Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

9 June 2020

Question from Chris Caswill about Schools Re-opening

Agenda Item 6 – Covid-19 Update and Financial Position

To Councillor Pauline Church Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills

Statement

Given the reservations expressed by UK Directors of Public Health and Government scientific advisers, there will have been many parents deeply anxious about their children going back to school last week, and many teachers equally anxious about the risks involved.

Question 1

In para 11 of the COVID paper, it states that "Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been procured for educational settings, in-line with government guidance". Was PPE provided to all local schools who requested it in time for the reopening on June 1st?

Response

Yes. Every Special School in Wiltshire had supplies ahead of the 1 June. All other Schools in Wiltshire were offered the opportunity to secure PPE supplies, and those that took up the offer all had deliveries made on or prior to 1 June.

Question 2

What steps has the Council taken to support and reassure Wiltshire parents who have opted *not* to send their children to school at the present time?

Response

Home learning resources and links have continued to be provided for parents and teachers via the council's online platform, Right Choice. The continued requirement to provide home learning for parents who have chosen for their children to remain at home has also been communicated through headteacher and governor briefings. A

programme called Happy Families, Happy Futures: Working together for stronger relationships, designed to support parents and carers who have heightened anxiety and tensions during this time, has also been offered free of charge for parents in Wiltshire.

Question 3

There are national reports that some teachers who are recognised as vulnerable or have vulnerable relatives in their households have nevertheless been required by their schools to return to work. Is the Council making it clear to Wiltshire schools that this is not acceptable, and then monitoring the situation?

Response

The Council provided a toolkit to schools to support with reopening. This toolkit included a section about staffing implications, which included clear advice about support for vulnerable staff. All advice was based on the national government guidance available at the time to toolkit was sent out.

It outlined that those considered extremely vulnerable (i.e. those who are shielding) should not return to work, and those living in a household with someone in this category should only attend work where stringent social distancing can be guaranteed. Despite some relaxation in the government guidance more recently we have maintained this advice for schools.

It also outlined that staff who are vulnerable (but not shielding) should, wherever possible, be provided with work enabling them to work from home but where this is not possible that adjustments must be made to their role to ensure social distancing can be adhered to and if this is not possible that they should not attend work.

However, in line with national guidance, the advice was that those living with vulnerable (but not extremely vulnerable) household members can attend work, and provided advice about different options open to the headteacher should staff in this category be anxious about returning to work.

The Council relies on head teachers to ensure that relevant risk assessments have been carried out, and for individual members of staff to raise any concerns with their Head Teacher. Where this does happen, and the school buys Wiltshire Council HR Advisory service, we would support the school to implement the guidance.

We are not currently aware of any incidents where an employee feels they have been required to return when they fall into a vulnerable group where this would not be in line with guidance.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

9 June 2020

Question from Chris Caswill about Public Health

Agenda Item 6 – Covid-19 Update and Financial Position

To Councillor Laura Mayes Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Public Protection

Question 1

Now that central government has finally recognised the important role that local authority Public Health can play in the containment of COVID, how much of the additional £25 million allocated to Wiltshire Council will come to Public Health to go with these vital new responsibilities?

Response

The emergency COVID-19 grant funding allocated to Wiltshire Council currently amounts to £25.5m. These funds have so far only been allocated to off-set the costs that have been incurred in the 2019/20 financial year which amounts to just under £0.5m. The funding will be used to address all areas of activity across the Council that have been impacted by the pandemic.

Question 2

Does the Council now regret the cuts that have been made in its public health resources since 2015?

Response

Since 2015/16 the ring-fencing of the Public Health grant has meant this has been protected by the Council. Just under £0.5m and £1m of savings from the Public Health Grant funded services were agreed as part of the budget setting approvals for 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively which are in line with the savings that have been proposed across other Council service areas for those years and also reflects the reduced funding received from Government.

Due to the emergency response to the coronavirus and the impact on the business of the Council all saving plans are currently being reviewed in terms of their ability to be delivered, particularly in light of the impact on the Councils finances.

Question 3

The Council has now prepared a Care Home Support Plan and submitted it to government (para 8) which covers PPE but seemingly not testing and tracing.

- Will it now include a test and trace programme for Wiltshire Care Homes?

- When will test and trace action in Wiltshire Care Homes begin?

- What is being done in the meantime to ensure reliable testing arrangements for local care home staff and residents?

Response

Wiltshire Council is already working with care homes to support testing of staff and residents. However, the logistics of arranging the delivery and collection of testing kits is via a national portal and not the responsibility of the Council. The Council identifies those homes on a weekly basis who should be a priority for the testing based on the number of outbreaks or care homes self-referring.

Question 4

Has the Council been able to provide or ensure provision of testing to all those Wiltshire schools and teachers who have requested it?

Response

Where a pupil or member of staff displays possible Covid-19 symptoms, the school is required to contact the Health Protection Unit at Public Health England where they will be provided with the relevant advice and support including information about getting tested.

Staff and the parents/guardians of pupils can arrange testing through the nhs.uk website: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/

This advice has been communicated to all schools in Wiltshire

Question 5

The Council's new role in tackling COVID 19 is complicated, expensive and extremely important. Will it be subject to regular monitoring and scrutiny by the Health Select Committee?

Response

Temporary arrangements for scrutiny of the Council's response to and recovery from the COVID19 pandemic have been agreed by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee at its meeting on 3 June. A copy of the report setting out the approach and arrangements may be found at:

https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/g13082/Public%20reports%20pack%20Wednesday%2003-Jun-2020%2010.00%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Management%20Committee.pdf?T=10

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will lead any public scrutiny engagement on the council's response to and recovery from COVID19, supported by a dedicated Wiltshire COVID-19 Response Task Group established to provide more in-depth scrutiny.

Meetings of the Children's, Environment and Health Select Committees have been cancelled from May to July 2020.

These temporary arrangements for delivering the council's overview and scrutiny function will be reviewed after July 2020 with further proposals brought back to

The OS Management Committee in September 2020 as required.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

9 June 2020

Question from Chris Lange

Agenda Item 6 – Covid-19 Update and Financial Position

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

Statement

Please see Page 19 & 20 of the agenda documents for WC cabinet meeting 9th June

The Covid19 crisis is without doubt placing Wiltshire council and its partner agencies under significant stress and is an overwhelming challenge. I would like to thank Wiltshire Council Officers and Members for all their hard work in supporting the community over this extraordinarily difficult time. I understand that the recovery plan which is being formulated will focus on five major themes by all major partners these include the following:

- Community Resilience
- Health and Wellbeing
- Economic Sustainability
- Care, safeguarding and education
- Partner Organisations 'internal recovery plans'

Wiltshire council declared a climate emergency in February 2019 and some councillors had promised that climate change considerations would form a golden thread through the council's policies. In order to fully demonstrate the council's commitment to dealing with this issue, it would be very positive if climate change and environmental consideration could be added to the 5 themes listed above. Failing to do so, would be a lost opportunity and would give the impression that climate change is no longer an important issue for the council.

There are many interest groups in Wiltshire that may well be able to help to ensure that the recovery plan considers climate change issues.

Question

Please could you confirm what plans are in place to consult with environmental interest groups in order to gather positive suggestions to ensure the recovery plan assists Wiltshire Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Response

Addressing the Climate Emergency continues to be a key priority for Wiltshire Council and that is why climate and the environment are a key thread that run through all the COVID19 emergency recovery themes.   Recovery from COVID19 will be a complex and enduring process, which we are committed to achieve by working closely with and continuously listening to our communities and partners.

Environmental sustainability is a cross-cutting theme which will be taken forward as part of the council's place-shaping agenda. This will include integrating carbon reduction into health and wellbeing, economic sustainability and provision of strategic infrastructure. The Council's Economic Sustainability working group will be ensuring this work is progressed as part of the emerging recovery plan and I can assure you climate and the environment will be embedded as a priority and key objective.

The council will work with partners to develop recovery plans and consult with key groups as plans become more formalised in July. For example, a meeting is scheduled for 18 June 2020 between the Wiltshire Climate Alliance, the Director for Communities and Neighbourhoods and the Head of Carbon Reduction.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

9 June 2020

Question from Ian James – Bremhill Parish Council about Social Care

Agenda Item 6 – Covid-19 Update and Financial Position

**To Councillor Laura Mayes Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Public Protection and
Councillor Philip Whitehead Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

Question 1

As from the 1st February to the 31st May 2020 when the threat of the COVID 19 virus appeared in Wiltshire how many hospital beds at the Great Western Hospital did Wiltshire Council managed to empty and accommodate those patients who were fit to be looked after in their own homes, or in care homes?

Response.

This data is not currently available in time for the Cabinet meeting. However, the information will be provided shortly

Question 2

How many people in Wiltshire are looked after in their own homes funded by Wiltshire Council in April 2020? Has this been an increase in the last 3 months as opposed to the 2019 figures, and if so by how many?

Response

Please find below the figures for the number of people receiving care in their own homes for which the Council pays either in whole or in part:

	2019	2020
Feb	3492	3332
Mar	3510	3378
Apr	3480	3394

Question 3
I note that you had a meeting with Danny Kruger recently. Please can you inform the public what was discussed?

Response
The Cabinet member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Public Protection confirms that she did meet with Danny Kruger to discuss the future of adult social care with many colleagues from the voluntary sector.

Question 4
The public is aware that the rewards paid to care staff are at the bottom of the food chain, some Carers' often take home only £10 an hour for their valuable work. Care Companies are cancelling contracts with Councils because over the years Councils have driven the hourly rate paid to the lowest levels in the history of Social Care.

I would ask that you state how much Wiltshire Council pays on an hourly rate for domiciliary care today? and is the Council going to pay Carers a proper living wage and reverse the continued drive to cut costs in this sector?. **And please don't state this confidential.**

Response
The Council is committed to paying a fair cost of care. The average cost of a Tier 1 domiciliary care package on the Council's framework is £20.48 per hour. The average cost on Tier 2 is £23.55 per hour.

Question 5
Noting the above, on 24th March 2020 you voted as a Cabinet member to finance a private company employing consultants to negotiate on behalf of the Council with Homes England for the HIF bid.

How many hours of Social Care for the most vulnerable could have been provided for £5m?

Response
Firstly, the costs of consultants working on Chippenham Futures project are funded from capital finance not revenue which would be the form of finance for social care work and so it is not comparable. Secondly, if the Council is successful in entering into contract with Homes England to secure the HIF funding an element of those up-front consultancy costs will be reimbursed to the Council from the HIF funding.

Question 6
You were no doubt fully aware or I would hope you were on the day rate these consultants are being paid to deliver a road, which is at risk of not being delivered.

How does this balance with the low wages paid by Wiltshire Council to Carers?

Consultants engaged on similar work will be paid up to £1000 a day.
On reflection now knowing the facts should have challenged the costs, or the cabinet member for Finance should have before voting for Council money to be spent on outside consultants.

Response

In deciding whether to engage consultants the Council always reviews the skill set it enjoys in house compared to the expertise that can be procured in the market. As mentioned previously engaging consultants specialised in this field will improve the chances of entering into contract with Homes England and thus securing HIF funding which in turn will reimburse the costs incurred.

Wiltshire Council

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9 June 2020

Question from Jessica Thimbleby

Agenda Item 6 – Covid-19 Update and Financial Position

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

Statement

With reference to the recent paper '[Will COVID-19 fiscal recovery packages accelerate or retard progress on climate change](#)?' from the Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment I'd like to ask the Wiltshire Council Cabinet in their recovery from Covid-19 and in light of the Climate Emergency declared in 2019

Question 1

Are they seeking to implement policies which capture co-benefits so that recovery policies deliver both economic and climate goals?

Response

Yes.   Addressing the Climate Emergency continues to be a key priority for Wiltshire Council and that is why climate and the environment are a key thread that run through all the COVID19 emergency recovery themes.

Question 2

Policies which for example promote energy efficiency to bring down costs and carbon emissions, training and jobs to retrofit insulation in houses and reduce fuel poverty and promote active transport to improve health and reduce air pollution. Are steps being taken to avoid a 'brown' recovery - where links are reinforced between economic growth and fossil fuels?

Response

Yes. Wiltshire Council is committed to work with partners and our communities to enable and be a catalyst for a recovery that is environmentally and economically sustainable. All the policies outlined will be considered as part of the council's

emerging recovery plan. The council already runs the <u>Warm and Safe</u> scheme which provides energy efficiency advice to residents and supports fuel poor households. As set out in item 6 paragraph 73, the council will be receiving £1.135m from government through the emergency active travel fund to improve facilities for walking and cycling. The first tranche of £227k will be spent on schemes over the summer. The council's capacity for tackling the climate emergency has recently been bolstered by the appointment of a new Head of Carbon Reduction who joined us on 1 June and will be leading the development of a carbon reduction strategy for Wiltshire.

Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

9 June 2020

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Question from Mike d'Apice

Agenda Item 6 – Covid-19 Update and Financial Position

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

Statement

The global, national, local and individual response to COVID-19 has demonstrated our individual and collective capacity to respond once an emergency arises. The UK Parliament and Wiltshire Council have declared a Climate emergency of which the COVID-19 pandemic is but one of the many early symptoms. These normally have limited regional impacts, such as the recent extreme weather event, Cyclone Amphan impacting the Bay of Bengal, two weeks ago. Unusually COVID-19 has had a direct and serious impact on everyone, including us here in Wiltshire.

Question 1

Will the Council commit to ensuring that positive gains achieved under our collective response to COVID-19, if and when an effective treatment for or vaccine against COVID-19 is available, are not reversed? These gains include:

a. Significant reductions in urban and road side air pollution.

b. Reductions in requirements for individuals to 'travel to work' and to attend meetings, achieved by increased working from home and video conferencing: Both contribute to pollution reductions; reduce peak traffic congestion; reduce requirement for "office" space; Reduce wasted/lost hours in travelling and so enhance individuals' well-being and productivity; Increased 'family' / free time and no doubt much else.

c. Promoting local small business' ability to distribute on-line customer purchases to their customers.

COVID-19 has, so far this year, enabled a marginally greater reduction in global CO2 emissions than the target 7.6% required by the UN Environment Programme 2019 Emissions Gap Report to stay below a 1.5°C average global temperature rise. This must be sustained for the remainder of 2020 and further 7.6% reductions achieved for each of the following 9 years of this decade. The Council if able to contribute

towards this target will mitigate far more serious 'symptoms' of Climate Change than COVID-19 in the years ahead.

Response

Yes. The council is currently concluding its response to Covid-19 and as we move into recovery we will be ensuring that climate goals are fully integrated into our policies and programmes. The council's capacity for tackling the climate emergency has recently been bolstered by the appointment of a new Head of Carbon Reduction who joined us on 1 June and will be leading the development of a carbon reduction strategy for Wiltshire.

Wiltshire Council

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Question from Councillor Murry

Agenda Item 6 – Covid-19 Update and Financial Position

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

Statement

Lord Nicholas Stern and colleagues at Oxford University's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment recently pointed out that: "The climate emergency is like the COVID-19 emergency, just in slow motion and much graver." We must not lose sight of this fact. They also said that: "There are reasons to fear that we will leap from the Covid frying pan into the Climate fire," pointing out the unprecedented reduction in greenhouse gas (carbon) emissions as a result of Covid-19 needs to be repeated year on year if we are to reach net-zero by 2050.

To avoid carbon emissions simply rebounding, and to make the most of this opportunity for positive change, Covid recovery plans must deliver both economic and climate/ environmental goals. Measures that support economic regeneration must also embed cuts in carbon emissions, as well as build resilience to the inevitable impacts of climate change.

A green recovery, and 'building back better', will help speed the transition to a zero carbon future, accelerating investment in renewable energy, EV infrastructure and cycle networks, supporting green skills and new digital ways of working, and delivering growth that is more inclusive and sustainable.

Such measures have the potential to be more effective in supporting economic growth by creating jobs that support the future economy and attracting investment that will support rather than undermine Wiltshire Council's 2030 climate goals.

They will also deliver better outcomes in other key areas of public interest, such as public health and wellbeing, and support more resilient communities, who increasingly want to work with Wiltshire Council in creating a cleaner, greener and more secure future for themselves and their families.

The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and its proposed Recovery Plan could become a key part of its future Business Plan, yet Climate Change and the Environment is not even a key theme in what is being proposed. To simply claim that it would be a thread throughout is highly unlikely to deliver the outcomes we need - it needs to up-front, and be a visible key priority to ensure it is properly incentivised and embedded within the Recovery Plan.

Question

Can Cllr Whitehead therefore give us a commitment that Wiltshire Council's Recovery Plan will include 'Climate and Environment' as a key theme, and that it will be climate positive, and help progress decarbonisation of our county, in all its aspects, supporting livelihoods recovery in the short term, whilst investing in the longer term by putting Wiltshire on a credible path to net zero emissions? And if not, can he explain why not?

Response

Addressing the Climate Emergency continues to be a key priority for Wiltshire Council and that is why climate and the environment are a key thread that run through all the COVID19 emergency response themes.

We will be sharing our detailed recovery plans with you in July. Environmental sustainability is a cross-cutting theme which will be taken forward as part of the council's place-shaping agenda. This will include integrating carbon reduction into health and wellbeing, economic sustainability and provision of strategic infrastructure. The Economic Sustainability working group will be ensuring this work is progressed as part of the emerging recovery plan. Integration into the place-shaping agenda will put carbon reduction at the heart of the economic recovery.