

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

2 May 2023

Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from Councillors

Questions from: Margaret Willmot

To: Cllr Caroline Thomas, Cabinet Member for Transport, Street Scene, and Flooding

Statement

The Salisbury Transport Strategy July 2018 [STS] gives “Wiltshire Council’s proposed long-term approach to meeting the transport needs of the city (for development proposals until 2026).” [STS para 7.1].

45 projects were identified within the STS in the categories of Smarter Choices (5 schemes), Pedestrian and Cycle improvements (15 schemes), Public Transport Schemes (9 schemes) and Highways and Parking (16 schemes).

There would appear to be little tangible progress on the 45 projects identified in 2018, but it is understood that several million pounds of S106 money has now been accumulated towards these ‘Salisbury Transport Strategy’ projects from developments around Salisbury.

Question 1 (23-19)

Could Wiltshire Council confirm the current accumulated value of the S106 funding which is allocated towards ‘Salisbury Transport Strategy’ projects?

Response

Of the total contributions secured through Section 106 agreements, some are confined to a specific purpose, while others can be used with less restriction. The accumulated value is £7,045,970, although some of this funding has been spent or earmarked for specific projects.

Question 2 (23-20)

One of the projects identified in the STS – PT02 – with an indicative cost of £406K is for “Bus stop infrastructure package - maintain existing bus shelters across Salisbury and look for opportunities to improve, this may include the introduction of high quality shelters, signage and cycle parking if viable”.

At the latest Salisbury LHFIG meeting on 15/2/2023 money was requested to provide a bus hard standing on Stratford Road (£8,445) and a bus shelter on Castle Road (£7,000).

Given that improvements to bus stops were identified as a project in the STS, why can work of this nature not be funded from the S106 money which has been collected towards the STS rather than from the very limited funding available to the LHFIG?

Response

Funding for these types of improvement are typically sourced through LHFIG, however it is correct to say that there is potential for them to be funded through alternative sources.

The Council is reviewing current sources of funding with a view to establishing a clearer basis upon which those various sources may be apportioned to individual schemes.

Question 3 (23-21)

It is recognised that insufficient funding has been obtained to fund all the 45 projects which are identified in the STS.

Could Wiltshire Council indicate the basis on which funding is to be allocated between the identified projects, and approximately how much is available for each of the different categories which have been identified (Smarter Choices, Pedestrian and Cycle improvements, Public Transport schemes and Highways/Parking)?

Response

Of the total contributions secured through Section 106 agreements, some are confined to a specific purpose, while others can be used with less restriction.

Regarding the latter, the Council is reviewing current sources of funding with a view to establishing a clearer basis upon which those various sources may be apportioned to individual schemes.

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Questions from: Dave Yearsley

To: Cllr Caroline Thomas - Cabinet Member for Transport, Street Scene, and Flooding

Statement

It is in the context of a detailed and well researched 2019 ‘paper’ that was prepared by the Lt Col Nigel Linge MBE in his role as [Wiltshire and Swindon Countryside Access Forum - Wiltshire Council](#). This ‘paper’ was supported by several organisations, in particular [Wiltshire & Swindon - Ramblers](#).

The ‘paper’ is supported by Tim Lewis, the current chair of [Wiltshire and Swindon Countryside Access Forum - Wiltshire Council](#).

The ‘paper’ is headed ‘MAINTAINING THE RIGHTS OF WAY NETWORK IN WILTSHIRE: THE NEED FOR A POST AUSTERITY RECOVERY PLAN (PARP)’ and is currently stored at https://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/media/8655/Nigel-Linge-s-RoW-Maintenance-paper-5-July-2019/doc/CAF_RoW_PAPER_Final_5_July_2019_PDF_a.docx?m=63780535931840000. In particular, paragraphs 42 to 45 on page 9.

Question 4 (23-22)

Is there a commitment to enable self-volunteering in a framework coordinated by the Council. And improve data systems, for example, leading with Countryside and Rights of Way, so that data, tasks, projects, and their management are coordinated in the public domain.

Response

Wiltshire Council is committed to exploring options that can enable voluntary groups to contribute to services provided by the authority.

Looking at public rights of way specifically, several voluntary groups are active in this field. Currently officers are working on the provision of an integrated asset management IT system that volunteers will be able to access. Through this, issues can be reported, and tasks allocated. Preparation work is well advanced and the prototype system will be trialled over the coming months, initially with officers, but then expanding into the voluntary sector.

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Questions from: Cllr Helen Belcher

To: Cllr Ashley O'Neill - Cabinet Member for Governance, IT, Broadband, Digital, Licensing, Staffing, Communities, and Area Boards

Statement

In the budget papers, various savings were identified by not continuing with recruitment to fill any posts that were currently vacant.

In addition, the Staffing Policy Committee receives a regular report detailing the use of agency staff, with the underlying premise that a reduction in costs (implying a reduction in use) of agency staff is a good thing.

Relevant lines in Annex 7 (Detail by service on Savings Proposals) of the Medium Term Financial Strategy are:

Service	Saving Proposal Description	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Finance	Staff saving from removal of vacant posts and realignment of resources	0.550	-
Information Services	Staff savings from removal of vacant post	0.112	-
Procurement and Commissioning	Staff savings through the removal of vacant posts and the regrading of vacant posts remaining in the structure	0.173	-
Economy and Regeneration	Staff savings from removing vacant posts	0.141	-
Environment	Staffing savings from removal of vacant posts and restructure	0.073	0.071
Highways and Transport	Maximise capitalisation opportunities for costs and staffing	0.092	-
Highways and Transport	Staff savings from removing vacant posts and service redesign	0.144	-
Education and Skills	Deletion of a post which will be vacant during 2023	-	0.068
Education and Skills	Deletion of a vacant post reducing marketing support	0.028	-

Families and Children's Services	Staffing efficiencies are anticipated pending service reviews	0.087	0.160
Living and Ageing Well	Staff Savings from removal of vacant posts and restructure	0.116	-
Whole Life Pathway	Staff Savings from removal of vacant posts and restructure	0.156	-
HR&OD	Staffing savings from removal of vacant posts and restructure	0.154	0.057
Legal & Governance	Staff savings from removing vacant posts	0.140	-

This is a total of £1.966 million pounds forecast to be cut from the Council's staffing budget for 2023/24, with a further cut of £0.356 million pounds forecast for 2024/25.

Question 5 (23-23)

How many members of staff by Service will be cut by removal of these vacant posts? What is the Full Time Equivalent (FTE)?

Response

No members of staff will be cut, the removal is of vacant posts.

Question 6 (23-24)

What is the impact of cutting these vacant posts estimated to be in terms of service delivery and service responsiveness? What evidence has the Council relied upon in order to reach its conclusions?

Response

Services reviewed and confirmed where deletion of vacant posts could proceed. All services were required to review the impact of deletion of the vacant posts in their areas to determine impact and/or any mitigation required. The process of review included challenge sessions with the senior leadership team and cabinet.

Question 7 (23-25)

Does the Council anticipate having to make further headcount reductions beyond those already detailed in the MTFS for 2024/25?

Response

The indicative budget for 2024/25 has been set with a balanced position based on the assumptions included in the budget papers. These assumptions will be monitored throughout the year as part of the financial monitoring and more critically as we lead into the formal setting of the budget towards the end of the calendar year.

At this stage in the year it is not possible to predict whether additional savings will be required beyond those already detailed in the MTFFS nor how they will be delivered.

Question 8 (23-26)

How many posts at the end of 2022/23 were or are going to be filled for 2023/24?
What is the FTE?

Response

Services reviewed vacant posts and identified those that could be deleted as part of budget setting process. Those posts that are intended to be recruited were not deleted.

Question 9 (23-27)

How many agency or casual staff were being used to fill the posts identified in this report at the end of 2022/23? What was the associated monthly cost?

Response

Services reviewed vacant posts and identified those that could be deleted as part of budget setting process. If these roles were occupied by agency or casual staff, appropriate HR policies would have been followed.

Question 10 (23-28)

How many of these vacant posts had been advertised, and what costs have been incurred in trying to fill them so far?

Response

Services reviewed vacant posts and identified those that could be deleted as part of budget setting process. The majority of Council recruitment is managed by our inhouse team and advertised through existing routes, so do not incur additional costs. Hard to fill roles can incur additional costs, however, these roles would not have been deleted as part of this budget setting process.

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Questions from: Cllr Ian Thorn

To: Cllr Caroline Thomas - Cabinet Member for Transport, Street Scene, and Flooding

Question 11 (23-29)

According to a recent survey Wiltshire Council takes longer to fix pot holes than all but four other local authorities. Is this acceptable?

Response

Wiltshire in common with other local authorities has suffered a massive increase in the number of potholes reported. Between December 2022 and January 2023, there was a 400% increase.

This has predominantly been due to extreme weather conditions.

When considering the survey referred to and reviewing the dataset that it relies on, it is important to look at the data as whole when drawing conclusions rather than looking at individual cases. Using the same dataset and using the average time that it takes to repair potholes, Wiltshire would rank in the top 5 performing councils rather than the bottom 5.

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Questions from: Cllr Ian Thorn

To: Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling - Cabinet Member for Public Health, Leisure, Libraries, Facilities Management, and Operational Assets

Question 12 (23-30)

Is it acceptable that, as of today, there are no NHS dentistry vacancies in Wiltshire?

Response

Until April 1st 2023 the responsibility for the commissioning and associated functions relating to dental services was the responsibility of NHS England (NHSE), from April 1st 2023 this has now been delegated from NHSE to Integrated Care Boards. For Wiltshire this is the B&NES, Swindon and Wiltshire ICB. There is agreement in the South West region for the NHS to establish a Collaborative Commissioning Hub in order that contacts and transactional work remain with NHSE staff as is currently, on behalf of the 7 x ICBs in South West for at least the next year 23/24.

Current national priorities for the NHS are:

Increase access

Reduce inequalities

Improve oral health

At a regional level the South West NHS have produced a 'Development and Sustainability Plan which is a 12 month recovery plan starting Autumn 2022 to recover pre-pandemic levels in all ICB areas. For the NHS locally there are 2023-24 priorities and operational planning guidance to recover the core services and productivity, including making it easier for people to access primary care services including number of Units of Dental Activity contracted.

A rapid scrutiny exercise focused on NHS dentistry took place with NHS colleagues in March with members of Wiltshire's Health Select committee to further understand the changes and challenges.

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Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from Councillors

Question from: Lucie Castleman and Celia Beckett

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

Statement

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Reforms to National Planning Policy are intended to be introduced in late 2024. The timeline for transitioning to the reformed plan-making system indicates under transitional arrangements they will begin to take effect from spring 2023 so that as many authorities as possible can take advantage of the policy outlined in this document.

Authorities with an up-to-date local plan in place will be in the best possible position to adapt to the reforms provided for in the Bill.

Proposals that plan makers will have until 30 June 2025 to submit their local plans, including among others, neighbourhood plans and spatial development strategies, for independent examination under the existing legal framework will mean that existing legal requirements and duties will still apply.

However, authorities *can* begin planning in line with these changes, *should they be implemented* in spring 2023. The Government recognise that any changes to emerging plans which are necessary may result in delays in getting an up-to-date plan in place. So, to reduce the risk of communities being exposed to speculative development, the Government propose the following time-limited arrangements. For the purposes of decision-making, where emerging local plans have been submitted for examination or where they have been subject to Regulation 18 or 19 consultations which included both a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting housing need, those authorities will benefit from a reduced housing land supply requirement.

This will be a requirement to demonstrate a 4-year supply of land for housing, instead of the usual 5. These arrangements would apply for a period of 2 years from the point that these changes to the Framework take effect, since the Government's objective is to provide time for review while incentivising plan adoption.

Question 13 (23-31)

Under transitional arrangements to the anticipated new planning guidance, do you consider Wiltshire Council plans continuing to be prepared for NE Trowbridge (Option 4, 5 and 6) should take account of the proposed 4-year rolling land supply requirement for emerging plans, and if no, what approach should be taken, if any?

Response

The emerging Local Plan Review is being prepared in line with current national planning policy. The implications of any changes to national planning policy will be considered in due course once the outcome of the consultation is known.

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Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from Councillors

Question from: Anne Henshaw

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

Statement

With the Council at an advanced stage of reviewing its Local Plan and a draft likely to be considered by cabinet during Q3 of 2023 we ask the following questions.

Question 14 (23-32)

CPRE provided evidence to the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation why the level of additional housing proposed had not been justified. How will the Council rethink its housing allocation levels?

Response

The Council received many consultation responses on the level of housing proposed in the 2021 consultation on the Local Plan and a commitment was made to review the level of housing in response.

Question 15 (23-33)

The Government's "Standard Methodology" formula for calculation of Housing Need for Wiltshire would require the new Local Plan to provide 40,820 dwellings over its 20yr period, of which only 29,260 would be based on demographic need.

How does the Council intend approaching figures derived from the Local Housing Need Assessment and the Government's artificial "affordability" uplift?

Response

The Council is preparing the Local Plan Review in line with the National Planning Policy Framework and is therefore using the standard methodology as a starting point. The evidence underpinning the Plan including the assessment of need, resulting housing requirement and proposed allocations will be made available once the draft Plan is complete.

Question 16 (23-34)

How does the Council intend approaching the assumed level of housing supply which does not include any allowance for windfalls? (Housing supply from sites which are not currently allocated). The most recent evidence from Wiltshire Council (2019 Housing Supply Statement) allows for 258 windfalls each year which would add 3612 new homes during the plan period but is not included in the Plan, even though the statements says this supply is likely to continue.

Response

The evidence underpinning the Plan including components of housing land supply will be made available once the draft Plan is complete.

Question 17 (23-35)

The previous Local Plan calculation (shown in the Regulation 18 consultations) was derived from Local Housing Need Assessment but was increased in the Plan itself. What does the Council intend doing about such calculations which were based entirely on assumptions about the balance between jobs and workforce and relied heavily on optimistic and self-fulfilling economic forecasts. These assumptions are now out of date. Are they being reviewed with the understanding that a fundamental change in approach will need incorporating into the document?

The principle change of thinking is one which accepts that the lifestyle of the people in Wiltshire (and of course elsewhere) is going to have to fundamentally change. It will take a long time, but it has to start or the IPPC warnings will all come true much faster. This new document has to be robust enough to plan for fairly dramatic changes over the next 10 years.

Response

A commitment was made following the previous consultation to review the level of housing. Evidence underpinning the Plan including the assessment of housing need will be made available once the draft Plan is complete.

Question 18 (23-36)

Given the over-supply inherent in the Standard Methodology, and evidence on Need and Supply suggesting the current housing requirement are excessive, will the figures be reduced?

Response

The evidence underpinning the Plan including the assessment of need and resulting housing requirement will be made available once the draft Plan is complete.

Question 19 (23-37)

Despite being advised by the Corporate Director-Place in October 2022 that synchronisation of the Local Plan Review and the Local Transport Plan is not always possible, CPRE ask that this is considered essential in order to create a properly integrated consultation methodology. It is very clear that all future Master Planning must demonstrate a complete integration of Transport and Development in order to achieve the rebalancing of land use and meeting carbon emissions targets. What steps are the Council taking?

Response

The transport evidence base for the Local Plan Review is predicated by delivering sustainable development and this will be predominantly achieved by site specific measures that address the specific impact of development. The Local Transport Plan 4, by contrast, will be developed to provide an 'umbrella' strategy for the wider Wiltshire community that the Local Plan Review sites will sit within. Wiltshire Council has commissioned Atkins to provide both the Local Plan Review transport evidence base and the Local Transport Plan, with both teams reflecting on the synergies of both projects and ensuring that the advanced stage of the Local Plan Review does not prejudice or conflict with the wider community aims of the emerging Local Transport Plan.

The evidence underpinning the Plan will be made available once the draft Plan is complete. This will include appropriate evidence on transport and carbon emissions.

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Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation and Questions from Councillors

Questions from: Mel Boyle

To: Cllr Caroline Thomas – Cabinet Member for Transport, Street Scene, and Flooding

Statement

Station Hill Traffic Lights

Following the latest article in the Gazette and Herald where a developer is trying to use the ongoing issues with the Station Hill Traffic Lights to promote housing to the East of Chippenham with tax payers money for a road, there were many residents comments saying the town centre congestion could be relieved by removing the station hill traffic lights.

<https://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/23459845.chippenham-traffic-problems-would-eased-eastern-link-road/?ref=ebIn>

This has been going on for over two years and we have engaged with various officers and Councillors, but have been passed off with inaccurate information. I am hoping as you are settling into your new role that you would look at this situation with fresh eyes and agree a compromise from the facts.

The queues of traffic back to the college and round past the Bath Road car park entrance at times are a pollution hazard for all. With Monkton Park being one of the biggest Cul de Sacs in Europe and expecting another 300 homes to be built before another exit is considered (200 at Rawlings Farm and a 100 at the Old College) We need Wiltshire Council to listen to residents to enhance the information from software packages.

Question 20, residents would like the traffic lights used for pedestrian crossings only and the roundabout put back to help traffic flow and reduce pollution while meeting the pedestrian requirements too. The train station should have signs pointing to the off road cycle route through the park rather than the dangerous station hill option. There is also the route to the bike stands on the other side of the station, a preferred option rather than the ones in one largest cul-de-sac in Europe.



Question 20 (23-38)

We have been continually told the works were to improve routes for cyclists, but the current situation has made cycling more dangerous. Before we had a safe route free of cars down Monkton Hill slip route. Now due to the congestion on Station Hill since the traffic lights were installation the slip road to Monkton Hill has been reopened to cars making it more dangerous. The cycle lanes that suddenly appear at the traffic lights do not have cycle lanes to get to them as it is a historic area with narrow roads, to get to the traffic lights cyclists have to pass parked cars with doors opening and large lorries and buses blocking the roads. This leads to us rarely seeing cyclists using the area, especially when we have a safe off road cycle route through the park (403).

Response

The cycle facilities included in the signal installation follow relevant design guidance and are compliant with standards.

Question 21 (23-39)

Presently pedestrians have to wait too long for the lights to change so walk out in front of cars. This was safer before when there was an island in the middle. Using the lights for pedestrians only would speed up the lights stopping people walking out in front of cars.

Response

Monitoring of the Station Hill junction has shown that the junction is working efficiently and that delays to traffic for the majority of the time are significantly reduced and that journey times are now comparable to pre-pandemic levels. The junction is significantly safer for pedestrians to use than the previous arrangement. An arrangement of independent signal controlled crossings in combination with a mini roundabout has been considered but would not work as efficiently as the installed signals.

Question 22 (23-40)

Due to the nature of the area with many businesses, cars are parked inappropriately blocking the roads, when it was a roundabout courteous drivers could wait for each other depending on the forward space, now it just means cars block the area as they

cannot see the obstacles in front of them, this then means when lights are on green other lanes cannot move.

Response

It is recognised that some blocking of the junction does take place due to inappropriate and illegal parking predominantly by delivery vehicles who ignore the dedicated loading bays provided in the area. This has been brought to the attention of the Council's Parking Services team for enforcement activity.

Question 23 (23-41)

Sadlers Mead Car Park

For the last two years I have been raising about the cleaning of the stairways and lifts in the Sadlers Mead Car Park, Chippenham Town Council say they only do the parking areas and Wiltshire Council just close MyWilts jobs without reading the posts due to the category, photo attached. How can this be resolved?

Response

Wiltshire Council recognise the work of Chippenham Town Council with providing the Street Scene Service in their area. The delegation allows the Town Council to decide the levels of service for their area. However, they do have the delegated responsibility for the litter and refuse cleanliness standards in the council's car parks. The Town Council must deliver the standards to the statutory minimum levels under the terms of the service delegation. Wiltshire Council will inspect the areas and if not at the guidance level will work with the Town Council to ensure the statutory standards are delivered.

Question 24 (23-42)

Sadlers Mead Car Park

For the last two years the land next to the car park has been strewn with trollies and rubbish, it is proven that neglected areas attract more litter etc, my latest MyWilts after a litter pick in the park and passing this area which we cannot get to was closed and said the Council were aware of it, if this is the case, when will it be cleared up, photos attached? Why isn't this site on the brownfield register or advertised for reuse now Good Energy have pulled out? How can this be resolved?

Response

When the Council considers the site to be surplus to requirements, the surplus land procedure will be followed as set out in the link below:

<https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s208580/Appendix%201%20for%20Disposal%20Programme.pdf>

Question 25 (23-43)

Cocklebury Road pot holes

I have logged pot holes on MyWilts and again they are closed and says you are aware of them, but they have increased in severity with ironwork exposed, but it seems they are closed without the information being read?

Response

Reports of potholes received via MyWilts are reviewed and inspected. Currently, a program of surface repairs in Cocklebury Rd awaits scheduling.

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Questions from: Chris Caswell

To: Cllr Richard Clewer - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Military-Civilian Integration, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Health and Wellbeing

Statement

I have spent some time trying to establish where the ultimate responsibility lies for the oversight of the joint Wiltshire/ Swindon Police and Crime Panel, without receiving any credible answer. It seems not to be clear, maybe it has not even been considered. This Panel is extremely important, not least when it has responsibilities to scrutinise the Wiltshire Police and Crime Commissioner at a time when Wiltshire Police have been rated Inadequate and are in the ENGAGE process, more or less equivalent to 'special measures'.

Question 26 (23-44)

Where does the responsibility for the high level governance of the joint Wiltshire/ Swindon Police and Crime Panel lie within Wiltshire Council, and specifically within your executive Cabinet?

Response

The panel is a joint committee of Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council and, as such, there is no single cabinet member at Wiltshire Council with direct responsibility for the governance of the Panel. The panel has a number of statutory powers, which it is required to undertake through the provisions in the Police Reform and Social responsibility Act 2011, and is bound by the panel arrangements agreed between both authorities. The panel is funded by the Home Office, so is ultimately responsible to the secretary of state.

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Agenda Item 11 – PHNS Future Delivery Model

Questions from: Chris Caswell

**To: Cllr Laura Mayes - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, and Skills
Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling - Cabinet Member for Public Health, Leisure, Libraries, Facilities Management, and Operational Assets**

Question 27 (23-45)

With regard to the item on the agenda on the Public Health Nursing Service, please give a publicly comprehensible reason why there is a Part II element of this proposal, which is being kept from public view. Specifically what is the public interest in non disclosure in this case that has more weight than the Council's stated policy and public duty For transparency?

Response

The Part II element is an in-depth appraisal of the options and contains commercially sensitive financial and contractual information not appropriate for sharing publicly, The key points affecting the scoring and, therefore, the recommendation, are summarised in the main paper.

Question 28 (23-46)

Why is the evidence Appendix referred to in para 17 of the public facing paper not available to the press and public? Surely the evidence base for the decision not to proceed with an in house option should be open to public scrutiny. Otherwise, what does the Council have to hide in the background evidence?

Response

The Part II element is an in-depth appraisal of the options and contains commercially sensitive financial and contractual information not appropriate for sharing publicly.