

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

Item 6 - Public Participation

From Clive Spencer - Colerne Climate Change and Biodiversity Working Group

**To Cllr Nick Holder - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change,
and Cllr Phil Alford - Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, and Asset
Transfer**

Question (P24-01)

The Government's climate change advisor, the Committee on Climate Change, has assessed that all new buildings must be "zero carbon" by 2025. Your 2030 carbon pledge shows Wiltshire Council to be forward thinking and as such, do you feel confident that this requirement for new buildings will be met by the 2025 deadline?

If not, could Wiltshire Council be proactive and push to adopt the necessary planning policy that would deliver Passivhaus standard buildings, in a similar manner to that adopted by the Scottish Government.

This would make the "zero carbon" goal realistically achievable. With each revision of the planning system, planning policy slowly edges towards the Passivhaus standard. Why not fully adopt it as a matter of urgency and prevent the completely unacceptable task of having to retrofit new housing in order to meet this 2025 requirement and ultimately the legally binding emissions target, set by the Climate Change Act, for 2050.

The challenge of retrofitting existing housing stock is enormous and we must not be adding to it. The Future Homes Standard may be on the horizon, but why reinvent the wheel when there is already a globally recognised standard, which has been proven over decades, in tens of thousands of buildings.

Response

In January 2024, the government announced its plans to achieve the Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard. They rely on changes to Building Regulations Part L (conservation of fuel and power), Part F (ventilation) and Part O (overheating). From 2025 Building Regulations will require a higher standard of energy efficiency.

The new regulations will require a higher standard of energy efficiency and will ensure that all new homes built from 2025 onwards are 'net zero ready'.

We agree that the challenge of retrofitting existing housing stock is enormous, and it should not, if possible, be added to by new homes that are built without high standards of energy efficiency.

At the local level, we are already working on planning policy that will achieve high standards and contribute to the county becoming carbon neutral. Wiltshire Council's [emerging Local Plan](#) (due to be submitted for examination by the Planning Inspectorate later this year) includes a draft policy that, if adopted, will require that new homes achieve a zero-carbon in operation standard.

Homes will achieve this by significantly reducing the heat and power demand of the building through energy efficient design and / or modern methods of construction. It does not require PassivHaus as such but would support a PassivHaus design.

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Item 6 - Public Participation

From Catherine Read

To Cllr Nick Holder - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Question (P24-02)

Wiltshire Council has many plans and documents on climate change and seeking to make the county net zero by 2030. It declared a climate emergency in 2019. We are now 5 yrs on and I struggling to see any changes in my local town, Devizes. There are still old fuel buses going through town, traffic is as bad as ever and there have been no new cycle routes, I don't see any increase of solar on existing houses, neither are new houses being built with solar. I feel despondent that I see little, if any changes or progress towards decarbonising in Devizes.

- a. What is the plan for Devizes to reduce its carbon footprint and by what means?
- b. When will I see these changes start to be implemented and delivered?

Response

Wiltshire Council is committed to be carbon neutral by 2030 in its own direct emissions as an organisation and is on track to meet this aim.

Wiltshire Council has also pledged that it will also seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral. To this end we have developed a Climate Strategy and delivery plans for all of Wiltshire (which of course covers Devizes) and we use our influence and work in partnership to deliver the objectives of the Climate Strategy.

But we cannot do this alone and is not something the council has full control over. As such, the council does not have a plan for specific areas, such as Devizes, to reduce its carbon footprint. We would expect local organisations, local councils, community groups, businesses and residents to be working together on local measures. We have provided training to local councils, in partnership with Centre for Sustainable Energy, on setting up local action plans.

The Devizes Area Board has as one of its priorities "addressing climate change and protecting the environment focussing upon:

- Alternatives to private car use
- Reducing waste
- Enhancing the environment

The Board continues to work closely with Sustainable Devizes and Devizes Town Council through its air quality and sustainable transport group. It is committed to creating a greener town and changing behaviours. Some of what has been achieved over the past year includes:

- Working with schools and parents to support them in Green travel plans
- Installation of new electric charging ports in car parks within the town
- Supporting the creation, roll out and promotion of the new demand responsive bus services across the Pewsey Vale
- Monitoring the air quality in key areas
- Holding events to encourage walking and cycling including around the current Street Tag project.
- Working closely with the Passenger Transport Service to develop a new town centre bus service that will come into place after April 24.
- Completing the Devizes Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan that will be signed off imminently by Wiltshire Council. This enables the town to bid for funding to deliver improvements and will guide local cycling and walking infrastructure. The council has allocated £20,000 from Active Travel England's "Capability and Ambition Fund" towards funding a priority scheme from the Devizes LCWIP.
- This month committed funding to prioritise and develop a new safe cycle/walking route West End towards Bishops Cannings along London Road and Estcourt Street to Sidmouth Street. This is a prime route for businesses and many of our schools.

There are additional activities going on that you may not come to know about, for example the government funded Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) scheme which Wiltshire Council is delivering. This will result in measures such as improving insulation and energy efficiency in low-income homes that are not on the gas grid. If you would like more information about what the council is doing please see our [webpages](#), [strategy and action plans](#), and our [reports to Cabinet and Council](#). The [latest climate update report](#) was in October 2023.

To respond to some of your observations and concerns in detail:

Solar panels Solar Together scheme run by the council has been introduced to encourage Wiltshire residents to install solar panels and in the Devizes 38 households have signed up so far, out of 1131 installations (complete and planned) across the whole county. National legislation, and local planning policy and building regulations are being updated so that new homes and commercial buildings will be required to be net zero ready and much more likely to have solar panels from 2025 onwards.

Buses Wiltshire's [Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\)](#) sets out our proposals for buses going forward. It is not Devizes-specific, but it provides a good overview in terms of our overall bus strategy. Our BSIP generally aims to increase the modal share of journeys taken by bus and to increase bus patronage.

In terms of buses operating in Devizes we can confirm that 96% of them are EURO VI buses which is currently the cleanest standard, apart from electric or hydrogen. We are committed to working with bus operators to move to ultra-low emissions vehicles for public transport in the county, as set out in the Climate Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Last year we also introduced the flexible, on-demand bus service to connect rural communities west of Pewsey, from Pewsey to Devizes. Wiltshire Connect is different from a conventional bus service, in that people can book journeys at a time to suit them using the Wiltshire Connect app or by phone. This service is encouraging more people to take a bus and leave their car at home for local journeys.

Cycling and Walking As well as the measures mentioned above, last school year (2022/23) 3,195 children took part in Bikeability training, which includes 55% of Y6 children. Further trainers have been recruited this year which will help to achieve the aim of higher numbers being trained over the following years.

The **Air Quality Action Plan**, to be proposed for adoption at Cabinet on 19th March 2024, includes specific actions for Devizes, in order to improve air quality, which also has benefits for carbon emissions and congestion.

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Item 6 - Public Participation

From Andrew Nicolson - Wiltshire Climate Alliance

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

Question (P24-03)

Five years ago this month the then Cabinet Member for Transport told you that the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP's forthcoming Rail Strategy would, following review and consultation, form part of a Wiltshire LTP4 to be developed in 2019-2021. Since then the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body has also delivered a Rail Strategy.

- (i) Three Cabinet Members later, when will these review and consultation process begin?
- (ii) What is the current revised timetable for the 4th Wiltshire Local Transport Plan, and how does it relate to the timetable for the Wiltshire Local Plan Review?

Response

In 2021, Department for Transport confirmed that they would be issuing guidance to all Local Transport Authorities to facilitate a review of Local Transport Plans. The issue of that guidance was delayed by the pandemic alongside other changes in national priorities – that guidance is still awaited and has resulted in corresponding delays for authorities across the country.

Despite the absence of any formal guidance, the Council has opted to progress development, consultation and adoption of LTP4 by the end of 2024. A review of the Rail Strategy (alongside several other theme documents) will form part of that.

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Item 6 - Public Participation

From Andrew Nicolson - Wiltshire Climate Alliance

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

Question (P24-04)

The Local Transport Plan Transport Evidence Base prepared by Atkins Ltd for the Local Plan Review forms the basis for a Local Transport Plan by developing a Scenario 4 "Do Maximum" that is the only one closely compatible with the Council's Climate Net Zero commitments.

- (i) Will Council commit to an emerging Transport policy and strategy that is compatible with, and furthers, its climate targets and commitments, by taking a "predict and manage" approach to road traffic instead of a "predict and provide" approach?
- (ii) As the Evidence Base has detailed implications for Wiltshire's Community Areas, will Council develop and present those implications to its Area Boards?

Response

The Council's Climate Strategy states that the council will "develop and implement a new Wiltshire Local Transport Plan ... in line with our climate objectives that will set out plans and policies to help achieve the vision for sustainable mobility and transport in Wiltshire" and the Local Transport Plan process involves consultation with relevant stakeholders and examination of the evidence base, including the Pathways to Carbon Neutral study for Wiltshire.

The council held a consultation with stakeholder on the issues and options for the Local Transport Plan in July 2023. This included consideration of Climate targets and commitments as set-out in the Climate Strategy. Further Consultation will take place in 2024.

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Item 13 - Notice of Motion 2024-01

From Julian Jones

To Cllr Nick Holder - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Question (P24-05)

Noting that Motion No. 2024-01 at Item 13 does not mention greenhouse gases or the climate emergency,

(i) does Council accept the science and recommendations that dairy and ruminant meat consumption in high consuming nations like ours needs to be urgently and deeply reduced to meet binding UK climate targets and Wiltshire Net Zero aspirations, and also to take pressure off land use and biodiversity loss?

(ii) Will the council take a lead in achieving these aims?

Response

The council's [Climate webpages](#) do encourage people to eat a balanced diet, which for most of us means consuming less meat and dairy, and that we should avoid imported meat due to the risk that it may be contributing to deforestation and land degradation.

The Wiltshire Climate Strategy has an area of focus to “work with Wiltshire stakeholders, communities and farmers on ways to reduce emissions from food and farming, in support of the objective of achieving sustainable, low-carbon food and farming systems.

The council is not necessarily the main point of support and advice for landowners and farmers, the NFU for instance is a significant expert resource for Farmers on Environment and Climate. The National Landscape partner in Cranbourne Chase also has set up Farm Clusters to encourage best practice to protect and enhance the landscape, habitats and biodiversity, and includes how soil health can impact climate change.

We are committed to working in partnership with relevant organisations and exploring the council's role in developing sustainable food and farming systems.

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Item 6 - Public Participation

From Julian Jones

To Cllr Nick Holder - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Question (P24-06)

- (i) What steps has Council taken or will Council be taking to monitor emissions of the shorter-lived greenhouse gases Methane and Nitrous Oxide, both produced by livestock farming?
- (ii) What is Council's strategy for reducing these, or if none, then when can these be incorporated into a review of its Climate Strategy?

Response

The council tracks emissions from the county of Wiltshire using government data. This is put together by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and the emissions are measured in CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent) which includes methane and nitrous oxide as well as carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

In 2021 (at COP26 in Glasgow) the UK signed up to a Global Methane Pledge to reduce methane emissions. The Wiltshire Climate Strategy acknowledges this and has an area of focus to “work with Wiltshire stakeholders, communities and farmers on ways to reduce emissions from food and farming, in support of the objective of achieving sustainable, low-carbon food and farming systems.”

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Item 6 - Public Participation

From Bill Jarvis

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

Question (P24-07)

The draft Local Plan (LP) reg 19 review was completed Q3 last year. Since then there have been no announcements by Wiltshire Council on their progress in preparing the plan for examination. The final plan will potentially have impacts on the Council's budget.

- i) Can you confirm when the draft LP will be submitted for examination. If not a precise date, perhaps which quarter of the year it is most likely.
- ii) Can you also confirm that the final LP will have no impact on the budget being set at this meeting.

Response

The consultation closed on 22 November, towards the end of last year. The council is reviewing responses to the Regulation 19 consultation. In some instances, the responses have raised issues that need to be discussed further with relevant parties. In other instances, additional work needs to be commissioned to answer the points being raised. Some of the technical work may take longer to complete than was previously envisaged, but we are not yet in a position to say whether this affects the Local Plan timetable. We are keen to make sure any delays are kept to an absolute minimum, and we are fully committed to submitting the Local Plan for examination as soon as possible.

The budget for the Local Plan is being carefully managed. Some of the new technical work that is required to support the Local Plan will mean that we will incur some additional costs for consultancy support. While it is too early to say what those additional costs will be, we can confirm that this will not affect the budget being set at this meeting.

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Item 6 - Public Participation

From Bill Jarvis

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

Question (P24-08)

The Local Transport Plan (LTP) is a document referenced in the draft LP, giving details of how transport and transport infrastructure will be managed throughout the plan period.

- i) Can you confirm that consultation on the LTP will have taken place and conclusions drawn before the draft LP is submitted for inspection.
- ii) Can you also confirm that any financial impact the LTP will have has been taken into account on the budget being presented at this meeting.

Response

The council held a consultation with stakeholders on the issues and options for the Local Transport Plan in July 2023. Further consultation will take place in 2024 - the current programme indicates the LTP being put forward for adoption towards the end of the year.

It is not yet possible to assess any detailed financial implications.

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Item 6 - Public Participation

From Jeremy Wire

To Cllr Nick Holder - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Question (P24-09)

After a high of 46.5% in 2014-25, the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and compost in Wiltshire has dropped to 40%, the lowest since 2010, and lower than Somerset, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire.

- i) Could you please explain why the recycling rate has dropped so dramatically, particularly considering the change in the collection regime since 2015, which was designed to increase recycling
- ii) Can you please advise what you are doing about reversing this trend.

Response

Several changes to the council's recycling services since 2014/15 have influenced recycling rates, along with differences in consumer behaviour and the nature of materials collected for recycling. Seasonal weather variations have also played a part.

The recycling figures quoted cover dry recycling, including materials such as paper, cardboard, cans, plastics, and the composting of organic waste. The figures also reflect the tonnage of recyclable materials and garden waste collected at the kerbside, and through the household recycling centre network.

In Wiltshire, "composting" relates solely to garden waste, whereas other councils would include food waste in their figures where this is separately collected. In 2014/15, Wiltshire provided a free opt-in garden waste collection service. To avoid garden waste collections being subsidised by residents that chose not to use the opt-in service, a charge has applied since 2015/16. This has reduced the uptake and tonnages collected, but also encourages more home composting which is better for the environment as there are fewer waste collection vehicles on Wiltshire roads. Tonnages of garden waste are influenced by weather with a particularly dry summer resulting in slow growth rates and less garden waste being collected in 2022/23. Composting contributed 21% towards our 2014/15 recycling rate and in 22/23 this contribution had fallen to 17%.

Dry recycling rates have also been affected by a number of factors including the “lightweighting” of packaging by producers and changes in packaging design and materials used for this purpose. Although we now provide services which are easier to use and collect a wider range of items for recycling at the kerbside compared with 2014/15, the tonnage of some of the packaging items collected has reduced. Previously high tonnages of newspapers and magazines have also declined since 2014/15.

We have also seen higher rates of contamination in kerbside collected recycling, which in Wiltshire is being tackled through the continuing “Recycling – Let’s Sort It” campaign. It is likely that cost of living pressures have also contributed to changes in consumer behaviour, resulting in less consumption and waste being produced overall. However, we’re pleased that the positive outcomes of the Let’s Sort It campaign so far have been nationally recognised, with it winning an industry specialist LARAC Celebration Award last year and has also recently been shortlisted for a prestigious 2024 LGC Award.

Wiltshire Council has also launched a scheme to promote the sorting of recyclable materials before residents visit a household recycling centre, after analysis showed that around of third of waste placed in the general waste skips at these sites could have been easily separated for recycling. Sorting tables are now provided at all Wiltshire HRC sites to support residents who hadn't managed to sort their waste before making their visit.

The key difference in Wiltshire’s recycling performance compared with that of Somerset, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire councils is that they have introduced separate kerbside collections of food waste, which counts towards the ‘composting’ element of their overall performance. Wiltshire Council is in discussion with the Department of Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on future plans to introduce separate collections of food waste across the county. Currently food waste collected in Wiltshire is part of the kerbside residual waste typically sent for disposal at energy from waste plants where it produces electricity.

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Item 13 - Notice of Motion 2024-01

From Jeremy Wire

To Cllr Nick Holder - Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Question (P24-10)

At Agenda item 13 you have Notice of Motion 24-01, "Supporting Wiltshire Farmers and Food Producers" which, if passed, will see food provided at its catered events sourced from 'local suppliers', specifically including meat and dairy. The motion commits the council to being 'vocal in opposing attempts to diminish the role our meat, dairy, and arable farmers play in our rural way of life.' But climate science findings are that livestock farming is one of the largest sources of the powerful climate heating gases methane and nitrous oxide.

- i) What consideration has been given to the Greenhouse Gas impacts of such a resolution? and
- ii) How would this reconcile with your 2019 commitment to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030

Response

The council's [Climate webpages](#) encourages people to eat a balanced diet, which for most of us means consuming less meat and dairy, and that we should avoid imported meat due to the risk that it may be contributing to deforestation and land degradation.

The Wiltshire Climate Strategy has an area of focus to "work with Wiltshire stakeholders, communities and farmers on ways to reduce emissions from food and farming, in support of the objective of achieving sustainable, low-carbon food and farming systems. It also encourages to source locally to reduce food miles.