

West Wiltshire District Council

Minutes

- Minutes of the:** Scrutiny Committee
- Held on:** Wednesday 19 April 2006
- Held at:** Council Offices, Bradley Road, Trowbridge
- Present:**
- Councillors:** Phillips OBE, (Chairman), Blakemore, Bower, Bryant, Conley, Cunliffe-Jones, Fortescue, Lewis, Manasseh, Mounde, Mudge, Newbury, Oakman, Oldrieve, Rosier and While
- Also in attendance:** Portfolio Holders: Cllrs Hames, Hames and Carbin
Cllrs Hawker, Repton and Viles
- Officers:** Corporate Director (TD), Head of Legal and Democratic Services (NM), Solicitor (GC), Head of Development Control Services (DH), Housing PFI Project Manager (CT), Head of Housing Services (NS), Policy & Communications Services Manager (PM), Policy & Scrutiny Officer (ML), Management Accountant (SH) and Member Support Team Leader (YR)

28. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs March and Payne. Cllr Payne was replaced for this meeting by Cllr Mudge.

The Chairman gave notice that he would be seeking the Committee's views on the order of the agenda.

29. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting held on 1 March 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to an alteration to correct the spelling of Cllr Lewis' name.

30. Declarations of Interest

The following Members declared their interests in the item Housing PFI Update and any other references to the PFI scheme:

Cllr Hames	Although present at the Chairman's invitation in respect of Performance Monitoring – declared his interest in PFI matters by virtue of being a member of the Cabinet.
Cllr Bower	Director (as Council representative) of West Wiltshire Housing Society. Had previously served on the Society's PFI Board and as an observer on the Council's PFI Project Board.
Cllrs Manasseh, Oakman Cunliffe-Jones Newbury & Rosier	By virtue of their membership of the Planning Committee
Cllr James	Present at the Chairman's invitation as a member of the PFI Project Board – declared his interest by virtue of being a member of the Cabinet.
Cllr Hawker	Personal interest.

31. Announcements from the Chairman

Urgent Business and Order of Agenda

The Chairman reported that he had accepted an item of urgent business in accordance with S.100B 4 (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 and Council Procedure Rule 4 (e) of the Constitution.

Mainly in view of this, he had adjusted the order of the agenda as follows:

Item 6– Update from Housing Portfolio Holder would now be deferred to a future date.

Item 9 – Performance Plan would also be deferred as the report was incomplete.

Items 11 & 12 – Annual Report of the Committee and Forward Work Plan would be taken together.

Item 13 – Report of the Audit Commission... would be brought forward to allow the reporting officer, George Curran, to leave the meeting.

Council Owned Development Sites for the Housing PFI Scheme

The urgent business item related to a request from 5 Members (Cllrs Hawker, Mudge, Rosier, Syme and Clark) for the Scrutiny Committee to consider a call-in of the Cabinet decision dated 5 April concerning Council Owned Development Sites for the Housing PFI Scheme. A report had been circulated to Members which included:

- a covering report from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which explained the call-in process and the options for the Committee to consider
- the reasons given for requesting the call-in from Cllrs Hawker and Clark which had received the support of the other 3 Members
- the views of the Deputy Monitoring Officer and S.151 Officer
- background information – minutes and reports of Cabinet dated 5 April 2006 and Council dated 19 July 2005.

A discussion ensued on whether the matter should be considered in detail at this stage or whether it should be deferred to allow time for full consideration of the report circulated and to allow attendance by interested parties.

The Housing PFI Project Manager had prepared a statement in response to the reasons given for the request for call-in. The Monitoring Officer had also prepared a report. Both these documents were available at the meeting for circulation should the Committee decide to consider the matter in detail at this meeting.

The Committee was advised that it should ensure it had sufficient time in order to consider carefully and thoroughly all available documentation. Further consideration of the matter was deferred to an additional meeting to be held on 17 May and therefore the aforementioned documents were not circulated at this meeting.

Open Forum Speakers:

Margaret White, Bernard Garforth, Davina Griffin, Nicholas Sherwood and Francis Morland

RESOLVED:

- (a) That Cabinet decision dated 5 April 2006 in respect of Council Owned Development Sites for the Housing PFI Scheme be called in by the Scrutiny Committee.**
- (b) That further consideration of this matter be deferred until the next meeting on 17 May 2006 in order for Members to receive and fully consider all available documentation and to allow for attendance by**

interested parties.

32. Housing PFI – Update

The Housing PFI Project Manager presented a report and gave a power point presentation which summarised the current position and the key issues facing the scheme and answered Members' questions.

RESOLVED:

That the report and presentation be noted.

Note: Cllr Carbin arrived at the meeting towards the end of consideration of the above item.

33. Notice of Motion – Reducing Accidents in Melksham North Ward – Cllrs Barker and Chivers

Open Forum Speaker: Margaret White

The following notice of motion had been presented to Council on 22 February 2006 and referred to this Committee for consideration and report back to Council:

“This Council notes with great concern that the ward of Melksham North finds itself in the top third of wards in England and Wales for road accidents related injuries to under 16 year olds and over 60 year olds. After research by the Child Accident Prevention Trust.

Between 2000 and 2003 17 accidents occurred to under 16 year olds and 60 year olds at a cost of £1,118,430 to society. This information is from Police Date and the project has been funded by The Department of Health.

As a matter of urgency this Council works with its partners such as Wiltshire County Council, Melksham Town Council and West Wiltshire Housing Society and others in a bid to reduce accident rates within this ward.

In doing so it may be possible to meet the Government target of reducing accidents to the young and old by 50% by the year 2010.”

It was noted that a similarly worded notice of motion had been considered by Wiltshire County Council on 7 February 2006, details of which were presented. The County Council had resolved :

“To note that, based on the most recent three year casualty data, Melksham does not have a child pedestrian safety problem”.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

In accepting the above mentioned resolution of Wiltshire County Council, no further action be taken on this notice of motion and that Council be informed accordingly.

Note: Cllr Newbury left the meeting at this point.

34. Report of the Audit Commission – Departure of the Monitoring Officer

The report of the Audit Commission concerning the Departure of the Monitoring Officer was presented by the Chairman.

A number of members expressed concern that certain aspects still could not be divulged due to the nature of the information. It was noted that the local MP's were seeking to obtain further information from the District Auditor.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that the matter be kept open and to await the views of the local MP's.

35. Performance Monitoring 2005/06

Cllr Hames, Policy and Community Portfolio Holder presented a report concerning Performance Monitoring for 2005/06. The report related specifically to the following five performance indicators referred to Cabinet on 14 December 2005 by the Scrutiny Committee:

- BV109a – % of major planning applications processed within 13 weeks
- BV183(i) – average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation
- BV183(ii) – average length of stay in hostels
- HG14 – dwellings empty for 6 months or more
- AS02/4 – calls to switchboard answered within 20 seconds

Cabinet was also asked to report back to the Scrutiny Committee through the portfolio holder on the progress being made, following the publication of the quarter three statistics.

The Committee was asked to review the actions being taken to improve performance in respect of the indicators mentioned and consider whether it wanted to make any recommendations to Cabinet.

Members commented on customer standards in relation to the length of time it took to reply to emails and responding to telephone calls.

Note: Cllrs Oakman then Manasseh left the meeting during consideration of this item).

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted with no recommendations be made to Cabinet.**
- (b) That the Policy and Scrutiny Officer be requested to provide the Chairman with details of how the performance indicator measuring the answering of calls to the switchboard is monitored.**

36. Performance Plan 2006/07

This item was not considered as the report was incomplete at this stage. See also minute no. 38 below.

37. Financial Monitoring Report

The Management Accountant presented a report which detailed the Council's financial position for the period ending 28 February 2006.

The Committee was invited to review the report and raise any areas of concern.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

38. Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee and the Committee's Forward Work Plan

The Chairman presented a report which detailed the work that the Committee had carried out during 2005/06 and set out the Committee's plans for its core work plan for 2006/07. The Committee was invited to comment on the annual report prior to presentation to Annual Council on 10 May 2006.

The Committee's Forward Work Plan was also presented which detailed items for future consideration by the Committee. The Committee's views were sought on any specific questions or issues it would like to see addressed by the reports and/or presentations.

The following matters were noted:

An additional meeting would be held on 17 May 2006 primarily to consider the call-in of the Cabinet decision dated 5 April concerning Council Owned Development Sites for the Housing PFI Scheme. (minute no. 31 above refers).

The meeting on 8 June 2006 would be dedicated to health issues, namely

- consultation paper by the Kennet & North Wiltshire and West Wiltshire Primary Care Trusts (PCT's) on proposed changes to services under the Pathways for Change agenda
- consultation by the Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP), on changes to the way mental health services are structured and delivered.

The Committee's views were sought on the outcomes it would be seeking from that meeting.

The Policy and Scrutiny Officer sought guidance on how members of the Committee should be engaged in consideration of the draft Performance Plan following its deferral from this meeting. It was suggested that this could be dealt with by the Performance Monitoring Group. The Policy and Communications Service Manager commented that the Scrutiny Committee could if it wished consider the Performance Plan at a later date.

The Chairman commented that the Committee was restricted on how much it could deal with in view of limited availability of officer resources.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted and presented to Annual Council on 10 May 2006.**
- (b) That the Performance Monitoring Group be asked to consider the Performance Plan on the Committee's behalf.**
- (c) That the Forward Work Plan be approved.**

39. Urgent Decisions – Reporting Back

No urgent decisions had been made which required reporting back to this Committee.

40. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 17 May 2006 (additional meeting).

(7pm – 10.16pm)

These minutes were prepared by Yamina Rhouati, Member Support Team Leader who can be contacted on direct line 01225 770322 or email yrhouati@westwiltshire.gov.uk