

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

Item 14 – Senior Leadership Structure

From Chris Caswill

To Councillor Philip Whitehead, Leader of the Council

Question (20-01)

Given that the Council has recognised the Climate Emergency, and the seriousness of the crisis we face, why do none of the officers listed in the Senior Leadership Structure have any identified responsibilities for prioritising and addressing the climate emergency in Wiltshire?

Response

The structure chart circulated outlines roles with designated statutory responsibilities and Council are being asked to approve where changes to the designation are now proposed. The responsibility for the Climate Emergency is not a statutory responsibility but is one the Council are committed to. We are currently taking steps to recruit a Head of Carbon Reduction and this role will report to the Director of Economic Development & Planning. The Head of Carbon Reduction will lead the Council's approach to meeting the challenges of transitioning to carbon neutrality.

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

Item 8 – Wiltshire Council Financial Plan Update 2020/21

From Harriet James (Wiltshire Gasification Action Group)

To Councillors Richard Clewer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Housing, Climate Change and Military-Civilian Integration and Toby Sturgis, Spatial Planning, Development Management and Investment

Question (20-02)

The question relates to para. 86 (climate change implications) of Wiltshire Council's Financial Plan Update 2020/21 which is on the agenda

In 2018 Wiltshire Council granted planning permission for a waste gasification plant in Westbury. Northacre Renewable Energy's planning application states that the facility would emit 31.79 tonnes of gross carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) an hour. This would amount to more than 4.5 million tonnes of gross CO₂e over the 20-year life of the plant.

- 1) How has the potential climate change impact of these carbon emissions been assessed as part of Wiltshire Council's Carbon Reduction Plan and have the Council independently verified Northacre Renewable Energy's figures?
- 2) What percentage of Wiltshire county's total annual gross CO₂e emissions would be emitted by the gasification plant?

The Westbury Gasification Action Group ask that Wiltshire Council redetermine the viability of outsourcing Wiltshire's waste to the gasification plant in light of its climate change implications.

Response

A verbal response was provided at the meeting

- 1) The council has committed to producing a carbon reduction plan by the end of 2020. As the ATT (Advanced Thermal Treatment) facility has not yet been built any emissions do not feature in the carbon baseline for the county. This would be adjusted at the time the plant is constructed.
The 2019 planning permission for the ATT facility is subject to a condition requiring the applicant to demonstrate that it will result in an overall reduction in carbon emissions. The condition further requires the facility to thereafter be operated using the technology referred to in the demonstration, and “.... continue to achieve a reduction in carbon emissions”. The condition was

imposed to achieve consistency with another ATT facility allowed by a Planning Inspector following an appeal in Swindon.

Prior to the planning permission being granted, and notwithstanding the condition referred to above, the applicant was requested to provide data relating to CO₂ emissions in both 'with' and 'without' ATT scenarios. Referring to the Sustainable Energy Strategy (SES) for the earlier planning application, in the 'with' scenario the applicant calculated emission of CO₂ of 31.79 tonnes/hr. In the 'without' scenario the applicant calculated emission of CO₂ of 48.6 tonnes/hr, (calculations were undertaken in accordance with ISO14064-1). The 'headline' figures in these calculations are as follows –

'With' scenario –

- +31.79 tonnes/hour direct CO₂ emissions from the facility

CO₂ savings due to the facility ('Without' scenario) –

- -36.19 tonnes/hour CO₂ landfill gas avoidance through processing at the facility
- -1.97 tonnes/hour CO₂ from metal recyclates recovered, thus avoiding replacement via primary smelting
- -10.22 tonnes/hour CO₂ through grid electricity displacement
- -0.22 tonnes / hour CO₂ through reduction in HGV movements

TOTAL = -16.82 tonnes / hour CO₂ (i.e. negative CO₂)

Which equates to:

-126,133 tonnes / year CO₂
-2,522,653 tonnes / 20 year lifetime CO₂

[The CO₂ saving figures do not take account of the increased efficiencies of the final approved ATT facility, and so the SES sells itself slightly short in terms of the savings this facility will actually make].

The condition referred to above effectively requires the verification / confirmation of the SES calculations for the approved ATT facility.

- 2) The percentage would be calculated dependent on the baseline at the time the plant is built and would be net of any carbon savings that arise as a consequence of its construction.

The council does not have a contract to deliver waste to the ATT plant. If the plant is built and successfully commissioned the council would deliver the solid recovered fuel produced from the mechanical biological treatment plant on the neighbouring site to the ATT.

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

From Vicky Moore

To Councillor Richard Clewer, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Housing, Climate Change and Military-Civilian Integration.

Question (20-03)

A year ago today Wiltshire Council declared a Climate Emergency and committed to an ambitious target of reaching carbon neutrality by 2030. This was welcome news to many environmental groups and individuals but to date there has been little in the way of published progress reports to show the Councils action on this urgent matter.

Other councils such as Bristol City Council have now completed a gap analysis to meet their target. A gap analysis looks at the baseline carbon emissions of an area, considering them by sector, such as energy, transport and so on. Then it looks at the predicted level of carbon emissions in 2030 if no action is taken other than what is already planned. It calculates the gap between the existing trajectory and what is required in order to reach carbon neutrality.

This information is used to work out what action needs to be taken, looking again at each sector in turn. It looks at tangible, practical elements, for example in the case of energy, how many new renewable energy systems will be required, how many people will need to be employed to install them. This then allows you to consider questions such as how much of the workforce will need to be re-trained, how long will this take, etc. When you start thinking about all these elements, ten years is a very short time frame so huge steps need to be taken immediately for us to get anywhere close to the 2030 requirement! Failure to do this does not bear thinking about.

Bristol City Council have used their gap analysis to create a Climate Emergency Action Plan and are now putting it into place.

Has Wiltshire Council completed a gap analysis to meet their target of zero carbon by 2030? If this has been completed, when will the report be published? If not, can you confirm when this essential work will be undertaken? Because not doing this will almost certainly lead to insufficient action

Response

A verbal response was provided at the meeting

Full Council considered a progress report at its meeting held on 26 November 2019
https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s171195/Update_Report.pdf

As set out in the report, the council has done some initial work on its carbon baseline. Data comes from SCATTER which is a very urban centric tool and we are struggling to translate that into detailed emissions for a rural county. We are not waiting on a baseline to start work and have progressed with investments in changing our street lighting to LED lights and plans to improve the energy efficiency of council buildings and to install renewable energy where possible. We are also looking at sites for solar generation on park and ride sites.

The council has identified that the sub-sectors of on-road transport and residential buildings are the sources of the highest levels of emissions within the county. Work has already commenced on the development of the council's fourth Local Transport Plan and the review of the Local Plan, both of which will incorporate policies in support of carbon reduction.

The budget proposals to be considered at Full Council include a growth item of £350,000 for the recruitment of specialists to new roles at the council and to procure work on, amongst other issues, ensuring our baseline and gap analysis are robust.

The council is currently advertising for a new Head of Carbon Reduction who will lead on this work for the council.

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

From Russell Hughes

To Councillor Bridget Wayman- Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste.

Question (20-04)

How much recycled plastic (from Wiltshire) is being put into landfill, and what are the environmental and monetary costs of this?

Response

A verbal response was provided at the meeting

Very little, if any, of the plastics that we collect for recycling either through the kerbside recycling service, or via the council's network of ten household recycling centres, is sent to landfill for disposal and Wiltshire Council does not incur any direct costs associated with this.

Wiltshire Council collects plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays at the kerbside, along with cardboard and drinks and food cartons. This mixed recyclate is currently delivered to a material recycling facility at Porte Marsh Industrial Estate, Calne. The facility is operated by Hills Waste Solutions Ltd, and also receives plastic bottles collected separately from mixed plastics at the Lower Compton and Purton household recycling centres. These two household recycling centres are also operated by Hills under contract to the council.

The mix of kerbside collected materials from the blue-lidded bins is sorted at the Porte Marsh site using a combination of optical separators and compressed air jets, as well as manual sorting by picking staff. The plant is designed to separate the input materials into recyclable product types, with all "target" materials being separated and baled, before being transported to reprocessors, most of whom are in the UK. A proportion of rejected "non-target" waste materials are separated from the input material as part of this sorting process. This rejected material will include non-target items such as black plastic food trays, plastic films, carrier bags, alongside all manner of general waste items that should not have been placed in the blue-lidded bins for recycling. This rejected material is sent to the Lakeside Energy from Waste facility in Slough and is therefore used for energy recovery rather than landfill. Between April 2019 and January 2020, almost 11,000 tonnes of materials have been received, with 2,765 tonnes (25%) being rejected as being non-target material, and therefore material that we would be unable to recycle.

Mixed plastics are also collected from the Hills' operated household recycling centres at Lower Compton and Purton and are delivered to their Lower Compton materials recycling facility where they are bulked up and sent for further reprocessing. Whilst there is a small amount of reject material reported from the Lower Compton facility,

this would comprise non-target materials, i.e. general waste. This rejected “non-target” material is sent to the adjoining landfill facility for disposal. The Lower Compton facility received 15,449 tonnes of material for recycling between April 2019 and January 2020. Only 189 tonnes (1.2%) of this was mixed plastics from the two Hills household recycling centres. The total amount of material rejected from the material received by the facility and landfilled was 201 tonnes (1.3%). The majority of this reject tonnage comprises non-recyclable waste, and whilst it is not possible to isolate how much of this reject tonnage might include forms of plastic, it is considered to be very low indeed. The contractor is responsible for the costs of disposing of reject materials.

Given that plastic is inherently lightweight compared with the other materials managed at this facility, and the fact that non-target materials are removed from the items being sorted for recycling, it is unlikely that the weight of plastic that might be consigned to landfill as part of the rejected material would be more than 0.5 tonne between April 2019 and January 2020. At the current landfill tax rate this would see the contractor due to pay £45.68 in landfill tax.

Mixed plastics collected from the eight council-owned household recycling centres, operated under contract by FCC Environment, are delivered to Grist Environmental in Devizes where the material is shredded and baled before being sent on for further reprocessing. No reject materials from this initial process are reported to the council, with the product sold on as a lower value mixed grade. Recipient reprocessors would undertake further washing and polymer separation, before the plastic is flaked or granulated to enable it to be used as a secondary raw material in the production of new items. 1,022 tonnes of mixed plastics were collected at the eight council-owned household recycling centres between April 2019 and January 2020.

The council will be improving its kerbside recycling service from March this year, making it easier for residents to recycle by enabling them to place more materials in their blue-lidded bins, including many that are currently collected using the black box. After the changes are implemented only glass will continue to be collected using the black box, and the following materials will be collected using the blue-lidded bin:

- Plastic bottles, pots, tubs and trays
- Paper and cardboard, including shredded paper
- Drinks cans, food tins, aerosols and aluminium foil
- Food and drinks cartons

Hills have constructed a new material recycling facility at their Sands Farm in Calne. This new highly automated facility will be able to better separate the new mix of materials to be collected for recycling at the kerbside after the service changes and will ensure the necessary material quality is achieved so that the different material streams can be sold on for reprocessing.

The new collection service will be supported by a communications campaign aimed at informing service users of the materials that should be placed into their recycling bins, and reminding them of the materials that we are unable to collect for recycling.

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

From Russell Hughes

To Councillor Ian Blair-Pilling- Cabinet Member for IT, Digitalisation and Operational Assets

Question (20-05)

What energy supplier is the council using, and has it considered using green energy suppliers?

Response

A verbal response was provided at the meeting

The council's energy supply contract is made with a Public Sector Energy broker, West Mercia Energy (WME), who in turn have the contract with Total Gas and Power for all the council's corporate gas and electric supplies. WME carry out the tender process for an energy supplier for all of the organisations on their books and all of the suppliers in the market, including green energy suppliers, are able to bid for the opportunity.

From April 2020 the council is moving onto a green energy tariff for all electricity supplies.

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

From Jo Ripley

To Councillor Ian Blair-Pilling- Cabinet Member for IT, Digitalisation and Operational Assets

Question (20-06)

Will Wiltshire Council ensure that, when they make the change to a green energy provider, that it is truly green? I.e. not such as Haven Power, whose energy comes from Drax Power Station, the world's biggest burner of wood for electricity (with much of the wood coming from clear-felling of biodiverse wetland forests in the US) and the UK's single largest carbon emitter.

Response

A verbal response was provided at the meeting

The council will be moving to a green tariff within its current contract with West Mercia Energy and provided by Total Gas and Power from 1st April 2020.

This 'Pure Green' tariff comes from 100% renewable sources (wind, solar, hydro/wave).

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

Item 8 – Medium Term Financial Strategy

From Bill Jarvis

To Councillor Simon Jacobs- Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement

Question (20-07)

Your Medium Term Finance Strategy is required to look forward 4 years prudently at likely income and expenditure. At present in your MTFS, Section 6, you've made a £350k allowance for the "Climate Change Team" in 2020-21. Apparently, this is for staff.

As it's only for one year, I assume that this staff allowance is for consultancy. The average rate for this type of consultancy is probably between £500 and £750 per day. This equates to a team of, at maximum, 2 people, completely inadequate to develop the solutions needed. Other Councils have made significantly more and bigger teams available, up to £1m and 10 staff in some instances.

Also, you've only budgeted for one year. Are you assuming that all work on climate change will cease at the end of this financial year? I'm impressed with your optimism.

Surely your Section 151 Officer has to take a different view?

A prudent approach, building up expenditure over the next 4 years to a reasonable estimate of requirements, would avoid the need for a sudden jump. This could be part funded from, say, removing commitments to new highway schemes which only add to our carbon problems.

The estimate could be adjusted as plans develop to align with the likely costs of delivering the many elements for a carbon neutral and environmentally positive county. Underspend in the early years could be added to reserves, drawn when needed. Again, following other Councils lead.

Carbon and environmental mitigation will reduce costs and create income. Receipts from such could be ongoing well past the need for capital expenditure. A short term investment with long term income, perfectly in line with local government accounting needs.

Please can you therefore:

- i) Confirm that you will increase the Climate Team staff allowance to at least 10 people and that this staff commitment will carry forward for at least the next 5 years?
- ii) Confirm that you will reconsider the capital allowances and make prudent provision in your MTFS to deliver the carbon mitigation measures that will properly address your 2019 commitment?

Response to Qs 20-07 and 20-08

A verbal response was provided at the meeting

The budget includes £0.35m for on-going growth in staff costs for a new climate change team. It is not one off. – it is £1.75 over five years. It is for permanent staff members not consultants.

The Head of Service post has already been advertised and will be responsible for developing a comprehensive carbon reduction strategy whilst promoting climate change decisions. They will be working alongside communities, groups and individuals as well as engaging with local businesses to explore opportunities afforded by carbon reduction and to promote the council's policies, plans and strategies in climate change. This will inform our future approach and needs including numbers of staff and future years budget proposals

The council has acknowledged a climate emergency and is seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030 it already delivers carbon mitigation measures. Investment required for capital projects will be considered on a case by case basis, continuing the work that the council has undertaken to date. This includes the £12m to convert our street lighting to LED lights and the proposals for £5.2m investment in energy efficiency measures and renewable energy and the £3.5m for canopy based solar panels which were agreed by full Council at its meeting on 26 November.

Part of our ongoing commitment to the carbon reduction work will be reviewing what else we can do across both capital and revenue. However, for there to be significant investment in one area of activity, then there will have to be less investment in another. The need for ongoing investment in carbon reduction measures in the coming four years will be taken forward by the new carbon reduction team. However, there is not an infinite resource and it is up to Members as part of our financial strategy where resources are spent – not the council's s151 officer.

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

Item 8 – Medium Term Financial Strategy

From Bill Jarvis

To Councillor Simon Jacobs- Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement

Question (20-08)

Are you able to confirm that your Section 151 officer will review the forward forecast, taking into account the need for significant investment in the carbon mitigation measures needed for the county in the coming 4 years?

The response to this question is a verbal response included with the response to question (20-07).

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

Item 12 – Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations

From Andrew Nicolson

To Councillor Toby Sturgis - Cabinet Member Spatial Planning, Development Management and Investment

Question (20-09)

As the Housing Allocations do not include the land that would be unlocked for development by the proposed Chippenham North-East-South Relief Road, why has the Council asked for £75Million from Homes England to build the road?

Response

A verbal response was provided at the meeting.

Land does not have to be allocated for development in the development to be eligible for a development grant, and in the case of the proposed Future Chippenham Access or Distributor road specifically a Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) Grant. The scheme proposed could deliver both transport and housing benefits and as such was deemed worthy of the award of the HIF Grant of £75m. The drawing down and defraying of the HIF Grant will be dependent on securing, the necessary permissions, including planning.