

Wiltshire Council

Council

04 February 2014

Item 6 - Public Participation

From Mr Tom Corbin

Question 1

Is it not a slap in the face of every Wiltshire Council employee for Wiltshire Councillors to accept these massive hikes in members SRAs when council employees have suffered years of pay freeze and below inflation pay rises that are effectively also pay cuts, 252 redundancies, voluntary or not they are still financially led. Shortly after the latest redundancies this Council authorised a massive hike in Directors wages, which understandably led to a public outcry. How is it then that this Council saw fit to increase members SRA payments to such levels when knowing that there would be no public support?

What is this council going to do to show its own staff that they really do matter in light of the last 6 months?

Response

The report of an independent Remuneration Panel was considered by Full Council on 12 November 2013. At the meeting Members agreed to accept the recommendations of the independent remuneration panel, convened to review members allowances.

I thought that it would be useful just to recap that the panel was convened under The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations 2003. The regulations require all local authorities to set up and maintain an advisory independent remuneration panel to review and provide advice on members' allowances. All councils are required to convene a remuneration panel and seek its advice before making changes or amendments to members allowances and they must 'pay regard' to the panel's recommendations before setting new or amended allowances.

The Independent Remuneration Panel last undertook a detailed review of the Members' Allowances Scheme in Wiltshire in 2009. A review was carried out in 2012 to update the scheme following changes to the standards regime introduced by the Localism Act in 2012, the new governance arrangements for the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Police and Crime Panel and following revised scrutiny arrangements

The review in 2013 was the first full detailed review since 2009. In undertaking the review, the panel considered a range of evidence and the recommendations made by the panel were independent of any elected member of Wiltshire Council and were based on the post and role required and not based on any individuals currently in a post or role.

As there is a motion on the agenda to discuss this subject, members who wish to will have the opportunity to respond at the appropriate time.

Statement of Mr Corbin

As the only member of public present at the November meeting of the Full Council I paid great attention to what was being said, indeed I would have liked to have been able to speak on the debate. Through all the motions that came and fell and for all the votes against the motions there was one particular lack of forthcoming information that I was most interested to hear. Just one independent Councillor spoke up in favour of the report for the specific reason that they felt that the 1% increase was necessary as they are struggling to get by on their current standard allowance. They did not go into detail as to how the rise in SRA would affect them.

But here it is, I think the current basic level is wrong - adding £122 to the basic allowance was not enough. I believe that the SRAs should have stayed low, after all the more special responsibilities you wish to take on the more you will receive in allowances. However this fails to address the baseline issue that I believe the Independent Councillor was raising.

Whilst as Councillors you give yourselves over to working for the local communities, hopefully acting as a representative person of that community. However if you look at the demographic of people in this chamber you will soon realise that most people here are either of retirement age or not too far from it. If you wish to encourage younger working age people to put themselves forward to be Councillors you have to show that in carrying out their duties you will cover their loss in earnings.

In debating item 7a) rescinding of the motion that set your increases in allowances, I want to hear you say you are worth it, that you need these agreed increases to cover the costs because right now the public perception is that you are all just quietly lining your pockets!

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From Mrs Charmian Spickernell, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)

To Councillor Fleur de Rhé-Philipe, Cabinet Member for Economy, Skills and Transport

Question 2

Re Transport Schemes being prioritised for matched funding, M4 Junctions 15, and 16 and A350 widening north of Chippenham.

Junction 16 Improvements

Given that:

1. Originally this was part of the Wichelstowe permission but is now said to be needed generally. (Applications to the north of the Junction have been granted on appeal)
2. The junction has a size constraint with narrow bridges over the motorway so there are limitations to improving the traffic flow. If traffic flow is improved, congestion on the small feeder roads will be increased.
3. There are safety issues with the proposed layout, the details are still to be finalised and Wiltshire has not agreed the layout. (Junction 16 is in Wiltshire)
4. There is a case, supported by the LEP Chairman, for looking strategically at a rail solution, re-opening Wootton Bassett Station. The possibility of new stations west of Mannington and at Moredon should also be considered.
5. Government funding is coming through the Local Economic Partnership (LEP), and Wiltshire has two representatives on the Local Transport Body(LTB) within the LEP but there is no opportunity for members of the public to ask questions before LTB/LEP Meetings. A consultation was held in September but the responses, which did raise important issues regarding process and projects, do not appear to have been addressed.

The cost for Junction 16 improvements is said to be £8million and this has to be match funded, how is this going to be financed and have all the issues raised above been taken into account?

Response

Based on the outcome of a Department for Transport (DfT) approved prioritisation process, the M4 Junction 16 Improvement was approved as a 'prioritised scheme' by the Swindon

and Wiltshire Local Transport Body (SWLTB) at its first meeting on 8 July 2013 (see <http://ww5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=940&MId=6298&Ver=4>).

Subsequently, following confirmation of the SWLTB's allocated funding level of £11.3m on 16 July 2013, the M4 Junction 16 Improvement was submitted to the DfT on 30 July 2013 as one of the SWLTB's 'prioritised schemes' (the others being the A350 Chippenham Bypass Improvements and M4 Junction 15 Improvement). This submission was formally approved by the SWLTB at its meeting on 2 October 2013 (see table below and <http://ww5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=940&MId=6359&Ver=4>).

Table 3: Prioritised Schemes

Local Transport Authority	Scheme	Estimated scheme cost ¹	Included in Programme		
			Dft funding	Local contribution	Funding shortfall
Wiltshire Council	A350 Chippenham Bypass Improvements	£2.25m	£1.67m	£0.58m	TBC
Swindon BC / Wiltshire Council	M4 J16 Improvement	£8m	£5.92m	£2.08m	TBC
Swindon BC	M4 J15 Improvement	£5m	£3.70m	£1.3m	TBC
Total			£11.29m	£2.98	TBC

Notes:

1. Based on estimated scheme. Further work is recommended to be undertaken to establish the exact level of local/third party contributions.

The three 'prioritised schemes' are now being progressed in accordance with the DfT's Transport Business Case guidance. Following this guidance will ensure that the business case for each scheme is sound and the evidence base (for example on congestion, safety and environmental issues) is robust. Assessments equivalent to Strategic Outline Business Cases were completed as part of the prioritisation process and at its meeting on 2 October 2013, the SWLTB approved draft Appraisal Specification Reports for the development of Outline Business Cases. Further information on the proposed approach to developing the relevant Outline Business Cases was approved by the SWLTB at its meeting on 8 January 2014 (see <http://ww5.swindon.gov.uk/moderngov/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=940&MId=6398&Ver=4>).

It is anticipated that Outline Business Cases will be submitted to the SWLTB's meeting on 16 April 2014 at which time further information will be available on the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership's emerging 'Strategic Economic Plan' (SEP) which has to be submitted to Government as part of the Local Growth Fund – the SWLTB's funding is now effectively part of the Local Growth Fund.

In terms of the consultation exercise undertaken over the summer, the results of this process were reported to the SWLTB at its meeting on 2 October 2013 where the following was stated:

- 3.7 The prioritisation process and outcomes have been consulted on for 6 weeks and no fundamental issues have been raised. A summary of the consultation is shown in **Appendix 1** and a verbal update will be provide at the meeting. Scheme specific consultation will take place through the business case development.

With regard to rail, a number of options were considered as part of the long list of potential local major transport schemes reported to Wiltshire Council's Cabinet meeting on 21 May 2013 (see <http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=35934&Opt=3>). Subsequently, Westbury Additional Platform has been included in the SWLTB's 'contingency scheme' list and Wilton Station, Royal Wootton Bassett Station and Corsham Station have been included in the SWLTB's 'development scheme' list.

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**From Mrs Charmian Spickernell, Campaign for the Protection of Rural England
(CPRE)**

**To Stuart Wheeler, Cabinet Member Cabinet Member for Hubs, Heritage & Arts,
Governance (including information management), Support Services (HR, Legal, ICT,
Business Services, Democratic Services)**

Question 3

How many consultants is Wiltshire Council employing generally and how much are they being paid?

Response

A verbal response will be given at the meeting.