

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**7 May 2024**

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**Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation**

**Question from Dr Jimmy Walker – Salisbury Active Travel**

**To**

**Cllr Tamara Reay – Cabinet Member for Transport and Assets**

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**Statement**

**Award for feasibility studies in Salisbury:**

I note that Wiltshire Council was awarded £375,000 to spend on walking, cycling and wheeling infrastructure developments and that the following feasibility studies for the following routes in Salisbury will be undertaken:

- A3094 Netherhampton to Hospital cycleway in Salisbury
- The Town Path walking and cycling link in Salisbury
- A338 City Centre to Hospital cycleway (via New Bridge Road and Downton Road) in Salisbury

Whilst it is encouraging that WC have secured funding for a number of feasibility studies to be undertaken it imperative that these studies are carried out without delay to ensure that many of those relocating to the new housing developments in Netherhampton are provided with active travel choices to the hospital or to the city centre.

**Question (24-22Q)**

When will these feasibility studies be undertaken and the outcomes shared with local active travel groups and residents.

**Response**

The feasibility studies will be undertaken during the 2024-25 financial year and it is intended that the outcomes will be shared with stakeholders in quarter 4 of 2024-25.

**Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation**

**Question from Dr Jimmy Walker – Salisbury Active Travel**

**To**

**Cllr Tamara Reay – Cabinet Member for Transport and Assets**

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**Statement**

**Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plans**

I note that the decision to approve the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) Chippenham, Devizes, Trowbridge was published on the 25h April 2024.

However, it is extremely disappointing that the long awaited LCWIP for Salisbury, which is essential to bring together the above routes into a coherent walking and wheeling network, is not mentioned in that report nor has it been published.

“Adopted LCWIPs are a key prerequisite for unlocking government funding through Active Travel England (ATE). Failure to develop and adopt LCWIPs will significantly reduce the chance of successful funding bids and is likely to harm Wiltshire Council’s ambitious aspirations on active travel, climate change, air pollution and health and wellbeing objectives.” (Extracted from: Decision details TA-01-24: Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs): Chippenham, Devizes, Trowbridge). Without the provenance of an LCWIP for Salisbury it is unlikely that any capital scheme bids will be successful in attracting government capital funding to enable implementation.

In April 2024 in response to a Cabinet Question I was informed that the LCWIP for Salisbury will be published in May.

**Question (24-23Q)**

Could you please confirm that the Salisbury LCWIP will actually be published in May as per your statement in April 2024 – could you also confirm that this will be May 2024?

**Response**

A Cabinet Member report is being prepared for the Salisbury LCWIP to approve the amendments to the LCWIP following the previous public consultation. This will be produced in May 2024 with the publication of the LCWIP following shortly after.

**Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation**

**Question from Dr Jimmy Walker – Salisbury Active Travel**

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**Cllr Tamara Reay – Cabinet Member for Transport and Assets**

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**Statement**

**Wiltshire's Active Travel Capability (ATCA) Score**

In the press statement about being awarded the above funding Cllr Reay stated that "We're committed to enabling residents to live healthier lives and improving walking, cycling and wheeling routes in Wiltshire. This is part of our Business Plan commitment to improve the air quality. That's why this funding is so welcome - it will be spent on both installing new infrastructure to make it easier for people to choose to leave their cars at home, as well as planning for more new projects, which will then put us in a good position to successfully bid for more funding.

Wiltshire's Active Travel Capability (ATCA) Score is currently 1, which is defined as "Some local leadership with basic plans and isolated interventions that do not yet obviously form a plan for a network".

The current score is not a good reflection on Wiltshire council nor on the current Cabinet Member for Transport and Assets.

"Adopted LCWIPs are a key prerequisite for progression through ATE's Self Assessment scoring system which will unlock additional government funding through the Active Travel Fund." (LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLANS (LCWIPs): CHIPPENHAM, DEVIZES AND TROWBRIDGE - CM10156 IMD)

It is essential that WC improve their current score as that will act as leverage to secure more funding for active travel.

**Question (24-24Q)**

- a. Have you now been made aware of the recent ATCA local leadership, plans, and delivery record scores.
- b. How do you intend to improve that score from 1 to ensure that you are able to leverage more funds in the future? What is your plan and strategy and over what timescale?

**Response**

- a. There has been no announcement from Active Travel England on the council's 2023 Capability Assessment Rating.

- b. The council is actively engaging with Active Travel England's Regional Manager for South West England on how we can improve our capability rating level. We are being encouraged to continue to focus on pipeline development, especially the development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) as Active Travel England requires that schemes submitted for capital funding are identified in an LCWIP. The council has now prepared LCWIPs for Salisbury, Chippenham, Trowbridge and Devizes, as well as the Wiltshire-wide LCWIP. We are currently developing LCWIPs for Calne and Melksham and it is intended that all of Wiltshire's towns will have LCWIPs by the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

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**Statement**

**Salisbury city centre**

The city centre of Salisbury is consistently gridlocked causing congestion, air pollution and resulting in an environment that does not encourage walking and wheeling. An example of this is that Castle street alone has been between 6500 (Sun 21st April) and 11,000 (Frid 26th April) car and heavy goods vehicles on a daily basis (Data provided by Telraam traffic sensors - [Abacus | Castle Street \(telraam.net\)](https://www.telraam.net)). A number of strategies have been suggested in the Salisbury Transportation plan.

**Question (24-25Q)**

When will Wiltshire Council start to implement long term and sustainable active travel strategies in Salisbury city centre to manage the excessive traffic flow and gridlock that is currently blighting active travel and economic commerce in the city centre.

**Response**

The main emphasis of the Salisbury LCWIP is to identify, prioritise and deliver schemes that have the most potential to increase active travel, particularly via modal shift from car trips.

Wider traffic management proposals to control movements across the city will be considered where there is clear evidence of local support.

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**Question from Dr Jimmy Walker – Salisbury Active Travel**

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**Statement**

**Avon Valley Path – Salisbury:**

The current walking and wheeling route along Avon Valley Path is currently closed after Nelson Road towards to the city centre. A clear theme that emerged from the LCWIP consultation process was the concern over existing shared use paths and the strong desire for segregated walking and cycling infrastructure along with improving maintenance of existing facilities.

The current route along the Avon Valley Path is too narrow to support walking and wheeling under the arch (see image below) – it is important that an alternative route is identified as soon as possible to ensure that a high quality walking and wheeling can be implemented for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users.

The current walking cycling and wheeling improvements being implemented through the river park only replace what was already there and do not address this pinch point.

We have consistently asked for updates on how this pinch point will be addressed, only to be informed that the solution will be part of another plan. This is extremely disappointing for a council with aspirations to improve active travel.



Image: blocked access along the Avon Valley Path

**Question (24-26Q)**

What alternative route is being planned for the Avon Valley Path after Nelson Road to the city centre to ensure that an alternative, appropriate, sustainable and usable segregated route for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair users will be delivered.

**Response**

The proposed alternative route is via Kivel Court and then along the access road into the Central Car Park through the third railway arch that is currently leased to a third party. The scheme is subject to the council taking over the lease and discussions with the third party are taking place.

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**Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation**

**Question from Margaret Willmott**

**To**

**Cllr Tamara Reay – Cabinet Member for Transport and Assets**

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**Statement**

**Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans**

It is noted that the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) for Chippenham, Devizes, Trowbridge are being progressed as a delegated decision (see TA-01-24, <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1959>).

**Question (24-27Q)**

What is the current situation regarding the Wiltshire-wide LCWIP and the LCWIP for Salisbury? These were both the subject of a public consultation in August/September 2022 but there does not appear to have been any visible progress since then.

**Response**

Cabinet Member reports are being prepared for the Salisbury LCWIP and Wiltshire-wide LCWIP to approve the amendments to these LCWIPs following the previous public consultations. These will be produced in May 2024 with the publication of the LCWIPs following shortly after.



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**Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation**

**Question from Cllr Ian Thorn**

**To**

**Cllr Richard Clewer – Leader of the Council**

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**Question (24-28Q)**

Has the administration decided whether to appeal the employment tribunal hearing outcome?

**Verbal Response** – This is a decision for the Head of Paid Service to make and not the administration. Officers have now had an opportunity to review the appeal hearing outcome and feel there are strong grounds to appeal the outcome of the tribunal.

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**Question from Cllr Ian Thorn**

**To**

**Cllr Richard Clewer – Leader of the Council**

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**Question (24-29Q)**

What does he think has contributed to our position in the Independent Office of Local Government's league table published in The Times?

**Response**

The data provided by oflog is not designed to be used for ranking purposes. For example, every District Council was ranked by the Times on its performance in its dealing with highways and adult social care despite the fact that they have no responsibility or involvement for these areas and they were given an average score.

There are some more significant issues coming out of oflog's perspective and calls into serious doubt the function of oflog from the start. The Times published the data pulled together by oflog. When oflog suggest that Wiltshire Council are compared with other Councils who have since issued 114 notices or in receipt of massive external additional financial borrowing support from government, in the realm of the Council's financial position and consistent performance in this area, it demonstrates that oflog are unaware of what it is actually measuring and calls into question how oflog are going to function going forward. The Government created oflog to try and provide an early warning mechanism and assistance for Councils that are heading into financial trouble in particular.

There are concerns as to the way information has been provided by oflog so far. The LGA have equal concerns about oflog data and the way this information is being used. The concept and principle of oflog is welcomed and good to demonstrate that councils are heading along the right path. The provision of assistance and support is welcome, although the data needs to reflect reality to achieve that aim.

**Supplementary Verbal Question**

Have other Local Authorities expressed their concerns at the report that appeared in the Times?

**Verbal Response**

I am not aware if other councils have written expressing their concerns, however, the LGA is talking with oflog about Councils concerns. The data does not reflect Wiltshire Council in any way and there are vast amounts of information the Council can provide

to demonstrate that. For the sake of oflog moving forward, they needed to develop a robust challenge to that approach and type of information being published.

**Supplementary Verbal Question**

Have we received a response from Oflog to the Council's concerns?

**Verbal Response**

Not at this stage, we understand they may consider a response later this week.

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**Agenda Item 5 - Public Participation**

**Question from Cllr Ian Thorn**

**To**

**Cllr Nick Holder – Cabinet Member for Highways, Street Scene, and Flooding**

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**Question (24-30Q)**

What is the latest on Wiltshire battle to reduce potholes?

**Verbal Response**

I can confirm that our annual program involves emptying approximately 42,000 gullies each year. Beyond this scheduled work, the council is significantly increasing its investment in drainage cleansing. The exceptionally wet winter has caused numerous flooding issues, with water seeping onto highways from saturated adjoining land. This has been a major contributor to pothole formation, so the additional investment should help mitigate future pothole problems.

In relation to progress on potholes, over 15,000 potholes have been repaired, an increase of 20% in comparison to the previous year. To meet the demand a number of additional measures have been deployed including, an additional two gangs to repair small surface potholes, Parish Stewards retaining their normal activities with a focus on potholes and the deployment of the dragon patcher to repair and counter any further deterioration of the existing highway. The Council recognises there is still more to do and note that the above measures are delivering results.

Regular meetings are being held between the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Place, investigations are ongoing in relation to possible additional capacity of the Councils Highways contractor, benefits of using AI to support ongoing repairs and use of pumps to clear water to enable repairs.

**Supplementary Question**

What is the level of claims being received?

**Response**

Suggested response: The council has seen an increase in the number of claims being received for highways related incidents over the past 4 years, although it is clear that the years impacted by COVID restricted movement initiatives (such as lockdown)

greatly reduced the number of claims being submitted. In the years prior to COVID approximately 1,000 claims were received annually. In 2022/23 1,332 claims were received and 2023/24 1,623 were received.