

Wiltshire Council

Council

10 May 2016

Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division

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

Question (16/16)

At the last Full Council meeting (23 Feb 2016) you gave me an assurance that any legal agreements in connection with planning applications are done in full consultations with Town and Parish Councils.

However in an email from a senior planning officer dated 23 Feb 16 to Melksham Without Parish Council it is stated that Wiltshire Council never consult on such changes.

Is this a case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing or did you get it wrong?

Response

Parish Councils are consulted on planning applications, but Section 106 agreements negotiated during the course of a planning application will not include Parish Councils as a party involved in the negotiations. This is because it has to be a professional judgement by the local planning authority as to whether a requirement can legitimately be included within S106 – i.e. does it pass the Regulation 122 test set out in the relevant legislation (is it necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms; directly related to the development; and fairly and reasonably related in scale.) At this stage the Parish Council can suggest matters in their response to the application that should be considered. Our report (either to committee or on delegated powers) will set out what has been agreed. Our commitment is that once an agreement is completed, if there are significant changes to it proposed at a later date, we will consult with the Parish Council before agreeing those changes.

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Councillor Ernie Clark, Hilperton Division

To Councillor Fleur de Rhé-Phillipe, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Skills, Strategic Transport and Strategic Property

Question (16/17)

Question to Council

Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Phillipe, with the Associate Director for Economic Development, met with representatives of 'Transforming Trowbridge' and agreed to provide funding to them of £2,000.

Why were no councillors from the Trowbridge Area Board invited to the meeting?

Why is Wiltshire Council making a financial contribution to what many would describe as an ad hoc group of people (some seemingly with a vested interest) which has no constitution, no audited accounts, is not a registered charity and has no clearly defined public accountability?

Response

The meeting with representatives of Transforming Trowbridge was at their request and not arranged by Wiltshire Council.

Wiltshire Council established Transforming Trowbridge in November 2009 to coordinate and facilitate the regeneration of Trowbridge. When the decision was taken to end direct support from Wiltshire Council its membership, including Trowbridge Town Council, offered to take on that function. The group had an extant Terms of Reference which we understand it was to update. Trowbridge Town Council was to act as the accountable body for the group. Trowbridge Town Council has a constitution, audited accounts and clearly defined public accountability.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Skills, Strategic Transport and Strategic Property and the Associate Director of Economic Development and Planning met with representatives of the Transforming Trowbridge and agreed to help the re-established Transforming Trowbridge with some start-up funding. It was agreed that £2000 would be provided from the service's budget to allow the group to undertake local economic development activity including development of website to help promote development opportunities and attract inward investment to the town. This is to be a one-off payment and would need to be matched by the private sector.

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Councillor Mary Douglas, Salisbury St Francis and Stratford Division

To Councillor Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE, Leader of the Council

Question (16/18)

At a meeting hosted recently by Churches Together in Salisbury to explore how we could best welcome refugees into our community, the consensus among those present was that we would like to receive more refugees.

What is the Council doing in this regard?

Response

Wiltshire has welcomed 27 Syrian refugees to the county so far, under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, more than other areas in the South West. The Prime Minister has paid tribute to Wiltshire Council as well as other councils involved in the scheme for the progress we have made in welcoming and supporting these families. The children have started in schools, adults have begun accredited English lessons at Wiltshire College and other learning is underway. Our new families have a caseworker to help them and are being supported to volunteer, gain work experience and enter the world of work. We are deeply grateful to all our volunteers who have befriended the families, provided informal English lessons and other support and helped them settle into community life in Wiltshire.

We are currently working with partners to prepare for a similar number of arrivals within a couple of months, ensuring that placements have suitable housing and that there is appropriate capacity in schools and health services, as well as other relevant support in place. Wiltshire Council will consider all offers of suitable self-contained housing, which is affordable and sustainable*, for the purposes of this programme and asks members of the public to contact the council with details of these. We continue to be grateful for all the offers of public support that have been made.

*[*Usually affordable is understood to mean available to rent at the local housing allowance rate, and sustainable to mean offered with an assured shorthold tenancy of at least twelve months, preferably three years.]*

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Councillor Chris Hurst, Royal Wootton Bassett South Division

To Councillor Philip Whitehead, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Question (16/19)

Given Wiltshire Council's decision to close the only public toilets in Royal Wootton Bassett and the Town Council's reluctance to take them over, the town is now without any functioning public convenience. This is damaging trade and the economic vitality of the High Street and gives an exceptionally poor image of Wiltshire Council.

Why has Wiltshire Council refused to keep the toilets open on a temporary basis until a new provider agrees to take them over?

Response

A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.

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10 May 2016

Councillor Chris Caswill, Chippenham Monkton Division

To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Operational Property and Waste

Question (16/20)

Has the Council taken independent legal advice about the soundness of the latest CSAP, and its ability to withstand legal challenge? If so, did it provide effective reassurance?

Response

The Council has taken independent legal advice. The Council is confident that the implementation of the Schedule of Work in response to the Inspector's concerns enables the Council to submit additional evidence and Proposed Modifications to support the progression of the Chippenham Site Allocations Plan through Examination. This work ensures the Plan is sound in accordance with Section 20(5)(b) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 183 of the NPPF.