

AGENDA SUPPLEMENT (1)

Meeting: **Council (Budget Meeting)**
Place: **Council Chamber - County Hall, Trowbridge BA14 8JN**
Date: **Tuesday 24 February 2015**
Time: **10.30 am**

The Agenda for the above meeting was published on 16 February 2015. Additional documents as set out below are now available and are attached to this Agenda Supplement.

Please direct any enquiries on this Agenda to Yamina Rhouati, of Democratic Services, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, direct line 01225 718024 or email Yamina.Rhouati@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications on direct lines (01225)713114/713115.

This Agenda and all the documents referred to within it are available on the Council's website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk

6 **BUDGET 2015/16** (Pages 3 - 4)

The Budget Process is attached.

7c) **The reports of the Special Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 4 February (attached) and 13 February 2015 (to follow)** (Pages 5 - 14)

Minutes and Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting held on 13 February 2015.

7e) **Financial Plan - Report by Michael Hudson, Associate Director Finance and S.151 officer** (Pages 15 - 16)

Appendix 3a – Relevant extract of Schools Forum Minutes

20 **Minutes of Cabinet and Committees** (Pages 17 - 20)

Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 21 January 2015.

22 **Councillors' Questions** (*Pages 21- 42*)

A list of questions submitted for Council is attached, with responses.

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 20 February 2015

COUNCIL – 24 FEBRUARY 2015

BUDGET DEBATE PROCESS

1. Introduction by Chairman

- Remind councillors about circulated paperwork
- To clarify process to be followed

2. Councillor Jane Scott - Leader of the Council

- to deliver the budget speech
- No time limit on speech

3. Councillor Dick Tonge - Cabinet member for Finance

- To present and move the budget
- No time limit on speech

4. Councillor Simon Killane - Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

- To present the report of the Committee on the consideration of the Financial Plan – 4 February (page 99-108 of Summons)
- To highlight particular areas of discussion
- No time limit on speech

5. Councillor Glenis Ansell – Chair of Financial Planning Task Group

- To report on the work of the Financial Planning Task Group
- No time limit on speech

6. Group Leaders – Response to Budget

- Group Leaders to respond to the recommendations of Cabinet and Councillor Tonge's motion
- No time limit on speeches

7. Group Leaders – Opportunity for amendments

- Group Leaders' opportunity to move amendments to the motion – each amendment needs to be seconded and the seconder may reserve their speech until later in the debate

- Debate on each amendment to budget – Group Leaders to be asked to speak first on any amendments followed by Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee then widen debate to other Councillors.

8. Councillor Simon Killane - Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

- Report of the Special meeting of the Committee on 13 February (agenda supplement)
- To respond to opposition budgets

9. Other Councillors – Amendment

- each councillor to speak once only
- the mover of the original motion (Councillor Tonge) has the right of reply
- Vote on amendment – if agreed this amends the original or substantive motion (or incorporated in the motion by agreement) – if not it falls
- Recorded votes on any amendments
- Proceed to next amendment and repeat process

10. The Substantive Motion

(This could be the original motion or the motion as amended in 9 above)

- Debate on the substantive motion
 - Councillors to speak only once
 - Cllr Tonge has right of reply
 - Substantive motion put to the vote
 - Budget set
 - All votes on budget will be by way of recorded vote
-

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2015 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE BA14 8JN.

Present:

Cllr Simon Killane (Chairman), Cllr Alan Hill (Vice Chairman), Cllr Christine Crisp, Cllr Stewart Dobson, Cllr Peter Edge, Cllr Gordon King, Cllr Jacqui Lay, Cllr John Noeken, Cllr Jeff Osborn, Cllr Pip Ridout, Cllr Ian Thorn, Cllr John Walsh, Cllr Bridget Wayman, Cllr Philip Whalley and Cllr Nick Watts (Substitute)

Also Present:

Cllr Glenis Ansell, Cllr Pat Aves, Cllr Terry Chivers, Cllr Jon Hubbard, Cllr Keith Humphries, Cllr David Jenkins, Cllr Bob Jones MBE, Cllr Magnus Macdonald, Cllr Alan MacRae, Cllr Laura Mayes, Cllr Christopher Newbury, Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Philippe, Cllr Jane Scott OBE, Cllr Jonathon Seed, Cllr Toby Sturgis, Cllr John Thomson, Cllr Dick Tonge, Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Cllr Roy While, Cllr Philip Whitehead and Cllr Jerry Wickham

22 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Jon Hubbard, who in his capacity as Group Leader would be presenting the proposals from the Liberal Democrat Group, and as such absent for the entirety of the meeting in his capacity as a committee member.

Councillor Hubbard was substituted by Councillor Nick Watts.

23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

24 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

25 **Public Participation**

There were no questions or statements submitted.

26 **Purpose of Meeting**

The Committee noted and agreed the proposed procedure for the meeting.

27 **Wiltshire Council Financial Plan 2015/16: Opposition Group Amendments**

The only proposed amendments to the budget proposals received were from the Liberal Democrat Group.

Councillor Jon Hubbard, Liberal Democrat Group Leader, presented the proposed amendments to the administration budget as detailed in the agenda supplement, which sought an increase in council tax of 1.9%, with the additional monies raised to be allocated to £1.719M additional investments in place of proposed savings. Councillor Hubbard thanked his group for their work in compiling the proposals, and praised the assistance of finance officers to ensure the proposals were properly fully costed, legal and viable.

It was confirmed the proposed council tax increase of 1.9% would result in an increase of £23.23 annually for an average Band D property, and that the Associate Director of Finance had confirmed the proposals were financially deliverable as they would not change the net budget requirement. Details of the proposed changes were outlined as detailed in the agenda supplement, including a 3 month winter suspension on garden waste collection in place of an annual £40 charge, the reallocation of 40% of Area Board funding as being available for revenue funding and additional funding for the Wiltshire Hopper service.

The Committee, along with other members in attendance including members of the Executive, discussed the proposed amendments, noting that with all the reversals in savings and additional investments being financed through an increase in funding, rather than being offset by savings from other services, they would need to be considered by Full Council en bloc. Questions were raised about the Council Tax Freeze Grant from central government and whether this would be continued in future years following the General Election in May 2015, and whether the council could afford in the forthcoming and future years to retain the current Council Tax rate.

Other areas of discussion along with other topics as detailed in the appended report included examining the impact of the proposed amendments on the Waste Service in relation to garden waste collection and the administration proposals, along with areas of the service which would require further scrutiny in the forthcoming year to identify improvements whatever proposal was adopted, the current position of the music service, where savings within Highways and Streetscene as proposed could be reinvested, how to increase the role of Towns and Parishes where beneficial to efficiency, and the need for replacement services or transitional arrangements where a service was being reduced, removed or amended following a review.

At the conclusion of discussion, it was,

Resolved:

- 1) **To thank the Liberal Democrat Group for providing the opportunity to scrutinise their proposed amendment and that the opportunity advanced the Committee's efforts to:**
 - **Help add value to policy development;**
 - **Provide for a more robust and engaging scrutiny of the budget;**
 - **Help provide for a more informed, evidenced debate at Full Council.**
- 2) **Therefore, to invite all opposition groups to submit their proposals or amendments to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee as soon as is reasonably practicable for consideration as part of all future Budget scrutiny events.**
- 3) **And to delegate to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to create firm proposals for a robust procedure for consideration of the Budget for next year, that is informed by consultation with members and officers and the Peer Review process.**

28 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 3 March 2015.

29 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 9.00 - 11.25 am)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott (Senior Democratic Services Officer), of Democratic Services, direct line (01225) 718504, e-mail kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115

This page is intentionally left blank

Council

24 February 2015

**Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee
Report on opposition groups' Proposed Amendments for the 2015-16 Budget**

Purpose of report

1. To report to Full Council a summary of the main issues discussed at the special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 13 February 2015. This was convened to consider opposition groups' proposed amendments to the budget recommended by Cabinet on 10 February 2015.

Background

2. This special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee provided an opportunity for non-executive councillors to question the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, as the only group to submit proposals to the Committee, on his group's proposed amendments to the budget recommended by Cabinet on 10 February before the budget is considered by Full Council on 24 February 2015.
3. The Leader of the largest opposition group (Liberal Democrat) gave a presentation covering its proposed amendments to the Executive's budget. He made the following comments:
 - The proposals had been accepted as legal and financially deliverable by the council's Section 151 Officer, Head of Paid Service and the Monitoring Officer.
 - The proposals were made in a very challenging financial climate and the Executive's budget could not be significantly improved upon without raising the current levels of Council Tax. Therefore this year the opposition group proposed that the council raise the levels of Council Tax by 1.9%. This would mean the council would not receive the 1% freeze grant made available from central government to local authorities who do not raise Council Tax, which the Government has said will be added to local authorities' base grants in subsequent years. The total overall increase in the council's budget, as compared with the budget proposed by the Executive, was £1.719M.
 - The proposed Council Tax rise was in line with the Council Tax precept proposals of the Police and Crime Commissioner, which had been approved by the Police and Crime Panel, and the anticipated Council Tax precept from the Fire Authority.
 - Around 50% of Tier 1 local authorities nationally were considering raising Council Tax.
 - The Liberal Democrat group's budget amendments would raise an additional £1.719M and would require:

- A raise of £15.48pa for those in the lowest Council Tax band,
- A raise of £36.45pa for those in highest Council Tax band
- A raise of £23.23pa for those in Council Tax band D, used for calculation of average tax rates.

Main issues raised during questioning and debate

4. The Chairman invited the Leader of the Council and other Executive Members to respond to the amendments to lead off discussion, before opening up to general queries from the Committee and other Members in attendance.
5. It was noted that as all the amendments were financed through an increase in Council Tax funding, rather than from additional savings elsewhere in the budget, Full Council would need to consider them en bloc.
6. The Committee also welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the opposition group's amendments and provide a constructive debate.

Leader's response and Council Tax Increase

7. The Leader of the Council stated that with all proposed reductions in savings and additional investments in the amendment being financed through an increase in Council Tax, the choice to be placed before Full Council was therefore a clear policy decision of a focus on retaining the current tax rate, requiring some additional savings, or increasing it for all, in exchange for some reductions in savings in a few specific areas. The Leader stated unitary authorities were more commonly freezing their Council Tax than other authorities and that she could not support refusing the Council Tax Freeze Grant while it was available, and that the council was working with groups and services to address concerns regarding reductions or reviews proposed in the administration budget.
8. The Committee then discussed the Liberal Democrat group's proposal to increase Council Tax, with questions around whether the option had been considered by the Financial Planning Task Group. The chair of the Financial Planning Task Group stated that they had not. It was noted that the Business Plan 2013-17 planned for no Council Tax increase until 2016/17, and that there was uncertainty around the future position of the Council Tax Freeze Grant until after the May 2015 General Election.

Consideration of amendments

Garden waste collections

9. The Executive's proposal was to charge residents £40 per annum to provide a continuation of the service.
10. The Liberal Democrat group's proposal was to reverse the proposed introduction of charging for green bin collection, and instead implement a ceasing of collections between December and February. This had been the most popular option amongst

people who had responded to a recent consultation on green waste collection. It was stated this would also mitigate the risk of more people burning waste in their gardens and increased fly tipping. The amendment would require an additional investment of £0.550M against the current administration's proposals.

11. The Committee discussed the amendment, including the predicted impact of charging for green waste collection against the impact on highways and environment of the existing service, and whether there should be greater encouragement for people to compost garden waste where possible.
12. Other debate involved the potential impact on people without cars, who may not be able to transport their green waste to a recycling centre.

Wiltshire Music Service

13. The Executive's proposal was to review the provision and strategic support to music services for a proposed £0.148M saving.
14. The Liberal Democrat group's amendment was to retain the Wiltshire Music Service, requiring an additional investment of £0.148M against the Executive's proposals in order to safeguard what was stated to be a vital and much valued service.
15. The Committee discussed the proposals, and a member noted that a survey for the Schools and the Local Authority Task Group showed that whilst it was a well used service, it had been rated as one of the least popular of the 25 services provided.
16. The Corporate Director with responsibility for the area stated that music tuition staff were not paid from the council's base budget, but instead their services were brokered, and it was suggested money would go directly to those providing that service, rather than through the council and incurring administration and staffing costs.
17. The responsible Corporate Director also stated that the consultation period with staff had commenced and that the council would continue to support and host the music hub, which enables the council to access almost £0.5M of external funding.

Wiltshire Hopper Service

18. The Executive's proposal was to remove the subsidy from the Royal United Hospital (RUH) and Great Western Hospital (GWH) Hopper Bus service, and to discuss alternate provision with the hospitals and the Clinical Commissioning Group for patient transport.
19. The Liberal Democrat group's amendment was to review the current service and look for an alternative model of delivery while retaining the current level of provision, requiring an addition investment of £0.130M. A full year's costing of the service was included in the proposed amendments with an intention that a realistic replacement be in place by January 2016. The Leader of the opposition group expressed regret at the lack of information available about this budget proposal in advance of it being made.

20. Some members expressed concern that alternatives to the Hopper Service had not been fully explored before its removal was proposed, causing anxiety to some service users. The Leader responded that the council would work with the RUH to explore other service options that might mitigate some of the effects of stopping the service.
21. The Cabinet Member for Transport reported that currently many hospital staff use the Hopper Service to get to work. There are alternative services providing transport to hospitals in place. The Portfolio Holder for Public Transport has been working closely with relevant providers to explore alternative service models. It was discussed whether Overview and Scrutiny could add value contributing to this process.

Concessionary fares

22. The Executive's proposal was to withdraw companion passes for new applicants and taxi vouchers for wheelchair users, working with users during the overall review of transport to look at alternatives.
23. The Liberal Democrat group's amendment was withdrawal of this at an additional cost of £0.070M.
24. The Liberal Democrat group leader reported that Wiltshire is a large rural county with some areas poorly served by public transport. Some people find using a bus impossible due to their disabilities or the complexity of negotiating the bus service.

Arts Grants

25. The Executive's proposal was to reduce the Arts Grant in line with the cuts the council has faced.
26. The Liberal Democrat group's amendment was a reversal of the proposal to reduce Arts Grant funding of £0.089M and maintain the current spend. The opposition group Leader reported that Wiltshire's vibrant cultural scene creates sustainable communities and attracts investment from outside of the county. It was also suggested that the council, through groups such as the Legacy Board, should work more closely with community arts and cultural groups to deliver long-term sustainable solutions.
27. The Leader of the Council reported that the Cabinet Member for Arts had been working closely with arts groups regarding the proposed budget changes.

Museum Concessions

28. The Executive's proposal was to cease to provide the subsidy to provide free access to the museum conservation service.
29. The Liberal Democrat group's amendment was that work be undertaken to identify opportunities for charging corporate users of the service, with the existing free service to community groups being maintained in order to protect Wiltshire's large number of local museums. In response to queries it was stated the level of savings that could be found by making just this change, rather than the full cuts

recommended by the Executive, had not been ascertained and so for this year the proposal was to reverse the £0.070M saving proposed by the Executive in its entirety.

Highways and Streetscene

30. The Executive's proposal was to make various minor changes in the provision of highways and streetscene services, to achieve savings of £0.300M
31. The Liberal Democrat group's amendment was to reverse £0.249M of the proposed reductions to further develop the service, while retaining attempts to rationalise and improve efficiency in the service, such as improving partnership working between county and town / parish councils as proposed by Cabinet, and build on community participation and engagement.
32. The Committee discussed where and how savings could be achieved with the proposals, and noted that the Liberal Democrat amendment did not specify which parts of the service would receive additional investment from any savings made and the increase in proposed funding.

Community Transport Champion

33. The opposition group stated the need to make more use of community transport schemes, and proposed to create a community transport champion initially for a 12 month fixed term contract to work in partnership with Community First to assist communities in making use of the schemes, at a cost of £0.050M for salary and on-costs.
34. The Committee sought details of the proposed role, with questions on scope, cost and the extent of additional benefit provided by the role. The Cabinet Member commented that the Cabinet Portfolio Holder – Horace Prickett - already in his view carried out such a role at far less cost.

Area Board Funding

35. The Executive's proposal was to maintain the existing budget for Area Board funding, which is capital.
36. The Liberal Democrat group's amendment was to replace £0.363M of the Area Board capital funding with revenue funding, thus increasing the range of projects the boards are able to support.
37. The Liberal Democrat group leader reported that Area Boards are a success story for this council and welcomed the increasing delegation of decision making to local level. However, the group felt the challenges of having only capital funding imposed severe restrictions on how the boards are able to support the work of local community groups.

38. The Committee discussed the amendment. The Leader of the opposition group clarified that within these proposals, the overall level of funding available to Area Boards would remain the same, but that the additional cost to the council enabled greater flexibility in what could be funded, around 40% for revenue funding. The current budget is capital only as identified in para 35 above.

Conclusion

39. That Council take into account the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in considering the proposed amendments to the financial plan 2015/16.

Councillor Simon Killane
Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Report Authors: Kieran Elliott, Senior Democratic Services Officer, 01225 718504 or kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk and Henry Powell, Senior Scrutiny Officer, 01225 718502 or henry.powell@wiltshire.gov.uk

EXTRACT OF SCHOOLS FORUM MINUTES

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2015 AT SALISBURY ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

11 Schools Budget 2015-16

Elizabeth Williams, Head of Finance, was in attendance to introduce the report which outlined the detail of the schools funding settlement for 2015-16 and considered the implications for the Wiltshire schools budget.

The pupil premium would be continued in 2015-16. This would be paid to schools at the same rates as last year, apart from the Primary pupil rate had increased from £1,300 to £1320 per pupil. Based on January 2015 census data it was estimated that the total pupil premium grant allocated to Wiltshire schools would exceed £13 million in 2015-16.

The dedicated schools grant (DSG) had received an increase in total funding of £6.39 million to £310.309 million. The Schools Block had received a significant increase, whilst the Early Years Block had seen a slight decrease. The High Needs Block would be confirmed in March 2015. It was noted that no school would see a decrease in its 'per pupil' funding of more than 1.5%, in accordance with the requirements of the Minimum Funding Guarantee.

The growth in funding in the Schools Block was attributed to two factors, firstly the additional £5.7m from the Fairer Schools Funding allocation and £2.1m due to an increase of 505 pupils in the county.

The following assumptions for the schools delegated budget were proposed;

- Per pupil rates reflect the increases from the Fairer Schools Funding, as previously agreed with Schools Forum
- Lump sum allocations were unchanged at £85,000 for primary schools and £175,000 for secondary schools
- Total funding allocations for English as an Additional Language (EAL), Prior Attainment and Deprivation remain unchanged and funding rates were scaled accordingly
- Costs of the MFG were met through limiting the increases to schools gaining from the formulaic changes

The Early Years Block would be updated once 2014 census details were made available. Take-up was stated as being hard to predict and a ringfence of the budget was proposed. From April 2015 the funding of 2 year-old places would move to a full participation model where local authorities would be funded on the actual take up of places. It was discussed and agreed that any increase in DSG arising from the

January early years census was allocated to the EYSFF budget to support increases in population and take up of places.

The hourly rate for 2 year olds was currently set at £5.43 to providers. This was stated as being the historical rate. The EFA funded rate for 2015-16 of £4.97 was questioned as to whether it was appropriate and £5.25 was considered as a midpoint.

The hourly rate was proposed to be reduced as there was risk that there would not be enough money in the reserves to continue the hourly rates as they were. The quantum provided enough for £4.97; anything higher would require using the reserves.

A consultation had taken place on a single hourly rate for 3&4 year olds. This was discussed at the meeting and further proposals would be brought to the next meeting.

The allocation of the high needs block was based on agreed planned place numbers and historical spend rather than on specific school census data. The final High Needs Block allocations will be notified in March 2015.

A request to the EFA for additional place funding through the Exceptional Case Process was successful in securing an additional 117 places within Wiltshire for 2015-16.

Given the current significant overspend within the high needs block in 2014-15, further modelling and work was being carried out, looking at all areas of the service. There was an underlying assumption that changes and services must be managed within the existing budget level.

Resolved

- 1. Any increase in DSG arising from the January early years census is allocated to the EYSFF budget to support increases in population and take up of places**
- 2. To agree in principle to £4.97 as an hourly rate for 2 year olds with the view that it is affordable and that any surplus is brought back to the 12 March 2015 Schools Forum meeting to be recycled.**
- 3. To agree that the hourly rate for 3&4 year olds be considered at the next meeting following further modelling work.**
- 4. Schools Forum agree the assumptions to be used in calculating the delegated budget**
- 5. Top-up rates remain unchanged, subject to any proposals at the March Schools Forum in relation to the High Needs Block**
- 6. That the overall schools budget is set at £310.309 million, the level of the provisional funding settlement and that work is taken to review the High Needs budget and contain spending within the allocated High Needs Block.**

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 JANUARY 2015 AT SALISBURY ROOM - COUNTY HALL, TROWBRIDGE.

Present:

Cllr Julian Johnson (Chairman), Cllr John Noeken (Vice Chairman),
Cllr Trevor Carbin, Cllr Howard Greenman, Cllr Paul Oatway, Cllr Horace Prickett,
Cllr Terry Chivers, Mr Philip Gill, Mr Paul Neale, Mr John Scragg and
Cllr Jerry Wickham (Substitute)

1 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors Desna Allen, Rosemary Brown,
Sheila Parker and Miss Pam Turner.

Councillor Parker was substituted by Councillor Jerry Wickham.

2 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2014 were presented for
consideration and it was,

Resolved:

To APPROVE and sign as a true and correct record.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no announcements.

5 **Public Participation and Questions**

There were no statements or questions submitted.

6 **Review of the Effectiveness of the Code of Conduct for Members Update**

The Monitoring Officer presented a report updating the Committee on investigations into the effectiveness of the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure, as instructed by the Committee at its meeting on 8 October 2014. The Committee was also asked to consider the current arrangements on Gifts and Hospitality, following referral from Council on 21 October 2014 of a motion to reinstate the requirement to register gifts and hospitality over £25.

A summary of all the Code of Conduct complaints received by the Council since the new Code came into effect in July 2012 was presented, with analysis of which complaints may have been referred for investigation under the previous Code. The Committee discussed whether there were any gaps in the Code which were limiting the Council in its duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct, and how that duty could be strengthened if necessary.

In response to queries on the evidence relied upon, it was acknowledged much was subjective or anecdotal, as in the absence of a single statutory body receiving information on complaints, compiling data was a more difficult task.

The Committee noted that with the limited sanctions permitted under legislation, the most effective means of censure in the event of a breach of a code would be to publicise the decision, and discussed whether it was possible to do so more widely than at present. It was felt that reliance on internal political group sanctions in the event of a breach was ineffective, particularly in Towns and Parishes with no political groupings. The need for additional sanctions was reemphasised, but it was acknowledged that efforts to lobby for further change would be delayed until after the May 2015 General Election.

The benefits of Towns and Parishes having complaints procedures to ensure good governance which could resolve many concerns before they rose to the level of a Code of Conduct complaint was discussed, as well as the impact of the Behaviours Framework attached to the Wiltshire Council Code and need for guidance on social media use.

In relation to the referred motion on Gifts and Hospitality, it was stated it would be a simple process to add an option under the Register of Interests to record gifts and hospitality received by Members, though guidance on what constituted a gift or hospitality, and the level of value that would be appropriate to be recorded without being unduly onerous, would need to be clarified.

It was also stated that Town and Parish Councils, many of which currently utilized Wiltshire Council's Code of Conduct, would be informed of the intention to revise the Code.

Resolved:

That the Monitoring Officer,

- 1) Draft proposals to strengthen the Code of Conduct**

- 2) **Draft proposals for enabling the recording of gifts and hospitality at an appropriate level**
- 3) **Continue efforts to work with other Authorities to lobby central government to increase the level of sanctions available to councils, as soon as appropriate.**

7 Complaints under the Council's Complaints Procedures and the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2014

The Corporate Complaints Manager presented a report providing an overview of the Council's complaints service, the annual reports on complaints and the Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO) Annual Review Letter 2014.

The Committee discussed the report, noting comparisons in terms of complaints and investigations with other similar unitary authorities, and welcomed the intention to increase focus on complaints toward mediation and other alternate resolutions in place of formal investigative processes, in an attempt to resolve issues more locally, swiftly and less resources. In response to queries it was stated it was intended internal complaints staff would be trained to offer mediation skills to resolve issues.

Resolved:

To note the report.

8 Recommendations from the Constitution Focus Group

A report was presented from the Monitoring Officer on recommendations from the Constitution Focus Group to amend Part 3 of the Constitution.

On 29 July 2014 Council requested the sections of Part in relation to the election of Chairmen of Area Boards and attendance of Cabinet Members at Area Boards be reviewed further. The Constitution Focus Group considered the sections and proposed amendments to clarify and simplify the procedure for regular and unitary election years, with a representative of Democratic Services to preside over the election of Chairmen.

Resolved:

To recommend to Council to adopt the proposed amendments to Part 3 of the Constitution as contained at appendix 1.

9 Forward Plan

The Committee noted the draft Forward Plan, and were informed a revised plan would be circulated after the meeting further to the date of the July meeting

being moved from 8 July, as a result of the movement of Council from 28 to 14 July 2015.

10 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

11 **Exclusion of Public**

No members of the public being present, no determination was made to exclude.

12 **Standards Review Sub-Committee Minutes**

The minutes of the Standards Review Sub-Committee held on 17 December 2014 were received.

Resolved:

To note the minutes of the Review Sub-Committees.

(Duration of meeting: 2.00 - 3.30 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Kieran Elliott, of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718504, e-mail kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications, direct line (01225) 713114/713115

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Ernie Clark, Hilperton Division

**To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning,
Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property, Waste**

Question 1

Does Wiltshire Council own, lease or have any financial interest, in any land within the area known as The Hilperton Gap? If it does, is the interest freehold or leasehold, what is the size (area) of the holding, where exactly is it located and is there any intended use for the land? Why does WC own/lease the land?

Response

Wiltshire Council has a number of land interests within the area known as 'Hilperton Gap'. These are listed below with a brief summary.

- **4a Horse Road-** held freehold as Sheltered Housing **size:976m²**
- **Hilperton Primary School-** playing field held freehold for education purposes **size: 5,073 m²**
- **Hilperton St Michael & All Angel's Churchyard-** held via a management agreement as amenity space **size: 2,082 m²**
- **Hilperton Middle Lane Cemetery-** held freehold as amenity space **size: 3,329m²**
- **Land at 118 Wyke Road, -** held freehold as highways land. This land is subject to a section 278 Agreement legal agreement which requires the council to make this land available in order to enable the relief Road. **size: 349 m²**
- **Land at Victoria Road/Wyke Road-** Held freehold as rural estate land **size: 23,921 m²**

As well as the above parcels of land there is a section 278 Agreement with Wiltshire council regarding the new relief road. This agreement contains various obligations in respect of making the land available to Persimmon in order to enable the construction of the relief road and its dedication as publicly maintainable highway.

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Chris Hurst, Royal Wootton Bassett South Division

To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband

Question 2

Given the very significant population increase in Royal Wootton Bassett over the past few years is it not time for Wiltshire Council to provide more litter bins?

Response

This administration remains committed to three main priorities – to protect those who are most vulnerable in our communities, to boost the local economy; and to support and empower communities to do more for themselves. It will continue to seek and explore ways of reducing expenditure to meet these.

To increase the highway and streetscene asset in the form of new litter bins or salt bins and bus shelters is not sustainable in the future. Many existing litter bins are not ideally located and remain under used. Consideration will first be made to re-siting these for more effective use. Such requests, supported by the Town Council can be brought to the attention of the Local Highways Community Coordinator in the first instance.

However, it is generally accepted that the presence of bins do not always solve the problem of the certain members of the community littering the area. Members of the public who do use bins will make other arrangements where none are present.

The Highway Service will continue to react to litter reports to maintain the area. These may be made through the normal channels to the council's customer service or more directly through the Council's 'App'. Between April 2014- January 2015 only twenty-six littering reports were received relating to Royal Wootton Bassett. Members and the public are encouraged to continue to report problems.

Question 3

In Royal Wootton Bassett, the speed limit around a number of our local schools is 20mph. However, on a prominent road adjacent to a children's play area (New Road) the speed limits remains 30mph. Recent metro counts have show that vehicles drive on average at 35mph in this area but this is below the Council's threshold for traffic calming measures. Residents have been told nothing more can be done. Can this matter be reviewed urgently and is the Council prepared to review its policy in order

to reduce the speed of vehicles around play areas and improve the safety of young children?

Response

The playground in question is located behind a substantial metal palisade fence approximately 5ft high. There is one access point from New Road into the playground via a staggered gate. The police collision database shows that there have been no recorded collisions along this length of New Road in the latest 10 year period. There are playground warning signs, but their location and condition could be reviewed to ensure they are providing adequate warning. This can be requested via the Community Area Transport Group.

The metrocount referred to recorded an average speed of 29.5mph with an 85%ile speed of 34mph. This would indicate that the posted 30mph limit is generally adhered to by the majority of motorists and that measures to reduce speeds are unnecessary. The use of 20mph speed restrictions around schools in Wiltshire is currently being reviewed to ensure that the Council's policy is appropriate and conform to current best practise. The initial findings of this review are due shortly.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Helen Osborn, Trowbridge Lambrok Division

To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband

Question 4

Last year across the UK 48000 claims were made to local Councils for damage to cars caused by potholes.

How many claims were made to Wiltshire Council last year, and how many claims were accepted and what was the total amount paid out in claims?

Response

The number of claims made, those paid and the costs of the claims paid in the last calendar year are given in the table below.

All claims for potholes for period 01/01/2014 – 31/12/2014

Total claims received	Total closed as liability NOT accepted - NIL cost	Total closed as liability accepted – claims paid	Cost of claims Paid	% of claims Paid
920	220	567	£141,884.76	72%

As you are aware the flooding in Wiltshire from December to April last year caused a substantial increase in the number of reported potholes in the county. As a result we had an increased number of insurance claims against the Council. The huge increase in reported potholes as a result of the flooding is shown below:

	January – March 2013	January – March 2014	% increase
Total Pothole Reports	2,122	6,809	220%

Wiltshire's liability for a claim is time driven from the time that we are aware of a pothole. It is understandable that if there is a significant increase in the total number of potholes there will be more difficulty in achieving these crucial time limits. Consequently, we receive an increase in claims, but more importantly, an increase in claims where we are liable.

The figures for the last 3 financial years are given below:

	2012-2013	2013-2014	% increase	2014-2015*
Claims made	602	773	28%	358 (430)
Claims Paid	189	439	132%	224 (269)
Value paid	£72,921	£131,839	80%	£43,989 (£53k)

2015-2016 figures are part year to 31/01/2015, ie 10 months (pro-rata full year figures in brackets)

This year's figures to date are included to show that following the abatement of the flooding from April 2014 there has been a significant reduction in potholes, claims and liability. This is a result of better weather and Wiltshire Council's increased investment of £53M on our roads.

We were not the only authority to suffer in this way last year and the entire flood affected areas suffered in a similar way, as you would expect:

Authority	% Rise in claims
Somerset	750%
Worcestershire	400%
Surrey	352%
Dorset	127%

Source Daily Telegraph

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Jeff Osborn, Trowbridge Grove Division

To Councillor Richard Britton, Chairman of the Wiltshire Police and Crime Panel

Question 5

Recently it has been widely reported that the Wiltshire Police will be working much more closely with the Avon and Somerset Police. Some reports have implied that this will be a merger in all but name.

Can Council please be informed as to the repercussions of this for the agreed back office integration of Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Police?

Response

At the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel on 5th February the Police and Crime Commissioner explained that the proposed strategic alliance between the Wiltshire and Avon & Somerset police forces was not a merger and would be looking at how specialist police resources and some office functions could be shared.

Whilst it is far too early in the process to speculate on how the strategic alliance might develop he emphasised that local police emergency response and neighbourhood policing, which is so valued by our communities, will continue to be delivered and managed locally and the co-location arrangements and associated back office collaborations between the force and Wiltshire Council will therefore be unchanged.

It is possible that in the future some collaboration (such as some IT, HR and training) which might have taken place between Wiltshire Police and Wiltshire Council might instead now take place between the two police forces. Equally, Wiltshire Council could provide some back office services to both forces.

The Police and Crime Panel will monitor progress very closely. I am also aware that senior council officers meet regularly with both the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable and will keep the Council apprised of how this proposed alliance might affect the strategic alliance between the Council and Wiltshire Police.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division

To Councillor Jane Scott OBE, Leader of the Council

Question 6

On the 15th October 2014 the Council issued a press release 'Wilts Council named fifth best Council'. It has been alleged by the local press that this article in the national press was in fact written by Rupert Sturgis the son of Cllr Toby Sturgis.

Can you confirm this and did you know this had been alleged when issuing the press release

Response

A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division

To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband

Question 7

How many traffic wardens did the Council have on duty at the Lacock Boxing Day hunt? What was the cost to the Council and how many tickets were issued?

Response

As requested by the Parish Council, we deployed 6 officers in anticipation of demand similar to the previous year (2013) where 4 officers were deployed and could not cope with demand.

Officers made 13 observations with 12 PCN's issued.

Costs are part of regular officer deployment and was not additional to forecasted budget: Bank Holidays are part of the working role and is paid at normal working day rates.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division

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

Question 8

When a resident calls the main Councils main number what is the average time before they are contacted to an operator? And how many calls go unanswered?

Response

In order to provide a recent picture of call performance, these call figures have been taken from the last 4 months, to calculate an average:

On the council's main number, the average time for a customer to wait before they are answered is **32 seconds**

On the council's main number, the average connection rate is **90.7%**. This equates to an average of **1,729** calls per month in which customers have been unable to get through first time.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division

**To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning,
Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property, Waste**

Question 9

Who carried out the consultation on the future of the green waste service and what was the total cost?

Response

The consultation was carried out by the Waste Management service supported by the Communications team and the results were analysed by the council's Knowledge Management team. The total cost was £1512.62 excluding the freepost facility.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division

To Councillor Jane Scott OBE, Leader of the Council

Question 10

Over the past six months we have seen the price of fuel fall from nearly £1.50 per litre to under £1.00 in some places today. As we are looking to cut public transport which may include the RUH Hopper would you agree that we could afford to cut the amount members claim in mileage claims?

Response

Under the Members' Allowance Scheme – Part 14 of the Constitution, "the rates for travel by a member in a private car are linked to the inland revenue rate (currently 45p per mile) and any movement in that rate to trigger an automatic rise in the councillors' rate".

Therefore, should there be an adjustment to the inland revenue rate to reflect the decrease in fuel costs or for any other reason, this will automatically be applied to the rates for travel for Councillors.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Jeff Osborn, Trowbridge Grove Division

To Councillor Richard Tonge, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Risk

Question 11

In a Cabinet Assets Committee report dated 24 July 2012 it is stated that there is a target for capital receipts of £50 million over four years.

Whereas in the recently published Budget papers reference is made to the Disposal of Assets bringing in a total of £34.739 million up until 2017/18.

Could the relationship between these figures please be explained?

Response

The two references are related to different information. The £50m was a target at that date. Both the programme and management of receipts is fluid due to the nature of developments and strategic decision making. The actual receipts received during this period were £52m.

Looking at the capital programme today the forecast is £34.739m going to Council today (24th February) but again that is indicative at the moment and will change as circumstances change. The movements are monitored through quarterly reporting to the Cabinet Capital Assets Committee.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Simon Killane, Malmesbury Division

To Councillor Jane Scott OBE, Leader of the Council

Question 12

I would like to gain full details about when Wiltshire Council intends to start web-casting other Committee meetings and ask for the following list of committee meetings to be included in future broadcasts:

- . Cabinet
- . Scrutiny Management
- . Health Select Scrutiny
- . Children's Select Scrutiny
- . Environmental Select
- . Health and Well-being Board
- . Police and Crime Panel
- . Area Planning committees with important planning decisions for large housing estates, retail or business units.

Response

The technology for webcasting is only available in the Council Chamber and the Kennet committee room, so in order to broadcast, it would be necessary for the relevant public meetings to be held in one of those two venues.

We are testing the equipment in Kennet and also addressing some of the minor technical issues identified within the Council Chamber. Full Council will continue to be broadcast, with other meetings being webcast as appropriate, once the issues have been resolved.

Question 13

We now have the technology in the council chamber to make every vote a recorded vote and to provide a voting record for every councillor to the public. Why don't we just agree to do this for the meetings of full Council?

Response

This would require a change to the Constitution. It will be discussed at the Constitutional Focus Group.

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Chris Caswill, Chippenham Monkton Division

To Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Question 14

- a) How many Early Years Advisory Teacher posts were on the Council complement on each of May 1 2012, May 1 2013 and May 1 2014?
- b) Would you agree that Early Years Advisory Teachers are in the front line of early years' provision and support, recently prioritised in the Early Years Strategy?
- c) Recognising that Childrens Services is facing an overall budget cut, why have Early Years Advisory Teacher posts not been protected in 2015/16?

Response

- a) In May 2012 there were 14.4 FTE Early Years Advisory Teacher posts. In May 2013 there were 13.4 FTE Early Years Advisory Teacher posts. In May 2014 there were 7.8 FTE Early Years Advisory Teacher posts.
- b) Early Years Advisory Teachers play an important role alongside other staff that work within early years, including the Child Care Officers, Children's Centre staff and staff that support the delivery of free entitlement (15 hours per week child care) to disadvantaged two year olds and three and four year olds.
- c) A further reduction in the number of Early Years Advisory Teachers posts (1 post) is being made in 2015/16 due to changes in our statutory responsibilities with regards to early years provision. The local authority is now only required to work intensively with early years settings that are graded 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' by Ofsted (previously satisfactory). Central Government do not expect the local authority to provide support to early years settings that are graded 'good' or 'outstanding' and this is clearly set out in revised statutory guidance. However, we continue to run locality cluster meetings for early years settings and provision of advice and training opportunities. This includes safeguarding advice.

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Chris Caswill, Chippenham Monkton Division

**To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning,
Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property, Waste**

Question 15

- a) The Council officers who prepared the Core Strategy and the draft Chippenham Site Allocation DPD have publicly asserted that they did not know that the Council was the principal landowner within the 91 hectares that is now proposed for development on the east of Chippenham, across the River Avon. Given that you are the Cabinet member for both Property and Strategic Planning, how did you operationalise that 'Chinese Wall' in your own decision making?
- b) When were you first consulted about the intention to include the East Chippenham site in the draft Chippenham DPD?
- c) Will you confirm that the 'at least 4510' number for additional houses in Chippenham was proposed by this Council's officers and that the Enquiry Inspector did not make any specific recommendations for the Chippenham numbers, only for the revision upwards of the overall Wiltshire total?
- d) The second Atkins report on the traffic implications for Chippenham was only submitted to the Council in its final form on February 4 and published on 9 February, the day before the Cabinet met to decide on the draft Site Allocation plan for Chippenham. Why were four versions required and why was the final one only submitted to the Council two days *after* that Site Allocation plan was published?
- e) At what precise time on 9 February was this report made available on the Council web site?
- f) Will you publish all the advice received from Council flooding experts on the proposals to develop farm land on both sides of the River Avon in and around Chippenham, and if not, why not?
- g) In earlier discussions, equal consideration was given to both a southern and an eastern link road. Given that a southern link road would make a direct

connection to the Council's priority A350, why was almost no attention given to it in the draft Site Allocation plan for Chippenham?

- h) Though you may believe it will 'mitigate the impacts of growth' (in and around Chippenham) (to quote your response to my question at Cabinet) will you confirm that an eastern link road around Chippenham is not an established and approved Wiltshire Council priority, and that responses to the public consultation which do not promote that link road will not be penalised for that and will be treated on their intrinsic merits?

Response

- a) Who owns land is not a consideration in the allocation of land in development plans. Site selection is based on evidence and a transparent methodology. Evidence includes Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment which is a public record kept by all Local Planning Authorities of those land owners and developers promoting land for development and for consideration through a plan preparation process. It will include land held by the Council.
- b) The emerging evidence and methodology that has informed the identification of potential sites within the Draft Chippenham DPD was shared at the informal Councillor/Officer Group, which has met during the preparation of the draft Plan. The proposal to include the site at East Chippenham was first considered at the informal Councillor/Officer Group meeting on 17 November 2014, as part of the draft proposals to be included in the Plan.
- c) In response to the 10th Procedural Letter issued by the Inspector examining the Wiltshire Core Strategy, the Council proposed modifications to the Core Strategy including the 'at least 4,510 new homes' for Chippenham over the period 2006 to 2026. These proposals were then consulted on. The Inspector considered these proposals and the outcome of the consultation and considered that this change was necessary to make the Plan sound.
- d) It is not unusual for more than one version of a draft report to be created during the course of a report's preparation.

As with any report commissioned from consultants, there are reporting stages in order to ensure the project fulfils its brief and the outcomes are understood. In this case, given the relatively short period of time within which the draft Plan was being prepared Officers met with Atkins at points during its preparation in order to have an early understanding of the emerging findings.

Late publication of the final report related to undertaking final checks in the interests of clarity and accuracy in order to ensure that the report could be signed off.

- e) It is understood that the report went live on the Council's website around 4pm.

- f) Council land drainage engineers input into the preparation of Evidence Paper 6: Flood Risk and Surface Water Management, including comments on draft versions, and is available on the Council's website.
- g) Both possible link roads would connect to the A350 and the benefits of each are considered in the site selection report as a part of determining the preferred areas for development. That consideration also takes account of findings published in Evidence Paper 3 : Transport and Accessibility (Part One) that a growth scenario based around a southern link road performed significantly worse in traffic terms than a scenario based around an eastern link.
- h) The Plan aims to ensure that necessary supporting road infrastructure is provided in step with Chippenham's growth. Specific requirements in the Plan's proposals set out these requirements. Responses to the public consultation are considered on the basis of whether individual proposals and the Plan as a whole are 'sound' and will be examined by an independent inspector appointed by the Secretary of State.

If the Plan is found sound by the Inspector then it will become a priority for the Council.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Chris Caswill, Chippenham Monkton Division

To Councillor Keith Humphries, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Protection Services, Adult Care and Housing (exc strategic housing)

Question 16

As of 17 February, when this question was drafted, the provision of Help to Live at Home Services in the South of the County was still being listed on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) as **requiring improvements** in four of the five areas in which the CQC has carried out two inspections – *providing care that meets people's needs, caring for people safely and protecting them from harm, staffing and quality of management*. This service has been publicly identified as needing serious improvement since the CQC carried out its first inspection in June 2014.

Isn't it time to stop coming up with hopeful phrases and excuses and admit that the Council has commissioned a Help to Live at Home service for residents which has regrettably proved not be adequate, and in some cases not safe? And to ask for a Wiltshire Council officer's endorsement of Mears to be taken off their web site? And to provide a clear public statement of what lessons have been learnt, and what has been done to guarantee that the Council's contractor delivers what we all believe to be needed – a safe, caring and effective service to elderly people who choose to stay in their own homes?

Response

A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Jon Hubbard, Melksham South Division

To Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Question 17

Could the Cabinet Member please inform me of the total cost of keeping the Canberra Youth Development Centre in Melksham empty is? Please supply the costs as a breakdown including details of security arrangements, business rates, utilities and any other costs.

Response

FM Void Costs:

- . NNDR - £8,500
- . Keyholding - £234
- . Security - £2,500

Note – building is not fully void as yet; still has residual storage use; full decommissioning imminent.

Question 18

Could the Cabinet Member please confirm the existence of a Covenant that restricts the options for disposal of the Canberra Youth Development and clarify if they were aware of the existence of this covenant when they decided to closed the building, with the stated intention of disposing of it to help subsidise the Campus development?

Response

Officers have been aware of the covenant in the deeds for the property for many years. The building closed as it was no longer required for Youth services. The sale of the property was linked to the original business case for Melksham Campus.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Graham Payne, Trowbridge Drynham Division

To Councillor Jane Scott OBE, Leader of the Council

Question 19

Is this Council still operating the Protocol whereby a Council Member must be advised of a Council Decision made that directly applies to and affects the Electoral Division that the member represents?

Response

The constitution includes Protocol 1 - Briefing and Information for Local Councillors. The main purposes of the Protocol is to ensure that councillors are provided with information on matters affecting their electoral division.

The Protocol is in fact currently under review, the outcome of which will be considered by the Constitution Focus Group. Recommended changes will be presented to the Standards Committee for onward recommendation to Council. The Review will focus on making the Protocol more effective and measures will be taken to raise awareness of the Protocol among staff.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Graham Payne, Trowbridge Drynham Division

To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband

Question 20

Can you confirm that this Council no longer uses SMA (stone mastic asphalt) for highway surfacing? If not, why not? If so, why?

Response

Wiltshire Council does not generally use SMA (Stone Mastic Asphalt). The material does have advantages in providing a quieter running surfaces than most surfacing materials, and because it can be laid in thinner layers, it can be cheaper.

However, previous experience with SMA has raised concerns about its long term durability, with failure of the material usually occurring much sooner than would be the case with more traditional materials. The thin layers and comparative stiffness of the material generally make it less suitable for surfacing roads which have evolved rather than been purpose built.

There is also an issue with SMA and equestrians as the smoother surface provides less grip for horses, with consequent safety implications.

There are places where SMA is suitable, especially on some new construction, but in most cases it is currently avoided. The road surfacing technologies continue to evolve and it is monitored so that improved materials can be considered for use.

Wiltshire Council

Council

24 February 2015

Item 22 - Councillors' Questions

From Councillor Graham Payne, Trowbridge Drynham Division

To Councillor Jane Scott OBE, Leader of the Council

Question 21

Do you still believe that this Council should be an unflinching supporter of the Armed Forces Covenant and all that entails in regard to our serving men and women and those who now form the large community of Ex service men and women who live in Wiltshire?

Response

Wiltshire Council is committed to the Armed Forces Community Covenant, which is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at the local level. Its purpose is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Wiltshire and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel their families in Wiltshire. For the Armed Forces community, it encourages the integration of Service life into civilian life and encourages members of the Armed Forces community to help their local community.

It also seeks to encourage all parties within a community to offer support to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for Service personnel, families and veterans to access the help and support available from the MOD, from statutory providers and from the Charitable and Voluntary Sector.

Accordingly, Wiltshire Council along with the numerous organisations that have signed and reaffirmed the covenant (last done at the Wiltshire Assembly in December 2013) remain fully committed to upholding its aims and principles. Although the council has made this covenant with the Armed Forces community, this is in line with the way in which we would hope to support any other part of the community in Wiltshire.