

Chairman's Announcements – 21 March 2011

Big Society, Localism and What it Means for the Devizes Area – Corn Exchange, Devizes, 7 April 2011 at 6.30 pm (with refreshments available from 6.00 pm)

This seminar will be for anyone who is interested in important issues now facing the Devizes area.

It will cover the implications of the Coalition Government's 'Big Society' proposals (as set out in the Localism Bill now before Parliament) and what this is likely to mean for public and voluntary services in the Devizes area.

We will look at how the Council plans to develop its own local arrangements through the Area Boards, with new ways of involving people in decisions about how services are delivered. We will also look at how the Government is proposing to change the current planning system to give local people more of a say over the future development of the places where they live.

The meeting will conclude with a discussion about the development of local planning policies (known as the Wiltshire Core Strategy) for the Devizes area. In addition to some excellent speakers, there will be plenty of opportunity to ask questions and put forward your own points of view. I think you will agree that this promises to be a very lively and stimulating evening, so do please join us – it is a genuine chance for you to influence things in the Devizes area.

Localism Bill – Proposed Changes to Arrangements Governing the Conduct of Councillors

The Government's Localism Bill, published on 13 December 2010, makes significant changes to the current arrangements governing the conduct of councillors in Wiltshire. The proposals in the Bill include:

- removing the requirement for councils to adopt a national code of conduct for councillors;
- abolishing Standards for England, the national body responsible for overseeing the current standards regime in England;
- introducing new arrangements for the registration and declaration of personal interests, backed by the criminal law;
- giving councils a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by councillors;
- enabling councils to adopt a voluntary code of conduct.

Councils, including unitary, town, parish and city councils will be expected to establish a committee to oversee the council's arrangements for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct.

We will be monitoring the Localism Bill as it proceeds through Parliament. The Bill is expected to become law in the Autumn 2011. Further details on the arrangements will be provided in regulations.

In the meantime the current arrangements for standards, including the local assessment, consideration and determination of complaints under the model code of conduct adopted by councils, will continue to apply. We anticipate that the new arrangements will not come into effect until the Spring 2012.

We will be providing updates on the progress of this legislation to towns, parish and city councils.

If you need any further information on this matter please contact:
Ian Gibbons, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer
01225 713052 E-mail ian.gibbons@wiltshire.gov.uk; or

Nina Wilton, Head of Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer
01225 713078 E-mail nina.wilton@wiltshire.gov.uk.

Community Resilience – Town and Parish Council Emergency Plans

Intention

The intention is that all parishes have an up to date Community Resilience Plan to replace where necessary the Initial Response Plan that some parishes (the minority) had written some years ago. These plans once written will be kept up to date by a nominated person (nominated by the Town/Parish Council) who will maintain ownership of the plan keeping it fully up to date.

Bradford on Avon Community Area Board who were part of a pilot scheme have fully endorsed the initiative. Subsequently the Emergency Planning Team has emailed all Parish Clerks.

A Government template and guidance notes written for Bradford on Avon are available on request. It is the intention that the remaining 17 Area Boards will have notes tailored to their region to assist the authors of the plans.

Introduction to Community Resilience

In order to ensure that Wiltshire Communities are truly resilient it is vital that they are aware of the risks which affect them. This will help the Town and Parish Councils to decide which threats they are comfortable with, without having to take any preventative action and those where a more proactive approach may be required.

This information will also be made available to each member of the community to ensure that they are able to take necessary measures such as preparing an 'Emergency Box', purchasing sandbags to protect their property or carrying out a business impact analysis for a Business Continuity Plan for example.

Recent studies have shown that the 'just in time' society in which we live has had a major effect on the way in which people view their own safety and their reliance on the local authority and emergency services. Whereas in the past people tended to be very much aware of the precautions they could and should take to look after their family, property and/or business, they are now more reliant on assistance from public services. Whilst this document does not advocate the derogation of the public service responsibility to care for its population, it is intended to highlight areas where members of the public can be more proactive in protecting themselves and their communities.

Community Resilience is not just about the Community Safety agenda, it is much more involved than that. It is about how the community, the individual within that community and businesses can best prepare to meet the challenges they may face if confronted with a major incident. It is also about how the community can continue to operate for as long as possible and how it can adapt to its new circumstances once the incident has passed. This is best outlined by the following definitions[1][1]:

Resilience: The capacity of an individual, community or system to adapt in order to sustain an acceptable function, structure and identity.

Community Resilience: Communities and individuals harnessing local resources and expertise to help themselves in an emergency, in a way that complements the response of the emergency services.

We can't stop disruptive challenges from happening, but we can mitigate their effects on the community by comprehensive preparations on the part of both the public services and members of the public, and by carefully planning the recovery from such events. Recovery from a major incident is covered in a separate document which outlines how the local services intend to approach restoration and improvements to communities affected by a major incident in order to help them adapt to their new, post incident circumstances.

If anyone wishes to discuss this matter further they should contact Nicholas Bate, Emergency Planning Officer on 07747 804604 or email Nicholas.bate@wiltshire.gov.uk.

End of Life: Dying Matters – awareness week 16-20 May 2011

There's one thing we can all guarantee in life and that is one day we will die. We choose how we live and how we have our children, but often don't get around to discussing our future plans. Death remains a taboo subject, something we're all afraid or unwilling to talk about.

NHS Wiltshire, Wiltshire Council and local hospices are joining in with national events planned for 'Dying Matters' week 16-20 May. The aim being to raise awareness of how we can talk about planning for our future care and putting plans in place with our families.

Ask most people how they would like to die and most would say 'at home, or a hospice, and surrounded by the people that I love.' But fewer than half of us achieve that aim.

Planning for your future not only ensures your wishes will be respected but that your family and loved ones are taken care of and supported at a very difficult time.

You can also really support your family by writing a will; planning your funeral and putting into place a power of attorney for someone to look after your affairs should you become incapable.

Look out for Dying Matters events this May in your local area. There is also very good advice at www.dyingmatters.org.uk. A leaflet talking about planning for care at the end of your life is available at:

http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Endoflifecare/Documents/Planning_your_future_care%5B1%5D.pdf or for a hard copy please contact Alison Bell at NHS Wiltshire 01380 736 044.

Where to get more advice?

For useful information on funeral options and writing wills go to:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Governmentcitizensandrights/Death/index.htm>

For more information on granting power of attorney go to:

<http://www.thecarer.co.uk/LastingPowerOfAttorney.html>

A guide on how to set out your preferred priorities for care can be found here

http://www.endoflifecareforadults.nhs.uk/assets/downloads/ppc_1.pdf

For more information on organ donation go to:

<http://www.uktransplant.org.uk/ukt/default.jsp>

Reducing Child Poverty Strategy Consultation

The Child Poverty Act requires each local authority to produce a child poverty strategy.

The consultation is currently open regarding the content of the Wiltshire Reducing Child Poverty Strategy. The draft strategy includes a suggested strategic objective around geographic approaches (page 16).

The Area Board is invited to contribute its views. The link is set out below:

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/healthandsocialcare/childreynongpeoplefamilies/reducin gchildpovertyconsultation.htm> and consultation closes on 4 April 2011.

Information has already been sent to a wide distribution including all councillors, the Wiltshire Assembly, thematic partnerships, schools and early years' settings.

Library Service Review

The Wiltshire Library Service Review has culminated in a decision by cabinet on 25 January to accept the proposals outlined in the Library Service review paper.

A summary of the proposals is available in the document provided tonight which has a section for comments that can be completed and returned to the council.

The proposals include inviting members of the community to get involved in volunteering in their libraries and the document has a reply section for those interested to get in touch.

The key points for libraries in this area are:

- All mobile library stops will continue to operate
- Devizes library opening hours will be reduced from 51 to 43 hours a week
- Market Lavington which is one Wiltshire's 10 smallest libraries, accounting for 3% of visits overall, will be operated in partnership with volunteers, and supported by the library service
- New self service technology will be introduced to both libraries improve efficiency and help communities extend library opening hours through support from volunteers, who will be trained and supported by Wiltshire library staff.