

Baroness Scott's statement to full council – 10 July 2018

I would like to update council members of the latest situation regarding the incident and ongoing investigation in Amesbury and Salisbury.

I am sure that, like myself, you will have been shocked and deeply saddened to hear of the tragic death of Dawn Sturgess on Sunday evening and will join me in sending our sincere condolences to her family and friends. We must acknowledge the role of Salisbury District Hospital that worked tirelessly to treat Dawn following exposure to the nerve agent Novichok.

Her partner Charlie Rowley is still being treated in Salisbury hospital and he is in a critical condition. Our thoughts are also with him, his family and friends during what is clearly a difficult time for them all.

Having a death occur in our local community; particularly in such extraordinary circumstances is undoubtedly affecting those who live and work there. Our role is to support our partners whilst they carry out their investigation into this dreadful crime.

As I am sure you are aware, this incident is now being investigated as a murder and is being led by the UK's Counter Terrorism Policing Network supported by Wiltshire Police.

Our responsibility as Wiltshire Council is to be a vital link with local communities to make sure that we keep people informed of the latest information as it becomes available. This is a fast-moving situation, the like of which we have never experienced in Wiltshire before, and we understand that people are concerned; particularly those in Salisbury and Amesbury.

It is also important that we provide support to those directly affected and to the most vulnerable in our communities, who are finding this incident extremely upsetting and difficult. It is important to reassure our communities and the current advice from Public Health England is that the wider risk to public health remains low. I would refer anyone with concerns to the health advice available on Public Health England's website which is also posted on our dedicated Salisbury page on the council's website, or to contact the helpline that has been set up on 0800 092 0410 or 020 7158 0124 to respond to any health concerns.

It is vital that we continue to assist local businesses and yesterday I announced that in Amesbury we have lifted the parking charges on our Central and Church Street car parks and we will be visiting all local businesses to assess their needs and provide any support that is needed.

People can now park free of charge from 12pm Monday to Friday and free all day at the weekend. We will continue to work with our communities in Amesbury and Salisbury to support them during this testing time. Since the first incident occurred in March they have shown just how resilient and determined they are in the face of unprecedented challenges and I am sure that this will continue. We will do all that we can to help both these communities affected get back to normal.

This evening we are holding a community meeting at 7.00 pm at Antrobus House in Amesbury to update on the current position and to provide an opportunity for people to ask questions and raise any issues they might have. The representatives from local and national partner agencies that will be attending are:

- Myself as the chair of the meeting
- Kier Pritchard, Chief Constable, Wiltshire Police
- UK Counter Terrorism representative
- Paul Cosford, Director for Health Protection and Medical Director, Public Health England
- Cara Charles-Barks, Chief Executive, Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust
- Alistair Cunningham, Chair of the Salisbury recovery coordinating group
- Angus Macpherson, Police and Crime Commissioner
- Ben Ansell, Chief Fire Officer, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service
- Jane Whichello, Deputy Commander (Wiltshire), South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust

I will continue to make sure that you are updated as matters progress.