

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

13 July 2021

Agenda Item 6 – Final Outturn 2020/21

Question from Sue McGill

To Councillor Pauline Church, Cabinet Member for Finance & Procurement, Commissioning, IT, Digital and Commercialisation

Statement 1

I notice that the “query with the historical balance on the revaluation reserve and capital adjustment account, which caused a delay in the approval and publication of the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts” remains unresolved, and I don’t see a reference to it in the final outturn statement.

Question 1 (21-253)

What is your predicted date for resolution?

Response:

The response is a similar one to that previously given at the Cabinet meeting held on 1 June 2021. It is worth noting that the final outturn statement refers to the Councils revenue and capital budgets as opposed to the Statement of Accounts; the latter is a technical document and reflects the Councils financial position in accordance with accounting standards, to which there is then a reconciliation between the position reported in those statements and the outturn position reported to Cabinet.

The Audit & Governance committee is the committee of the Council which holds the responsibility for approving the Councils statement of accounts. The Committee has been presented with update reports at every meeting on the progress of the formal processes for the statutory statement of accounts for both 2018/19 and 2019/20.

We can confirm that the accounts for 2018/19 were approved at the Audit & Governance Committee meeting held on 18 November 2020. Within the reports to the Audit & Governance committee it has been reported that there have been additional delays in completing the audit process and approval of the accounts for 2019/20 due to resourcing capacity from within the Council.

At its meeting on 28 April 2021 the Audit & Governance committee were presented with an updated set of accounts, with the audit now substantially complete but due to other Auditor commitments it is now expected that the final audited accounts for 2019/20 will be presented to the Audit & Governance committee when they meet on 27 July 2021 for final approval.

The reports to the Audit & Governance committee have set out actions taken to date to improve the process, which include the appointment of qualified staff, bringing in additional experienced capacity to help progress outstanding issues and to develop the team and standards of supporting documentation for the audit process. Some training has already been undertaken and a comprehensive improvement plan is under development to address the weaknesses set out by the auditors.

Good progress has been made and it is expected that the accounts for 2020/21 will be presented to the Audit & Governance committee for approval at its meeting on 24 November 2021. Work has progressed and we are confident that the 'except for' qualification in connection with two historic technical balances that results in a 'non-standard' audit report will be complete and a standard report will be received for the 2020/21 financial year. This is and remains a significant priority for us.

Statement 2

I notice that the Council has made Stone Circle (sic) a capital loan £3.030m. What is the source of these funds?

Question 2 (21-254)

If the Council has itself borrowed the wherewithal to make the £3.030m loan to Stone Circle (sic), where in the accounts is this and other borrowing detailed?

Response:

The council is supporting the Stone Circle group of companies in line with the original business plans and approvals. The position of the loans made to Stone Circle is included within the capital section of the Final Outturn 2020/21 report, with detailed narrative included in paragraphs 52-56 of that report.

These loans along with all other loans made are also included within the Treasury Management Outturn 2020/21 report presented to Cabinet today. This report details all borrowing the council has and all loans made, known as borrowing and investments. All borrowing and investments will also be presented in the detail Statement of Accounts for the 2020/21 financial year that are reported to Audit & Governance committee later in the year.

Statement 3

I notice that, for example, Cabinet are being asked to "approve £20.340m of capital programme slippage to be rolled forward into 2021/22," and that the Station Hub project was £0.006m overspent. The Council has vastly ambitious development and road-building plans—for example the road proposed to link the A350 north of

Chippenham to the A350 southwest of Chippenham, together with associated link roads, bridges and viaducts.

Question 3 (21-255)

What assurance can you give me that, if approved, this scheme will not cause further slippage or overspend or both?

Response:

The road schemes are currently at the design stage. As part of this work, risk management processes are being used by the Council's staff and specialist consultants in order to understand the various risks associated with the individual schemes and to enable them to be managed effectively. These include the programme, environmental, and technical risks as well as financial risks. These are being considered at the earliest stage in order to ensure successful delivery and management of these schemes in the future.

Wiltshire Council

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13 July 2021

**Agenda Item 8 – Update on the Council’s Response to the Climate
Emergency**

Question from James Bradbury

**To Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development
Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

Statement

The UK's Climate Change Committee has stated that road building plans are incompatible with our commitments to address climate change and we should instead invest in improvements to broadband [1]. These roads are ostensibly to "reduce congestion", but could only ever provide temporary relief at huge cost. Building or widening roads to relieve congestion is likely loosening your belt to solve obesity.

The surface transport sector is one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gasses, both nationally and within Wiltshire. It is therefore not appropriate to allow it to expand further. Justifying such expansion with dubious offsets or some future carbon capture technology is akin to magical thinking.

You may have heard that Wales recently took the decision to freeze all road-building projects pending a review. [3]

[1] Climate change: Switch road cash to broadband, adviser says

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-52371140>

[2] UK road-building scheme breaches climate commitments, high court told

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jun/29/uk-roadbuilding-scheme-breaches-climate-commitments-high-court-told>

[3] Wales transport: Freeze on all new road building projects

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-politics-57552390>

Question – (21-256)

Will Wiltshire Council agree to freeze all road building projects and conduct a review into their impact on the climate?

Response

To be supplied at Cabinet on 21 July 2021

Wiltshire Council

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13 July 2021

**Agenda Item 8 – Update on the Council’s Response to the Climate
Emergency**

Statement from Margaret Green

**To Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development
Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

Statement

Please advise the cabinet of my ongoing objection to approval for projects that are hugely damaging to the climate emergency (new roads, tunnels, incinerators, green field housing). It is pointless to declare an emergency then make it worse. A moratorium on carbon intensive projects would be wise. There are better alternatives.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

13 July 2021

**Agenda Item 8 – Update on the Council’s Response to the Climate
Emergency**

Statement from Mel Boyle

**To Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development
Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

Statement

Point 19 Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

Through the Station Hill Traffic lights in Chippenham we have seen air quality decline, carbon emissions increase significantly, cycle routes that are not fit for purpose stopping and starting when we already have off road suitable cycle routes, pedestrian crossings that most people will not wait the 4 minutes to cross so walk out in front of vehicles, pubs and restaurants that need all the trade they can get with outside space effected by the noise and fumes. If Wiltshire Council would admit they are human, make mistakes and work with residents by changing the traffic lights to pedestrian only, painting a roundabout back and removing 3 bollards to open up a pop up cycle route wide enough for cars, cyclists and pedestrians all the excessive carbon production could have been saved.

Question 1 – (21-257)

How will Wiltshire Council calculate the extra carbon caused by residents not using public transport and queuing traffic and deduct this from your gains elsewhere?

Response:

Section 5 of our climate strategy discussion document (available as a download [here](#)) sets out our approach to the carbon baseline for Wiltshire. We will be reporting on the 2019 government data from BEIS in our next progress update.

We are also involved in the carbon baseline and forecasting tool currently being developed by the Western Gateway Sub-national Transport Body. This tool will enable us to better understand the carbon impact of different assumptions including those related to mode shares and congestion levels.

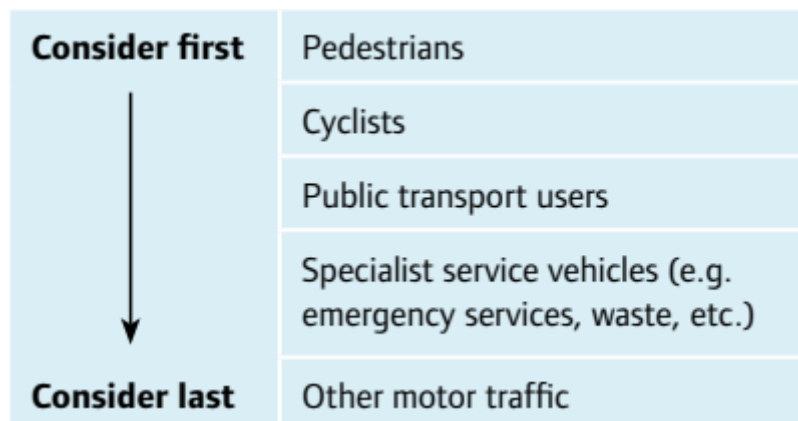
More local statistics are now available in the new neighbourhood carbon calculator which is publicly available here: www.carbon.place

Question 2 – (21-258)

Going forward please will you take into consideration all modes of transport in these "improvements" walking, cycling, car, bus (bus companies threatening to withdraw services due to the delays) and train (people driving to Swindon as quicker than getting to the station by car or bus).

Response:

In designing schemes, the Council follows the 'user hierarchy' set out in the Department for Transport's Manual for Streets document (see [here](#)):



However, as set-out in paragraph 3.6.9 of Manual for Streets:

“The hierarchy is not meant to be rigidly applied and does not necessarily mean that it is always more important to provide for pedestrians than it is for the other modes. However, they should at least be considered first, followed by consideration for the others in the order given. This helps ensure that the street will serve all of its users in a balanced way”.

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**Agenda Item 8 – Update on the Council’s Response to the Climate
Emergency**

Question from Jeremy Wire

**To Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development
Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

Question – (21-259)

I note the work done on the eye-catching Climate Update Report and congratulate it for outlining the number of initiatives and projects, and bold graphics but upon reading the report (and note my own failure when taking part) have realised the lack of actual measurement of the amount of carbon reduction achieved, and the demand for it. There are lots of financial figures in the report but none relating to the actual physical problem.

Will this be rectified? And by when?

Response

Section 5 of our climate strategy discussion document (available as a download [here](#)) sets out our approach to the carbon baseline for Wiltshire. We will be reporting on the 2019 government data from BEIS in our next progress update. Carbon footprint data is available once a year only, and with a two year time lag for government statistics. We report on our own greenhouse gas emissions as a council once a year and the data for 2020/21 will be available on our website from September. We do have up to date statistics available for our streetlights and this has been shared at paragraph 23 of the report.

Wiltshire Council

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13 July 2021

**Agenda Item 8 – Update on the Council’s Response to the Climate
Emergency**

Question from Andrew Nicolson

**To Councillor Nick Botterill, Cabinet Member for Development
Management, Strategic Planning and Climate Change**

Statement 1

External bodies

- i. Noting that Wiltshire Council is a member of UK100 and is in its Countryside Climate Network as a founder member, and that the UK100 UK Net Zero Pledge says, "Those pledging should set interim targets, focusing on early actions and prioritising sectors that will contribute to rapid reductions in GHG emissions;

Question 1 (21-260)

Has Wiltshire Council set or drafted dated and quantified interim targets, and if so can you give the two or three most significant examples?

Response:

A draft climate strategy is currently being developed and will be consulted on from 1 September for 6 weeks. From this, a range of delivery plans with key milestones will be developed.

A number of key targets have been set out in this report and previous progress reports, such as:

- Retrofitting 100 of the least energy efficient council homes by September 2021
- Reducing carbon emissions from streetlights by 83% by 2022/23 compared with the 2013/14 baseline
- Saving 1200 tonnes of CO2 per year from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund improvements to our estate

- ii. Noting that Wiltshire Council's Climate Strategy webpage states the

council has joined Race to Zero, a "global campaign driven by science to rally leadership and support towards a net Zero Carbon future";

Question 2 (21-261)

Can you verify that membership, and briefly explain what it involves, how it helps and what difference it has made?

Response:

We can confirm that we have joined the Race to Zero. This is a commitment signed up to by businesses, cities, regions and investors worldwide. It enables the sum of all our initiatives to be visible, which is crucial when tackling a global problem. It also provides a common framework for pledging and reporting on progress.

Statement 2

Carbon reduction outcomes

- i. On Wiltshire Council's own internal 2030 target, noting that LED street lights and the Public Sector Decarbonisation programme are almost the only actions where actual carbon reduction outcomes are reported;

Question 3 (21-262)

Does the Council's target include employee green travel plan outcomes and count in emissions from employee commuting and work travel, and what is the progress here?

Response:

The council's carbon neutral target for 2030 applies to scopes 1 & 2, which are emissions within the council's direct control. Employee commuting and business travel are in scope 3 as we do not have direct control over these, although we are able to influence them. Further detail on scopes is provided in section 7.6 of our climate strategy discussion document which is available as a download [here](#).

The preliminary data for last financial year shows that staff business travel almost halved from 4.2m miles driven in 2019/20 to 2.4m miles driven in 2020/21.

Question 4 (21-263)

On the Wiltshire area-wide 2030 target, can you comment on which two or three of these major contributors the Council currently sees as the most challenging to reduce, and hardest for the Council to influence, out of:

- Reducing transport emissions via traffic volumes,
- Reducing transport emissions via vehicle emissions,

- More and better domestic insulation,
- Domestic heating conversion from gas to renewables,
- Loss of land-based carbon sinks (soil, greenfield sites, etc.),
- Natural carbon sequestration (new woodland, wetland, farming practices etc.),
- or others?

Response:

All of the above will be required, as there is no single solution to tackling the climate emergency. The full range of areas to be addressed have been set out in our climate strategy discussion document and will be consulted on as part of our draft climate strategy in the autumn.