found to ensure there would still, when required, be enough retirement properties, due to people living longer.
- It was asked if the percentage of affordable houses approved by Section 106 agreements was known. Housing Services would feed this back and investigate if this was achievable.

- Responses to the Housing Needs Survey were unknown as it had only very recently been distributed. The District Council would not be collating the responses.
- Concern was also raised regarding the obstacles faced by applicants wanting to move into a rural property.

RESOLVED:

- **The Committee expressed thanks to officers and recognised their achievements and looked forward to seeing continued progress with the future challenges which had been set.**
- **That the Housing Team seek to ensure that applications still have expectations set realistically according to circumstance.**
- **That monthly statistics are provided to members via the MIS of people being rehoused, including a comparison of bands.**

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET:

- **This authority believes the target of reducing temporary accommodation by 50% by 2010 to be unrealistic.**

70. Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance – Update on the Implementations of Recommendations to Cabinet

The Environment Portfolio Holder, Cllr Brown and Interim Commercial Services Manager, Kevin Gibbs presented this report to the Committee and noted that good progress had been made on the short term, high priorities issues.

A discussion ensued, which included:

- Dead weeds should be collected by the sweepers.
- Wiltshire County Council funds 7 grass cuts per year. However to date the District Council had done 22 cuts. Any additional cuts, over the 7 per year, the District Council had to pay for. This was an area was being investigated to see if a reduction in cuts was possible to enable resources to be deployed elsewhere.
- Two Streetscene Enforcement Officers had been employed on a 6 month trial and were currently concentrating on reducing fly tipping and fly posting. They had recently issued an £80 fixed penalty notice (FPN) to someone who had been fly tipping. It was commented that the Council should be giving this maximum publicity in an attempt to deter. Any money collected from FPN's was retained by the District Council.

- The Personal Protective Equipment issued to the Streetscene Enforcement Officers was adequate – they were also issued with needle proof gloves.
- The funds to action the short term recommendations would have to be funded by the District Council and were currently not in the budget. It was expected to take another 2 – 3 months to action the remaining short term recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the report

71. Performance Monitoring – 2006/2007 – Quarter One – April – June 2006

Cllr While presented a report which summarised the Council's performance in the first quarter of 2006/07.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Committee;

- **Notes the general improvement in performance during 2006/07**
- **Supports the specific comments of the Performance Monitoring group**
- **Asks that Cabinets attention be drawn to the red performance indicators**

72. Financial Monitoring 2006/07

Steve Harding, Management Accountant, presented a report which informed members of the Council's financial position for the period ending 30 June 2006.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the report

73. Committee's Forward Work Plan

The Committee considered its forward work plan and also a recommendation which had been made from Trowbridge Area Seminar. The Area Seminar had asked that 'The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee be asked to look at the migrant workers situation within the Town Centre and the issues that this is generating. Having assessed this make appropriate recommendations.'

Although the Committee agreed that the issue needed to be addressed, it was not felt that the Scrutiny Committee was the appropriate body to do this.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Plan as presented be approved.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next ordinary meeting of the Scrutiny Committee would be held on Wednesday **11 October 2006** in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge at **7pm**.

(7.05pm – 9.45pm)

These minutes were prepared by Melanie Stimpson, Member Support Officer who can be contacted on direct line 01225 770322 or email mstimpson@westwiltshire.gov.uk