

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

From Councillor Ian Thorn, Calne Central

**To Councillor Allison Bucknell - Cabinet Member for Communications,
Communities, Leisure and Libraries**

Question (20-1)

When was the last time an opposition member featured in a Wiltshire Council press release or social media communication?

Response

The following press releases feature members of the Council who are not part of the current administration:

9 October 2019 – Cllr John Walsh – New parkour facility in Salisbury

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/news/articles/parkour-fans-jump-for-joy-as-exciting-new-sports-facility-opens-in-salisbury> -

26 July 2019 – Cllr Graham Wright – Wiltshire Council to be carbon neutral by 2030

http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/news/articles/council-pledge-to-be-carbon-neutral?fbclid=IwAR1fPIx2TA70eBkQ8TE-TJMbd0ui4yL_bj8d2iMY9Dds0-41TI_TbqgZ7PgJ

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24 June 2019 – Cllr John Walsh – AFD flag raising

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/news/articles/armed-forces-day-flag-raised-across-the-uk-as-salisbury-prepares-for-weekend-of-national-event-celebrations> -

25 June 2018 – Cllr George Jeans – New homes in Mere

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/news/articles/home-sweet-home-for-new-residents> -

5 June 2018 – Cllr Graham Wright – New homes in Durrington

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/news/articles/new-rural-homes-for-older-residents-officially-opened> -

Press releases are sent out in accordance with the framework set out in the Media Relations Protocol in Protocol 7 of the Council's Constitution:

<https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s94451/CURRENTProtocol07MediaRelations.docx.pdf>

All press releases give contact details for the spokesperson from the political parties. It is up to the press whether or not they speak to other elected members of the Council.

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25 February 2020

From Councillor Jon Hubbard – Melksham South

To Councillor Bridget Wayman – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste

Question i)

With the closure of Cleveland Bridge in Bath to vehicles weighing in excess of 18 tonnes and the subsequent diversion of this traffic onto the A350 what steps have been taken to measure and monitor the levels of air pollution in the communities affected by the significant increase in heavy vehicles, specifically in and around the Melksham Community Area?

Response

Levels of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) are being monitored using passive diffusion tubes in a number of locations along the A350 both in the Melksham and Westbury areas. This ongoing monitoring will assist the council to assess any impact from the introduction of the 18 tonne weight restriction on the Cleveland Bridge in Bath.

Question ii)

Is the Cabinet Member aware that members of the administration in Bath and North East Somerset council are campaigning for the closure to heavy traffic of the Cleveland Bridge to be made permanent? Does she support this campaign?

Response

Yes, I am aware of the campaign by some members of the Liberal Democrat administration in Bath for the permanent closure of Cleveland Bridge to heavy traffic. Of course, I do not support this campaign. It would mean that the banned vehicles would be diverted through Wiltshire. Wiltshire Council has not been consulted about this and I have written to the Leader of BaNES seeking a written assurance that it is not her intention to use the bridge reconstruction as a stepping stone towards a permanent weight restriction, and confirmation that the petition is a rogue exercise that does not have her Council's support. I know our Leader is meeting the Leader of BaNES to discuss this further.

As you know, Wiltshire Council has received funding to develop the business case for the Melksham bypass which will help alleviate congestion and pollution through Melksham, but the construction of the bypass is some years away. There is also the issue of Westbury and the A350 through the centre and I do not want to see any increase in HGVs through Westbury that might be due to a permanent closure of Cleveland Bridge. BaNES has a duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities on highway matters, hence our desire to open discussions rather than be dictated to by a petition organised by a BaNES councillor looking at an issue from their narrow perspective.

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25 February 2020

From Councillor Edward Kirk – Trowbridge Adcroft

To Councillor Richard Clewer – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts, Tourism, Housing, Climate Change and Military-Civilian Integration

Question (20-10)

Trowbridge Town Council has both a substantial debt with the Public Works Loan Board of £5.6 million (more than any other Town or Parish in the Country), and an annual cost for staff salaries, pension and NI of £1.7 million. The Trowbridge Town Council Precept in 2019/20 was set at £153.98 for a band D property, while neighbouring villages, like Hilperton have a Precept of only £14.28.

The new approved housing developments in Trowbridge will regrettably remove much of the green space between our Town and Villages (Hilperton, Southwick, North Bradley and West Ashton). Therefore, as we are now all joining together and sharing services in becoming part of a larger district of Trowbridge, we should also share the cost and have a combined Trowbridge & District Precept of £124.49 (Band D). Please can the Cabinet Member confirm how this fairer funding principle can be achieved?

Response

Parish and Town Councils have responsibility for setting their own precept and would need to consider the level of precept annually. This would then come into effect from 1 April each year.

If Parish and Town Councils wished to share the cost of services and a combined Trowbridge and District Precept they would have to consider a community governance review, the terms of reference which should include consideration of boundaries of existing parishes.

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25 February 2020

**From Councillor Brian Mathew – Box and Colerne and Councillor Pat Aves –
Melksham North**

**To Councillor Bridget Wayman – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and
Waste and Councillor Toby Sturgis**

Question (20-13)

Given that Wiltshire Council has responded to the four parts of our question on Ash-dieback with four identical responses referring to

Officers “working on a Policy for dealing with ash-dieback and an initial draft is under discussion. The issues raised in the above questions are all under consideration, we will provide an update once this is finalised”.

Will Wiltshire Council produce a firm timeline for the production of both the initial draft and policy on Ash-dieback, and that complete, direct and relevant answers on the four specific points raised in our original written question form part of the finalised policy, and that we are kept informed throughout the process?

Response

The council is in the process of drafting a Green Infrastructure Strategy which should be adopted as policy before the end of 2020. This strategy will inform the development of a woodland strategy and tree planting policy which will be in place for the tree planting season next year. With regard to the Ash die back, this policy will be in place for the first half of the year and we will keep you informed.

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25 February 2020

From Councillor Ian Thorn, Calne Central

**To Councillor Allison Bucknell - Cabinet Member for Communications,
Communities, Leisure and Libraries**

Question (20-2)

Wiltshire Council produced an inaccurate bar in an infographic (showing Labour with more votes across Wiltshire than the Lib Dems) following the General Election that appeared on social media. Why did this happen and what was done to correct it?

Response

The infographic was produced to demonstrate the success of the council's communications campaign to promote the General Election. The information included related to social media statistics and support given to the media. The colours were added to support the colourful nature of the infographic not to represent votes cast during the General Election. Therefore, as the infographic was not incorrect it was not deemed necessary to amend it.

Wiltshire Council

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25 February 2020

From Councillor Jon Hubbard – Melksham South

To Councillor Bridget Wayman – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste

Question (20-8)

I'm sure that the Cabinet Member will share the disappointment of all residents in the Melksham area at the decision by First Group to cease the important D3 bus service providing a vital link between Melksham and Bath.

I note that Council has been reminded on numerous occasions that the proceeds received by the council from its car parking income are used to subsidise the provision of busses for the local community.

Could the Cabinet Member reassure me that the subsidised evening and Sunday service on the D3 route will be continued and a new tender issued?

Response

Tenders are currently with suppliers and we will determine what we can afford to support when they are returned and evaluated. The daytime services will be picked up by Faresaver on a commercial basis, so there should be little disruption to the travelling public. Any changes to the bus timetable will be communicated in good time to the passengers in partnership with the provider.

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25 February 2020

From Councillor Ian Thorn, Calne Central

**To Councillor Allison Bucknell - Cabinet Member for Communications,
Communities, Leisure and Libraries**

Question (20-3)

During the six month period leading to the 2017 local elections Wiltshire Council produced a series of propaganda posters which appeared on Wiltshire Council property and cost Wiltshire tax payers £10,000. Is Wiltshire Council proposing a similar advertising campaign in the lead in to the 2021 local elections?

Response

Wiltshire Council regularly runs campaigns to promote council services and to highlight that Wiltshire is a great place to live and work.

To refer to this as “propaganda” does the work of our Council and our Communications team a disservice.

Specifically, the posters referred to were produced as part of the Get Involved campaign, which began in December 2016. This campaign was intended to encourage residents to engage with our services, whether that be volunteering, taking the Big Pledge, reporting a pothole or applying for a community grant. The campaign covered a wide range of service areas and was targeted to promote stronger communities, as part of the council’s business plan.

All campaigns in the lead up to the 2021 elections will, as always, be consistent with guidance on publicity in the pre-election period.

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25 February 2020

From Councillor Ian Thorn, Calne Central

**To Councillor Philip Whitehead – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member
for Economic Development**

Question (20-4)

At the last full council meeting a motion was presented amending the opening paragraphs of Wiltshire Council's business plan to reflect our commitment to a climate emergency. It was agreed that you would receive the amended document and pass it through the overview and scrutiny process. Any news?

Response

At the last full council, I proposed that we would update the introduction to the business plan but more importantly we would include both a section on Climate change and a section on our Stone Circle companies within the plan. As I said at the time, I expect these to come through to Overview and Scrutiny and any other relevant committees at the start of the new financial year for the authority.

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25 February 2020

From Councillor Ian Thorn – Calne Central

To Councillor Bridget Wayman – Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste

Question (20-9)

Wiltshire Council has received £600k to support rural transport. Can you inform me of how this funding will be spent and that £600k won't be taken from the budget and spent elsewhere?

Response

As part of the governments recognition that the bus plays a pivotal role in reducing commuter traffic, reducing social isolation and supports the climate change agenda, it has, as part of a suite of funding, made available £671k for Wiltshire Council to enhance elements of its existing bus service network. We will be submitting our statement of intent, before the 13th March deadline, which will also be available on the website from the same date, but I can confirm this money will be spent on public transport. Town and Parish Councils will be consulted asking for suggestions that can be considered for enhancements to bus services in their area.