

Public Questions

Questions from Marie Hillcoat – Westbury Waste Gasification Group (WGAG)

1) What reviews are proposed to Wiltshire Council's Waste Management Strategy in light of the DEFRA consultation on food waste and the current government's ' Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England' published in 2018 in which legislation was proposed that will require local authorities to provide a weekly, separate food waste collection? What actions are the Council taking that anticipate food waste collections in the next two years?

Wiltshire responded to the recent DEFRA consultations, which followed their publication of a new Resources and Waste Strategy and which included wide-ranging proposals to achieve greater consistency in household waste and recycling collections in England. These consultations closed on 13 May 2019 and DEFRA have subsequently reported that they are inclined to progress many of the proposals, including the mandatory introduction of weekly food waste collections by 2023. However, DEFRA has also confirmed that this will be subject to further consultation on the detail.

Government has signalled that it would meet the additional costs that such new services would impose on local authorities, recognising that the timing of any introduction of new mandated services may need to reflect local circumstances, in respect of existing contracted service delivery. This is to avoid the potential for significant contract compensation payments, if contracted services were to be substantially modified before the end of the current contract term. Wiltshire Council has entered into separate contracts for waste collection and waste management services which run until 30 July 2026.

Wiltshire Council officers are therefore closely monitoring the situation and will fully participate in the further planned consultations on this subject.

2) Somerset Waste Partnership, who were cited as a case study in the government's ' Our Waste, Our Resources: A Strategy for England ' published last year, collected over 18,000 tons of food waste in 2017/2018 for use in biodigestors in the region. What feasibility studies for supplying biodigestors such as Malaby Biogas in Warminster with food waste from Wiltshire homes have been done and the feasibility of a pilot scheme in a town?

As set out above, DEFRA proposals include the introduction of mandatory weekly food waste collections across all local authorities by 2023. However, this remains subject to further detailed consultation, with the timing of any new service introductions potentially informed by existing local contracted waste and recycling services.

Wiltshire Council will continue to participate in the ongoing consultation process, to understand the mechanisms to be developed enabling local authorities to access the necessary additional funding needed to implement such changes. As part of this the council will also be conducting costing and service planning analysis at the appropriate time.

3) A separate food waste collection will substantially reduce the amount of contaminated household waste. This reduction will alter both the tonnage and composition of the feedstock that will be used in the ATT/incinerator plant in Westbury planned by Northacre Renewable Energy. This will therefore, alter the contractual commitments Wiltshire Council have with Northacre Renewable Energy. How and when do the Council propose to address this?

The proposed ATT facility at Northacre in Westbury is a commercial project being pursued independently by Hills Waste Solutions. The facility is designed to receive and treat up to 145,000 tonnes of waste per year.

Wiltshire Council has a contract with Hills to supply 60,000 tonnes of municipal waste per year to the neighbouring MBT facility and up to 30,000 tonnes per year of solid recovered fuel (SRF) produced at the MBT is planned to be sent to the ATT facility, as part of the overall input tonnage. The SRF being produced at the MBT is currently being sent for use in energy from waste (EfW) facilities in Germany, The Netherlands and Norway.

Although the majority of the SRF produced by the MBT originates from household residual waste collected by Wiltshire Council, the majority of the waste to be treated at the ATT facility will be commercial waste sourced from the region by Hills as a commercial waste management company. Therefore, a mandatory food waste collection from households would be unlikely to significantly alter the majority of the waste feedstock into the ATT. Any impacts of a mandatory food waste collection from households on Wiltshire Council residual waste deliveries to the MBT would be assessed as part of the work to be undertaken pending further consultation with DEFRA, and may inform the assessment of the costs of implementing such a service and / or timing of any implementation.

4) The approved planning application for an ATT plant in Westbury to be constructed and operated by Northacre Renewable Energy has caused widespread opposition in the area with objections from Andrew Murrison MP, town and parish councils. Will the Climate Change Task Group as part of its work on waste and renewable energy generation review the specific technology and plant manufacturer in terms of CO2 emissions? Such plants often require additional feedstock ie., coke and this will have an effect on CO2 emissions in the county.

The Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group have agreed to look at six key areas within the scope of their work, one of these being 'Renewable energy generation, energy use and efficiency'. As planning permission for the ATT plant in Westbury has been given, it is not within the Task Group's jurisdiction to review the specific technology and plant manufacturer of the plant, however, the Task Group will be considering Wiltshire's wider use of renewable energy, energy use and energy efficiency as it progresses with its work.

Question from Jane Laurie

1) Part of the draft terms of reference states that the CE Task Group is to undertake a carbon/renewables audit. Is this the start of the overall county baseline survey committed to in the February motion?

- If so, what form will this audit take and how inclusive of all county emissions will it be?
- If not, when will the full county baseline survey be completed and when will it be made public?
- Which are the top ten carbon emitting organisations in the county and how does the Council plan to work with them?

Response

Yes, this is the start of the baseline survey, however, we are still discussing how to scope and carry out this work. If you have any examples of how this has been done elsewhere, we would welcome the opportunity to review them.

Question from Jeremy Wire – Extinction Rebellion

Communicating the Climate Emergency

It was good to see the initial press release re Wiltshire Council's plans to go carbon neutral. What further plans does the Council have to communicate the climate emergency? For example:

- Will the Council commit to putting the climate emergency on the agenda of all relevant meetings as a standing item eg Cabinet, Scrutiny and Area Boards?
- B&NES Council have a Climate Emergency button at the centre of their website home page. If you click on it, you can see the plan of action so far. Could Wiltshire do something similar?

Response

Area Boards are locally focussed and therefore local residents and councillors shape these agendas, however many Area Boards are already featuring climate change/ environmental issues on their agendas, and Wiltshire Council is making resources and information available to Boards to support this.

As decision making bodies, other committees and Cabinet will feature items on the climate emergency when it is relevant to their decision-making remit. Questions can be asked about the council's plans to address the climate emergency at any ordinary meeting of Cabinet or Council.

An update outlining the council's work to date on achieving its aim of becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030 will be presented to Cabinet in October. We will develop our communications strategy from this, with a lead communications officer assigned to the project.

We are currently reviewing our web content. We have a green economy link on our homepage and once we have updated our web content this will be amended.

Questions from Adrian Temple Brown – Extinction Rebellion

1) I understand that CE Task Group has started discussions with Area Boards about putting the Climate emergency onto their agendas:

a) As this is an emergency, why can't the Area Boards hold specific meetings devoted to this subject, enabling communities to be informed and add to the ideas that Councillors and Officers may be having? One Councillor has taken the initiative and has set up a meeting specifically to discuss the issues with the Trowbridge community.

Response:

Area Boards are locally focussed and therefore local residents and councillors shape their agendas. Residents can contact their local councillor about items of interest and how they think they could be addressed at an Area Board meeting. The Chairman of the Global Warming and Climate Change Task Group will be meeting with the Area Board chairmen to invite them to consider including climate change on future meeting agendas of their Area Boards.

b) Are there now any plans for a workshop with Councillors and Officers to inform and debate Climate Change, its impacts and potential solutions for the County?

Response:

Climate Change will be discussed by all councillors at the next meeting of Full Council.

The Task Group reports to meetings of the Environment Select Committee, which all councillors are able to attend and may participate in, at the discretion of the Chairman.

The Task Group are already meeting with officers and Executive councillors to gather evidence and will consider the benefit of wider council workshops as part of its review.

c) The only public communication to date has been a short press statement. Excellent examples of Councils communicating with communities are available: BANES and Cornwall. What similar lines of communication to public and businesses on progress are planned by the Council?

Response:

The council is developing its strategy regarding Climate Change and one element of this includes developing a long-term communications strategy.

The council has a webpage on Climate Change and other environmental issues, which is currently being updated: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/green-economy>

The council will continue to produce periodic press releases to update the public on its actions regarding Climate Change, including on the activity of the Task Group.

2) Engagement and communications with Business

a) Is there a developed programme of work to deliver action and solutions for the County and will the Council be sharing this publicly?

Response:

The council would propose working with the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) to engage with business. In the meantime, the SWLEP website has information to support businesses who want to focus on carbon reduction which is available

via this link: <https://growthhub.swlep.co.uk/> and typing 'carbon' into the search engine. Alternatively, businesses can contact one of the SWLEP business advisers by email or by phone, details are available on the website: <https://growthhub.swlep.co.uk/contacts>

b) To achieve the aims of the Council there is a real need to bring climate mitigation entrepreneurs into the county.

Response:

The Task Group will consider this under its Business and Industry workstream.

c) How is the County engaging with this community?

Response:

The task group has begun engagement with the business community through attendance at various external meetings, including the following:

Wessex Community Energy Network Meeting

Swindon and Wiltshire LEP European Regional Development Fund – Information Session

NFU Mutual Climate Change and Agriculture in Wiltshire

Climate Innovation Forum 2019

As the task group continues their work under its Business and Industry workstream this engagement will continue and develop.

d) When will the Task Group engage with the business community to establish joint actions on climate?

Response:

One of the task group's areas of enquiry is Business and Industry and as such this will be one of the group's priorities when exploring the options available for joint action on climate change.

Question from Bill Jarvis – Extinction Rebellion

1) Commitment to County Climate neutrality by 2030

The press release by Wiltshire Council only pledges that the Council will be carbon neutral by 2030. Can the Council confirm, by updating their press release, that they will honour their commitment to seek to make the County carbon neutral by 2030?

Response:

As resolved at Full Council on 28 February 2019, the council will seek to make Wiltshire Council's administrative area carbon neutral by 2030.

2) Forming a CE Council Group to lobby parliament for devolved powers and funding to support the groups ambitions to get carbon neutral. There are almost 200 Local Authorities who have now declared or acknowledged that there is a Climate Emergency.

Some of the South West Councils who are working on the Climate Emergency have well developed action plans in place with funding allocated.

a) What discussions have taken place with these other Councils?

Response:

The Global Warming and Climate Emergency Task Group has been researching the actions and strategies of other local authorities and will directly engage with relevant local authorities throughout their work.

Representation from the Task Group has also been received at a number of external meetings and webinars from which representatives of other local authorities have been amongst those in attendance. These meetings are listed in the Task Group update submitted to this meeting of Environment Select.

b) Will the CE Task Group consider following the Australian 100 Councils model and form, at least, a South West Council group to enable sharing of ideas and providing "mass" in order to lobby Central Government for devolved powers and funding to address the Climate crisis?

Response:

The Task Group will consider the options for lobbying central government and will take this Australian 100 Councils model into consideration.

Question from Lucy Vigar *(submitted after deadline for written questions)*

Our government was 71% short of its tree-planting target for the year ending March 2019. Can you advise what, if anything, Wiltshire Council contributed to the 29% that was achieved and what plans do you have for tree-planting in the future?

Response to be sent from the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Cllr Bridget Wayman.

Question from Sarah Prinsloo – Extinction Rebellion (*submitted after deadline for a written response*)

- 1) Can the Council assure its residents that there will be no more sale of publicly owned land as we are going to need all available land in public ownership for adaptation to climate change and mitigation of its impacts, including but not limited to community projects and tree planting.

Response

The Council has a programme of asset disposals to generate capital receipts, to help finance council services. Therefore, we cannot give an assurance that we will not dispose of public land in the future, as that could jeopardise the Council's ability to deliver services to the people of Wiltshire. However, Council officers will imminently be bringing forward proposals where use of Council land to generate renewable energy not only address that issue, but will also provide a return from the asset comparable to that which could be achieved from a sale. The Council will consider carbon mitigating measures on its land, which may not generate a financial return such as tree planting, and would be keen to work with the communities in Wiltshire to see how that could be achieved.

The Wiltshire Local Plan will regulate the amount and location of new development up to 2036. The Local Plan Review is currently being prepared with a draft expected to be put before Council before the end of 2019. The Local Plan is being prepared with regards to current guidance and legislation, including recent new requirements relating to the Climate Change agenda.

- 2) Will the Council confirm that in calculating the carbon footprint for the County, it will include construction emissions, which account on average for 50% of a buildings lifetime Carbon emissions? Can the council also please address how it will manage to achieve net zero in light of this, including plans to repurpose old buildings, rather than demolishing and rebuilding as this has a clear advantage in terms of achieving a reduction in emissions.

Response

The Council's control of development in Wiltshire is achieved through the Development Plan, i.e. the Local Plan and any 'made' Neighbourhood Plan and their planning policies, in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Practice Guidance. This will include the most recent changes to guidance that requires development to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain and wider environmental net gain and hence, to further demonstrate that development will be carried out in the most sustainable way.

The Council intends to develop an ambitious council house build programme over the next ten years, to help meet the affordable housing needs of Wiltshire. As part of that plan, our ambition is to seek to achieve carbon neutral development where possible and economic. We are in the process of researching that in the light of our development opportunities. The programme will include the purchase of some existing dwellings, which will then be refurbished to improve the carbon footprint. The Council will seek to replace heating systems in its council housing with more efficient systems to reduce the carbon foot print, but also to allow its customers to run their homes at reduced cost. In addition, the Council will be

developing a programme to increase the production of renewal energy from its estate, increase insulation and reduce water usage again to reduce its carbon footprint.

Regarding the repurposing of old buildings, this approach is embedded in the Local Plan approach through conformity with Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework; which requires the Local Plan to take a proactive approach towards adapting and mitigating climate change. Many of the older buildings in Wiltshire are protected as assets of national or local importance through designation and therefore, they will be considered for repurposing rather than demolition which should be regarded as a last resort.