

Wiltshire Council

Council

13 May 2014

Item 18 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division

**To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning,
Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property, Waste**

Question 1

At the Strategic Planning Committee, on 16th April, the Conservative Group voted on block to refuse the application for a solar farm at Sandridge.

Can you assure me and the residents of Wiltshire that applications aren't being decided on party lines, and every application is decided solely on planning issues?

Response

I attended the meeting on 16th April and I can give the assurance that for the Conservative Members on the Committee, every application is determined solely on planning issues.

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From Councillor Jeff Osborn, Trowbridge Grove Division

To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband

Question 2

Please can I be told that why after all the promises made, BBLP have once again failed to provide the residents of my division with a decent and reliable grass cutting service?

Response

As you are aware WC officers and BBLP spent a lot of time earlier in the year producing definitive maps of all grass cutting areas and issued these to the town and parish councils so that they too would have a definitive record.

From these definitive maps BBLP were tasked with producing grass cutting schedules and identifying the resource they would apply to each area. BBLP did this, showing the levels that would be applied to each area, north, south, east and west. During our regular service meetings with BBLP we expressed concern about the resource being allocated to the West, and to a lesser extent the South. We made it clear to BBLP that we did not think enough resource was being applied to the West.

However, this is a service contract, and we can only determine the outcome of the service not the input. We therefore monitored the situation through the first cut of the year and into the second cut of the year.

Because of our concerns about resource levels, and through our regular weekly review meetings, we elicited a number of response measures that would be invoked if BBLP were to fall behind the agreed schedules.

At the end of cut 1 BBLP were on schedule in the East and the North, but behind in both the West and the South. However the situation was redeemable so we did not invoke the special measures agreed.

During the last week of April our concerns increased re the West falling further behind so on 30th April we requested that the special measures be invoked immediately. Additional teams were employed over the bank holiday weekend at the start of May and by 7th May an additional 3 teams of grass cutters, 9 personal, were allocated to the West to bring it back to schedule. This additional resource will be

provided for the foreseeable future to support grass cutting across the county to ensure appropriate standards are maintained.

The impact of these additional teams could be seen immediately and we will remain until the schedules and all back on time.

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To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband

Question 3

Will Balfour Beatty Living Places publicly apologise to the residents of Trowbridge for repeated failures to provide an effective grass cutting service?

Should this aspect of the overall Balfour Beatty contract be curtailed?

Response

BBLP apologise, both to Trowbridge residents, and to the Council for any inconvenience caused by any service shortfall in grass cutting in and around Trowbridge. We have now trebled the resources in the area, and are totally committed to providing an excellent service to Wiltshire Council. We will continue to invest more time, more people and more machines until the end of the season.

My comments:

The grass cutting element is a very small part of the contract. Grass cutting in many areas has been delivered in line with the contractual requirements. The implications of changing the grass cutting service arrangements would have considerable financial and contractual implications to the council. The contract has processes and procedures to manage services not delivering to the contract requirements. Corrective action is the most appropriate action to take when issues arise. Balfour Beatty Living Places have given assurances that the grass cutting arrangements will be delivered in line with the contractual requirements across the county.

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From Councillor Graham Payne, Trowbridge Drynham Division

To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband

Question 4

Do you think that Trowbridge will win the "Dandelions in Bloom" competition this year or is it your viewpoint that it would be better for the Town to be entered in the "Best Kept Roadside Verge" category?

Response

By the time judging takes place the Dandelions will no longer be there so we suggest collecting as many as possible now and using one of the following recipes:

Dandelion Wine (2)

- 2 qts dandelion flowers
- 3 lbs granulated sugar
- 4 oranges
- 1 gallon water
- yeast and nutrient

This is the traditional "Midday Dandelion Wine" of old, named because the flowers must be picked at midday when they are fully open. Pick the flowers and bring into the kitchen. Set one gallon of water to boil. While it heats up to a boil, remove as much of the green material from the flower heads as possible (the original recipe calls for two quarts of petals only, but this will work as long as you end up with two quarts of prepared flowers). Pour the boiling water over the flowers, cover with cloth, and leave to steep for two days. Do not exceed two days. Pour the mixture back into a pot and bring to a boil. Add the peelings from the four oranges (again, no white pith) and boil for ten minutes. Strain through a muslin cloth or bag onto a crock or plastic pail containing the sugar, stirring to dissolve. When cool, add the juice of the oranges, the yeast and yeast nutrient. Pour into secondary fermentation vessel, fit fermentation trap, and allow to ferment completely. Rack and bottle when wine clears and again when no more lees form for 60 days. Allow it to age six months in the bottle before tasting, but a year will improve it vastly. This wine has less body than the first recipe produces, but every bit as much flavour (some say more!).

Dandelion Fritters

For the fritters you only need the tops which are very easy to pick. Do pick them in the sunshine when they are open, and when you have time to make the fritters right after gathering. Bring your basket of flowers inside, find a bowl, and mix together one egg and one cup of milk. Stir in a cup of flour and your fritter batter is ready to go. (If you like your fritters sweet you can add a little maple syrup or honey.)

Now, prepare a skillet on the stove with gently warmed olive oil – keep it over medium heat. Take one of the flowers and hold it by the greens at the base of the flower petals. Dip the petals into the batter and twirl until the flower is covered.

Drop it into the skillet, flower side down. Continue dipping and dropping flowers, checking the first ones every once in a while to see if they are brown. When they've lightly browned, flip them over and brown them on the other side. When they're brown on both sides remove them from the skillet and drain the excess oil on paper towel.

For a sweet treat, drizzle them with maple syrup, honey, jam, or powdered sugar. For savoury fritters try dipping in mustard or adding some savoury herbs to the batter.

Enjoy!

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From Councillor Graham Payne, Trowbridge Drynham Division

To Councillor Jane Scott OBE, Leader of the Council

Question 5

Could you outline the recent successes of the Local Enterprise Partnership together with a report on the strategy to take this organisation forward? What specific benefits have accrued for Trowbridge as a result of LEP activities?

Response

The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (S&WLEP) is one of 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships established by business and local authorities and approved by government. The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership comprises of 8 private sector board members and the 2 Local Authority Leaders, plus a representative from the Higher Education/Further Education sector and the military (43 Wessex Brigade).

To date the S&WLEP has delivered the Growing Places Infrastructure Fund, a £10 million revolving fund that is currently supporting the delivery of 3 Wiltshire projects: Gateway to Growth, a £1 million fund to provide business support including a web based portal and intensive support for growth, focusing on development of; new markets, products and processes, leadership and management capacity. In the first round, 4 local businesses were provided with support, and further rounds are available. Additionally, Wiltshire Council and S&WLEP are working to deliver 'The Enterprise Network', providing incubation space and business support for local businesses.

Currently, S&WLEP is working to develop its Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), setting out the schemes and infrastructure necessary to deliver economic growth through Swindon and Wiltshire. From this, the S&WLEP will negotiate with government its allocation of the Local Growth Fund which constitutes a competitive £10bn funding source for strategic infrastructure projects delivered between 2015 and 2021. As part of this, work is ongoing to establish the governance procedures, including the democratic mandate of the two Local Authorities which is being developed from the initial proposition outlined in the bid to establish S&WLEP, submitted in 2011.

While many schemes as mentioned above are LEP-wide, some bring specific benefits to Trowbridge including:

- Gateway To Growth, which has selected Trowbridge based Wessex Chamber of Commerce as its delivery partner

- White Horse Business Centre at Ashton Court Trowbridge, which is one of the centres in The Enterprise Network. Currently 4 businesses are utilising space at the centre, and through the support scheme 96 businesses have been supported across the 4 centres.

In addition, the Strategic Economic Plan, with reference to Trowbridge specifically, sets out the LEPs bid for £8.74million of Local Growth Funding to support essential transport infrastructure across Trowbridge. These projects seek to ensure that the Trowbridge transport network is developed sustainably to accommodate the future growth of the town and will help lever in an additional £8.84million in private sector contributions. In particular, proposed improvements to the West Ashton/Yarnbrook junctions are expected to create around 1470 jobs, opening up land for employment and housing. The SEP also makes provision for strategic improvements to both the local road network, sustainable transport network and the local rail network, supporting the sustainable development of Wiltshire as a whole up to 2026. These projects collectively amount to over £36million of Local Growth Fund matched by over £35million of private sector contribution.

Details of what this will comprise will be available once negotiations are concluded, but the first version of the Strategic Economic Plan is available at:

<http://www.swlep.biz/docs/1>

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From Councillor George Jeans, Mere Division

To Councillor Jonathon Seed, Cabinet Member for Communities, Campuses, Area Boards, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding

Question 6

I am confused about Area Board Funding for 2014-15.

I am proud of what Area Boards have achieved as I know many Councillors would be. I welcomed the impression during the Budget debate that the Area Board Funding would be maintained at the same level as 2013-14.

However I find that SWWAB has been allocated £56,800 (Capital & Revenue) this year, the similar figure for 2013-14 was £96,467 i.e the amount is reduced by some £40K this year.

I have taken last years' amount from the summary attached to the delegated decision reference ACCH-001-13.

The Budget book for this year has the same amount of £1,027,000 as the prior year for Capital Funding, how can this be?

Would it be possible to have the breakdown of Area Board Funding in a similar format to that produced in Spring of 2013 as part of the delegated decision at the time, as it appears that Administration has substantially reduced the base monies of Area Board funding for this year.

Response

The total funding allocated to Area Boards is £1 million in line with Council's budget setting process. However Area Board funding varies from year to year for a number of factors. Last year's allocation included some one off grants for youth funding initiatives, Rural Support Funding and Digital Literacy Funding as well as one off funding for CATG Community Speed initiatives. This year further funding may be allocated following the conclusion of the Youth Services Review when that has been considered by Cabinet. The allocations per Area Board for this year are as follows

2014 Allocation :

| Area Board | Capital | Revenue | CATG | Total |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Amesbury | 57,519.51 | £10,151 | 17,731 | 85,401 |
| Bradford on Avon | 32,922.54 | £5,810 | 10,062 | 48,795 |
| Calne | 38,536.98 | £6,801 | 12,465 | 57,803 |
| Chippenham | 78,525.62 | £13,857 | 18,087 | 110,470 |
| Corsham | 34,938.68 | £6,166 | 10,951 | 52,055 |
| Devizes | 58,551.41 | £10,333 | 15,751 | 84,635 |
| Malmesbury | 34,527.87 | £6,093 | 13,360 | 53,981 |
| Marlborough | 35,437.57 | £6,254 | 13,615 | 55,307 |
| Melksham | 47,438.90 | £8,372 | 13,225 | 69,035 |
| Pewsey | 29,392.01 | £5,187 | 12,377 | 46,956 |
| Royal Wootton Bassett & Cricklade | 49,892.98 | £8,805 | 14,205 | 72,903 |
| Salisbury | 75,926.93 | £13,399 | 14,758 | 104,084 |
| Southern Wiltshire | 37,335.35 | £6,589 | 13,676 | 57,600 |
| South West Wiltshire | 48,299.52 | £8,523 | 17,079 | 73,902 |
| Tidworth | 38,300.43 | £6,759 | 11,757 | 56,816 |
| Trowbridge | 75,942.18 | £13,402 | 15,354 | 104,698 |
| Warminster | 44,968.33 | £7,936 | 15,226 | 68,130 |
| Westbury | 31,543.19 | £5,566 | 10,320 | 47,430 |
| TOTALS | 850,000 | 150,000 | 250,000 | 1,250,000 |