

COUNCIL  
22 February 2011

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**COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS**

**QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS CASWILL  
CHIPPENHAM MONKTON DIVISION**

**TO COUNCILLOR JOHN THOMSON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT  
CARE, COMMUNITIES AND LIBRARIES**

**Question 1**

- a. Have any representations being made to the government on the Council's behalf in respect of the deeply regrettable proposals to cut the mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance?
- b. Will he take this opportunity to make clear this Council's concern about the effects of this proposed reduction of the living standards and working opportunities of Wiltshire citizens?
- c. What would be the cost to this Council of restoring this cut for the citizens of Wiltshire were going to be otherwise affected?
- d. If this policy is implemented, would he consider proposing to the Cabinet that the restoration of this allowance be included in the 2012 – 2013 budget?

**Response**

- a. The council has written to our local MPs.
- b. We have written to MPs. We have also suggested that if this were to be implemented then a ringfenced grant could be made available to Local councils to help provide some alternative support.
- c. we estimate that there are approx 400 people in residential homes in Wiltshire who we fund that may claim DLA, and the total loss to them would be estimated at approx £1m.a year. In addition there will be some people under 65 in residential care who fund themselves, whom we are unaware of.
- d. As part of our regular reviews of people's services in our care we would always discuss all their care and support needs and together with them, their families and the providers try to find ways of helping their needs be met. This will continue.

## **Question 2**

Will he take this opportunity to give a public assurance that it is the intention to reverse the cuts in public library opening hours and the services which have been removed from other libraries as soon as the Council's financial circumstances permit?

## **Response**

There is no provision in the 4 year plan to reverse the cuts in public library opening hours. Wiltshire Council is facing a budget reduction of 28.4% over the coming years. To help the council meet this target, the library service will need to reduce its budget.

Following comprehensive consultation, including with area boards and customer focus groups, proposals for how the library service will be managed were approved by Wiltshire Council's Cabinet on 25 January 2011. This will be made in part by introducing rationalised core library opening hours and by working with volunteers to operate our smallest libraries and to extend opening hours at other locations.

We are pleased that the proposals for the library service in Wiltshire unlike those of neighbouring authorities will avoid the need for any library to close.

- All 31 of Wiltshire's libraries will be retained
- All five of Wiltshire's mobile libraries will be retained
- All libraries will still receive funding from Wiltshire council for premises costs, power, cleaning and computer systems
- Library stock would continue to be provided to all library branches
- Self service technology will be introduced to all libraries to improve efficiency and help communities extend library opening hours through support from volunteers who will be trained and supported by Wiltshire library staff

The proposals come into effect September 2011 allowing time for volunteers to be recruited and trained. Officers are currently attending Area Boards and Parish Councils to outline the proposals and discuss ways of working with communities to extend the library opening beyond the new core opening hours and how communities can make better use of their library buildings.

The response from communities has so far been positive. To date 156 volunteers have come forward, before we have started a recruitment campaign. We are optimistic that ultimately that the new ways of working with communities and volunteers could result in longer opening times for smaller rural libraries.

**TO COUNCILLOR DICK TONGE, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS  
AND TRANSPORT**

**Question 3**

- a. What is the full cost of installing pedestrian refuges on the A 4 on either side of the Beckhampton roundabout?
- b. How many accidents involving death or serious injury have occurred within the close vicinity of this roundabout in the last five years?

**Response**

- a. £21,541.41
- b. Fatal Accidents            0  
    Serious Injury            0  
    Slight Collisions        9

Works have been undertaken following a meeting between George Batten and the then MP Mr Michael Ancram in 2009 after concerns had been raised by local residents about speed of vehicles, difficulty of crossing the road, difficulty of access from side roads, and the dangers caused by motorcyclists using the area as a drag strip.

**TO COUNCILLOR JANE SCOTT OBE, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**Question 4**

How many charitable, voluntary and arts organisations have already had their grants from Wiltshire Council reduced in the financial year 2010 – 2011?

How many more of these organisations will have their grants reduced in FY 2011 – 2012 and FY 2012 – 2013?

Will she arrange for a list of the affected organisations, and the size of the reductions, to be sent round to all members?

**Response**

**In the financial year 2010/11**

The total grants allocation to the Voluntary sector from the VCS Unit is £2.4m. In this year 12 organisations have had their grants reduced although the overall spend in the voluntary sector did not reduce. The total amount of this movement was £470,000. Some of this reduction came from projects ending, some from merging 4 ex-district funded VCS support services into one countywide service, some from moving services to another provider, or from bringing projects in house . The savings have provided new services,

including a volunteering data base which matches potential volunteers with current volunteering opportunities - which has helped over 1,000 volunteers this year, and the Wiltshire Good Neighbours .

### **In the financial year 2011/12**

8 organisations will have their funding reduced (2 of these are also counted in 2010/11 above). Four of them are merging into one organisation (for carers) making efficiency savings to cover the reduced funding.

A further 5 organisations who provide support services to the VCS will have reduced funding. This is a very slight reduction since savings have been identified elsewhere, including grant aid from external funders. Efficiency savings here are expected to come from groups collaborating and sharing back office functions to reduce core costs.

### **In the financial year 2012/13**

The total is unknown since discussions on this will take place in 2011.

However we have negotiated other support and funding for 17 lunch clubs to continue the services they provide .

A report detailing all the organisations affected, with details of the financial reductions, will be circulated to Members .

## **TO COUNCILLOR FLEUR DE RHE-PHILIPPE, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RISK**

### **Question 5**

- a. In cash terms, what is the effect on this Council's 2012 – 13 budget of the decision by the Government to frontload reductions in the local authority grant for the coming year?
- b. What representations did this Authority make to the government in respect of the scheduling of the budget reductions?

### **Response**

- a. In cash terms formula grant will reduce by £11.477 million.
- b. None, as we did not feel it would be of any added benefit.

### **Question 6**

With respect to the Government funding allocations to Wiltshire Council for FY 2011-12, how much was attributable to additional money Intended (but not ring fenced) for adult social care from the Department of Health?

## **Response**

At this time we are finalising negotiations with the PCT around this money and how it will be used. To that end we have assumed 88% of the monies within our base budget.