

Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE

Budget speech – 21 February 2017

It is said that great things in business are never done by one person – they're done by a team of people...

That quote was from Steve Jobs the late co-founder and chairman of Apple – one of the most dynamic, successful and innovative companies in the world.

He was right ...

A good team is powerful and strong; particularly when that team shares a vision and goals;

And, it sets out to achieve those goals and above all else - make a difference.

In my view that's what we have here at Wiltshire Council – a great team – made up of elected members, staff and partners.

And, it's a very successful one.

And, not unlike Apple, we are seen as a pioneer in terms of pushing the boundaries and doing things differently in local government.

Four years ago, this council set out its plan for action and delivery based on its vision - agreed in 2009 - to deliver stronger and more resilient communities.

The plan focused on three priority areas that are embedded in everything we do;

Protecting those who are most vulnerable;

Doing all we can to boost the local economy; and,

Working closely with our communities to encourage and enable them to do more for themselves.

This focus has become our success.

Our policies, decisions and annual budget allocations have been aligned to deliver these goals, and in four years - working together - as a team - we have achieved a great deal.

These achievements, which we need to recognise, haven't always been easy.

We have faced challenges as a result of the reduction in funding from central government and the increasing demand for some of our key front line services; particularly adult care and children's safeguarding and waste collection and disposal.

We have learnt to drive an environment that encourages innovation and change as the norm, so that we can overcome these challenges and, wherever possible, maintain the services that really matter and make the difference that's needed.

We are definitely not your average local authority...

We do things differently in Wiltshire Council.

We place people at the heart of all we do and together we take action to do what's right for Wiltshire with the resources we have.

We protect those who are most vulnerable.

Children need to be safe...

In the last 4 years we have invested £3.7 million more into safeguarding.

This included investment into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and work to improve awareness and prevent child sexual exploitation.

Last year an Ofsted-led inspection praised the public services partnership in Wiltshire for its dedication to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and our culture of continuous improvement.

Inspectors said that public service leaders prioritised the protection of children, including those living in homes where domestic abuse occurs.

In a competitive market, we've recruited more than 180 social workers through a targeted and successful two year campaign.

These staff are supporting the increased demand in both children's and adult's social care.

In the last two years we have also recruited 42 new foster carers who are making a positive difference to children's lives.

We currently care for around 450 children and the pressures of high cost placements is continuing, which means further pressure on our budget.

We intend to redirect £3 million to meet this demand and we will continue to reduce caseloads and develop more local placements in the county.

At a time when other local authorities across the country are disinvesting in children's centres and the services they provide - we've invested £3.5 million to continue to deliver these valuable services.

Over the last two years we have seen an increase in the cost of providing services for children with special educational needs and adults with learning disabilities.

This is due to a mix of higher need, complexity of cases, and changes to government policy, especially around the new statutory requirements for the 18-25 year age group, which will also impact on the demand for transport.

We see this as a key priority.

We are investing in these services and working closely with schools and the NHS to ensure that wherever possible costs are prevented and value for money is achieved.

We know we have little choice other than to do things in a different and more innovative way.

We have to manage the significant increase in the complexity and cost of care for the growing number of people as a result of the fact that people are living for longer – which is good news - but it's also a pressure.

Vulnerable adults also need to be safe and supported.

In the last four years we've helped almost 6,500 people to stay independent through our Help to Live at Home scheme.

Working with our partners in health we have made significant improvements to the whole system of care.

In the last 12 months there was a 1% improvement in the percentage of people discharged from hospital to rehabilitation who are still at home after 91 days.

This means that 84.9% of people discharged can remain independent for longer, avoiding costly residential care.

As a result of working with our partners through the Better Care Plan the number of permanent admissions to nursing and residential homes has reduced by 200 admissions in the past 12 months.

This reflects the wishes of older people who want to stay in their own home for as long as possible.

We are proposing an increase in the adult social care budget of £6.8 million so that we can continue to make changes and improvements to our services.

Working closely with the CCG and other health partners we will implement a more effective system.

There is no doubt that the key to reducing these escalating costs and increasing demand lies in early intervention and integration.

Four years ago responsibility for public health transferred from the NHS to Wiltshire Council. In that time £40 million has been spent to deliver improvements in the health and wellbeing of the county's population.

The average life expectancy for both men and women has increased and is now over 80 years.

More than 15,000 local people are now trained as Dementia Friends and we are a Dementia Friendly county, which is a huge accolade to our local communities.

The number of children who are overweight or obese in Wiltshire is reducing thanks to the many local projects and;

Wiltshire's Health and Wellbeing Board won a national award last year for its success in delivering more effective, joined up health and social care services.

Our under 16s have benefited from more than 303,000 free swimming sessions, since this was introduced four years ago, and we've helped 6,000 people to give up smoking in the same period.

Working closely with our area boards we are tackling the issues that are evidenced through the community area Joint Strategic Assessments.

Health and wellbeing funding and decision making is devolved to each local community area to look at how it can take action and make a difference based on its local evidence.

Initiatives across the county are testament to the improvements in people's health and wellbeing.

I'd like to thank the area boards for their work to tackle these health issues and inequalities and for encouraging more people to get active and involved as there is a clear link to the improvement in both their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

We have welcomed 68 refugees to Wiltshire and these families and individuals are settling well into their local communities and making new lives for themselves here.

I am pleased that we have supported these vulnerable people to build new and safer lives and I thank the volunteers who have helped them to integrate in their new communities.

We support the local economy

In the last four years we've helped to regenerate our town centres.

In Trowbridge we enabled the £17 million investment into St Stephen's Place restaurant and cinema complex to be delivered, creating 200 jobs. A new retail offer will open this year providing M&S foods and Toby Carvery.

£3 million has been invested into Salisbury City Centre to improve the Market Place and create a vibrant space for shoppers and visitors.

The redevelopment of the Maltings and Central Car Park has been prioritised by the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership in a bid for £20 million grant from the next round of the Government's Local Growth Deal.

We should hear the outcome of this bid very soon.

The Bath Road and Bridge Centre sites have recently been cleared ready to attract investment and development that will bring further economic benefit to Chippenham.

We helped to secure £16 million of government funding to redevelop Chippenham Railway Station and work on this major redevelopment should start on site this year.

Chippenham has also seen £13 million of funding for major improvements to the A350 which is now complete and a further £1 million will be invested at Junction 17 on the M4 to improve traffic flow and safety.

£6 million has been secured to deliver improvements to the A350 at Yarnbrook.

We supported the successful transformation of RAF Lyneham to become a national Defence College for Technical Training.

In total more than £70 million of Local Growth Funding from central Government and £40 million of European Programme Funding has been allocated to schemes in Wiltshire – this is having a positive impact on the local economy.

We are working with the government on the long awaited A303 improvements at Stonehenge.

The right infrastructure and roads keeps the county accessible and moving and is vital to the local economy.

In the last four years we have spent £84 million maintaining Wiltshire's roads which is substantially higher than pre 2000 expenditure.

Last year more than 4,100 potholes were filled. But, more importantly - through investment we have stopped the deterioration of our roads, and we are now seeing significant improvement in their condition.

We have introduced the Wiltshire App to make it easier for residents to report issues and over 23,000 reports were received in 2016. Of these 6,600 were regarding potholes, which were repaired, where required.

A peer review of highways in 2016 praised the level and quality of the service within the budget available and concluded that our highways service has strong political and officer leadership, with effective local delivery and decision making.

We also know that roads are a key priority for our residents and we plan to continue to invest £21 million this year to maintain Wiltshire's roads.

Wiltshire is a good place to do business.

The Business Location Index in 2015 shows Swindon and Wiltshire in the top 5 business locations in England.

Since 2012, workforce jobs in Wiltshire have increased by 27,900 or 15%.

Since 2013, we have directly worked with businesses to create over a third of these jobs – that's more than 10,000.

We have also safeguarded tens of thousands more jobs; and, we established a pipeline for 11,000 potential new jobs as a result of ongoing work with businesses and investors.

We are extremely fortunate to have very low unemployment in Wiltshire.

In fact the employment rate is now at its highest since 2006.

Overall unemployment is 3.4% compared to the South West at 4.1% and nationally at 4.9%.

The percentage of working age people on job seekers allowance is now only 0.6% - compared to 4% in 2012.

Businesses want to be based in Wiltshire.

Internationally reputed companies such as Dyson is expanding to provide a new research campus and also education facilities to skill the workforce for the future.

Other companies investing in Wiltshire include TJ Morris, Hermann Miller, Apetito, Babcock, Hitachi Capital, and Welton Bibby Baron.

We have also seen the successful growth and expansion of many local companies.

These include Anthony Best Dynamics, Bath ASU, Hill Brush Company, Good Energy and Haydens Bakery.

More recently, after months of negotiation, Boeing announced its plans to relocate to Boscombe working with QinetiQ.

This will have a hugely positive impact on southern Wiltshire - creating 1,500 high value engineering jobs which will be a huge opportunity; particularly for young people in the county.

We can, and do, help businesses to relocate and grow.

Take Chippenham based Good Energy that needed to expand and find new premises in Chippenham.

Given the nature of their business their preference was to locate close to public transport.

Rather than lose this growing business from Wiltshire - we worked with them.

The company now occupies the top floor of our Monkton Park offices.

I visited last week and met the chief executive and several staff who told me how much they like the open plan, modern and fit for purpose space.

Those are jobs that could have been lost from Wiltshire had we not taken action.

And, we benefit too...

We know that by maximising the space we have in our main hubs and campuses – through lease agreements with commercial companies like Good Energy, our partners; such as the police, fire and rescue and health - we can generate income, protect jobs and key frontline public services.

This approach - to make the most of the public estate - has been recognised by the Cabinet Office.

The One Wiltshire Estate partnership was recently presented with an award for its outstanding collaborative work to share resources and premises and drive efficiencies.

In today's modern world, businesses don't just want offices, they want state of the art technological infrastructure to go with it.

Wiltshire Online, the partnership between Wiltshire Council, BT and the Government's Broadband Delivery UK programme, has already made fibre broadband available to more than 83,000 homes and businesses across the county, since it began in 2013 through an investment of almost £33 million.

More than a third of those able to access the new technology as a result of the Wiltshire Online roll-out have already opted for an upgrade.

Having fibre broadband means more people can now benefit from the right technology in a fast paced world. We are working hard towards achieving 100 percent coverage across Wiltshire.

These households and businesses would not have this access to broadband without an investment of £16 million from Wiltshire Council.

Employers also need a skilled workforce.

We recognise this and want businesses to be able to recruit and retain the skills they need to thrive and grow.

We work hard to give our young people the skills that businesses need. Last year alone we helped 6,500 young people become apprentices – this was the second highest rate of growth in the country.

Currently, 92.7% of Wiltshire's 16 and 17 year olds are participating in education and training, which compares favourably against the national figure of 91.4%.

Our schools consistently achieve well and are the best in the south west.

I'm delighted that in Ofsted's most recent annual report it states that over 93% of our children are in good or outstanding schools.

And, 99% of Wiltshire secondary students are now in such schools with this figure rising by 6% since 2015.

Two thirds (66%) of Wiltshire students achieved A*-C in both English and maths GCSEs – nationally the figure was 59%.

More than 20% achieve A level grades of AAB or better and more than 10% of all students achieve three or more As in their exams.

The investment into Wiltshire College and the new University Technical College in Salisbury provides new learning opportunities for young people.

In addition, Wiltshire College at Lackham and Salisbury College have been prioritised by the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership for a grant from the Government's Local Growth Deal.

We work with communities and we protect and enhance the environment

Our Core Strategy was approved last year and sets out land use and the growth in houses and business across Wiltshire up to 2026.

Last year 2,118 new homes were built in Wiltshire including 635 affordable homes.

A New Housing Build Programme will deliver a further 226 new affordable homes including 157 extra care apartments as a result of Right to Buy receipts and Commuted Sums over a 4 year period from 2015 to 2019.

These homes are critical to help to try and meet the demand for start-up homes and young people trying to get their foot on the housing ladder – and, for accommodation for our growing older population that meets their needs.

Wiltshire's landscape is changing

By 2020 this county will be home to largest number of Army personnel in the country.

Wiltshire is unique – it is a military county.

Working with the MoD we will ensure a successful army basing programme is delivered.

This is a £1 billion investment that will provide 900 additional family houses, significant new development within MoD camps across Salisbury Plain, an additional 1,125 school places, highway improvements and community facilities.

The key to success isn't just the infrastructure required – it's the integration of military and civilian communities. Over the next two years 4,000 service personnel and their families will be rebased in our county.

A recent LGA Peer review commended this work stating the council's management of the Army Basing Programme as exemplary, and this work will be showcased at this year's LGA conference.

The strong leadership provided by Wiltshire Council, the extensive stakeholder consultation and the appointment of a competent team to manage the programme was recognised by the peer reviewers.

Our communities are getting stronger.

No libraries in Wiltshire have closed in the last four years.

In fact, we have 31 libraries plus 3 mobiles, that are thriving thanks in part to the 867 – yes I did say 867 – volunteers, that we have right now supporting the delivery of this frontline service.

Wiltshire is well supported by its volunteers and its active community groups.

We should not underestimate this wealth of support and I would like extend my thanks, on behalf of Wiltshire Council, to all our volunteers and unsung heroes.

We've awarded more than £8 million to support 2,645 community projects through our 18 community area boards over the last four years.

We've also invested more than £28 million in state of the art community facilities.

These include Springfield Community Campus in Corsham, Five Rivers Health and Wellbeing Centre in Salisbury, the Nadder Centre in Tisbury, and in Melksham the development of Oakfield's – home to the town's football and rugby clubs.

If you haven't seen this new facility in Melksham, I would urge you to visit and view the excellent conference level facilities.

More than 500 young people currently play at the new facility and I'm sure the football and rugby clubs will have no problem attracting more young people to sign up, and grow them into top players for the future.

There are also new community hubs in Calne and Malmesbury which are seeing a huge increase in the number of volunteers supporting and - in the case of Malmesbury - running the hub - and they are an extremely popular place for community events, activities and gatherings.

All the new centres are well attended - Five Rivers Health and Wellbeing in Salisbury has more than 2,500 people through its doors every day.

The investment has provided opportunities for all ages to get more active, more involved and as a result we have seen community spirit and support grow.

We plan to roll out the community hub model in Devizes, Royal Wootton Bassett, Tidworth and Westbury this year, as well starting work on new state of the art health and wellbeing centres in Pewsey and Melksham.

Working with local business we've been able to support our rising sports stars through the Funding Future Olympians and Paralympians Foundation. More than 52 grants have been awarded since this was established four years ago.

Wiltshire takes huge pride in following their journey and I was delighted that Springfield Community Campus has renamed its pool – only last week at the official opening – as the Stephanie Millward Swimming Pool in recognition of her Gold Paralympic medals and achievements in swimming.

Wiltshire is a beautiful county and we're all working hard to keep it that way.

Working with the area boards and our local town and parish councils, communities across the county came out in force to Clean for the Queen in March last year.

More than 1,500 volunteers of all ages, took part in more than 80 litter picks.

Almost 2,000 bags of rubbish were collected weighing 20 metric tonnes, which was the second largest litter collection outside of London on that weekend event.

This year, I am delighted that many community groups have already signed up to take part in the Great British Spring Clean.

Over the last four years we have reduced the amount of waste going to landfill by almost 23%.

This has been achieved through a combination of reducing, recycling and generating energy from waste.

This year we will work with community area boards to encourage households to throw away less waste and increase re-use and recycling.

Our beautiful county also needs a serious campaign to educate people not to litter.

We need to encourage everybody to respect our county and keep it clean.

We currently spend £2.5 million on picking up litter – this money could be better allocated into vital services.

Wiltshire does community well.

All our area boards should be proud of what they have achieved.

More decision making and funding is now devolved at local area level.

In addition to the funding grants and Highways (CATG) and youth activities, there is also funding for older people's champions and health and wellbeing projects.

Community areas are developing more locally owned and innovative delivery of services such as youth activities.

The new approach has seen more than 630 local projects to deliver activities and more than 34,000 young people accessing these activities across the county. This compares to 4,500 young people participating under the previous arrangements.

Working collaboratively and innovatively with town and parish councils and local communities we are devolving services that are best delivered locally.

This year marked the first major devolvement of services to Salisbury City Council and devolution will continue as a key priority in the future.

So what will we focus on going forward?

How do we plan to build on the success and investment of the past four years?

I would hope that the next council continues to focus on the big strategic issues that will make the most impact and difference to the lives of people in Wiltshire.

There is a clear need to integrate health and social care – to provide one service – to deliver greater efficiencies and better care to those who need it most.

We have no choice if we are to meet the growing demand and do what's best for our ageing residents.

A successful Army basing programme needs to be delivered and we must support and facilitate, wherever possible, the integration of military and civilians into strong and vibrant communities.

The big economic development schemes that will be delivered include:

- The improvements in Chippenham, as I have already highlighted
- The relocation of Boeing
- The development of Porton Science Park
- The redevelopment of Salisbury City Centre to provide a better retail and visitor offer
- The redevelopment of Trowbridge Town Centre; particularly the East Wing site to provide a new health and wellbeing, housing and retail offer.
- The provision of affordable and extra care housing to meet some of the aspirations and demands of our communities

- Implementing new, dynamic digital technology to meet customer expectation and make us even more efficient
- The continued work with our public sector partners to share resources and make better use of public money
- Devolving services to ensure that they are delivered at the most appropriate level.

We will continue to invest in the areas that are the priorities for this council, and the residents we serve;

Protecting those who are vulnerable

Boosting the local economy; and,

Supporting local communities to become stronger and more resilient

I am proud to have been the leader of Wiltshire Council for the last eight years and to reflect on what we have achieved in that time.

Particularly, what we have delivered in the last four years – together – as one council – one team.

All our staff and elected members are the real asset.

To quote Steve Jobs again who knew a thing or two about achievement.

He believed that having the right team is the key to success and stated:

“I’ve learned over the years that, when you have really good people, and you expect them to do great things... You can get them to do great things.”

We may not be a world leader like Apple – but, we do have a team of talented, skilled and loyal staff at Wiltshire Council and we set out the expectations and they deliver – again and again.

The recent staff survey highlighted that morale remains high and despite the tough challenges we have faced, and continue to face, our staff remain motivated and committed to doing all they can to deliver what’s needed.

National online job search and recruitment company Glassdoor yesterday voted Wiltshire Council as the number one best council to work for.

This is a great accolade and to quote a recent recruit:

“The council offers great support, a great team, great training opportunities and a friendly environment to work in. I feel really lucky to have secured employment within Wiltshire Council.”

We need to invest in our staff and through training and development enable them to grow in the organisation and have the skills and experience that we need them to have for the future.

Let’s be in no doubt that together, we can and have, done great things and we have made a difference to people’s lives.

From the small, effective community projects through to the major economic investment - the impact is clear - we have helped to make Wiltshire a better place.

The next four years will build on what we have all achieved.

Whilst there will be more challenges ahead - I know that this council is both well-equipped and ready to meet those challenges...

And, to keep its focus on what really matters – the people that we serve.

Before I hand over to Dick (Tonge) to take you through the budget...

I would like to take the opportunity to say thank you to our staff, and, in particular the corporate team and the finance officers who have worked through – what I consider to be – the toughest budget setting in eight years.

Working together with my cabinet members, I am confident that a sound and robust budget has been proposed for this council.

I would also like to take the opportunity to say thank you and to acknowledge the hard work of those elected members, that I am aware of, that have decided not to stand for the election this May.

Councillors Keith Humphries, Julian Johnson, Bill Moss, Nina Phillips, Charles Howard and Dick Tonge.

I know there will be others that I am not aware of, and can I please extend a sincere thank you to all of you for the work you have done in the years that you have served this council...

My heartfelt thanks to all of you...

I would now like to handover to Dick...