

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**18 June 2024**

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**Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation**

**Question from David Redgewell – South West Transport Network and Rail  
Future Severnside**

**To**

**Cllr Tamara Reay – Cabinet Member for Transport and Assets**

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**Statement**

With submission by Wiltshire Council to the Department for Transport of Wiltshire bus services improvement plan on the 12 June 2024,

**Question (24-31Q)**

What provision is being made in the plan to improve community safety at county bus and coach stations and interchanges, at Chippenham, Devizes bus interchanges, Salisbury coach station, Trowbridge Town centre, Melksham Town centre, Calne, Bradford on Avon, Marlborough, Pewsey and Salisbury City centre, where bus and coach stops are vandalised and Covered in Graffiti.

What provision is being made to clean and maintenance the county bus and coach stations interchanges bus shelters Including key National Express coaches Berry's coaches part of megabus, Scottish City link coaches and Flixbus coaches network stops at Trowbridge, Melksham, Devizes, Swindon, and Salisbury, Warminster, Amesbury, Which not give good impression of welcome to Wiltshire and South west England to tourists to this great county

**Response**

Wiltshire Council is working with partners, including Town and Parish Councils and transport operators, to maintain and improve bus shelters and associated infrastructure as part of our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

New shelters will be introduced as and when Section 106 monies become available, and, or where further BSIP funding becomes available.

**Question (24-32Q)**

In view of the Department for Transport instructions and guidance on working with the police and crime commissioner and Wiltshire police, MOD and British Transport police to keep passengers safe on the public transport Network, what discussion have taken place on a safety public transport service in Wiltshire and Swindon Councils areas, and what if any prosecution have taken place by council and police over criminal damage to the council public transport infrastructure, of bus and coach stations interchanges bus and coach stops and railway stations

## **Response**

Wiltshire Council, through its Enhanced Partnership will establish a programme of consultation with the public during 2024-25 on a number of issues relating to public transport.

As part of that we will be asking residents questions around their perception of safety whilst on and waiting for public transport. All previous consultations on public transport have not highlighted any significant concerns on this subject in Wiltshire.

## **Question (24-33Q)**

What plans do the council have to roll out and improve the Real-time passengers information systems on Bus stop shelters bus and coach station and Railway station throughout the county and in Swindon Borough Council area, and the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority on Swindon bus and coach station to Marlborough, Pewsey, Amesbury Salisbury bus corridor and the Bath spa bus and coach station, Winsley, Bradford on Avon Trowbridge Westbury, Warminster Salisbury, bus corridor, Frome, Warminster, Salisbury bus corridor, Frome, Trowbridge Railway station, Trowbridge Town centre, Melksham and Chippenham Town centre and Railway station and bus and coach stations.

## **Response**

Wiltshire Council invested £640,000 in replacing its existing Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) during 2023-24. Salisbury Station Forecourt improvements are now underway, and this will see new RTPI being installed. We will, during 2024-25 introduce low powered battery RTPI to shelters in Trowbridge and Melksham Market Place.

In 2024-25 £20,000 is available for further RTPI installation. Our approach will be to install RTPI “where passengers will benefit the most”. This will include:

- Locations with high numbers of boardings
- Locations where passengers are likely to interchange between routes/modes
- Locations where RTPI will allow passengers to make informed decision on whether to catch the imminent 'all stops' bus, or wait for the fast/express bus, due a little later
- Locations where travel choices from/to new developments (residential and other) can be influenced from initial occupation, by RTPI.

We also consider applications from town and parish councils, based on their local knowledge and requests from their residents. Usually, these requests are made based on match-funding from Wiltshire’s Local Highway and Footway Improvement Group.

## **Question (24-34Q)**

What discussion are taking place with bus, coach and railway operators, and the Department for Transport over the recruitment of bus and coach Drivers, Cleaners, engineers and supervisors to provide the county and Region bus network, and railway

staff to man the county railway station such as Trowbridge on the metro west railway Network services, provide by First group plc Greater Western trains company limited GWR and Department for Transport and West of England mayoral combined transport Authority and mayor Dan Norris, for £35m between Salisbury, Warminster, Dilton Marsh, Frome some journeys Westbury, Trowbridge, Bradford on Avon, Avoncliffe, Freshford, Bath spa, Oldfield park, Keynsham and Bristol Temple meads station.

## **Response**

Through the Enhanced Partnership with Wiltshire bus operators a regular dialogue is in place to determine the availability of drivers across the network. Whilst the recruitment and retention of drivers remains challenging across the Wiltshire network, it is much improved when compared to say 12 months ago.

Where some services are operating a reduced timetable, discussions are now being had to restore the frequencies to previous levels. Wiltshire Council is not able to comment on staffing levels provided by Network Rail or the train operating companies.

**Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation**

**Question from Cllr Richard Budden, Tisbury Division**

**To**

**Cllr Nick Holder – Cabinet Member for Highways, Street Scene and Flooding**

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**Statement**

You will recall that at the Cabinet meeting in February I raised the topic of the appalling state of roads in the parishes of Donhead St Mary and Donhead St Andrew in my Division (though also more widely in South West Wiltshire) and requested your predecessor as portfolio holder for Highways to provide information on the Council's forecast expenditure on highways maintenance, broken down between Wiltshire's community areas and by road class. At the time I was advised to raise my request again at the Environment Select Committee, which I duly did at the next meeting which was on 20<sup>th</sup> March.

In your reply to me, over a month later, you declined to respond directly to my request except to say that you had "*asked Officers to include indicative scheme costs, treatments and spatial information of scheme locations in the programme in the coming months.*" And you drew attention to a 'defect dashboard' to be shared "*over the forthcoming months at Area Board level*" [my emphasis], neither of which has yet appeared.

We now know (from the Highway Investment Plan 2024/25) that the condition of our roads varies considerably between community areas. In the case of C-class roads (over a third of Wiltshire's total road length) the proportion 'in need of maintenance soon' is well above the national median of 4% in several community areas: in Malmesbury (6.6%), Bradford on Avon and Royal Wootton Bassett & Cricklade (both 6.1%), South West Wiltshire and Chippenham (both 5.6%), Calne (5.5%) and Westbury (5.3%). In the case of unclassified (UC) roads, that make up a further 43% of total road length, the areas that are significantly above the national median are Marlborough (6%) and South West Wiltshire (5.7%).

It is these community area percentages that lift the overall share of Wiltshire's roads 'in need of maintenance soon' to 5%, which is what caused Wiltshire to reach only 275<sup>th</sup> place in the Office of Local Government's ranking of Highways Authorities that led to recent unwelcome publicity.

The lengths in kilometres of these C-class plus UC roads 'in need of maintenance soon', in the areas significantly above the national median are:

	km
South West Wiltshire	23
Malmesbury	17
Chippenham	12
Royal Wootton Bassett & Cricklade	9

Marlborough	7
Calne	5
Bradford on Avon	5
Westbury	3

Residents in these areas are, quite reasonably, keen to understand how it is that the condition of roads in their area has deteriorated so markedly by comparison with those in other areas of the county. It is therefore appropriate not merely to ask about future plans and budgets but to request an analysis of the history of expenditure on highways maintenance, area by area, so as to be able to reassure residents and ourselves that available funds have been targeted where they are most needed.

### **Question (24-35Q)**

Would you not agree with me that residents deserve to be reassured that the funds available for highways maintenance are being spent where they are most needed?

If so, please provide this assurance by setting out Wiltshire's highways maintenance expenditure over, say, the last five years, broken down by community area and by road class, in £ and in £/mile (or £/kilometre) or, if that is not available to hand, a clear timetable for officers to do so.

### **Response**

A previous commitment has been given that an historic breakdown of spend and maintenance activity type by community area and road class would be provided.

This is still an action for officers. However, given the current priority for the future years surfacing works, it is not possible at this stage to provide a definitive timeline as to when this information will be made available.

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**Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation**

**Question from Cllr Ian Thorn, Calne Central Division**

**To**

**Cllr Nick Botterill - Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning**

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**Question (24-36Q)**

Can the Cabinet Member set out how the £1 million of additional funding for the planning service will be spent?

**Response**

The additional funding for the planning service will be spent on strengthening staffing capacity across all areas of the service. This includes additional staff to speed up processing planning applications and dealing with planning enforcement matters as well as additional staff to work on the emerging local plan and the gypsy and traveller plan.

We are using some of this funding to appoint staff to deal with minerals and waste matters and to provide extra support to communities preparing their neighbourhood plans. Staff will be appointed at all levels from graduates through to more experienced principal planning officer posts.