

AGENDA SUPPLEMENT (1)

Meeting: Council

Place: Council Chamber, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN

Date: Tuesday 20 February 2024

Time: 10.30 am

The Agenda for the above meeting was published on 12 February. Additional documents are now available and are attached to this Agenda Supplement.

Please direct any enquiries on this Agenda to Kieran Elliott of Democratic Services, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, direct line 01225 718352 or email committee@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications on direct lines (01225)713114/713115.

This Agenda and all the documents referred to within it are available on the Council's website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk

6 **Public Participation** *(Pages 3 - 16)*

Questions from members of the public, together with responses.

8 **Wiltshire Council Budget 2024/2025 and MTFs Update 2024/25-2026/27**
(Pages 17 - 22)

Report of the meeting held on 12 February 2024.

18 **Questions from Members of the Council** *(Pages 23 - 24)*

A question from a Member of the Council, together with a response.

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 19 February 2024

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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.

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

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.

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

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.

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

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.

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

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.

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

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.”

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

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.

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

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.

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.

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

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.

APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 12 February 2024

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on the Wiltshire Council Budget 2024/25 - Amendments

Purpose of report

1. To provide to Full Council a summary of the main issues discussed at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 12 February 2024.

Background

2. The meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 12 February 2024 provided an opportunity to scrutinise amendments to the budget. The meeting on 25 January 2024 had considered the initial proposals from the Cabinet, which were subsequently agreed at Cabinet on 6 February 2024 for recommendation to Full Council on 20 February 2024.
3. Three proposed amendments were received for the meeting from Councillors Gavin Grant and Ian Thorn on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group.
4. All proposals were provided to the Committee with comments by the Section 151 Officer, Head of Paid Service, and the Monitoring Officer. They were confirmed as financially and legally viable, with comments included on any increased risks such as in relation to use of reserves or use of assumptions to fund additional expenditures.

Wiltshire Council Financial Plan 2024-25: Addendum

5. It was noted that though the meeting was principally for the scrutiny of budget amendments put forward by opposition members; a report had been included which was an update on the administration's Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This was agreed by Cabinet on 6 February. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was announced on 5 February, and it included additional funding for Wiltshire over and above that included in the provisional settlement.
6. It was outlined by the Leader of the Council that the funding was proposed to be used as follows:
 - £0.100m contribution to Air Quality monitoring in 2024/25.
 - £0.025m contribution towards volunteer recruitment by Libraries for residents in remote areas.
 - £0.603m funding for rural play areas to enable them to continue to be used by the local community that will lead to their transfer to the local town or parish council.
 - £3.798m funding for additional investment in SEND and children's services early help and prevention support

APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 12 February 2024

7. It was outlined that the addendum had the effect of amending recommendation A of the proposals included in the Budget 2024/25 report. As the funding had only been confirmed for one year the budget impact and changes would affect 2024/25 only.

Main issues raised during questioning

- 8. Clarity was sought regarding how the rural play areas funding would be split up, with some communities investing more in their play areas than others. It was outlined that this process would be evidence driven with a desire for the play areas to be improved in an efficient way.
- 9. It was noted that the Air Quality monitoring would be county wide and that community conversations had been focused in two areas, Studley Green and Bemerton Heath, however additional members of staff had been hired so community conversations would be rolled out wider with an evidence base starting to be gathered.
- 10. It was questioned whether there was a timeline for the proportion and use of the £3.798m funding for additional investment in SEND and children’s services early help and prevention support. It was stated that there was a first draft with a plan to use the funding over a two-year period.
- 11. Concern was raised that some parishes with small precepts might not be able to afford improving their play areas and whether this issue could be mitigated, to which the importance of ensuring that empowerment stays with Parish Councils was stated.
- 12. Clarity was provided that the 33 play areas referenced did not include those which had 7-year leases to the towns.

Proposed Amendments

Amendment A

13. The proposal from Councillors Grant and Thorn was as follows:

A £0.003m increase in social welfare funding to each of the 18 Area Boards, and the establishment of a central fund of £0.036m that Area Boards can bid for extra social welfare funding.

14. This would have the following financial impact on the 2024/25 base budget:

Proposal	Impact £m
£0.003m increase in social welfare funding to each of the 18 Area Boards	0.054
Establishment of a central fund of £0.036m that Area Boards can bid for extra social welfare funding	0.036
Total annual pressure of proposals	0.090
Total pressure across MTFs	0.270

APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 12 February 2024

Funding Proposal of Pressure	
Reduce the Business Plan Priority reserve allocation of £0.821m for Council wide enforcement activity by the total of £0.270m	0.270

Amendment B

15. This proposal from Councillors Grant and Thorn was as follows:

To remove the income budget introduced in 2022/23 as a result of the saving included in the budget to introduce parking charges for Blue Badge holders of £0.040m.

16. This would have the following financial impact on the 2024/25 base budget:

Proposal	Impact £m
Remove the income budget introduced in 2022/23 as a result of the saving included in the budget to introduce parking charges for Blue Badge holders	0.040
Total annual pressure of proposal	0.040
Total pressure across MTFS	0.120
Funding Proposal of Pressure	
Reduce the Business Plan Priority reserve allocation of £0.821m for Council wide enforcement activity by the total of £0.120m	0.120

Amendment C

17. This proposal from Councillors Grant and Thorn was as follows:

Provision of funding of £0.075m to enable partnership working with VisitWiltshire or an equivalent body in both 2024/25 and 2025/26.

18. This would have the following financial impact on the 2024/25 base budget:

Proposal	Impact £m
Provision of funding of £0.075m to enable partnership working with VisitWiltshire or an equivalent body	0.075
Total pressure of proposal in 2024/25	0.075
Total pressure across 2024/25 and 2025/26	0.150
Funding Proposal of Pressure	
Reduce the Wiltshire Towns Funding by £0.150m to allow for a budget surplus to fund this pressure	0.150

APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 12 February 2024

19. For each amendment the Chairman gave the opportunity for Members of the Cabinet who were present to respond if they wished, as well as opportunity for the Corporate Leadership Team to add anything further to the statutory officer comments provided with the submissions. The Section 151 Officer, Lizzie Watkin, provided clarification on the amendments where appropriate.

Main issues raised during questioning and debate

Amendment A

20. Councillor Grant introduced his amendment and explained its purpose and implications. He stated that each of the 18 Area Boards would receive £3,000 and that there would be a central pot of funding available with Area Boards able to bid for additional funding.

21. Details were provided that the impact of the funding of the proposal would have the effect of reducing the Business Priority Plan Fund commitment of £0.821m to Council wide enforcement activity by £0.090m in 2024/25, and by a total of £0.270m over the MTFS period.

22. Queries were raised on whether the additional funding to Area Boards would be a straight split of £3,000 each as generally Area Board funding had a formula applied to it to represent the size and need of the area. It was clarified that this was not the case, and the additional pot would represent an opportunity for Area Boards to receive more funding.

23. It was questioned where the money would be taken from to fund Amendments A and B, to which clarity was provided from the Section 151 Officer, that the Business Plan Priority reserve allocation for Council wide enforcement activity was a reserve set aside for additional enforcement activity. Further clarity was provided that this reserve referred to enforcement activity as a whole to provide a coherent approach to tackling enforcement as a joined-up authority, with planning, licensing and other departments linked. The reserve would fund a One Council approach to dealing with enforcement issues particularly where there were concerns about safety to life.

24. Emphasis was placed on the need for evidence when conducting enforcement activity and that such work would be reliant on the need to develop an evidence base through officers.

25. The need for Members to discuss the risks and priorities of not having the reserve for enforcement activity or not having the additional Area Board funding was stressed.

Amendment B

26. Councillor Grant presented the amendment, whose purpose was to remove the income budget introduced in 2022/23 as a result of the saving included in the budget to introduce parking charges for Blue Badge holders of £0.040m.

APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 12 February 2024

27. Clarity was provided by the Monitoring Officer that though this had been a decision regarding the previous budget, the financial implications would remain on this budget, therefore meaning that the amendment was relevant.
28. Clarity was provided that if accepted, this amendment would allow Blue Badge holders to have free parking in Wiltshire Council car parks.
29. A point was raised that if someone can afford to run a car, then it would be likely that they would be able to afford to pay for parking.
30. It was questioned that if this amendment was accepted, what would the implications be for the capital funded programme to move parking machines, to which it was clarified that this programme was separate and aimed to achieve several objectives including improved accessibility of car parks and the introduction of cashless payments.
31. The Section 1515 Officer provided clarity that as it is not possible to calculate the actual income generated through disabled or able-bodied residents paying for parking. Therefore, the estimate of £40,000 was included as the figure included as a saving included as part of a previous budget setting process.
32. A point was raised that some residents with disabilities would be happy to pay for their parking.
33. A suggestion was made that it would be preferred that the savings from this amendment, if accepted, be used for enhancing the capital fund programme and ensuring that more accessible meters were put into communities faster.

Amendment C

34. Cllr Gavin Grant presented the amendment, detailing the provision of funding of £0.075m to enable partnership working with VisitWiltshire or an equivalent body in both 2024/25 and 2025/26. It was also noted that a competitive process for tender would have to take place should the amendment be passed.
35. It was outlined that the £150,000 funding for the amendment would be from the Wiltshire Towns Funding.
36. The Leader suggested that the £500,000 of unallocated funding referenced as being within the Wiltshire Towns Funding did not relate to the latest figures and that everything within the Wiltshire Towns Funding had been allocated in one way or another.
37. It was agreed that officers would obtain the precise details of the Wiltshire Towns Funding and that this would be shared with Members as soon as possible.
38. The Monitoring Officer provided clarity that regarding the amendment and withdrawal of funding from the Wiltshire Towns Funding, that as there was no legal commitments and binding, this may lead to disappointed partners at the end of the process should

APPENDIX to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee Minutes of 12 February 2024

the amendment be accepted. Clarity was provided that conversations with partners take place off the record initially, before then being made public and contractual.

39. Queries were raised as to the benefit of approving the amendment and what return might be expected to communities and the county following the investment. A question was also posed that if the Council was not to spend money on building such partnerships with bodies, then what would be done to promote the tourism and economic health of the county.
40. Reference was made to the deadlines within the scrutiny process.
41. A point was made which suggested that statistically Wiltshire was the worst performing county in the Southwest in terms of value for money from Visit Wiltshire's efforts.
42. Assurance was provided that bodies other to VisitWiltshire did exist and would seek such a tender if it was available.
43. It was suggested that it would be beneficial for the amendment to outline the potential benefits of going out to tender to an outside body for such a provision.

Conclusion

44. Cllrs Thorn and Grant were thanked for submitting their budget proposals to the Committee, and it was noted that they have been scrutinised.
45. To ask Full Council to take note of the comments of the Committee, as presented in this report.

Councillor Graham Wright

Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Report Author: Ben Fielding, Senior Democratic Services Officer (Democratic Services), 01225 718656 or Benjamin.Fielding@wiltshire.gov.uk

Report Date: 15 February 2024

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2024

Item 18 - Members' Questions

From Cllr Paul Oatway QPM - Pewsey Vale West Division

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

Question (24-01)

At the Full Council meeting held on 17 October 2023, Cllr Nick Holder provided an update on the Council's response to the climate emergency.

In part of this update Cllr Holder explained how Wiltshire Council is responding to the changing requirements regarding household waste collection as part of the Environment Act and subsequent clarification from DEFRA.

Whilst Cllr Holder was doing this he was interrupted by another Member, and I am concerned not all Members were able to understand the details which were being discussed.

Can I therefore ask Cllr Holder to reiterate how this council is responding to these changing requirements?

Response:

The Environment Act 2021 is expected to have a significant impact on the household waste collection services that Wiltshire provides today. It also includes several new statutory requirements we will need to comply with. The new initiatives and requirements under the Act have been subject to significant delays with key detail only recently being made available by Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Some key changes are:

October 2025: A national Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for all drinks containers (excluding glass) - consumers will be required to pay a deposit on all drink containers in scope, to be redeemed when returned to a retailer deposit point. This scheme should lead to an increase in national recycling rates, and a reduction in local littering, but may reduce the income this council receives from the sale of the recyclable materials it currently collects at the kerbside and through the household recycling centre network.

October 2025: Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Scheme. Packaging producers will finally be made responsible for covering the costs of managing their waste packaging through waste collection services, recycling centres and litter bins.

There is potential for significant funding to be shared with councils by the EPR scheme Administrator. More are details expected in 2024, with councils told to expect to receive their first funding settlement in December 2025. As well as appropriately funding local authorities, the EPR scheme aims to encourage better packaging design to allow more recycling, and disincentivise the use of “hard to recycle” packaging items, such as black plastic food trays.

March 2026 – minimum requirement for all councils to provide recycling collections for glass bottle and jars, metal cans and tins, paper and card, and plastic containers (Wiltshire already complies with this).

Food Waste: Requirement to provide a separate weekly collection of food waste by March 2026, unless this would have a negative impact on existing waste management contracts. As this is the case in Wiltshire, we have been granted a short deferment until August 2027. The council has also received positive news from Defra on the indicative level of New Burdens Funding that we should expect to receive to allow this new service to be rolled out to Wiltshire residents.

March 2027: “flexibles plastics” such as plastic films and bread bags to be included in kerbside recycling collections, recognising that more UK-based reprocessor capacity is needed to successfully recycle this material at scale.

The officers are working hard to fully assess the impacts and opportunities arising from these significant changes, and to ensure that Wiltshire provides compliant services by the necessary deadlines. In doing so, we are confident that we shall be able to further increase our recycling rates and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill, with all of the Environmental benefits that this will deliver.

Additional comment on food waste

It is important to note that currently, food waste is typically disposed of in household waste bins and is sent to generate energy, very little if any of this waste collected at the kerbside is sent to landfill.

Between now and 2027, we will focus on encouraging residents to reduce the amount of food waste that they generate, and promoting our subsidised food waste digesters that allow households to manage the food waste they produce at home.