

MINUTES

Meeting: WESTBURY AREA BOARD
Place: The Laverton Hall, Bratton Road, Westbury, Wiltshire BA13 3EN
Date: 11 December 2014
Start Time: 7.00 pm
Finish Time: 9.00 pm

Please direct any enquiries on these minutes to:

Roger Bishton (Democratic Services Officer), Tel: 01225 713 035 or (e-mail) roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk

Papers available on the Council's website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk

In Attendance:

Wiltshire Councillors

Cllr Russell Hawker, Cllr David Jenkins (Chairman), Cllr Gordon King (Vice Chairman) and Cllr Jerry Wickham

Cllr Jonathon Seed also attended the meeting.

Wiltshire Council Officers

Sally Hendry, Westbury Community Area Manager
Roger Bishton, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Amy Schuring, Community Youth Officer
Phoebe Brazier, Community Youth Office
Norman Burgess, Community Co-ordinator, Local Highways

Town and Parish Councillors

Westbury Town Council – Cllr Stephen Andrews, Cllr David Bradshaw, Cllr Ian Cunningham, Cllr Sue Ezra, Cllr Christine Mitchell, Cllr Mike Sutton, Keith Harvey (Town Clerk)
Bratton Parish Council
Coulston Parish Council
Dilton Marsh Parish Council
Edington Parish Council – Cllr Mike Swabey
Heywood Parish Council – Cllr Keith Youngs

Partners

Wiltshire Police – Inspector Alan Webb

Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service

Wiltshire NHS

BA13+ Community Area Partnership – Carole King

Total in attendance: 66

<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Summary of Issues Discussed and Decision</u>
1.	<p><u>Chairman's Welcome and Introductions</u></p> <p>The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Westbury Area Board.</p> <p>At the request of the Chairman, all stood in silence for one minute in memory of the three young men who were tragically killed in a road accident in Westbury Trading Estate on 5 December.</p>
2.	<p><u>Apologies for Absence</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from:</p> <p>Julia Cramp, Associate Director for Commissioning and Performance & School Effectiveness</p> <p>Mike Franklin, Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service</p>
3.	<p><u>Minutes</u></p> <p><u>Decision</u> The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 October 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.</p>
4.	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>Cllr Russell Hawker declared a personal interest regarding the Community Grant application for a defibrillator at Leigh Park Community Centre in Minute No. 15 (a) below as he was a member of the Community Centre.</p>
5.	<p><u>Chairman's Announcements</u></p> <p>The Chairman made the following announcements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiltshire's Car Parking Review – This announcement drew attention to a car parking review being carried out by Wiltshire Council. A pre consultation assessment had been undertaken in May and June of this year and also a number of community workshops had taken place. The findings of these pre-consultation exercises had been combined with parking data which formed the basis of a consultation which were open from 27 October 2014 to 16 January 2015. <p>Interested parties and members of the public were encouraged to respond to the consultation either in writing to Sustainable Transport Group, Highways and Transport, Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN or by email to transportplanning@wiltshire.gov.uk by the completion of</p>

	<p>a questionnaire. Full details of the proposals were available to view at http://consult.wiltshire.gov.uk/portal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stonehenge & Avebury World Heritage Site Management Plan 2015 – It was noted that a public consultation was taking place between December 2014 and February 2015 on the Stonehenge and Avebury WHS Management Plan 2015. The consultation was available to view on the Wiltshire Council website.
6.	<p><u>Partner and Community Updates</u></p> <p>The Area Board received the following partner and community updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiltshire Police Inspector Alan Webb presented his update report which was received from which it was noted that the current main issue continued to be non domestic burglaries and criminal damage. A copy of this report is attached to these minutes. • Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service An update report is attached to these minutes. • BA13 Community Area Partnership An update report was received and noted. Carole King further reported that she would be responding to the car parking consultation on behalf of the Partnership and that their next meeting was due to be held on Wednesday 18 February 2015 when the principal theme of the meeting would be the Environment.
7.	<p><u>Westbury Community Campus Working Proposal</u></p> <p>The Westbury Community Campus Team presented a report which set out details of the Team's working proposal for a local campus based on its engagement and consultation with local people, a copy of which was circulated with the agenda papers.</p> <p>The meeting noted that a full and comprehensive consultation had taken place within the Community Area and this had included two separate surveys in which questionnaires had been very widely distributed to households and were also made available at key venues including the Library, street fairs and clubs. It was recognised that the campus was about people and the community as well as buildings and the overwhelming desire of the community was that the campus should be split and developed around the Library, the Swimming Pool and the Leighton Recreation Centre.</p> <p>The report recommended: that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the Swimming Pool should be renovated and improved to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an attractive and welcoming entrance/meeting area • updated changing and shower facilities • Accessibility for all

2. The Library should be renovated, extended and improved providing:
 - A community hub for the campus
 - a statement building delivering a new focal point for regeneration in the town
 - a piazza setting at street level to increase the impact
 - a wide range of services for the community,
 - Flexible space for public and private services to be delivered, including the library, local police services, heritage and visitor centre

3. The Leighton Recreation Centre should be renovated, extended and improved to include:
 - Inside**
 - significantly increased sports hall area
 - flexible community rooms
 - increased and modernised fitness suite
 - enhanced café facilities
 - Improved changing facilities
 - accessibility for all
 - Outside**
 - All weather pitches
 - Covered courts/playing areas
 - Improved access to all areas
 - External changing rooms
 - Improved access to and from the site

It was explained that the Area Board was now being requested to support the proposals and recommendations set out in the report which would then be forwarded to the Council's Cabinet for consideration. Subject to the endorsement of Cabinet, a feasibility study and business plan would need to be developed prior to Cabinet making a final decision.

Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cabinet Member for Communities, Campuses, Area Boards, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding congratulated the Campus Team on the production of such a good and comprehensive set of proposals and he also stated that he was very impressed with the level of consultation that had taken place within the Westbury Area Community. Subject to the approval of the Area Board, he would be pleased to present the report and recommendations to Cabinet which would consider the practicality and feasibility of the proposals. However, he went on to explain that the Council was likely to face significant financial challenges over the next five years and there was no guarantee that Cabinet would be able to providing financial assistance for all proposals. Nevertheless, he would be pleased to support parts of proposals which could be funded.

Mr Gary Davies, a local trader, expressed concern that the provision of a piazza at the entrance to the Library would have a detrimental effect on his business which was situated in close proximity. He stated that this development would

	<p>result in the closure of that section of road to traffic which would cause a major threat to the viability of his business. The meeting expressed some sympathy with these views but considered that Mr Davies would be able to register his concern and express his opposition to that part of the proposal at the planning application stage.</p> <p>After further discussion</p> <p>DECISION</p> <p>To approve the proposals for the provision of a three site campus in Westbury based on the Library, Swimming Pool and Leighton Recreation Centre and to forward the report prepared by the Westbury Campus Community Team, together with its recommendations to Wiltshire Council's Cabinet for consideration.</p>
8.	<p><u>Update on Area Boards and the delivery of the Campus Programme</u></p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cabinet Member for Communities, Campuses, Area Boards, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding to the meeting who was attending to provide an update on Area Boards, the communication around events at Area Boards and an update on campuses.</p> <p>He explained that since the Council had established area boards in 2009 there had been a number of changes which warranted a review of the system.</p> <p>The Council's vision had been to build up stronger and more resilient communities and to provide accessible services which catered for local needs. The campus programme had been developed to help meet these needs and although it had been realised from its inception that this programme would be long term of at least 15 years to achieve, to date Cabinet had given approval for the first seven campuses to be provided at Calne, Corsham, Cricklade, Melksham, Pewsey, Salisbury and Tisbury, together with the first phase of a campus at Malmesbury. It was anticipated that the approved campuses would be delivered hopefully by the end of 2017. However, Cllr Seed stressed that not all campuses would be new purpose built structures and much would depend on local circumstances and needs. He explained that the Council had already approved more than £77 million for the first seven campuses and the first stage of a campus at Malmesbury out of a £120 million budget estimate for the programme but further expenditure would depend upon available funding.</p> <p>In other community areas, it was suggested that the delivery of a campus be reviewed and aligned to other key factors including future development, economic development schemes, army basing and community needs and, where appropriate a community hub model could be implemented. It was therefore anticipated that some communities might bring forward smaller scale community hub proposals, approved by their area board, for consideration by Cabinet on a case by case basis.</p>

	<p>On behalf of the meeting, the Chairman thanked Cllr Seed for his update.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><u>Development of a Renewable Treatment Centre at Northacre, Westbury by Hills UK Ltd</u></p> <p>The Chairman introduced and welcomed Ed Dodd, Monique Hayes and Simon Thomas from Hills UK Ltd who were attending to explain their plans to develop a renewable energy centre on a 6.6-acre plot of land between Hills Waste Solutions' Northacre Resource Recovery Centre and Arla Foods Westbury Dairies.</p> <p>Ed Dodd explained that Hills was a family owned local company which was established in 1900 and employed 400 staff in the area. The company was expert in recycling and the management of waste and a leading manufacturer and operator of advanced thermal treatment technology.</p> <p>He explained that the proposal would be for the construction of a renewable energy centre, supporting regional energy security and which would be capable of generating 22 megawatts of power and thus be able to supply local business. The proposal would mean that there would no longer be a need to transport solid recovered fuel to Europe. The facility would support 80 jobs during construction and 40 permanent jobs once built. The process would lead to the recovery and recycling of metals, glass and aggregates for use in industry and construction and would process 160,000 tonnes of feedstock each year to generate power and heat. Most importantly, the facility would lead to a reduction in landfill requirement. Ed Dodd further explained that the facility would consist of three principal buildings and a substation, the height of the buildings being about 20 metres and the stack would be constructed to a height of 60 metres. It was anticipated that once this process was fully operational, vehicle movements would amount to an additional 1.3 lorries per hour.</p> <p>Cllr Jerry Wickham, the Council's Portfolio Holder for Waste, explained that, whilst the Company was not in partnership with the Council, there were ongoing discussions regarding this proposal which would need to be submitted as a planning application and processed accordingly in due course.</p> <p>The Chairman, on behalf of the meeting, thanked the representatives from Hills UK Ltd. for their presentation.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p><u>Updates on tackling JSA Priorities</u></p> <p>A report by the Community Area Manager was received which provided an update on the implementation of Joint Strategic Assessment priorities on health and wellbeing issues affecting the Westbury Community Area. In particular, she drew attention to progress which was being made in the following areas:-</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of domestic abuse • Making people feel safe in their community • Reaching hard to reach people • Encouraging recycling • Improve cycle and walking routes • Raise awareness of heritage • Improve activity levels leading to better health and mental wellbeing <p>It was noted that the Westbury Area Board had:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Agreed to channel its grant funds to reflect these local priorities. (2) Designated specific councillors as champions to lead on each of the themes. (3) The Community Area Manager had worked with the BA13+ Community Area Partnership on the update of the Community Plan to reflect the findings and prescribed actions. (4) Worked with local agencies and with the Community Area Partnership to progress the identified priorities.
11.	<p><u>Youth Services in the Westbury Area</u></p> <p>The Chairman introduced and welcomed Amy Schuring, the newly appointed Community Youth Officer, who was attending this meeting of the Area Board to explain plans for the future development of Youth Services in the Westbury area.</p> <p>She explained that she had been appointed together with Phoebe Brazier to job share the post and their role would be to implement the new community led model which had been issued last August.</p> <p>She informed the meeting that an initial youth network management meeting had been held a couple of weeks previously at which there had been a positive input from youth and also from community groups. The new youth model (Local Youth Network – LYN) was due to be launched on 8 February 2015 at the Leigh Park Community Centre. Work was required in engaging young people and to find out exactly what sort of activities would be popular in the area. There were plans to widely circulate questionnaire forms amongst the youth and also to reactivate the Youth Advisory Group. The future of the Youth Centre had yet to be determined but it was reassuring to note that all the equipment previously used was being kept safe and available for future use.</p>

	<p>It was noted that updates would be provided at future meetings.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p><u>New Youth Model</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to a report which explained that a Local Youth network (LYN) was a sub-group of the Community Area Board. It would represent a wide range of community stakeholders who would work in partnership to facilitate a range of positive activities for young people across the Community Area. Young people would play a central role in all aspects of the LYN.</p> <p>The LYN would identify local needs, priorities and outcomes and make recommendations to the Area Board on how funding for positive activities for young people should be deployed.</p> <p>It was noted that the LYN may include representatives of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the Community Area Board • Young people • Schools • Town and Parish Councils • Community and voluntary organisations and groups • Police • Health organisations • Other organisations, agencies and individuals that have a genuine interest in promoting the welfare and interests of young people <p>DECISION:</p> <p>(1) To adopt the Leader’s Guidance for Positive Activities and Terms of Reference for Local Youth Networks (LYNs) and commence work on establishing a LYN.</p> <p>(2) To approve a motion that the Community Area Manager, in consultation with the Community Youth Officer and the Chairman and Members of the Westbury Area Board, may authorise expenditure in support of positive activities for young people of up to £1,000 per project between Area Board meetings and that this will be recorded at the next available Area Board.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p><u>Community Area Transport Group</u></p> <p>The Area Board received a report by the Community Area Manager together with the minutes of the Community Area Transport Group dated 21 November 2014.</p> <p>Decision:</p> <p>(1) To allocate £1600 for changes to be made to the white lines at</p>

	<p>Hawkeridge junction.</p> <p>(2) To allocate £1000 for a 7.5 tonne weight restriction to be placed on Brook Lane, Westbury.</p>
14.	<p><u>Air Quality Group</u></p> <p>The notes of the Air Quality Group meeting held on 21 November 2014 were received and noted.</p>
15.	<p><u>Community Area Grants</u></p> <p>Consideration was given to a report by the Community Area Manager in which councillors were asked to consider applications for funding from the 2014/15 Area Board Grants Budget. She then explained each application in turn.</p> <p>(a) Leigh Park Community Centre</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>To approve a grant of £618 towards the purchase of a defibrillator.</p> <p>Reason</p> <p>This application meets the grants criteria for 2014/15.</p> <p>(b) Edington Parish Council</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>To approve a grant of £2,262 towards the purchase of play equipment.</p> <p>Reason</p> <p>This application meets the criteria for 2014/15.</p> <p>(c) Westbury Family History Society</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>To approve a grant of £320 towards the purchase of a printer, scanner and hard drive.</p> <p>Reason</p> <p>This application meets the criteria for 2014/15.</p>

	<p>(d) Grassacres Day Centre, Westbury – Led by Cllr Russell Hawker</p> <p>Decision</p> <p>To approve a grant of £4,380 towards the cost of upgrading the floor and kitchen for set up of leg Clinic for older people.</p> <p>Reason</p> <p>This application meets the criteria for 2014/15.</p>
16.	<p><u>Future Meeting Dates</u></p> <p>It was noted that the next meeting of the Westbury Area Board would be held on Thursday 5 February 2015 at The Laverton, Bratton Road, Westbury, BA13 3EN.</p>

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Crime and Community Safety Briefing Paper Westbury Community Area Board December 2014



1. Neighbourhood Policing

Town Team:

Pc Gavin Hucks
PCSO Neil Turnbull
PCSO Matoyizi Katsande

Rural Team:

Pc Darren Foulger
PCSO Vacant
PCSO Caroline Wright

2. NPTs - Current Priorities & Consultation Opportunities:

Up-to-date details about Neighbourhood Policing Teams including team membership, current priorities and forthcoming community consultation events can be found on our Wiltshire Police Website.

□ Visit the new and improved website at: www.wiltshire.police.uk

3. Performance and Other Local Issues

PCSO Lukas Breedt is retiring which will lead us with a vacancy on the rural team

On December the 5th Wiltshire Police Specials were again involved in a Rural Crime operation, this was the same evening as the tragic triple fatal that happened in the Westbury Trading Estate and the officers were deployed to assist and then provide high visibility patrols from 2300hrs until 0400.

Rural Crime Operations are planned for the 18th December lead by Pc Jeff Rice a rural crime officer based out of Warminster Police Station

Current issues remain Non Dwelling burglaries and Criminal Damage. The property that is stolen is often petrol chain saws and strimmer and also Quad Bikes and off road motorcycles. Generally rural locations from out buildings. For Criminal damage it is often parked vehicles that are targeted. I have attached to the end of this report the information relating to Criminal damage for the past 60 days for Westbury and it totals 18 offences.

EG Westbury NPT	Crime				Detections*	
	12 Months to November 2013	12 Months to November 2014	Volume Change	% Change	12 Months to November 2013	12 Months to November 2014
Victim Based Crime	651	655	+4	🟡 +0.6%	19%	15%
Domestic Burglary	37	35	-2	🟢 -5.4%	27%	11%
Non Domestic Burglary	48	57	+9	🔴 +18.8%	0%	5%
Vehicle Crime	81	66	-15	🟢 -18.5%	4%	12%
Criminal Damage & Arson	145	163	+18	🔴 +12.4%	12%	7%
Violence Against The Person	159	170	+11	🟡 +6.9%	40%	30%
ASB Incidents	616	554	-62	🟢 -10.1%		

* Detections include both Sanction Detections and Local Resolutions

Alan Webb

Westbury Sector Inspector.

December 2014

BRATTON, WESTBURY, Known suspect has collected some radiators from a property and has damaged the copper piping in the property by unknown means.

EDEN VALE ROAD, WESTBURY, Unknown person's have kicked in 4 of ips fence panels. Ip was woken by noise and went out and gave chase but did not catch up with then.

- MEADOW CLOSE, WESTBURY, Unknown suspect has used an unknown weapon to slash the rear passenger side tyre of the IPs vehicle.

BRABANT WAY, WESTBURY, Unknown suspect(s) have thrown a large number of eggs at IPs dwelling and vehicles. IP has since discovered damage to the paintwork on one of her vehicles caused by the eggs.

BRABANT WAY, WESTBURY, unknown suspect used a sharp implement to scratch the IPs vehicle .

KENDRICK CLOSE, WESTBURY, Unknown suspect has caused damage to Ip's car using a sharp object.

RAILWAY CLOSE, WESTBURY, Unknown suspect(s) have used unknown means to ' key ' IP's vehicle on D/S from door mirror along the door with 3 deep scratches.

EMMS LANE, BRATTON, WESTBURY, Unknown suspects have driven vehicle through farmer's field, causing substantial amount of damage to perimeter fence and newly planted winter corn.

ASH GROVE, WESTBURY, Known male has kicked off and caused damage to a door.

CHESTNUT CORNER, BRATTON, WESTBURY, Overnight/during the late afternoon UNKNOWN person/s have put super glue in IP's front door lock damaging it. The lock has to be replaced. IP believes that they know who the suspect is due to ongoing problems with them.

CASTLE VIEW, WESTBURY, unknown have approached Parked Unattended vehicle In Street. Suspect(s) have used Sharp Pointed Implement to Gouge/ Scratch Paintwork on Offside Door and Bonnet. Suspect has then bent over and Broken Wiper Blade prior to making off

WARMINSTER ROAD, WESTBURY, Unknown suspect has bent a stanchion, erected to prevent unauthorised parking on private land, to allow him to park his van on the land which is frequently unoccupied.

SYCAMORE GROVE, WESTBURY,) Named suspect has smashed window of premises following argument

CONNEMARA CLOSE, WESTBURY LEIGH, WESTBURY, Unknown suspect(s) have use a sharp object to key passenger side of vehicle from rear to front.

SAXON CLOSE, WESTBURY, unknown suspects have scratched both sides of the IPs vehicle with an unknown object.

SPRINGFIELD ROAD, WESTBURY, Unknown suspect(s) have broken the drivers side wing off by unknown means, leaving the wing mirror hanging by the wires.

MARKET PLACE, WESTBURY, Unknown suspect has caused damage to the light fitting to the outside of the occurrence address.

MARISTOW STREET, WESTBURY Unknown suspect has caused damage to the IPs offside wing mirror by unknown means causing it to come off completely, costing £230 to replace.

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**Wiltshire
Fire & Rescue
Service**

Briefing report for Westbury Area Board



Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service has grouped together neighbouring fire stations into station hubs, to work more effectively and efficiently, supporting each other to improve the service we provide.

Responding to incidents:

Your Area Board's / Locality's communities immediate emergency response will be provided by staff at these stations and where necessary additional support from staff and specialist equipment from other stations.

Prevention work:

Staff from other departments also provide the community with specialist services giving fire safety and road safety advice and interventions such as talks and visits.

Protection work:

Specialist staff provide expert knowledge, give advice and undertake enforcement action working very closely with the planning authorities to keep communities safe from fire.

In an **emergency dial 999**, for other non urgent matters you can either visit our website: www.wiltfire.gov.uk or contact the following people:

	<u>Manager / Department</u>	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>email</u>
Operational matters	Station Manager – Andy GREEN Trowbridge, Bradford-on_Avon, Westbury Station Hub		andy.green@wiltfire.gov.uk
Partnership and community engagement issues	Michael Franklin (Wiltshire Council Area)	07919 306037	mike.franklin@wiltfire.gov.uk
Home fire safety visits and for talks and visits	Community safety department	0800 389 7849	www.wiltfire.gov.uk and then complete the on line request

Combination with Dorset approved by Fire Authority

At a special meeting of Wiltshire and Swindon Combined Fire Authority on 11 November, members voted unanimously in favour of combining with neighbouring Dorset. Dorset Fire Authority had already unanimously agreed to the move at a meeting held in Dorchester on 4 November.

A 13 week public consultation showed an overwhelming preference from residents, businesses and partners across both counties for combination, not just for financial reasons but also for efficiency and resilience.

Combination with Dorset was also the strong recommendation of Chief Fire Officer Simon Routh-Jones, as professional advisor to the Fire Authority, as it would enable the organisation to maintain a safe, strong and sustainable Fire & Rescue Service that sits in the heart of local communities.

Support for combination was subject to assurance in writing from the Department of Communities and Local Government for equalisation of the fire precept element of the council tax – thus ensuring that residents in Wiltshire, Swindon, Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole will all pay the same. Work will now start to develop a Combination Order, which will need to be laid before Parliament.

Local News from Station Manager GREEN

Crews from Westbury fire station have attended 54 calls during the months of September, October and November.

During September, crews supported staff from other stations at incidents. They were one of six pumps and several support appliances that attended a house fire in Market Lavington. In mid-September responded to 11 flooding incidents in 5 hours in the Melksham/Hilperton/Corsham area as a result of extremely heavy rainfall.

The station held a very well attended open day. This enabled crews to demonstrate their skills with some exciting drills. Community Safety was a big part of the day with staff available to help with any safety related issues raised by those visiting. We also raised awareness of the need for new trainees with a number of people having the chance to try out some of our equipment.

In October local crews attended an 8 pump fire at the APETITO factory in Trowbridge and a further 8 pump fire at a farm in Rowde.

In November crews attended a house fires in Trowbridge; Devizes and Westbury. The crews also took the Light Off Road Pumping vehicle from the station and attended a canal boat fire in Hilperton. This resulted in a fatality. The 'light pump' is a small off road vehicle that is able to provide a first aid firefighting capability in areas that are difficult to access while more resources are transported to the scene of operations.

A number of minor road traffic collisions, chimney fires and false alarms have also been attended.

Fire Safety Messages

Christmas Safety:

Don't let fire become an unwelcome guest this Christmas. Brightly wrapped presents under the Christmas tree, dazzling decorations and feasting with our nearest and dearest are all well-loved trappings of the festive season. But as Fire Kills figures show a peak in the number of accidental fire deaths and injuries over the festive period, it's clear that without care some of our favorite Christmas trimmings have the potential to leave festive celebrations in ruin. Cooking, drinking and faulty or flammable decorations are among the biggest festive fire risks.

Unattended cooking is one of the biggest causes of accidental house fires through the year, and the distractions of a crowded house at Christmas can often result in cooking being left unattended. The added influence of alcohol means that it's even more important to stay alert while preparing the turkey dinner.

Also while no Christmas party would be complete without a few decorations, dry Christmas trees, flammable decorations and wrapping paper can all act as extra fuel for a fire sparked by overheated sockets, faulty fairy lights or unattended candles.

Warning given over portable heater safety

Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service is supporting a national campaign by Fire Kills and Electrical Safety First to highlight the potential dangers of portable heaters.

Evidence from across the country shows that portable heaters pose a real fire risk if not used properly, with vulnerable, elderly people most in danger. We would urge anyone wanting to warm their home in this way to take particular care of the type of heater used and to follow our advice on staying safe.”

Top tips include:

- Never leave portable heaters unattended or keep them on when you go to sleep.
- Ensure that heaters are positioned well away from anything that could knock them over.
- Keep heaters at least a metre away from combustible materials, such as curtains, soft furnishings or paper.
- Never buy second-hand halogen heaters.
- Never power a halogen heater from an extension lead, as these can easily be overloaded and cause a fire.
- Regularly inspect your heaters and don't use anything that appears to have been damaged.
- Make sure you have working smoke alarms and test them regularly.

Some households will qualify for a free home fire safety check from Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service. To find out more, call 0800 389 7849 or visit www.wiltshire.gov.uk

- Electrical Safety First is a charity dedicated to reducing deaths, injury and damage caused by electricity. For more information, visit www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk

