

## AGENDA

**Meeting:** Cabinet

**Place:** Kennet Room - County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN

**Date:** Tuesday 21 January 2025

**Time:** 10.00 am

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Please direct any enquiries on this Agenda to Stuart Figini of Democratic Services, County Hall, Trowbridge, direct line 01225 718221 or email [committee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:committee@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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### Membership:

Cllr Richard Clewer

Cllr Laura Mayes

Cllr Phil Alford

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling

Cllr Nick Botterill

Cllr Jane Davies

Cllr Nick Holder

Cllr Dominic Muns

Cllr Ashley O'Neill

Cllr Tamara Reay

Leader of the Council

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, and Skills

Cabinet Member for Housing

Cabinet Member for Public Health, Communities, Leisure and Libraries

Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning

Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion

Cabinet Member for Highways, Street Scene, and Flooding

Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment

Cabinet Member for Governance, IT, Broadband, Digital, and Staffing

Cabinet Member for Transport and Assets

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Please see the agenda list on following pages for details of deadlines for submission of questions and statements for this meeting.

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## Part I

*Items to be considered while the meeting is open to the public*

### Key Decisions

*Matters defined as 'Key' Decisions and included in the Council's Forward Work Plan are marked with the following symbol on the agenda *

#### 1 **Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence.

#### 2 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting** (Pages 5 - 12)

To confirm as a true and correct record and sign the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10 December 2024.

#### 3 **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of disclosable interests or dispensations granted by the Standards Committee or Monitoring Officer.

#### 4 **Leader's Announcements**

To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council.

#### 5 **Public Participation and Questions from Members**

The Council welcomes contributions from members of the public.

This meeting is open to the public, who may ask a question or make a statement. Questions may also be asked by Members of the Council.

Questions must be submitted to [committee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:committee@wiltshire.gov.uk) by 12.00 noon on Wednesday 15 January 2025.

Written notice of a wish to make a statement should also be provided wherever possible.

#### 6 **Safety Valve plan update & School's Block Transfer** (Pages 13 - 64)

To receive a report from the Chief Executive.

#### 7 **Climate Delivery Plans 2025 - 2027** (Pages 65 - 126)

To receive a report from the Corporate Director, Place.

#### 8 **Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy** (Pages 127 - 158)

To receive a report from the Corporate Director, Place.

#### 9 **Wiltshire Council's Housing Board Annual Report to Cabinet** (Pages 159 - 174)

To receive a report from the Chief Executive.

10 **Insurance Services Tender** (Pages 175 - 184)

🔑 To receive a report from the Corporate Director Resources.

11 **City Hall - Salisbury** (Pages 185 - 192)

🔑 To receive a report from the Corporate Director, Place.

12 **Urgent Items**

Any other items which the Leader agrees to consider as a matter of urgency.

13 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

This is to give further notice in accordance with paragraph 5 (4) and 5 (5) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 of the intention to take the following item in private.

To consider passing the following resolution:

**To agree that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in Item Number 14 because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.**

*Reason for taking item in private:*

*Paragraph 3 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).*

**Part II**

*Items during consideration of which it is recommended that the public should be excluded because of the likelihood that exempt information would be disclosed*

14 **City Hall, Salisbury** (Pages 193 - 196)

🔑 To consider a Part II Appendix.

## Cabinet

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### **MINUTES OF THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2024 AT KENNET ROOM - COUNTY HALL, BYTHESEA ROAD, TROWBRIDGE, BA14 8JN.**

#### **Present:**

Cllr Richard Clewer (Chairman), Cllr Laura Mayes (Vice-Chairman), Cllr Phil Alford, Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cllr Nick Botterill, Cllr Jane Davies, Cllr Dominic Muns, Cllr Ashley O'Neill and Cllr Tamara Reay

#### **Also Present:**

Cllr Richard Budden, Cllr Clare Cape, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Cllr Robert MacNaughton, Cllr Stewart Palmen and Cllr Ian Thorn

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#### 135 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Nick Holder.

#### 136 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024 were presented, and it was,

#### **Resolved:**

**To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024.**

#### 137 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 138 **Leader's Announcements**

1. The Leader reminded members that the public participation and questions from members section of the meeting is for statements to be heard and the submitted questions and responses to be received. He explained that one supplementary question could be asked and this may be responded to verbally by the Cabinet member at the meeting or a written response would be provided after the meeting, it was not an opportunity to engage in long debates about general issues.
2. The Leader was pleased to report that the Council had received the highest ranking possible for its recent SEND inspection. He went on to announce that the inspectors from the Quality Care Commission and Ofsted stated that people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Wiltshire are Valued and prioritised. It was noted that

Wiltshire Council is now one of only five local authorities to have received the top grade inspection for SEND and also an 'Outstanding' Ofsted result for work with Families and Children, in the last four years. [A full report is available to read on the Council's website.](#)

Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group congratulated everyone involved in the process in achieving the fantastic results for SEND and the outcome from Ofsted.

## 139 **Public Participation and Questions from Members**

Thirty-six general questions had been received for the meeting, which were provided in the published agenda supplement together with written responses.

Supplementary questions were received from:

- Cllr Ian Thorn thanked officers and the Leader for the response to his question about the Council's appetite for auctioning off leases for commercial properties that have been empty for long periods. He again asked about the Council's appetite for taking this process forward. The Leader explained that the process appeared to be very complex, and the impact on officer time needed to be assessed. Wiltshire Council is engaging in the process to learn from the early adopter authorities to understand how the process could work in Wiltshire.
- Andrew Nicolson read a statement about the Local Transport Plan 4 and the accompanying implementation plan and business risks. He asked a supplementary question about the public consultation period and why it appeared to not have been included on the Council's main consultation webpage. Cllr Tamara Reay, Cabinet member for Transport and Assets repeated that the statutory requirement for public consultation is 6 weeks, the Council would be extending the consultation period to 8 weeks to cover the Christmas period. Details about the consultation can be found on the Council's website here - [Help shape the Local Transport Plan for Wiltshire as consultation begins - Wiltshire Council](#). A written response would be provided in relation to regional strategies and the LTP4. The Leader explained that the proposed combined authorities and Mayoral model may be a route for future funding of regional transport strategies. He noted that large urban areas would implement different transport policies to combat climate change compared to rural authorities such as Wiltshire.

In addition, Mr Nicolson asked about a comment from Cabinet about the Council being too ambitious in meeting the net zero targets. Cllr Dominic Muns, Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment confirmed that the comment had been taken out of context and he was referring to other Councils and companies being too ambitious in meeting their own targets. He further explained that the Council only had control over a small proportion of transport in Wiltshire and it continued to work towards achieving its net zero commitments.

## 140 Devolution Update

Cllr Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council, presented a report providing an update on Wiltshire Council's expression of interest in devolution submitted to government by Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire councils.

The Leader reported that since the last update to Cabinet in October 2024 further discussions have taken place with Dorset and Somerset councils and the Expression of Interest (EoI) has been amended for the proposed 'Heart of Wessex' devolution deal for a directly elected mayor for the Combined Authority.

Cabinet noted that a letter has been sent to the Deputy Prime Minister requesting that the Heart of Wessex be considered in the first tranche of devolution deals. The revised submission reflects the shared vision for securing better funding deals through local empowerment and collaboration. It was expected that an English Devolution White Paper would be published on 16 December, which should provide further clarity, ahead of further legislation being laid before parliament. The offer to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council and Swindon Borough Council remained open.

Cabinet, although accepting of the proposals expressed concerns about additional tiers of bureaucracy being imposed, recognised the many challenges ahead and raised queries about the Combined Authorities ability to raise finances through precepts.

Three public and member questions were received for the meeting, and these were included in the published agenda supplement together with written responses prior to this meeting.

Supplementary questions were received from:

- Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, recognised that the devolution process was being forced on Local Authorities by the Government and noted that one of the economic drivers for the Heart of Wessex should be the inclusion of Swindon Borough Council in the Combined Authority. He stressed the importance of backbench members and residents being involved in discussions about the future structure of any combined authority in the area and asked about the funding requirements for this additional layer of bureaucracy. The Leader confirmed that he had provided updates to members, and this would continue throughout the process with debates at Full Council meetings and highlighted the importance of seeking the views of the public. He accepted that information was limited at this stage until the White Paper was published on 16 December 2024.
- Chris Caswill asked further about the benefits of a regional mayor, issues relating to planning and public involvement. The Leader explained that the Government had decided that combined authorities are the best way

forward and there would be a risk to rural England if they were not involved in the process at an early stage. It is recognised that there would be a tension with regard to cross border planning and this required further clarity to define its impact within a combined authority.

Cllr Clare Cape asked about the funding streams for the Combined Authority and whether these would come from existing local authority funding or new forms of funding. The Leader reported that further clarity is needed on the funding of combined authorities. He reminded members that the council currently bid for a number of funding streams and it was possible that these funding streams would be diverted to the combined authority to manage.

**Resolved:**

**That Cabinet note:**

- 1. The revised expression of interest submitted to government as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.**
- 2. The intention to continue discussions with neighbouring councils and government as appropriate, particularly following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*Devolution should provide greater freedoms and flexibilities allowing councils to work more effectively to improve services for local residents.*

141 **Recommissioning of Speech and Language Therapy Service**

Cllr Jane Davies, Cabinet member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion presented a report seeking approval to commission Speech and Language Therapy services for schools and early years settings, via a procurement process.

Cabinet noted that the Service provides education settings with support in meeting the needs of children and young people with communication needs and works directly with children in school and early years settings to provide therapy. The current contract ended on 31 March 2025, and Wiltshire Council proposes to commission a service directly to support children and young people in education.

Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, welcomed the proposals and expressed support for the direction of travel. He asked about the level of oversight and clarity in delivering the current arrangements with the Independent Care Board (ICB) and procuring additional services with the Board. Cllr Davies reported that the Council is constantly ambitious for the early years setting and continue to make ongoing improvements. The Leader highlighted the pressures in commissioning and the many different processes followed by the members of the ICB including different commissioning cycles.



**Resolved:**

**That Cabinet:**

- 1. Agrees to commission Speech and Language Therapy services for schools and early years settings with a clear co-produced specification that meets the needs of families and children and education settings.**
- 2. Agrees to increased investment in speech and language services from the SEND Transformation Programme budget, to provide a total of £2,280,000 over the lifetime of the contract period of two years, plus one.**
- 3. Delegates authority to approve and award a new contract and future extensions and all associated documents to the Director of Commissioning and Director of Education and Skills in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*The purpose of this paper is to provide an update to Cabinet on the status of the Council's contracted Speech and Language Service which is delivered by an external service supplier and expires on 31 March 2025.*

*Following the end of the current service Wiltshire Council intend to commission a service separately from the BSW ICB to ensure a greater level of oversight and clarity in delivering a service that meets the needs of education settings, parents and children. However, the service specification will be designed to ensure full alignment with the health delivered speech and language service to provide a service that reduces duplication and allows for a holistic approach.*

*A recommissioned service following a procurement process and award of contract will be in place for 1 April 2025*

#### **142 Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) Adoption**

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cabinet member for Public Health, Leisure, Libraries and Communities presented a report seeking approval to adopt the Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) renewal.

Cllr Blair-Pilling reported that the Strategy supplied up-to-date information to provide a robust, strategic evidence base in the Council's negotiation, secure S106 developer contributions and influence a variety of local authority functions. The Strategy was conducted over a 14 month period in accordance with Sport England's PPS Five Step Guidance covering the four main sports of football, cricket, rugby and hockey.

Cabinet noted that the PPS is not a financial package or commitment from the Council to deliver the action plan but sets out an approach to deliver within

available resources. It is a tool to assist in the planning process, informs decision making and policy development, the leveraging in of S106 developer contributions and is needed to underpin the Wiltshire Local Plan as an evidence base to conform with the National Planning Policy Framework.

Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Chairman of the Environment Select Committee reported that he and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee received a briefing on the proposals on 5 December 2024. Cllr Kunkler noted that it is a very comprehensive strategy. The Cabinet Member and officers explained the reasoning behind the strategy and the core principles which underpin it. They discussed how the success of the previous strategy could be measured and heard how the evidence used would be regularly updated. They questioned whether associated facilities such as changing rooms, toilets and lighting were covered and were reassured that they were. They were also interested in how less formal spaces would be identified and mapped. They welcomed the Strategy as it would help increase sports, physical activity and play opportunities in Wiltshire.

Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, welcomed the proposals and commented on the disparity between male and female sport, budgets to implement the Strategy. Cllr Blair-Pilling confirmed that the Strategy is not a financial package or a commitment to deliver the action plan, it details the current and future infrastructure required and an enabler for others to manage the funding of schemes and projects.

Cllr Budden welcome the proposals and thanked officers for their work on the Strategy. He commented on the necessary funding to deliver the Strategy and any funding shortfalls. Cllr Blair-Pilling explained that the Strategy is a statement of where we are with the current Playing Pitch infrastructure. The future plans were very dependant on S106 developer contributions and the enthusiasm of every school, club and individual. Officers confirmed that the Strategy was an enabling document and there were no funding predictions.

**Resolved:**

**That Cabinet approve and adopt the Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*An up-to-date Wiltshire PPS is a tool to assist in the planning process, it informs decision making, policy development, the leveraging in of s106 developer contributions and is needed to underpin the Wiltshire Local Plan as an evidence base to conform with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).*

143 **Library Strategy 2025 - 2030**

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling, Cabinet member for Public Health, Leisure, Libraries and Communities presented a report seeking approval to adopt the Wiltshire Library Strategy 2025-2030.

Cllr Blair-Pilling reported that the Library Service has experienced significant change over the last 5 years and the report detailed the reasons for the changes. The strategy would help to maintain the momentum already developed and provide a clear direction to sustain and improve on this performance, particularly in the areas of health and wellbeing, economic regeneration, cultural activity and digital support. He congratulated officers for their engagement with users in the preparation of the Strategy. He commented on the Peer Challenge by the Local Government Association and Arts Council England, undertaken in July 2023, with the key recommendations detailed in the report and the Executive Summary available at Appendix 2 of the report.

Cllr Reay provided an example of how she recently provided assistance to a member of the community in relation to the provision of a thermal imaging device that was available from the local library for community use. The Leader thanked officers for producing a very good Strategy and Cllr Davies thanked officers for delivering on the one council approach, and maximising the outcomes for all assets.

Cllr Jerry Kunkler, Chairman of the Environment Select Committee reported that he and the Vice-Chairman of the Committee received a briefing on the proposals on 5 December 2024. Cllr Kunkler reported on the discussions about improving the marketing of the service and the 'Think Libraries First' approach, finances, digital inclusion, and the role of libraries in supporting health and well-being. He explained that the Environment Select Committee has taken a keen interest in the development of the Library Services recognising its key role in our communities. He welcomed the new Strategy. The select committee will also want to be updated on progress over the coming years.

Cllr Ian Thorn, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, congratulated the Cabinet member and officers for their work on the Strategy. He commented on the role of Libraries in the local community and made reference to the recent storms and potential for reporting issues to the Council via the local Library. Officers confirmed that reporting issues at a local library is acceptable.

Cllr Budden welcomed the proposals and commented on the budget underpinning the Strategy.

The Leader welcomed Colin Gale to the meeting and agreed that he could ask a question on the Library Service. Colin commented on the importance of the Mobile Library Service to rural areas and the use of redundant telephone boxes for community book schemes. Officers confirmed that the Mobile Library Service is an important element of the Library Service and reported that the Service would be taking delivery of two new Mobile Libraries in 2025. The book scheme using telephone boxes is community led and not something that the library service had capacity to be involved with.

**Resolved:**

**That Cabinet approve the Library Strategy 2025-30.**

*Reason for Decision:*

*The results of a Local Government Association Peer Challenge in July 2023 recommended a strategy be developed so the library service could continue to innovate and adapt to meet the future needs of people living, working and studying in Wiltshire.*

*The potential impact of demographic, budgetary and environmental changes in the future means a clear framework is required to focus delivery and ensure the statutory requirements of the library service are maintained and delivered in a cost-effective way.*

*By articulating the vision, purpose and priorities of the library service over the next five years the strategy will ensure the service remains relevant and able to deliver on the national and local priorities a public library is there to support.*

144 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

(Duration of meeting: 10.00 am - 12.00 pm)

The Officer who has produced these minutes is Stuart Figini of Democratic Services, direct line 01225 718221, e-mail [committee@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:committee@wiltshire.gov.uk)

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**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**21 January 2025**

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**Subject: Safety Valve agreement update & Schools Block transfer**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Richard Clewer - Leader of the Council  
Councillor Laura Mayes - Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, and Skills  
Councillor Jane Davies - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion  
Councillor Nick Botterill - Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning**

**Key Decision: Non-Key**

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## **Executive Summary**

The High Needs Block (HNB) is the part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) that primarily supports pupils who have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), and approximately two thirds of councils in England have some level of deficit in their HNB.

On the 12 March 2024, Wiltshire Council signed a Safety Valve agreement with the Department for Education (DfE). This agreement is supported by the High Needs Block Sustainability Plan which was created with parent carers, schools and settings, and health and care professionals.

As was reported to Cabinet in September, while the activity to support the plan is broadly on track, the financial limits are not being met and consequently the agreement has been marked as off track. Appendix 1 is the monitoring report for November 2024 which reflects the Q2 budget monitoring position that went to Cabinet on 19 November, this forecasts a £17.49m overspend, on top of the £28.25m overspend included in the original plan.

The data shows that the increased spend in the current year is driven primarily by increased activity rather than by unit cost in most types of provision. This is reflected in the SEND service data which shows that, at the end of December, the number of EHCPs in the system was 6,354 - 660 ahead of the figure suggested by the original Safety Valve Plan.

Clearly this puts the plan far enough off track that significant changes are required. A draft of these changes, subject to Cabinet approval, was submitted to the DfE in December. These changes, contained in Appendix 2, set out further proposals that have been worked up so that an in-year balanced position can be achieved. These proposals will follow the principles set out in the original plan – investing to save in future years and improving support for children and young people with additional needs across the system.

It is now thought that the earliest a balanced position is achievable, without compromising the support given to the children and young people with SEND, is April 2031 (seven years from the start of the plan) instead of April 2029 as originally forecast. This reflects the higher number of EHCPs in the system, higher number of Independent Sector Placements, and consequent work that is required to address the overspend.

The decision to amend the Safety Valve agreement is not for the Council to make unilaterally, and agreement will need to be sought from the DfE.

One minor change to the plan submitted to the DfE in December was the amount that the council is requesting to transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. Local authorities in England can transfer up to 0.5% of the schools block into the high needs block with the agreement of Schools Forum, but the original plan anticipated a 1% transfer.

The council had to submit a draft request to the Secretary of State in November 2024 and then consulted schools on a 1% transfer. While there was support for some level of block transfer, a significant majority were against that transfer being 1%.

School's Forum met on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and voted in line with the consultation responses and officer recommendation, agreeing to a transfer of the maximum amount of money that would be affordable without impacting National Funding Formula rates for individual schools. This was what was done in 2024/25, and that percentage figure was 0.55% (£2m), and a similar amount was expected this year.

Based on this, the revised plan submitted to the DfE, assumed a 0.5% transfer however in this coming year the percentage figure that maintains school budgets without impacting the National Funding Formula is 0.24% reflecting the lower uplift in school funding. This is £1.022m less than the figure submitted in December.

The council needs to decide whether to uphold the draft request and pursue a 1% transfer, despite the objections of Schools Forum, or make a change to the SEND Sustainability Plan which Cabinet endorsed last year and put forward another percentage figure.

If the council and School's Forum are not in agreement, then the Secretary of State makes the final decision. School's Forum meet again on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January.

## **Proposals**

- 1) That Cabinet endorse the draft revised plan submitted to the DfE in December, including the new timeline and the interventions set out within it.

That Cabinet approve:

- 2) The Corporate Director for Children and Education, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Members, to seek agreement for the revised plan from the Department for Education.

- 3) An adjustment to the plan which was submitted to the DfE in January 2024, and revised in December 2024, to request a block transfer of the maximum amount that can be transferred without impacting school budgets (estimated at 0.24%)

### **Reason for Proposals**

Delivery of the SEND Sustainability Plan is vital to removing the DSG deficit, and related financial risk, from the council and bringing DSG into an in year balance position. Having a realistic plan, over seven years, enables the authority to do this in a structured way that does not compromise on the quality of support given to children and young people with SEND.

Delivery of the plan relies on schools and headteachers working effectively with the local authority and continuing to build a more sustainable system. Given the strength of feeling over the School's Block transfer, and the uncertainty about whether a request for a 1% transfer would be granted by the Secretary of State without Schools Forum approval, it is felt that maintaining the relationships with schools is paramount and a change required to that assumed and included previously.

**Lucy Townsend**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

**21 January 2025**

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**Subject: Safety Valve agreement update & Schools Block transfer**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Richard Clewer - Leader of the Council  
Councillor Laura Mayes - Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education, and Skills  
Councillor Jane Davies - Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion  
Councillor Nick Botterill - Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management and Strategic Planning**

**Key Decision: Non-Key**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To update Cabinet on the draft revised SEND Sustainability plan which was submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in December.
2. To seek agreement on the changes proposed to the plan, including a change to the length of the plan, and for the interventions that are contained within the plan.
3. To seek agreement on the percentage transfer from the School's Block to the High Needs Block and that a letter should be written to the Secretary of State explaining this change.

### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

4. This decision relates to the Safety Valve agreement which will ensure that the Dedicated Schools Grant will be brought back into a balanced position. This is a significant financial risk and so removing it will support the delivery of the Council's priorities as set out in the Business Plan.
5. The delivery of the Safety Valve agreement will also provide better outcomes for children with SEND in Wiltshire, supporting the following Business Plan priorities:
  - Resilient Communities
  - Empowered People
  - Thriving Economy

### **Background**

6. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is funding which local authorities in England receive to support schools. The DSG is split into four blocks which support different parts of the schools and education system.
7. One of these blocks is the High Needs Block which is used to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).



8. Since 2018/19 the High Needs Block has been under increasing pressure. This growth in expenditure has been seen in every council in England, and Wiltshire is no exception.
9. This growth is the result of changing practice following The Children and Families Act 2014, SEND Regulations 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2015 which introduced new statutory obligations for local authorities in England in how they support children and young people with SEND.
10. In Wiltshire from 2018/19 to 2022/23, this equated to a 51% growth in the number of children supported by an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and a 46% growth in the amount of money being spent from the High Needs Block. Over the same period, the money received into the High Needs Block from government only grew by 36%. The Association of Directors of Children's Services estimate that, as of 2022, this was a £2.6bn issue across England.
11. While High Needs Block income has not kept pace with the growth in demand, there are also changes that councils can make to respond to the new strategic context.
12. This issue has received some attention over recent years, and this is reflected in the introduction by government of a statutory override. This override allows councils to hold their DSG deficit as a negative reserve on their balance sheet, walled off from the rest of the council's finances. This statutory override, however, is due to expire 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 and at that point, councils will be expected to make good any remaining deficit that has not been previously addressed.
13. The Wiltshire Council DSG deficit forecast suggests that, by April 2026, the cumulative unmitigated deficit could be £117m while the current forecast total general fund and earmarked reserves are £90m.
14. The invitation from DfE to join the Safety Valve programme was received in August 2023 and an initial meeting with the Department for Education was held in early October 2023. The plan was submitted in draft form on December 15<sup>th</sup>, it was then amended and resubmitted on January 12<sup>th</sup> 2024.
15. Further negotiations were held between the council and the DfE to ensure a mutually agreeable position. This agreement received ministerial approval and was signed on behalf of Wiltshire Council on 12<sup>th</sup> of March.
16. The agreement sets out commitments from the DfE and from Wiltshire Council. The DfE has committed to give Wiltshire Council an additional £67m over the 5 years of the agreement. These contributions are paid in instalments, profiled as follows:

<b>Year</b>	<b>The Department agrees to pay to the authority an additional £m of DSG by year end</b>
<b>2023/24</b>	£26.8m
<b>2024/25</b>	£6.7m
<b>2025/26</b>	£6.7m
<b>2026/27</b>	£6.7m

<b>2027/28</b>	£6.7m
<b>2028/29</b>	£13.4m

17. In addition, the council has agreed to regular monitoring, 3 times a year, to check on progress. The DfE will expect the council to report against the key conditions of the agreement, and on progress to deliver capital projects associated with the agreement.

18. These conditions are:

- 1) The authority undertakes to reach a positive in-year balance on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) account by the end of 2028/29 and in each subsequent year.
- 2) The authority undertakes to control and reduce the cumulative deficit, not exceeding £84.5m in financial year 2024/25.
- 3.1. Provide earlier support for children and young people with SEND, improving inclusion practices and managing pressure points and school transitions;
- 3.2. Prevent the need for escalation by providing the right support, first time, including a more holistic response alongside health and social care, with improved management and communication;
- 3.3. Increase the number of special school placements, resourced provision, and alternative provision to ensure that children and young people can access the support they need, with proper reintegration support for children who belong in mainstream provision;
- 3.4. Improve transition pathways to provide a range of opportunities for young people with SEND to prepare for adulthood, including training, further education, and employment;
- 3.5. Foster a culture of change across the Wiltshire SEND and AP system by engaging with partners and parent carers, improving trust and coproduction across the sector.

19. In September, it was reported that the August monitoring report was RAG rated “off-track” and that officers would be reviewing and revising the SEND sustainability plan in preparation for the November submission. These revisions were intended to provide assurance to the council, and to the DfE that there is a credible plan to get back on track.

20. Following this submission, the Q2 monitoring report was published and did not show any improvement in the financial position within the High Needs Block.

21. Officers undertook a re-baselining exercise to understand the sustainability challenge and reviewed the current plan to identify the gaps. Service leads from across Education and Skills and Families and Children’s directorates undertook an exercise to see what could be accelerated or re-scoped within the plan to bring the impact forward. New interventions were also developed, with a clear emphasis on measurable and deliverable impacts.

22. The resulting changes, and revised plan, were submitted to the DfE in early December, subject to Cabinet approval.

## **Main Considerations for the Council**

23. As at the end of December, there are 6,354 EHCPs in the Wiltshire SEND system, this is 660 ahead of the forecast suggested by the original Safety Valve Plan. As a result of this increased growth in EHCPs, there are 41 more Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) placements than this time last year. The average cost of a INMSS placement is £35.56k more than one in a maintained special school.
24. These factors are driving an overspend in the High Needs Block of £45.74m. This is £17.49m more than the £28.25m overspend included in the original plan.
25. Appendices 1 and 2 go into greater detail about the reasons for this, and the data insights that have been gathered since the original plan was submitted. In summary, firstly the predictions around how quickly impact would be felt were optimistic. Secondly, the original forecast was based on a 5-year average, which included years where demand was artificially suppressed by COVID-19 and the assumptions about what happens to that demand were also optimistic.
26. There has also been an impact because the council has made significant progress with clearing the EHCNA backlog, ensuring that where children and young people have a level of need which would warrant an EHCP, this is available to them. The result of this is that the backlog is now at its lowest level since 2020, but this has brought more plans forward.
27. Given these factors, the plan has been re-baselined and a new forecast created that maps the existing interventions and impacts onto the revised trajectory. It became clear that, without risking the quality of support that is available to children and young people with SEND, getting to balance in five years would not be possible.
28. Given the commitment that the council rightly shows to maintaining that quality, as highlighted in the recent Ofsted/CQC inspection, officers worked up plans that would reflect the values-based approach which underpins the original SEND Sustainability Plan.
29. To achieve this, an evidence led approach has been taken to understanding what could be achieved in the short term. Given that Wiltshire already has more EHCPs per head of population than many of its statistical neighbours, it is not unreasonable to have an ambition that is based on achieving similar data milestones to statistical neighbours for metrics like EHCNA requests, robust decision making, and ceased plans.
30. Eight short-term interventions have been developed to move Wiltshire towards that target system by April 2026. These are listed in appendix 2, and without this milestone being met, balancing the SEND budget in Wiltshire becomes impossible.
31. All eight interventions place the needs of children and young people at the centre, and are grounded in an invest-to-save approach.
32. These interventions have been mapped onto the revised forecast and officers believe that the earliest time that the High Needs Block could be balanced is March 2031, two years later than originally planned. This would make the SEND sustainability programme a seven year process, rather than the five years originally set out in the Safety Valve Plan.

33. This would leave a £122.5m residual deficit for Wiltshire Council to manage, up from £70.3m in the original plan. This will be a challenge, especially if local government budgets continue to be pressured, as they have been in recent years.
34. Extending the length of the Safety Valve agreement, and adjusting the deficit limits in it, are not steps that the council can take unilaterally and there will need to be further discussion with the DfE. The council should not expect the DfE to increase the contribution they are making as part of the Safety Valve agreement.

### **School's Block Transfer 2025/26**

35. Within the SEND sustainability plan, assumptions were made about the amount of funding that could be transferred from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.
36. Local authorities can transfer up to and including 0.5% of their schools block funding into another block, with the agreement of their Schools Forum. Where a local authority wishes to transfer more than 0.5% of their schools block funding into another block, and/or where agreement has not been reached with Schools Forum, the local authority must seek the agreement of the Secretary of State.
37. In Wiltshire, Schools Forum has recognised the pressures against the high needs block and a transfer of funding from the schools block has historically been agreed, following consultation with schools, each year, where this has been affordable within the 'cash envelope' for school funding and the National Funding Formula (NFF) has been applied in calculating school budgets.
38. In 2024/25 a transfer of £2m, or 0.55%, from the schools block to the high needs block was agreed by Schools Forum and confirmed by the Secretary of State. This was in line with the proposals in the council's High Needs Sustainability Plan.
39. The Safety Valve agreement that the council has in place with the DfE includes an assumption of a transfer of 1% of schools block into high needs block each year from 2025/26 to 2028/29.
40. For this reason, the council has consulted with schools on a proposal for a 1% transfer from schools block into high needs block in the 2025/26 financial year. The consultation opened on 17th October 2024 and closed on 21st November 2024.
41. On 15 November 2024 the council submitted a draft request to the Secretary of State to ensure the deadline, set by the DfE, was not missed. This draft request made it clear that the consultation with schools had not yet closed and that the council would be updating the request once views had been collected from schools.
42. 61 responses to the consultation were received, representing 79 schools across the range of primary and secondary and maintained and multi academy trust. The consultation report is included as Appendix 3.
43. The majority of respondents (66.7%) were in support of a transfer of funding from schools block to high needs block.
44. Of those respondents who supported a transfer of funding, the majority (60.0%) were not in support of the proposal to transfer 1% of schools block. Comments provided by

those respondents indicated majority support for a transfer of 0.5% or a value that would not impact on NFF formula rates.

45. The majority of comments from respondents who voted No to a transfer of funding referred to the financial impact on their schools. Comments also noted existing cost pressures and wider concerns relating to the SEND system.
46. Schools Forum met on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December to consider the consultation responses and reach a decision about the block transfer. Officers put the full range of options in front of School's Forum and recommended that the consultation response be respected.
47. Schools Forum voted in favour of making a transfer from the school's block to the high needs block set at the highest percentage which would not directly impact school budgets.
48. High Needs Block Sustainability Board met on the 19<sup>th</sup> December to discuss the issue. The Board recognised the financial pressure on schools, and the vital role that schools will play in the delivery of the sustainability plan. The board also reflected on the financial pressures in the dedicated schools grant and the risk to the council's services if this deficit is not brought under control.
49. However, despite concerns about the impact on the DSG deficit on balance, the High Needs Block agreed with the view from schools as expressed in the decision from Schools Forum.
50. Based on the final DSG funding settlement announced on 18<sup>th</sup> December it is estimated that the maximum level of transfer from schools block to high needs block will be £0.913m, or 0.24%. This will leave a shortfall to be managed within the revised plan of £1.022m in the 2025/26 financial year.
51. The Council now has two choices:
  - a. Uphold the draft request made to the Secretary of State, pursuing a 1% block transfer without the support of Schools Forum.
  - b. Revise the draft request, in line with the decision of Schools Forum, and request the highest percentage transfer possible without impacting school budgets.

52. The recommendation is that Cabinet, on behalf of Council, select option b and that the S151 officer write to the Secretary of State withdrawing the disapplication request.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

53. There are no direct implications of this decision.

### **Public Health Implications**

54. The schools block supports provision of universal support to all pupils in Wiltshire. This support includes measures designed to prevent ill health among pupils.

55. If schools felt under pressure to cut back on their provision due to budgetary constraints, these preventative measures are likely to be the first thing to be cut to protect frontline teaching posts. The proposal in this paper reduces that likelihood.

### **Procurement Implications**

56. There are no direct implications of this decision.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

57. The high needs block supports children and young people with additional needs, including those with physical disability. While this paper proposes moving less money into the high needs block from the schools block, the risk to those learners is negligible.

58. Further support is being provided to those learners through other elements of the SEND Transformation Programme which will fully mitigate any potential risk.

59. Each project plan within the SEND Transformation Programme has an Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) tool embedded within it, and full EQIA is undertaken where necessary. The total level of impact is also being monitored.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

60. There are no direct implications of this decision.

### **Workforce Implications**

61. There are no direct implications of this decision.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

62. If the revised plan is not accepted, then there is a risk that the council does not have a credible plan to get the High Needs Block to a balanced position. The council would have to manage a deficit which is increasing exponentially.

63. Should the proposed decision around the Schools Block Transfer not be taken then the existing request to the Secretary of State for a 1% transfer would remain the position of the council. This request, taken against the wishes of Schools Forum and the consultation with schools, would risk the erosion of relationships with education providers in Wiltshire.

64. If the council decided to set itself in direct opposition to the stakeholders who can have the biggest impact on the SEND Sustainability Plan, then this could have a profound and lasting effect on the ability of the council to address the overspend in the dedicated schools grant. While this scenario has not been modelled, it is thought that this would greatly exceed the value of the block transfer.

65. It is also worth noting that the new Secretary of State has indicated that she is less pre-disposed to agreeing block transfers than her predecessor, where the request does not have the support of Schools Forum, and so there is a risk that the council damages relationships with schools and the block transfer is not granted.

## Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

66. There is a risk that the council will see an increase in legal challenge and tribunals arising from the SEND decision making process. This risk is being mitigated through the plan, by ensuring the council is confident in the support being provided to children with SEND, by ensuring that the council has efficient and well defined processes in place. Additionally, the plan is being co-designed with parent carers, schools, early years settings and colleges to create shared ownership and buy-in.
67. Adopting the Schools Block Transfer proposal would concede that less money is being transferred from the schools block to the high needs block to mitigate the significant deficits which are building up in that area. This does increase the financial liability for the council.
68. Adopting the proposal could leave the DfE with the impression that the council is not willing to make tough decisions to address the deficit in the high needs block.
69. The mitigation for both these risks is the revised Sustainability Plan submitted to the DfE. This plan includes further interventions designed to bring the deficit down, and these interventions provide a credible evidence base for the DfE to conclude that the council has an ambitious plan to address the deficit.

## Financial Implications

70. The updated sustainability plan is no longer predicting a positive in-year balance by the end of 2028/29. The latest forecast is that a positive in-year balance will be possible by the end of 2030/31 and in subsequent years.

Provision Type	Revised Forecast							
	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000	2029/30 £'000	2030/31 £'000
Plan Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Mainstream Provision (incl. Resourced Provision Top Ups)	23,190	25,055	19,512	18,090	16,885	16,003	15,580	14,985
Resourced Provision (places only)	4,249	4,933	5,712	5,582	5,822	6,062	6,302	6,542
Special Schools	28,137	34,504	34,262	37,147	40,333	42,937	45,047	47,072
Independent and Non-maintained Special School Provision	20,263	28,373	26,525	25,111	17,547	5,328	3,480	3,893
Post 16 Provision	11,150	12,193	13,112	12,034	10,379	9,365	8,500	8,106
Alternative Provision	7,980	9,040	9,974	9,319	8,877	8,720	8,520	7,530
Therapies	667	669	873	873	873	873	873	873
Other High Needs Block places and top ups	1,047	1,103	1,087	1,054	1,003	932	840	748
High Needs Block staffing etc	0	6,303	7,693	6,723	6,736	6,749	6,763	6,776
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>96,683</b>	<b>122,172</b>	<b>118,751</b>	<b>115,933</b>	<b>108,455</b>	<b>96,969</b>	<b>95,906</b>	<b>96,527</b>
High Needs Block	-70,798	-74,445	-80,301	-82,710	-85,192	-87,748	-90,380	-93,091
Block Transfer	-1,797	-2,000	-1,937	-3,867	-3,983	-4,102	-4,225	-4,352
<b>In Year Surplus (-)/Deficit(+)</b>	<b>24,088</b>	<b>45,727</b>	<b>36,513</b>	<b>29,356</b>	<b>19,280</b>	<b>5,119</b>	<b>1,301</b>	<b>-917</b>
Blocks	-2,766	-2,531						
Safety Valve Income	-26,800	-6,700	-6,700	-6,700	-6,700	-13,400		
Surplus/Deficit Brought Forward from Previous years	35,214	29,736	66,232	96,045	118,701	131,282	123,001	124,301
<b>Total Deficit Balance</b>	<b>29,736</b>	<b>66,232</b>	<b>96,045</b>	<b>118,701</b>	<b>131,282</b>	<b>123,001</b>	<b>124,301</b>	<b>123,385</b>

71. This would leave a £123.4m residual deficit for Wiltshire Council to manage, up from £70.3m in the original plan. This will be a challenge, especially if local government budgets continue to be pressured, as they have been in recent years. Therefore, the

council will need to regularly review what steps it can take to accelerate the impact of the plan and meet key milestones more quickly.

72. High Needs block income is shown at the provisional settlement level for 2025/26 and is assumed to increase by 3% per annum from 2026/27, in line with DfE guidance. Any change to the level of the high needs block will impact on the plan, either positively or negatively.
73. The council's Safety Valve agreement includes a proposed transfer of 1% from schools block to the high needs block each year from 2025/26 to 2028/29. Whilst this is included in the agreement, the council is required to consult annually with schools on the level of any transfer and seek Secretary of State approval each year if that value is greater than 0.5%. The value of the proposed 1% transfer for 2025/26 was assumed to be £3.754m.
74. Following consultation with schools, and the provisional announcement of school funding for 2025/26, Schools Forum did not support a transfer of 1% for 2025/26 when the proposal was discussed in December. The recommendation from Schools Forum was taken to the High Needs Sustainability Board on 19<sup>th</sup> December and it was agreed that Cabinet would need to ratify the views of schools that the transfer should be the maximum level that would not impact on school budgets. In the revised plan submitted to the DfE the level of the block transfer is assumed to be 0.5% of schools block, or £1.937m.
75. The final DSG settlement has now been received. The settlement includes a 7.9% increase in the high needs block for Wiltshire and confirms a 0.5% increase in core factors for mainstream schools. Analysis of the data indicates that the maximum affordable block transfer, without impacting on National Funding Formula rates for schools will be £0.915m, or 0.24%. This is £1.022m lower than the revised plan.
76. In future years of the plan, high needs block increases are assumed at 3% per annum, in line with government guidance, and the assumption of a 1% block transfer each year continues. This would be consulted on annually and reviewed in the context of the funding settlement each year however the experience from this year puts the affordability of a 1% transfer in future years at risk.

### **Legal Implications**

77. The schools block is the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) that is allocated to fund the National Funding Formula (NFF) for pupils aged 5 to 16, in mainstream schools. The high needs block is the amount of DSG that is allocated to support pupils aged 0 to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
78. Whilst the schools block is ring-fenced in line with the DSG conditions of grant, local authorities can transfer up to and including 0.5% of their schools block funding into another block, with the approval of their Schools Forum. Where a local authority wishes to transfer more than 0.5% of their schools block funding into another block, and/or where agreement has not been reached with Schools Forum, the local authority must seek the agreement of the Secretary of State.
79. The Safety Valve agreement does not specify the level of the schools block transfer, it sets financial targets for the end of each financial year, therefore this proposal is not in breach of the agreement.



80. The consultation process was undertaken in a compliant way, and the process followed was in accordance with the legislation on this matter.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

81. The revised plan has been developed quickly and less engagement has been undertaken than officers would have liked. These proposals are going to Children's Select Committee on the 15 January 2024 and comments from the committee will be included in the delivery plans going forward.

82. These decisions have been discussed at Schools Forum, who have been kept appraised throughout the process.

### **Conclusions**

83. Endorsing the revised plan that was submitted to the DfE provides a credible plan to remove the council's biggest financial risk.

84. While a seven-year recovery programme does leave the council with a bigger residual deficit to manage, this approach balances the financial urgency with maintaining the quality of support that the council provides to children and young people with SEND.

85. Taking a decision to transfer less money into the high needs block may seem counterintuitive at a time when the system is running a deficit against that budget, however, the risk that a 1% transfer poses to the delivery of the rest of the financial sustainability plan is significant.

86. Schools are the partners in this process who have the biggest impact on the success or failure of the wider SEND Sustainability plan.

87. The additional high needs block funding in the government's budget exceeds the monetary difference between a 1% transfer and a 0.24% transfer. However, this had already been taken into account in the forecast and so it would leave the plan £1.022m less than the figures submitted in December.

88. Given the factors above, the proposal is to support the decision from School's Forum and write to the Secretary of State to amend the block transfer request to reflect the highest percentage transfer possible without impacting school budgets.

### **Lucy Townsend - Chief Executive**

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Report Author: Ben Stevens, Inclusion, SEND and AP Transformation Lead, [Ben.Stevens@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Ben.Stevens@wiltshire.gov.uk); Liz Williams, High Needs Block Finance Lead, [Liz.Williams@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Liz.Williams@wiltshire.gov.uk)

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – November 2024 Safety Valve Monitoring Update

Appendix 2 – Changes to the SEND sustainability plan

Appendix 3 – School's Block Transfer Consultation Report

### **Background Papers**

[Schools Forum papers, December 2024](#)

[Minutes of Wiltshire Council Cabinet, March 2024](#)

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## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

LA Name	Date Report Submitted	Signed off by S151 Officer & Director of Children's Services	Name & Email Address of Key Personnel	
Wiltshire	11 <sup>th</sup> December 2024		CEO:	Lucy Townsend Lucy.Townsend@wiltshire.gov.uk
Do you need additional support from either of our specialist SEND advisers (early years / inclusion) to support the effective delivery of your Safety Valve plan? If yes, please specify which area (early years / inclusion) you would like extra support in, giving a brief overview of how this support would be beneficial.			S151 Officer:	Lizzie Watkin Lizzie.Watkin@wiltshire.gov.uk
			DCS:	Darryl Freeman Darryl.Freeman@wiltshire.gov.uk
			Other key contacts for Safety Valve:	Kathryn Davis – Director for Education and Skills Kathryn.Davis@wiltshire.gov.uk Florah Shiringo – Interim Director for Children and Families Florah.Shiringo@wiltshire.gov.uk Ben Stevens – Inclusion, SEND and AP Transformation Lead Ben.Stevens@wiltshire.gov.uk Liz Williams – High Needs Block Finance Lead Liz.Williams@wiltshire.gov.uk Lisa Fryer – Head of SEND and inclusion Lisa.Fryer@wiltshire.gov.uk
The initial meeting held with both advisors was very helpful and so the intention is to continue working with them. Of particular interest, and subject to further exploration, was: advice shared on the use of attitudinal measures to assess the impact of SEND transformation on mainstream inclusion; enhanced provision opportunities in EYFS Reception classes; and the use of special schools as part of triads within a SEND review framework for mainstream schools.				

Is your LA's Safety Valve plan on track?	Yes/No	Commentary
To achieve the Safety Valve agreement's projected deficit in the current year?	No	As was reported in the August update, based on the Q1 forecast, the Wiltshire Safety Valve agreement is not on track to meet the projected deficit in year. This remains the case based on Q2 monitoring, and there has been further adverse movement of £5.05m.  This is due to continued demand being higher than forecast, and this generating more independent non-maintained special school placements.
To achieve a £0 DSG deficit by the end of the Safety Valve agreement?	No	Further analysis has been undertaken to model forward the impact of the plan being off-track. It is no longer thought possible to reach a £0 deficit by the end of the 5 year Safety Valve agreement.  This is a reflection that, despite positive steps being taken on inclusion, finance and post-16 workstreams, there has not been any appreciable impact seen in Year 1 so far, and consequently there has been additional cost been added to the system.  There is a plan to reach balance 7 years after the commencement of the Safety Valve agreement (April 2031) and a discussion with the DfE about amending the agreement in line with this would be welcomed.  Given how this impacts the residual deficit, which the council is responsible for, the authority has thoroughly explored options to get to a balanced position earlier.

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

		However, it has not been possible to identify viable options without compromising the support that is offered to, and required by, Children and Young People with SEND in Wiltshire.
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	Yes/No	Commentary
Is your LA's Safety Valve capital project on track?	Yes	Despite a number of significant challenges, including an extended delay in determining the outcome of our application, the capital project is back on track and should deliver the expected placements on schedule.

### Programme Headlines

This quarter, the biggest drivers of positive change have been (up to 3):

1. The continued relationships with Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) and schools have enabled mature conversations and understanding across the system about the scale of SEND transformation required.
2. As the plan has been reworked, there has been system-wide willingness to engage with the process, despite the complexity and scale of the change required as well as competing priorities during the month of October when we were engaged in the Ofsted/CQC Local Area SEND inspection.
3. There has been successful recruitment into teams which will deliver support on the ground in schools. The staff recruited are credible specialists in their field, which is vital to their success. This includes, for example, recruitment of secondary behaviour support advisory teachers and SEMH inclusion mentors.

This quarter, the biggest barrier(s) to successful implementation of the Safety Valve plan have been (up to 3):

1. Capacity from officers across the partnership was lower than usual, due to the Ofsted/CQC Local Area SEND inspection, which kept key stakeholders busy for around a month. Leaders were very willing to give Safety Valve their full attention once the inspection had passed.

This quarter, the best examples of stakeholder engagement around the Safety Valve plan have been (up to 3):

1. The authority has continued to model co-design and engagement principles while delivering the plan and developing the new mitigations. There have been multiple engagement events with parent carers and schools to ensure stakeholders remain engaged, involved and have their views heard. For example, 3 face-to-face parent carer events were held in September across the county and webinars have been held monthly providing live Q&A opportunities. These have been led by the Director of Education and Skills and the Inclusion, SEND and AP Transformation Lead.
2. The first of the Stakeholder Reference Panels has taken place, bringing together schools, parent carers and the voice of children and young people to discuss and influence our project proposals.
3. The revised proposals and descriptors for EHCP top-up funding in Wiltshire have been developed through a series of small working groups with key stakeholders from the Statutory SEND team and the community care provider, HCRG Care Group. Consultation events have been delivered for schools and parent/carers as 'live' events to enable meaningful dialogue and discussion beyond the standard consultation response medium.

*Alongside your Safety Valve financial and narrative monitoring reports, please share with us the latest strategic data dashboard utilised by your governance oversight board for Safety Valve.*

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

*NB This should not be something created for the DfE Safety Valve monitoring process; if you do not have a strategic data dashboard, just let us know.*

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>																											
Condition 1: The authority undertakes to reach a positive in-year balance on its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) account by the end of 2028-29 and in each subsequent year.	Update 1 (May)	<p>The current financial forecast is detailed on the attached finance template.</p> <p>The council is no longer predicting a positive in-year balance by the end of 2028/29. The latest forecast is that a positive in-year balance will be possible by the end of 2030/31 and in subsequent years.</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>High Needs Block financial forecast 2023/24 - 2030/31 (£,000)</p> <table border="1" style="display: none;"> <caption>High Needs Block financial forecast data (Estimated)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Mitigated In-Year Overspend (£,000)</th> <th>Mitigated Cumulative Deficit (£,000)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2023/24</td><td>20,000</td><td>30,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2024/25</td><td>40,000</td><td>70,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2025/26</td><td>35,000</td><td>105,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2026/27</td><td>30,000</td><td>135,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2027/28</td><td>20,000</td><td>155,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2028/29</td><td>-5,000</td><td>150,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2029/30</td><td>-2,000</td><td>148,000</td></tr> <tr><td>2030/31</td><td>-1,000</td><td>147,000</td></tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Year	Mitigated In-Year Overspend (£,000)	Mitigated Cumulative Deficit (£,000)	2023/24	20,000	30,000	2024/25	40,000	70,000	2025/26	35,000	105,000	2026/27	30,000	135,000	2027/28	20,000	155,000	2028/29	-5,000	150,000	2029/30	-2,000	148,000	2030/31	-1,000	147,000
	Year		Mitigated In-Year Overspend (£,000)	Mitigated Cumulative Deficit (£,000)																									
	2023/24		20,000	30,000																									
	2024/25		40,000	70,000																									
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Update 2 (August)																													
<b>Amber</b>																													
Condition 2: The authority undertakes to control and reduce the cumulative deficit, not exceeding £84.5m in financial year 2024/25.	Update 1 (May)	<p>The forecast above includes all the mitigations that have been developed, including new targets that the authority has given itself to stabilise EHCP numbers by April 2026, it has included the Local Authority contribution, and has assumed the Safety Valve payments continue.</p> <p>Income for 2025/26 has been assumed to be £80.301m. This is in line with the provisional allocation announced on 28 November and represents an increase of 7.9% compared with 2024/25. This allocation will be updated following the final funding settlement in December and again in March 2025.</p> <p>In future years High Needs Block income is assumed to increase by 3% per annum in line with DfE guidance. It should be noted that if all other assumptions remain the same, a 5% increase per annum in the HNB would enable in year balance to be achieved 1 year earlier.</p> <p>The assumption of a 1% schools block transfer has been removed for 2025/26 and replaced with a proposed 0.5% transfer. This reflects the increased high needs block allocation for 2025/26. An assumption of 1% schools block transfer remains for future years.</p> <p>Inflation on unit costs has been assumed at 2.2% per annum</p> <p>This forecast does require INMSS spend to reduce to below £4m by the end of the plan which is very ambitious. We have adjusted the forecast in line with known slippage in these projects, but reaching balance in year 7 will require all the existing capital projects to be delivered on time. Additionally, there are a further 25 special school places planned</p>																											
	<b>Green</b>																												
	Update 2 (August)																												
	<b>Red</b>																												
Update 3 (November)	<b>Red</b>																												
	<b>Red</b>																												

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

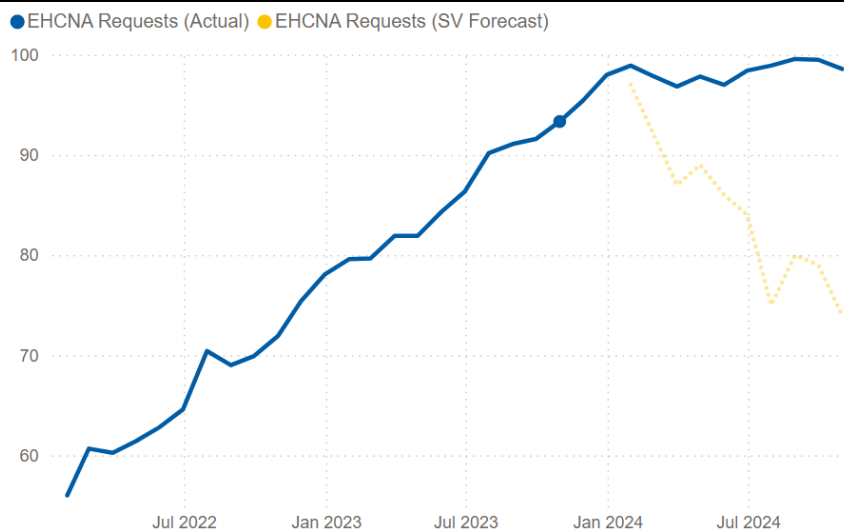
Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>																								
		<p>for September 2025, 50 from September 2028, and more resource base places beyond what was previously planned.</p> <p>The forecast also retains an assumption that the authority can reduce EHCP rates to be in line with Good or Outstanding councils. This means EHCP numbers as at 31 March 2031 are assumed to be 5,938 compared with an unmitigated forecast of 7,996.</p> <p>This would leave a £122.5m residual deficit for Wiltshire Council to manage, up from £70.3m in the original plan. This will be a challenge, especially if local government budgets continue to be pressured, as they have been in recent years. Therefore, the council will be regularly reviewing what steps it can take to accelerate the impact of the plan and meet key milestones more quickly.</p>																								
Condition 3.1: Provide earlier support for children and young people with SEND, improving inclusion practices and managing pressure points and school transitions.	Update 1 (May)	<p>The Wiltshire SEND Local Area Partnership inspection was undertaken during this period. The outcome, which was to award the highest grading, and the final report was published on 6<sup>th</sup> December.</p> <p>In the report, inspectors specifically highlight how inclusive this system is saying “Wiltshire children benefit from an inclusive education system. The development of the ‘ordinarily available provision for all learners’ strategy has helped secure a system-wide commitment to inclusive practice in schools.” Inspectors were also impressed with the early help offer in Wiltshire, and the work around school transition points.</p> <p>Receiving such positive, independent validation of the inclusion approach in Wiltshire has given leaders confidence that the direction of travel set out in the Sustainability Plan was the right one. However, this is not leading to complacency, and leaders understand that significant work is still required.</p> <p>The preventative early support activity that was expected during this quarter has been delivered, as was the case last quarter. However, the activity is not having an impact on overall EHCP numbers, and this is impacting our ability to meet financial targets.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">EHCP Numbers</th> <th>Apr '24</th> <th>May '24</th> <th>Jun '24</th> <th>Jul '24</th> <th>Aug '24</th> <th>Sep '24</th> <th>Oct '24</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">SV Forecast</td> <td>5562</td> <td>5586</td> <td>5609</td> <td>5632</td> <td>5645</td> <td>5649</td> <td>5669</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">Actual</td> <td>5728</td> <td>5815</td> <td>5867</td> <td>5861</td> <td>5932</td> <td>6051</td> <td>6161</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The number of EHCPs is around 500 ahead of the forecast figure. Demand, as measured by the number of EHC Needs Assessment requests received, has continued to hold steady. This remains at the highest level it has ever been in Wiltshire, but the fact that demand is not continuing to increase shows a more stable system is emerging, that is significantly more predictable than it was when the plan was first submitted in December 2023. This is also in contrast to the reported position in other local authorities who are continuing to see their EHCNA request rate rise.</p>	EHCP Numbers	Apr '24	May '24	Jun '24	Jul '24	Aug '24	Sep '24	Oct '24	SV Forecast	5562	5586	5609	5632	5645	5649	5669	Actual	5728	5815	5867	5861	5932	6051	6161
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## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition

Assurance Level

Progress Update from this Quarter  
Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts



EHCNA Numbers (12 month rolling ave)	Apr '24	May '24	Jun '24	Jul '24	Aug '24	Sep '24	Oct '24
	97.83	97.00	98.44	98.92	99.58	99.50	98.58

There are a number of reasons why this condition is so far offtrack. Firstly, the predictions around how quickly impact would be felt were optimistic. This was partly due to delays with the onboarding of new staff, especially with those on school contracts, but also due to time required to drive forward systemic cultural change.

Secondly, the original forecast was based on a 5-year average, which included years where demand was artificially suppressed by the pandemic. An assumption was made that this suppressed demand was compensated for by the rapid growth in demand since the pandemic and the system might be returning to the mean. However, the demand this year has continued, and broadly follows a 2-year average line, rather than the 5-year line.

There has also been an impact because the council has made significant progress with clearing the EHCNA backlog, ensuring that where children and young people have a level of need which would warrant an EHCP, this is available to them. The result of this is that the backlog is now at its lowest level since 2020, but this has brought more plans forward.

This realisation has driven a re-appraisal and re-forecasting of the data trends in the system. There are five key insights:

- a) Demand is strongest in Early Years – which was understood before, but the new analysis has revealed that a quarter of assessment requests were made for three-year-olds last year.
- b) There appear to be opportunities to cease plans pre-16 when children and young people meet outcomes. According to the data, since 2020 fewer than 15 children and young people with SEND of statutory school age have 'met all outcomes' and been able to have their plan ceased. This seems unrealistically low and does not align with Wiltshire's strong attainment data for children and young people with SEND.



## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		<p>c) While improving significantly this year, the No to Assess and No to Issue rates in Wiltshire are lower than our statistical neighbours. This implies that there are further opportunities to improve the robustness of decision making in this area underpinned by effective SEND support for children and young people who are pre-statutory.</p> <p>d) There have been consistent and sustained shifts 'up' in placement, with more children going into Special School or Independent Special schools and whilst multi-disciplinary decision-making and allocation of resource are robust, work is ongoing to increase the volume and breadth of specialist provision available within our local SEND system, in line with the council's ambitious Specialist Place Planning strategy.</p> <p>e) More children with EHCPs are now funded on a Band 3 or 4 plan instead of a Band 0 or 1 plan. This is reflective of school funding pressures which are seen nationally and experienced more profoundly in Wiltshire as an F40 council. The EHCP Top-Up Funding review is focussed on prioritising funding allocations based on need and bringing our system into balance.</p> <p>f) The biggest growth areas are in Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Speech Language and Communication (SLCN) which have grown as a proportion of EHCPs.</p> <p>Given these insights, changes to the plan have focussed on accelerating or developing proposals in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Training to improve confidence in the mainstream inclusion offer.</li> <li>2. Improve communication around mainstream inclusion.</li> <li>3. Communicate the inclusion offer more explicitly.</li> <li>4. Develop the support which is part of inclusion offer.</li> <li>5. Support children and young people with SEN through transitions.</li> <li>6. Work with Public Health to develop a more effective early help offer.</li> <li>7. Change our processes to offer Social Care Early Help Assessments earlier.</li> <li>8. Greater support in Early Years</li> <li>9. Increased prioritisation of Annual Review attendance and focus on Outcomes met, supporting pre- and post-16 ceases.</li> </ol> <p>In addition to these proposals, which will generate a large benefit in the medium to long term, Wiltshire Council are committing to urgent action to arrest the negative movement.</p> <p>The authority has set an ambitious target of stabilising EHCP numbers by April 2026.</p> <p>This will be done through a limited number of highly targeted, tangible projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small team who will work intensively with parent carers over a period of 6-8 weeks seeking to solve problems quickly and efficiently, avoiding recourse to statutory assessment.</li> <li>• A more intensive approach to utilising Early Help and Early Support Assessments in Early Years which includes the Early Years Pathway Navigators who are starting in January 2025.</li> </ul>

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>																		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeting support to schools who appear to be outliers in the data, based on inclusion metrics, and working with them to support best practice and inclusion.</li> <li>Work to identify children and young people with EHCPs who are close to meeting all of their outcomes, prioritising their annual reviews and celebrating successes and step down from an EHCP. In parallel, training on producing SMART outcomes will be prioritised at system-wide level.</li> </ul> <p>These 4 interventions are expected to have an impact on EHCP growth of 39 plans a month, which is £30m over the life of the plan. This gives the system a much better chance of achieving balance through the medium-long term interventions articulated in the original plan.</p>																		
Condition 3.2: Prevent the need for escalation by providing the right support, first time, including a more holistic response alongside health and social care, with improved management and communication.	Update 1 (May)	<p>The activity that was planned to support this agreement condition is on track. The percentage of children and young people in Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) placements is broadly in line with the figures reported at the last quarter (5.86% in July, 5.62% in October) and so this workstream is RAG rated as Green – on track.</p> <p>These percentages equate to one fewer INMSS placement in October as compared to July, but 44 more than this time last year. Independent sector placements are only commissioned where there is no maintained provision available in county. Robust decision-making at point of placement occurs in Wiltshire. Opportunities for planned step-downs at age-phase transfer points and appropriate points mid-phase continue to be actively explored. These step-downs will accelerate when our new local planned specialist placements come online, and we are developing options to use modular or temporary accommodation to bring this forward.</p> <p>● INMSS (actual) ● INMSS (forecast)</p> <table border="1"> <caption>INMSS Percentage Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Month</th> <th>INMSS (actual)</th> <th>INMSS (forecast)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Jul 2022</td> <td>5.3%</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jan 2023</td> <td>5.2%</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jul 2023</td> <td>5.4%</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jan 2024</td> <td>5.6%</td> <td>6.0%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jul 2024</td> <td>5.8%</td> <td>6.8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Month	INMSS (actual)	INMSS (forecast)	Jul 2022	5.3%	-	Jan 2023	5.2%	-	Jul 2023	5.4%	-	Jan 2024	5.6%	6.0%	Jul 2024	5.8%	6.8%
	Month		INMSS (actual)	INMSS (forecast)																
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<b>Green</b>	Update 2 (August)																			
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<b>Green</b>																				
		<p>The Local Area Partnership inspection highlighted the strong partnership work, which is already happening in Wiltshire, as well as the ongoing commitment to provide a truly holistic response to SEND need.</p> <p>To this end, the partnership has been working on a toolkit for schools to support them in managing medical needs in mainstream settings. This joint piece of work, between the council and ICB will launch in January 2025. The clarity around responsibilities and where to turn for support or advice should help schools and settings feel more confident and reduce any need for escalation.</p> <p>The rollout of Family Hubs was highlighted in the August report as an area of good practice, and these have continued to be an area of</p>																		

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		<p>strength. Work is ongoing to understand what can be done to further support this service as it currently has a waiting list. The main drivers for referrals are mental health of parent carers or children and young people.</p> <p>The 'go-live' date of the SEND early help line was pushed back due to the Local Area SEND inspection creating a pause in the induction plan that was in place. However, this has now launched.</p> <p>The consultation on EHCP top-up funding has opened as planned. The proposal will secure special school funding, to ensure that the system avoids INMSS placements, and will address the current trend whereby schools regularly seek 'up-banding'. The expectation is that, should this proposal be adopted, it will re-link funding to need.</p> <p>Recognising the need to address the growth in INMSS placements, the authority is also taking urgent action in this area. These proposals aim to reduce growth in INMSS placements by 20% by April 2026, above and in addition to the expected reduction generated by action under Condition 3.3 (increasing availability of maintained special school and resource base placements).</p> <p>This action is focussed both on stepping down children and young people mid-phase as part of the annual review process, and on establishing Assistant Education Officer posts to ensure support and challenge is available to push back on no responses from schools, where appropriate, thereby preventing escalation,</p>
<p>Condition 3.3: Increase the number of special school placements, resourced provision, and alternative provision to ensure that children and young people can access the support they need, with proper reintegration support for children who can be appropriately supported in mainstream provision.</p>	Update 1 (May)	<p>As was the case in August, significant progress has been made against this condition, however the delivery of special school places is still Amber – Off Track.</p> <p>156 new special school places were due to come online in September, but unfortunately only 98 were delivered. These delays were due to a new academy free school being unable to take children up to expected PAN following challenges with leadership and staffing capacity (DfE regions group has full awareness). Also, delays in Ofsted registration timeline for an independent provision within local authority premises, run by a subsidiary company of a MAT with special school expertise.</p> <p>Work is underway to bring the growth in places back on track as soon as possible within the current academic year. Confirmation of the capital funding to support new special school places in the south of the county has secured the next phases of this work. Urgent work was required to move this crucial scheme forward to secure the site and to get approvals. This workstream is now on track and is forecast to deliver a new 120 place special school will start to take pupils from September 2025.</p> <p>Another element of this work which has made real progress is the creation of further secondary resource bases. While the need for places had been identified, there was not a clear pathway forward. Thanks to highly focused work from the SEND team and dedicated project management resource from SEND transformation, there is now a clear</p>
	<b>Amber</b>	
	Update 2 (August)	
	<b>Amber</b>	
Update 3 (November)	<b>Amber</b>	

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		<p>pipeline, and schools lined up to launch new secondary resource bases from September 2025, and into the 2025/26 academic year.</p> <p>Following the rigorous commissioning and procurement exercise Brunel Education (a subsidiary company of Brunel Academies Trust) were awarded the contract to deliver education provision from Melksham House on 1st July 2024, at a Wiltshire owned building. The provision will include places for 50 primary age learners with SEMH needs who have an EHCP. The provision will also support a cohort of up to 25 secondary age learners with an EHCP who have SEMH needs. The provider will also be working with the local authority in supporting our outreach model to support the wider system in delivering high quality education for learners.</p> <p>The provider has now commenced the Ofsted registration process which we hope to conclude in early 2025.</p> <p>To ensure a greater continuum of offer for learners, Wiltshire Council is currently undertaking a procurement exercise to appoint a provider to deliver DfE registered Alternative Provision from a Wiltshire owned building. The commissioning specification has been updated to reflect the latest demand modelling for SEMH needs, and a new tender process will begin within the next 3 months.</p> <p>This provision will be for 50 secondary age young people, including children with or without an EHCP, which aims to have places commissioned by the local authority and schools directly. As with Melksham House, the provider will be expected to support the wider system with an outreach model that delivers high quality education for learners.</p>
<p>Condition 3.4: Improve transition pathways to provide a range of opportunities for young people with SEND to prepare for adulthood, including training, further education, and employment.</p>	Update 1 (May)	<p>In May and August, it was reported that the system expected to be back on track for this condition by November. This has not been achieved. Project activity has been delivered on time; however the data is behind target and despite assurances that ceasing would pick up, this has not been achieved. Ceases have dropped from 32 a month in July to 28 a month in October (based on a 12-month rolling average).</p> <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;"> <span style="color: blue;">●</span> EHCPs Ceased (Actual)    <span style="color: yellow;">●</span> EHCPs Ceased (Forecast)         </p>
	<b>Amber</b>	
	Update 2 (August)	
	<b>Amber</b>	
Update 3 (November)	<b>Amber</b>	
		<p>The rate of ceasing has continued to decline and</p>

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
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		<p>so the authority should, rightly, be proud of the work done to support children and young people with SEND into education or employment. However, the numbers need to be higher without this percentage increasing.</p> <p>The authority has taken on a new Project Manager focussed primarily on the post-16 space, and great progress has been made in creating a structured and strategic plan for this workstream.</p> <p>A new document articulating the pathways for children and young people with SEND has been produced and should be published early next year. This document clearly sets out the options for children and young people with SEND in Wiltshire, so that realistic but ambitious conversations can be held.</p> <p>The Post 16 Partnership and Strategy group has been guiding this work as part of their development into a more strategic cross-system group. Partners meet on a regular basis to identify progress against priority actions and to ensure that work is moving forwards. This has led to a greater focus on developing employment and education pathways as well as work towards improved transition planning. This work will also be reflected in our strategic action plan, post-SEND AP inspection.</p>
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<p>Condition 3.5: Foster a culture of change across the Wiltshire SEND and AP system by engaging with partners and parent carers, improving trust and co-production across the sector.</p>	Update 1 (May)	<p>This deal condition is currently green – on track. The authority has continued to engage partners and parent carers to ensure that trust remains high.</p> <p>The first substantive meeting of the Stakeholder Reference Panel was held, which brings schools and settings, parent carers, and voice of children and young people together to discuss the development of the transformation projects.</p> <p>The agenda for the meetings is driven by the members themselves and after the meeting, a “You Said, We Did” report was generated so that members can recognise how we responded to their comments and will be able to see the direct impact that they had on the projects. The projects discussed at this panel were: the Inclusion Charter, EHCP Funding, SEMH Graduated Response, specialist support in early years, and improvements to the behaviour support service.</p>
	Green	
	Update 2 (August)	
	Green	
	Update 3 (November)	
	Green	

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME DETAILED UPDATE

Agreement Condition	Assurance Level	Progress Update from this Quarter <i>Please include/refer to relevant data and evidence to support your rating and explain the scale of any impacts</i>
		<p>As a snapshot, a survey about how supportive the panel members were of each project were taken before the agenda item and then after it. Confidence that these projects will improve outcomes for Children and Young People with SEND in Wiltshire increased by just over 10%.</p> <p>Alongside this 'showpiece' engagement event, project managers are continuing to bring stakeholder voices into their work on a regular basis. This mirrors the commitment shown to co-design during the development of the plan. At an early stage in the projects, representative groups are given the chance to feed in. This includes Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC), Schools Forum, and the System of Excellence Steering Group.</p> <p>System of Excellence Steering Group is made up of the special school headteachers, and representatives from mainstream schools, early years, the ICB and post 16 providers. This group have had a substantive impact on the work that is happening in the Wiltshire system and are a key part of driving culture change.</p> <p>Work to create an in-house replacement for the POET survey is continuing and this new survey is expected to go live early in 2025. This survey will be supported by AI review and interpretation algorithms to assist with processing and ensure that the team can see changes and trends as soon as possible.</p> <p>These metrics will be used to measure the effect of culture change efforts in the system and to understand where the council needs to improve communication, in terms of what is said, how it's said and where it is said.</p>

RAG	Definition
S	Savings/cost avoidance and/or workstream(s) complete
A	Savings/cost avoidance and/or workstream(s) remains on target
O	Savings/cost avoidance and/or workstream(s) are currently off target, with plans to mitigate
R	Savings/cost avoidance and/or workstream(s) are off target



## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME RISK REGISTER

Risk	Assurance Level	Mitigation	Progress Update from this Quarter
<p>Risk 1: There is a risk that <b>unpredictability in the system</b> could lead to the authority failing to meet financial targets despite the plan working.</p>	Update 1 (May)	<p>The authority needs to remove as much unpredictability from the system as possible. This will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clearing the backlog of EHC needs assessments to remove the unknown risk around those plans.</li> <li>2. Map and improve financial decision-making to ensure it is clear and has the right level of scrutiny and rigour.</li> <li>3. Increase the visibility of financial decision-making in the system to all partners so that they are better able to forecast accordingly.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The investment in Educational Psychologist capacity has continued to benefit the system and the authority remains on track to clear the backlog by April 2025.</li> <li>• Work has continued to look at how EHCPs are funded and proposals for a new funding scheme are now out to consultation. This will rebalance the system and lead to a reduction in ad hoc funding payments, and requests to increase banding which are not needs led.</li> </ul>
	<b>Green</b>		
	Update 2 (August)		
	<b>Green</b>		
	Update 3 (November)		
<p>Risk 2: There is a risk that a <b>failure to maintain trusted relationships</b> could fundamentally erode faith in the inclusive vision for our SEND system</p>	Update 1 (May)	<p>The authority will continue to hold stakeholders close to this work and co-design the projects with them. The messaging and communication will emphasise the importance of co-design and of improved outcomes from children and young people with SEND. Quick wins early in the project will deliver tangible improvements for stakeholders and children and young people with SEND.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ofsted/CQC Local Area SEND inspection has highlighted good working relationships in the system.</li> <li>• The first Stakeholder Reference Panel was undertaken, and those results are being fed into the transformation work.</li> <li>• Open working relationships with Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC) have enabled mature conversations about the work.</li> <li>• Consultation with schools on 1% transfer from the Schools Block as part of the Safety Valve plan has highlighted strong feelings from Head Teachers about affordability for schools to make this level of contribution. The council is listening carefully to schools and is identifying mitigations.</li> </ul>
	<b>Green</b>		
	Update 2 (August)		
	<b>Green</b>		
	Update 3 (November)		
<p>Risk 3: There is a risk that partners struggle to engage at the required pace leading to a <b>slower pace of change</b> than is required to meet the plan.</p>	Update 1 (May)	<p>The authority will continue to engage partners and check-in with them about pace of change and progress. Recognising that the financial risk lies with the local authority, the programme team will remain cognisant that other partners will have differing priorities. The authority will ensure that the benefits for other partners are clearly articulated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further work has been undertaken to articulate and communicate the positive outcomes for schools and settings.</li> <li>• Key partners, including Schools Forum and the ICB, have reiterated their commitment to the delivery of this plan.</li> </ul>
	<b>Amber</b>		
	Update 2 (August)		
	<b>Green</b>		
	Update 3 (November)		
	<b>Green</b>		

## SAFETY VALVE PROGRAMME RISK REGISTER

Risk	Assurance Level	Mitigation	Progress Update from this Quarter
<p><b>Risk 4:</b> There is a risk that <b>failure to access the required capital</b> leaves the system reliant on expensive independent special school places.</p>	Update 1 (May)	<p>The authority has put in a request for £5.7m of additional capital through the Safety Valve programme, and this would deliver an extension to a special school in the south of the county. Other projects need to have allocated capital. The authority has considered options to reduce reliance on the capital, essentially derisking the project, but 120 additional places for £5.7m already represents excellent value for money, and Wiltshire has a low number of special school places for a county of its size. It is difficult to imagine an alternative that would reduce reliance on INMSS placements while still meeting the statutory obligations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to capital has been completed and work is progressing.</li> </ul>
	Amber		
	Update 2 (August)		
	Amber		
	Update 3 (November)		
	Blue		
<p><b>Risk 5:</b> There is a risk that system <b>partners struggle to recruit or resource the changes</b> required in our system leading to failed attempts at change.</p>	Update 1 (May)	<p>The authority must maintain contact with key partners and include them in decision making so that it can take account of the impact of the transformation programme on their services. The authority will also review unintended consequences that might impact partners and will offer support with recruitment where possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partners remain fully engaged with the work at a strategic level and so monitoring is underway.</li> <li>Recruitment support for special schools is being delivered to help them get the staff they need to support this transformation.</li> </ul>
	Amber		
	Update 2 (August)		
	Amber		
	Update 3 (November)		
	Amber		



# Sustainability Plan Evolution

## Background

As was reported to the Board in June, and expanded on in August, the High Needs Block Sustainability Plan is off-track. This position was confirmed by the Quarter 2 forecast, which shows a forecast DSG overspend of £43m instead of the £28m which was expected when the plan commenced.

The update report submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) at the end of August described this position and set out the steps that are already being taken to address it.

Feedback from the advisors assigned to Wiltshire Council was that, while one monitoring report 'off-track' was unlikely to result in the Council entering "Enhanced Monitoring and Reporting" (EMR), there was an expectation that the November report would include significant revisions to present a credible plan to the DfE.

At the same time, internal stakeholders have also been clear that they want to see revisions that re-baseline and re-forecast the plan so that assurances can be given about the approach to addressing SEND sustainability.

This document pulls out the changes that we are making to our plan, and the pressures we've identified which these changes will address.

## Key Drivers

In preparation for this update to the sustainability plan, and to support the development of our SENDIAP Strategy Implementation Plan, further data analysis has been undertaken. This has revealed some key patterns, and trends which underpin the interventions laid out in this document.

The most impactful levers that are available to us remain the same, and are the focus of this amended plan:

- Number of EHCPs
- Number of ceases
- Number of Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS)

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### Growth in the number of EHCPs

Given the actual number of EHCPs in our system is significantly above where we wanted it to be at this stage, a re-baselining and re-forecasting has been done. This has given us a new 'unmitigated' trajectory against which we can measure ourselves. This 'data led forecast' suggests that we are currently on course to hit 7,491 EHCPs by the end of 2028, compared to 7,001 plans in the original forecast, and 5,893 in the mitigated plan.

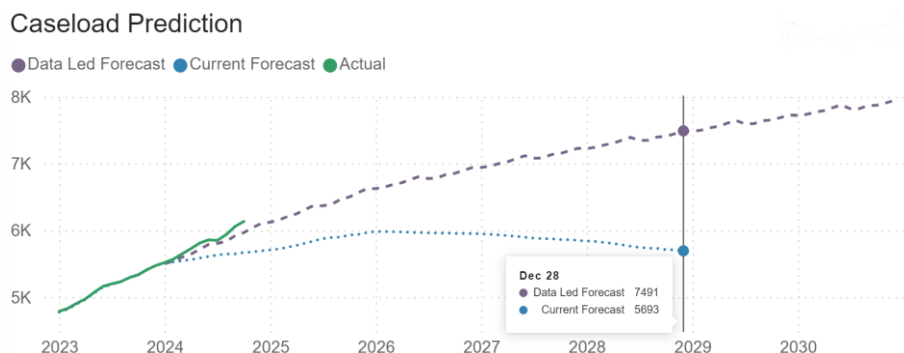


Figure 1: Graph showing the forecast growth in EHCPs

The Actual figure is above the Data Led Forecast, and this is due to the additional plans brought off the backlog through investment in agency Educational Psychologists.

This revised forecast gives us a significantly more challenging starting point and highlights the need to ensure that our plan responds to the higher levels of demand in our system.

### Confidence in the mainstream inclusion offer

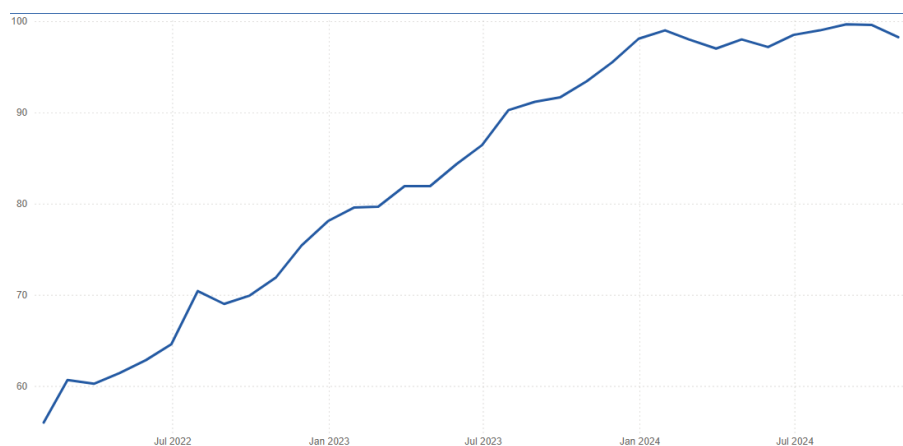


Figure 2: Graph showing the 12 month rolling average of EHCNA requests in our system.

One of the key measures that we had in our plan was the number of Education Health and Care Needs Assessment requests in our system. This measure indicates the confidence in mainstream inclusion in our system as we expect demand will fall when people believe children are supported without the need for statutory support.

This grew steadily from 2021, peaking at 99 requests per month in January 2024. However, since then start of 2024 this growth in demand has slowed, levelling out at 95

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– 99 requests a month on average. This has given us a slightly more stable position to work from, but the rate is still at its highest ever level.

This does indicate that some of our work to improve confidence in mainstream inclusion may be cutting through, but there is still significantly more to do.

### Age Distribution of Requests

Academic Age	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1	0.20%			0.17%	
2	1.59%	3.95%	5.01%	3.99%	4.57%
3	26.39%	23.52%	24.09%	23.60%	15.23%
4	4.76%	5.16%	4.80%	4.84%	4.90%
5	7.14%	4.86%	5.97%	7.39%	7.51%
6	8.33%	4.10%	5.97%	7.81%	7.83%
7	6.75%	8.80%	6.08%	6.62%	8.71%
8	7.74%	6.07%	8.00%	6.54%	7.62%
9	9.33%	8.80%	9.81%	10.10%	10.34%
10	9.13%	12.59%	9.28%	9.34%	7.18%
11	2.98%	3.79%	3.52%	2.89%	3.59%
12	3.77%	5.61%	4.90%	5.18%	4.57%
13	3.57%	4.40%	4.16%	4.07%	6.31%
14	2.78%	3.19%	3.94%	3.31%	6.75%
15	2.98%	3.03%	2.56%	2.89%	3.05%
16	0.99%	0.91%	0.53%	0.51%	0.65%
17	0.79%	0.61%	0.64%	0.34%	0.87%
18	0.60%	0.46%	0.11%	0.25%	
19			0.21%	0.17%	0.33%
20			0.21%		
22	0.20%	0.15%	0.11%		

Figure 3: Table showing the age distribution of new EHCP requests from 2020-2024

### Early Years

The level of demand in early years remains a concern. Last year around a quarter of requests came from 3-year-olds and, while the percentage is lower so far this year, it still represents the most common age.

### Transitions

The second most common time for a plan to be requested is 9/10 years old as the child begins to approach transition to secondary school.

We know from previous work that parent carers worry that someone who had coped in a smaller primary school may struggle at secondary.

## Number of EHCP ceases

Another measure that we have been monitoring is the number of plans ceased, that do not result in NEET. 2023 was a record year in terms of ceasing and, while we hoped to exceed that this year, it doesn't appear this this will happen. This is partly due to disruption in the post 16 team, but we are keen to review what more we can do.



Figure 4: Graph showing the 12-month rolling average of plans ceased.

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One pleasing thing is the decline in the rate of Ceased Plans that result in that young person ending up Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). This has steadily fallen since a peak in 2022 and has fallen more steeply since our sustainability plan began being implemented. This can reassure us that we are not inappropriately ceasing EHCPs.

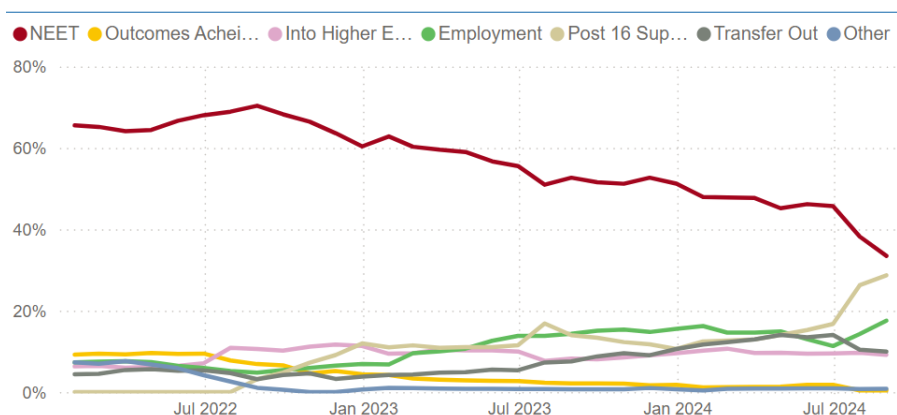


Figure 5: Graph showing the 12-month rolling average of reasons why Post-16 plans were ceased.

However, we did take a look at the number of ceased plans for under-16s, and there is work to be done there. The predominant reason for under-16 plans to be ceased is “Transfer Out”, all other reasons barely register. We would like to see more children who, at their annual review, are recognised as having achieved their outcomes and so their plan can be ceased because they are able to access their education without the need for that statutory support.

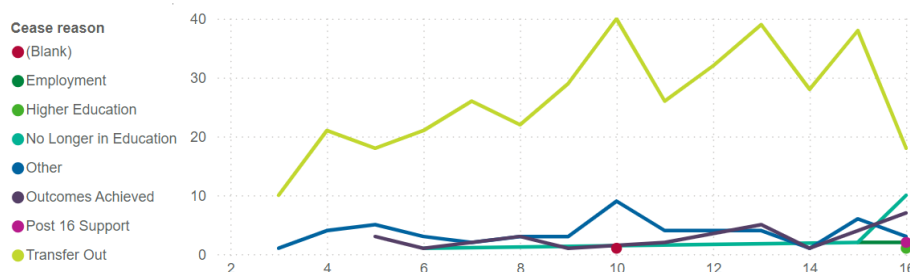


Figure 6: Graph showing the number of children, under 16, who have had plans ceased broken down by age and reason for cease.

## Growth in the number of Independent Sector Placements

Date	% placed in INMSS	vs 2023 Stat Neighbour	# placed in INMSS	vs last year
31/10/24	5.87%	0.15%	362	43
30/09/24	5.92%	0.20%	359	48
31/08/24	4.88%	-0.84%	290	51
31/07/24	5.29%	-0.43%	310	64
30/06/24	6.02%	0.30%	353	61
31/05/24	5.98%	0.26%	348	64
30/04/24	6.02%	0.30%	345	63
31/03/24	5.91%	0.19%	334	58
28/02/24	6.02%	0.30%	336	61
31/01/24	5.86%	0.14%	324	59

Figure 7: Table showing the percentage of EHCPs in Independent Special Schools

In addition, we have also been monitoring independent (INMSS) placements. While our % of children in INMSS is lower than we expected, because of the number of EHCPs in our system, we currently have around 45 more placements than this time last year.

Understanding what can be done to address this is vital to returning financial balance to our system.

## Short term interventions

### Target system

In response to the new forecast, and the accelerating growth of EHCPs, we have reflected on the need to take urgent action to address it. Many of the interventions in our original plan were medium/long term, relying on culture change and behaviour change. Ultimately, these interventions will deliver the biggest impact, but they will take a couple of years to have measurable impact.

We are significantly revising our strategic approach to delivery – within the framework of our values. This approach will see us take six highly tangible steps over the next 18 months with an aim to stabilise EHCP growth in Wiltshire.

This is only possible, because EHCNA request numbers have sat stable, and so demand levels in our system are therefore stable, making measurement and predication much easier.

Per month	EHCNA request	No to assess	No to issue	Ceased plans	Net annual growth
Wiltshire 2023	97*	12.0%	3.9%	29	636
Stat Neighbours 2023	-	25.0%	5.0%	44**	-
Target System	66	25.0%	5.0%	44	36
Change Required	-31	+13.0%	+1.1%	+15	-

\* 97 EHCNA requests a month represents the 12 month rolling average during 2024

\*\* 44 plans ceased is adjusted for population size

These targets are there to give us an understanding of the “shape” of a sustainable system, and to focus us on the change required. They are not, and cannot be, hard and fast targets. A child or young person in Wiltshire who needs support through an EHCP will always be granted a plan: there will be no ‘cut off’ and we will remain legally compliant.

### Six interventions

#### 1. Addressing ‘poor practice’ in schools

*Expected impact: reduction of 8 EHCNA requests a month*

*By Apr '25*

Through the data that our teams already collect, we can identify unwarranted variation in school practice. By targeting resource from existing teams, and directing at schools which appear to be outliers, we anticipate that we can have a significant impact on changing practice, and ensuring that those schools are delivering what they should be through OPAL, and therefore meeting need without a statutory plan.

We would hope to over-deliver against a relatively modest target of 8 EHCNA requests a month, and we would measure this in the monthly EHCNA request numbers from our target schools.

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### 2. Pre-DaD1 support

*Expected impact: reduction of 8 EHCPs per month*

*By Jun '25*

The Wiltshire Council Family And Children Transformation (FACT) programme has demonstrated the value of relational practice in delivering support services. Building on these principles, we would propose to deploy a small team of navigators/advocates to work alongside families. This team would select EHCNA requests where they think they can have an impact and use the 6 week statutory process to get to know the family, understand their issues, and introduce professionals who can provide longer term support. At the end of the process, a "No to Assess" decision can be issued, because that child or young person is getting what they need from other sources.

This is a new approach, and a new service, and so the target of 8 EHCPs a month is a reasonable starting point. This is based on an average of 97 requests coming in, of which 32% come from parent carers, which is where we think they will have the biggest impact. Half of that number is 16, of which we think we could reasonably expect to have a 50% success rate. We will measure this by directly tracking the cases that this team manage.

### 3. Early Years ESA

*Expected impact: reduction of 15 EHCNAs per month*

*By Jun '25*

We recognise the challenges in demand in Early Years – especially for 3-year-olds. Apart from a limited number of very clear-cut cases, it is challenging to identify SEND in pre-school age children. Even where there is a possible SEND need, we believe that an Early Support Assessment (ESA), which takes a broader view of the child in the round, will tend to be more appropriate. These assessments can lead to more holistic support for the child, and support around the parent carers as well.

The target of 15 EHCNAs per month is based on 97 requests coming in per month, of which 27% are in early years. We are confident that, by offering a quality, alternative option we could reduce that number by about 60%. We will measure this by monitoring the number of plans coming in from Early Years, and comparing that to the rise in Early Support Assessment.

### 4. Additional post-16 ceasing

*Expected impact: increase of 10 plans ceased per month*

*By Sept '25*

We recognise that we need to focus on ceasing the plans which can be ceased in the post-16 space. We have noted the progress made in other areas, and the opportunity to change the narrative around ceasing so that it is seen as a 'success' for the young person. This will be a renewed focus for our Preparing for Adulthood team, and annual reviews will be prioritised where this opportunity exists.

The target is based on a sensible increase, working towards the cease rates which are managed in Statutory Neighbour councils. This will be measured by monitoring the number of ceased plans compared to the previous year, and through the 12-month rolling average.

### 5. Pre-16 ceasing

*Expected impact: increase of 5 plans cease per month*

*By Jan '26*

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In the past 5 years, just 15 EHCPs have been ceased in Wiltshire for children and young people under-16 who have met all their outcomes. We know that our schools are providing a better education than that, and that our children and young people are achieving. This belief has been bolstered by the recent SEND Local Area Inspection. We do accept that this will be a challenging project to undertake, and that the work to ensure the narrative around ceasing significantly changes, but through a rigorous programme of training on writing good outcomes, by defining and promoting the support on offer when stepping down, and by prioritising annual reviews effectively, we believe that there is progress to make here. Ultimately, this is about celebrating the progress that our children and young people are making.

The target is an ambitious one of five plans a month, and we accept that it will take time – until January 2026 – for us to see those kind of outcomes. We will measure this by counting the number of plans ceased for pre-16s due to “met all outcomes” and this will be measured against the baseline of 3 a year.

### 6. Improving our decision-making

*Expected impact: increased “no to assess” and “no to issue” decisions* By Jan '26

As has been discussed previously, we need to ensure our decision-making is robust and evidence-based. Children who should get a Yes, will get a Yes, but children who should get a No, need to have a No so that we can appropriately support the children who need an EHCP. Our statistical neighbours has significantly higher rates of no to assess, and no to issue, in 2023, which tells us that some more progress can be made.

Targets are based on what Statistical Neighbours achieved in 2023, and may need to be revised when the SEN2 data for 2024 is published. We expect to achieve what our Statistical Neighbours manage, on average, by the submission of the SEN2 data in January 2026. Progress has already been made in this space, eg. our 2024 year-to-date percentage of No to Assess has climbed to 17.6%.

	EHCNA Requests	No to Assess	No to Issue	EHCPs Ceased
Current System	97	12.0%	3.9%	29
Addressing Poor Practice in schools	8			
Pre-DaD1 support	8			
Early Years ESA	15			
Additional post-16 ceasing				10
Pre-16 ceasing				5
Improving our decision-making		13%	1.1%	
Total change	31	13%	1.1%	15
Target System	66	25%	5%	44

### Plus two

In addition, given the pressures on EHCP numbers that we are already under and consequent rise in INMSS placements, we also need to consider what steps we can take to urgently reduce growth in this area.

#### 1. Mid-phase step downs

*Expected impact: Reduction in INMSS growth* Page 47

By Apr '26

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Traditionally, we have focused on step-downs out of INMSS at the end of a school phase, however, we need to consider the opportunities to do this mid-phase too. Several enabling factors need to be in place, including having the right placements to step them down into. We are looking at what can be done to accelerate delivery of special school placements, including the use of modular units within the existing maintained/academy special school estate.

### 2. Assistant Education Officer posts

*Expected impact: Reduction in INMSS growth of 10%*

*By Sept '25*

We are also looking at the development of an assistant Education Officer post to ensure there is capacity to support and challenge all settings in Wiltshire around their provision for children with plans. These would operate in the same way that the Mainstream Inclusion School Advisors (MISAs) are already having an impact on supporting schools around children without a statutory plan.

### Medium/Long term interventions

In response to the new forecast and our improved understanding of our system, we have revisited the interventions in our plan and considered if they are sufficient. The existing plan was very reliant on culture change and invest to save – these interventions will have a significant positive impact on the quality of support in Wiltshire and the financial deficit, but will take longer for the impact to be felt.

66 specific changes have been proposed, including 27 new interventions that we will undertake. The activity to set these up will begin over the next 12 months, but we expect that the impact will only begin to be felt in 2026.

Interventions have been categorised below as follows:

- **New** – new projects which were not in our previous plan and will make an impact
- **Accelerate** – projects which were in our plan and can be delivered faster so the impact is felt more quickly
- **Optimise** – projects which were in our plan and can be improved so the impact is bigger
- **Pause** – projects which we were going to deliver, but will be deprioritised in favour of more effective projects

#	Intervention	Change	Timeframe
<b>1 - Training to improve confidence in the mainstream inclusion offer</b>			
<b>Impact: reducing the number of EHCNA requests.</b>			
1.1	Map the training offer and ensure it's accessible.	Accelerate	By March 2025
1.2	Develop a training offer for Parent Support Advisors.	Accelerate	By April 2025
1.3	Create tailored training offer for schools, settings and parent carers.	New	By June 2025
1.4	"System" level training for senior practitioners, trust CEOs and Heads.	New	By Dec 2025



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1.5	Record and evidence the impact of training and how it is embedded and sustained.	New	By June 2025
1.6	Upskilling school workforce on good quality paperwork and evidence.	Accelerate	Rolling process starting Jan 2025
<b>2 - Improve communication around mainstream inclusion</b>			
<b>Impact: reducing the number of EHCNA requests.</b>			
2.1	Develop a clear communication strategy for engaging with parent carers.	Accelerate	By March 2025
2.2	Develop case studies about the benefits of support without an EHCP.	New	By March 2025
2.3	Review communication metrics and optimise for best communication.	Accelerate	By end of the calendar year
2.4	Develop advice for parent carers when choosing schools.	New	By Jan 2025
2.5	Ensure 'easy read' versions of OPAL are accessible.	Accelerate	By June 2025
<b>3 - Make the inclusion offer more explicit</b>			
<b>Impact: reducing the number of EHCNA requests / increasing the number of No to Assess decisions.</b>			
3.1	Map the support available without an EHCP and ensure it is clearly explained.	Accelerate	By the end of the calendar year.
3.2	Create an inclusion charter / framework.	Pause	Delayed to 2025/26 school year – in line with the charter mark.
3.3	Continue to develop the dyslexia friendly school model.	Accelerate	By Sept 2025
3.4	Create an inclusion “charter mark” to incentivise schools that brings other schemes together.	Accelerate	Launching 2025/26 school year.
3.5	Hold an inclusion conference to bring professionals together and share best practice.	New	In July 2025
3.6	Develop information on OPAL that schools should hold on their website.	New	By March 2025
<b>4 - Develop the inclusion offer</b>			
<b>Impact: Reduce the number of EHCNA requests.</b>			
4.1	Create new behaviour support service in secondary schools	Optimise	By March 2025
4.2	EBSA pathway that provides a coordinated local area offer of support	New	By Sept 2025
4.3	Increase Educational Welfare Officer capacity to focus on attendance	Optimise	By Sept 2025
4.4	Extend OPAL to include post-16	Accelerate	By March 2025
4.5	Develop a graduated response pathway for SEMH	Accelerate	By Feb 2025

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<b>5 – Support children and young people with SEN through transitions</b>			
<b>Impact: Reduce the number of EHCNA requests.</b>			
5.1	Introduce a one page profile to help with transfers	Accelerate	By Feb 2025
5.2	Develop and implement a model of temporary transition support funding	Accelerate	By Feb 2026
5.3	Create a suite of tools to support parent carers with transition	New	By Feb 2025
<b>6 - Work with Public Health to develop a more effective early help offer</b>			
<b>Impact: Reduce the number of EHCNA requests.</b>			
6.1	Enhance guidance for schools on the universal offer – especially around emotional health	Optimise	By Feb 2025
6.2	Further rollout and embedding of trauma informed practice	Optimise	By July 2026
6.3	System-wide training on relational approaches	New	Rolling programme starting Dec 2025
6.4	Further development of the Healthy Schools Programme	Optimise	By July 2025
<b>7 - Change our processes to make use of early help</b>			
<b>Impact: Reduce the number of EHCNA requests.</b>			
7.1	Survey Early Years providers and Health Visitors to gain feedback on ESA process	New	By Mar 2026
7.2	Merge SEN Support Plan and Early Support Assessment	Optimise	By Jan 2025
7.3	Further develop the SEND understanding in the Integrated Front Door	Accelerate	By Jun 2025
<b>8 - Greater support in Early Years</b>			
<b>Impact: Reduce the number of EHCNA requests.</b>			
8.1	Rollout Early Years OPAL and guidance	Optimise	By July 2025
8.2	Deliver training on primary areas of need across our early years system	New	By July 2025
8.3	Continue to promote Dingley’s Promise Inclusion project.	Optimise	Ongoing
8.4	Early Years Inclusion Advisors will review a comprehensive training package.	New	By July 2025
<b>9 - Change the conversation around ceasing</b>			
<b>Impact: Increase the rate of plans ceased.</b>			
9.1	Change the language and story we use around ceasing.	New	By Feb 2025
9.2	Support schools to have conversations about ceasing.	New	By Sept 2025

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9.3	Change the paperwork to ensure that ceasing is discussed from the start of an EHCP process.	New	By Sept 2025
<b>10 - Prioritise Annual Reviews to enable pre-16 ceasing</b>			
<b>Impact: Increase the rate of plans ceased.</b>			
10.1	EHCPs to focus on celebrating success, progress, and how the child or young person can move forward.	New	By Sept 2025
10.2	Roll out training on annual reviews to ensure consistency.	Accelerate	By Jun 2025
10.3	Ensure planning for annual reviews is cohesive and includes well-crafted outcomes.	Optimise	By Jun 2025
10.4	Support and training for parent carers around their rights without an EHCP in place	New	By Sept 2025
<b>11 - Improve confidence in the options post-16</b>			
<b>Impact: Increase the rate of plans ceased.</b>			
11.1	Produce clearly mapped pathways for young people with SEND.	Accelerate	By Jan 2025
11.2	Support PfA pathway with case-studies, resources, and link to universal services.	Accelerate	By Mar 2025
11.3	Develop and raise awareness of health, social care and education offer to young people	Optimise	By June 2025
11.4	Understand options to incrementally transition support instead of a cliff-edge.	New	By July 2025
11.5	Drop-in surgeries about PfA Pathways on regular basis for young people and parent carers.	New	By Sept 2025
11.6	Increase the number of young people accessing employment and volunteering.	Optimise	Ongoing
11.7	Co-produce One-Page "How to plan for my future" template underpinned by e-learning.	New	By July 2026
11.8	Review opportunity gaps for SEMH and complex learners.	Accelerate	By Jan 2026
11.9	Seek out opportunities to develop independence skills in local communities.	Accelerate	By July 2026
<b>12 - Deliver the capacity we need in Wiltshire</b>			
<b>Impact: Reduce the number of INMSS placements.</b>			
12.1	Deliver more special school places	Accelerate	Ongoing
12.2	Deliver more Secondary Resource Base places – especially in SEMH, C&I and C&L	Optimise	Ongoing
12.3	Deliver more Primary Resource Base places	Accelerate	Ongoing
12.4	Improve the AP offer in schools ensuring equitable geographical spread	Accelerate	Ongoing
12.5	Explore Special School Satellite provision	Accelerate	By July 2026
<b>13 - Strategically review our commissioning intent</b>			
<b>Impact: Reduce the number of INMSS placements.</b>			

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13.1	Use outcomes from DaD2 and DaD4 to inform provision	New	Ongoing with an initial review in March 2025
13.2	Ensure place-planning forecasts are triangulated with key data sets	Accelerate	Ongoing
13.3	Engage an external consultancy to conduct a gap analysis for our specialist provision.	New	By Jun 2025
13.4	Change commissioning narrative to ensure expectations are clear.	New	By Jun 2025
13.5	Review of ELP to understand good practice and how to spread that.	Accelerate	By July 2025
<b>14 – Ensure guidance and approach supports ‘downward pressure’</b>			
<b>Impact: Reduce the number of INMSS placements</b>			
14.1	Refresh our guidance to schools and signpost support.	Optimise	By July 2025
14.2	Ensure the EHCP top-up review feeds into the strategic approach.	New	By Feb 2025
14.3	Implement a range of guidance and support around “waiting well” – including waiting for Special School placement.	New	By Jun 2025
14.4	Communicate a counter-narrative to the assumption that INMSS is the best option.	New	By July 2025



## **Consultation Outcome Report:**

**Transfer of funding from the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant to the High Needs Block in the Financial Year 2025/26**

Liz Williams  
Finance Lead – High Needs Block Sustainability  
November 2024

## 1. Executive Summary

This summary highlights the key outcomes of the consultation on the transfer of funding from schools block to high needs block in 2025/26. The consultation was held between 17<sup>th</sup> October and 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 and sought the views of headteachers, governors and senior leaders from Wiltshire's mainstream schools and multi-academy trusts. 61 responses were received, one of those responses was from a special school and this has not been included in the analysis as special schools are not funded from the schools block.

**The majority of respondents were in support of a transfer of funding from schools block to high needs block.** 66.7% of respondents supported the proposal for a transfer of funds from schools block to high needs block.

**Of those respondents who supported a transfer of funding, the majority were not in support of the proposal to transfer 1% of schools block.** 60.0% of respondents who supported a transfer of funding did not support a transfer of 1%. Comments provided by those respondents indicated majority support for a transfer of 0.5% or a value that would not impact on NFF formula rates.

The majority of comments from respondents who voted No to a transfer of funding referred to the financial impact on their schools. Comments also noted existing cost pressures and wider concerns relating to the SEND system.

The majority of respondents took time to provide additional comments to support their responses. These are all included in this report.

There were a number of comments relating to the format and distribution method for the consultation. These are noted and will inform any future consultations.

## 2. Background

The schools block is the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) that is allocated to fund the National Funding Formula (NFF) for pupils aged 5 to 16, in mainstream schools. The high needs block is the amount of DSG that is allocated to support pupils aged 0 to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Whilst the schools block is ring-fenced in line with the DSG conditions of grant, local authorities can transfer up to and including 0.5% of their schools block funding into another block, with the approval of their Schools Forum. Where a local authority wishes to transfer more than 0.5% of their schools block funding into another block, and/or where agreement has not been reached with Schools Forum, the local authority must seek the agreement of the Secretary of State.

In Wiltshire, Schools Forum has recognised the pressures against the high needs block and a transfer of funding from the schools block has historically been agreed, following consultation with schools, each year, where this has been affordable within the 'cash envelope' for school funding and the NFF has been applied. In 2024/25 a transfer of £2m, or 0.55%, from the schools block to the high needs block was agreed by Schools Forum and confirmed by the Secretary of State. This was in line with the proposals in the council's High Needs Sustainability Plan.

The council's DSG deficit is supported by a High Needs Sustainability Plan and a safety valve agreement is in place with the DfE. Within that plan the council commits to eliminating the in-year deficit on high needs spend by the end of the 2028/29 financial year. The Safety Valve agreement includes a clear condition on the maximum level of deficit allowable in any financial year and the plan is supported by investment from the high needs block, the council and a transfer from the schools block. The high needs block deficit remains the most significant financial risk for the council.

The High Needs Sustainability Plan prioritises investment in early support for schools and families and an increase in specialist provision across special schools and resource bases.

The plan approved by the DfE, the council and by Schools Forum, includes an assumption that a transfer of 1% will be made from the schools block into the high needs block for the next 4 financial years, starting from 2025/26. The transfer is part of the investment required to support the delivery of the plan and support required to reduce the high needs deficit. Whilst the block transfer is built into the agreed plan, it is recognised that it must be the subject of an annual consultation with schools and Schools Forum, and agreement by the Secretary of State. It is also recognised that this is in the context of an increasingly difficult financial environment for schools.

For this reason, the council made the decision to consult with schools on a transfer of 1% of schools block funding into the high needs block for the 2025/26 financial year. The consultation opened on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024 and closed on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024.

### **3. Consultation Objectives**

The consultation sought the views of schools on a proposal to transfer a total of 1% of schools block funding to the high needs block.

The aim of the consultation was to hear the views of schools on the proposed transfer and to inform the discussions at Schools Forum on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

### **4. Consultation Process and Communications**

In June 2024 a report was taken to Schools Forum confirming the council's intention to consult on a 1% block transfer, in line with the High Needs Sustainability Plan, and seeking the views of Schools Forum members on what information needed to be included in the consultation to enable schools to make an informed response.

The consultation went live on Right Choice on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The consultation document included a summary of the expected changes to services proposed in the High Needs Sustainability Plan, and an indicative financial impact for each school. The financial impact was modelled based on 2024/25 figures as no provisional allocations have been received for the 2025/26 financial year.

A briefing was given to the WASSH Conference on 11<sup>th</sup> October highlighting the key issues within the consultation document and the indicative impact on schools.

An online briefing was held for Primary Head Teachers on 5<sup>th</sup> November. 9 Head Teachers attended and a recording of the briefing was made available.

A briefing was sent to governors on 11<sup>th</sup> November.

A brief summary of the consultation was presented at the Head Teacher briefing on 12<sup>th</sup> November.

All questions submitted by e-mail on the detail of the consultation were responded to.

Feedback has been received from some respondents that the method of distributing the consultation via Right Choice made it difficult to access and respond to. Whilst Right Choice has been used previously for the annual finance consultations, this feedback will inform the method of any further consultations.

### **5. Summary of Consultation Responses**

In total 61 responses were received, broken down as follows:

- 15 Mainstream Secondary Schools
- 42 Mainstream Primary Schools
- 3 Multi Academy Trusts
- 1 Special School

This compares to 16 responses to the block transfer consultation last year.

The Multi Academy Trusts provided a trust wide response and between them covered 28 schools. There was a small level of duplication where 6 of those schools also submitted an individual response, however, adjusting for that, 79 schools in total were represented in the responses to the consultation.

The response from the special school has not been included in the analysis of responses as special schools are not funded from the schools block. It should be noted that responses from special schools have been included in previous years.

The consultation questions are attached at Annex 1 to this report.

Responses to the consultation are summarised as follows:

**Question 1(a) Do you support a transfer of any funding from the schools block to the high needs block?**

	Total	%
<b>Yes</b>	40	66.1%
<b>No</b>	20	33.9%

This is split between different phases as follows:

	Yes	No	Total
Primary	28	14	42
Secondary	11	4	15
MAT	1	2	3
	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>60</b>

	Yes	No	Total
Primary	67%	33%	100%
Secondary	73%	27%	100%
MAT	33%	67%	100%

The responses can be analysed by size of school using the DfE criteria for small schools (as defined by the sparsity factor in the NFF). Primary schools with fewer than 75 pupils are considered to be “very small” and primary schools with fewer than 150 pupils are defined as “small”. For secondary schools the pupil numbers for “very small” and “small” are 350 and 600 respectively.



	Yes	No	Total
V Small	3	0	3
Small	8	4	12
Other	29	16	45
	<b>40</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>60</b>

	Yes	No	Total
V Small	100%	0%	100%
Small	67%	33%	100%
Other	64%	36%	100%

**Question 1(b) If you support a transfer, do you support the proposed transfer of 1%?**

	Total	%
<b>Yes</b>	16	40.0%
<b>No</b>	24	60.0%

This is split across different phases as follows:

	Yes	No	Total
Primary	12	16	28
Secondary	4	7	11
MAT	0	1	1
	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40</b>

	Yes	No	Total
Primary	43%	57%	100%
Secondary	36%	64%	100%
MAT	0%	100%	100%

The split across very small and small schools compared with other schools is as follows:

	Yes	No	Total
V Small	2	1	3
Small	5	3	8
Other	9	20	29
	<b>16</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>40</b>

	Yes	No	Total
V Small	67%	33%	100%
Small	63%	38%	100%
Other	31%	69%	100%

**Question 1(c) If you are in support of a transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, but not in agreement with a transfer of 1%, what level of transfer could you support?**

There were **26** comments in response to this question.

The majority of responses stated a preference for a transfer of 0.5%.

The second most popular suggestion was for a transfer of 0.55% or a transfer that did not affect NFF rates for schools.

Two schools stated a preference for less than 0.5% and two suggested up to 0.75%

**Question 1(d) Please give your reasons for saying no to a transfer from the schools block to the high needs block.**

There were **16** comments in response to this question which can be grouped under the following headings:

***Direct Financial Impact on Schools***

- Many schools highlighted existing budget pressures and low levels of funding
- Cost of living pressures on school budgets
- A small number of schools highlighted that they were in a deficit position which would be further impacted by a reduction in funding.
- A number of schools highlighted the potential direct impact of the proposed transfer on their ability to employ staff, in particular support staff who would be directly supporting pupils with SEND
- Potential inequity in impact on schools due to the protections in the formula for schools on MFG or MPPFL meaning that some schools would not have their funding adjusted

***Wider SEND System***

- Some respondents commented that they understood the rationale to reduce the deficit but questioned the sustainability of using a transfer from schools block to reduce the high needs deficit.
- Comments highlighted wider concerns with the SEND system as a whole and questioned the difference that the schools block transfer could make versus the impact of the loss of funding at school level.
- Concerns that reducing funding for mainstream schools would reduce capacity for early intervention at school level.

***High Needs Sustainability Plan***

- Concern that the plan has already been reported as off track. One respondent stated a lack of confidence that the plan could be brought back on track.
- Concern that the plan does not fully recognise the challenges facing schools and that the transfer would erode trust between schools and the council.
- At least one response highlighted that in their view support for schools is limited

***Government Funding/Reform***

- A number of comments highlighted the possibility of further government reform or funding in this area.

**Question 2 – If you do not agree to the transfer of funds or the reduction of top-up funding levels, do you have any further suggestions to enable the delivery of the proposals in the High Needs Sustainability Plan?**

There were **23** comments made in response to this question. These can be grouped under the following themes:

***Funding***

- Explore external funding streams
- Some respondents expressed the view that we should await the full detail of the autumn budget announcements before reducing funding for schools.

***The High Needs Sustainability Plan***

- Review existing proposals.
- Lack of clarity about the proposals in the plan.
- A number of respondents identified specific areas for review or change within the plan including:
  - Review the investment and savings in Workstream 2 where costs in 2025/26 exceed savings
  - More SEND team members going into schools or a bank of TAs
  - Realistic funding to support children
  - Staff to work alongside schools to support mental health or SEMH
  - Increase the focus on early intervention
  - Maximise the use of local provision rather than external placements
  - Review commissioned services

***SEND Processes***

- Rationalise and streamline EHCP process
- SEND professionals to work directly with children
- Streamline processes for accessing support

***Financial Processes***

- One respondent suggested that school balances should be taken into account in calculating the transfer adjustment.

**Question 3 - Do you have any further comments that you would like to make in response to this consultation?**

There were **46** comments made in response to this question and they can be grouped under the following themes:

In general respondents stated that they understood the need to address the high needs deficit.

### ***Consultation Process***

- A few respondents commented on the consultation process including:
  - The consultation felt “hidden” and was difficult to search for on Right Choice
  - Difficult to respond because of the format of the document
  - Delay in sending the document direct to Governors
- A number of respondents commented that they were unclear as to why the indicative figures showed that some schools would not be required to make a contribution.
- One respondent expressed concern that money could be taken from schools without the consent of Schools Forum and that this raised issues of trust.

### ***Financial Impact on Schools***

The majority of responses to this question were in this category and are summarised as follows:

- Financial pressures affecting all schools and concerns that a relatively small percentage reduction in school budgets could compound existing challenges faced by schools in managing their budgets.
- Comments expressed the view that the proposal did not sufficiently recognise the financial pressures being faced by schools.
- Inequity in the distribution of reduction in funding due to the protections in the NFF
- Wider cost pressures faced by schools including recruitment and staff costs, falling rolls and high maintenance costs. Academies not able to set deficit budgets.
- For many schools this would potentially result in staff reductions.

### ***High Needs Sustainability Plan/Local SEND System***

- A number of comments recognised the need to invest to better support pupils with SEND however did not support that investment being funded by reductions from school budgets.
- Concerns that the plan is off track
- Concerns that funding in schools is insufficient to meet the needs of pupils with EHCPs
- Mismatch between needs and provision across the county
- While the High Needs Sustainability Plan aims to reduce deficits through early intervention and increased local provision, schools are not yet seeing these benefits.

### ***National SEND System***

- A number of comments related to the potential impact of government reforms to SEND and wider school structures and uncertainty about how this would impact on schools.
- This is a national issue that really needs a national response with adequate funding being provided from central government

**Annex 1 – Consultation Response Form**

**Transfer of funding from the Schools Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant to the High Needs Block in the Financial Year 2025/26**

<b>School</b>	
---------------	--

**Q1 a) Do you support a transfer of any funding from the School Block to the High Needs Block?**

<b>Yes</b>	
<b>No</b>	

If you have answered “yes” please answer question 1(b)  
 If you have answered “no” please answer question 1(c)

**b) If you support a transfer, do you support the proposed transfer of 1%:**

<b>Yes</b>	
<b>No</b>	

**c) If you are in support of a transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, but not in agreement with a transfer of 1%, what level of transfer could you support?**

--

**d) No transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2025/26.**

**This decision has been made on the understanding that High Needs funding and support, currently provided to schools, may have to be reduced to help towards balancing the High Needs Block budget?**

<b>Confirm NOT to transfer funds</b>	
--------------------------------------	--

**Please give your reasons for saying no to a transfer from schools block to high needs block**

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**2) If you do not agree to the transfer of funds or the reduction of top-up funding levels, do you have any further suggestions to enable the delivery of the proposals in the High Needs Sustainability Plan?**

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**3) Do you have any further comments that you would like to make in response to this consultation?**

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Return Signed off by:

Name:	
Position:	
Date:	

## **Annex 2 – List of Respondents**

Sarum Academy  
St Joseph's Catholic School  
Matravers School  
The Trafalgar School at Downton  
Bishop Wordsworth's Church of England Grammar School  
Abbeyfield School  
Lavington School  
Devizes School  
The Stonehenge School  
Melksham Oak Community School  
Hardenhuish School  
St John's Marlborough  
Wyvern St Edmund's  
Sheldon School  
Royal Wootton Bassett Academy  
Luckington Community School  
Broad Hinton Church of England Primary School  
Heddington Church of England Primary School  
Oaksey CofE Primary School  
Whiteparish All Saints Church of England Primary School  
Morgan's Vale and Woodfalls Church of England Primary School  
Chilton Foliat Church of England Primary School  
Wootton Bassett Infants' School  
Baydon St Nicholas Church of England Primary School  
Semley Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Hullavington CofE Primary and Nursery School  
Kington St Michael Church of England Primary School  
Crudwell CofE Primary School  
Marden Vale CofE Academy  
St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Porton  
The Holy Trinity Church of England Primary Academy  
Durrington Church of England Controlled Junior School  
Preshute Church of England Primary School  
Woodlands Primary School  
Princecroft Primary School  
St Michael's CofE Aided Primary  
Cherhill CofE School  
Holy Trinity Church of England Academy  
Amesbury Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Bemerton St John Church of England Primary  
Charter Primary School  
Mere School  
Holbrook Primary School  
Wellington Eagles Primary Academy  
Colerne CofE Primary School

## Appendix 3

Noremarsh Junior School  
Walwayne Court School  
Longleaze Primary School  
Ludgershall Castle Primary School  
Priestley Primary School  
Redland Primary School  
Kings Lodge Primary School  
Kiwi Primary School  
St Mary's Church of England Primary School & Nursery, Purton  
Lyneham Primary School  
Marlborough St Mary's CE Primary School  
Fynamore Primary School  
Magna Learning Partnership  
DSAT  
Pickwick Academy Trust



**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**21 January 2025**

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**Subject: Climate Delivery Plan 2025**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Dominic Muns - Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment**

**Key Decision: Non Key**

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## **Executive Summary**

This report sets out Wiltshire Council's Climate Delivery Plan for 2025. The existing plans - 'Wiltshire Climate Strategy Climate Delivery Plan 2022-2024' and the 'Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-24' were approved in September 2022. The proposed plan will identify the action the council is taking to tackle the climate emergency. Prioritisation of actions is based on what the data tells us about the impact it can have, and the role and influence the council has, so that we continue to focus activity towards the most meaningful activities to reduce carbon emissions and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change.

The plan has reviewed the areas of focus of the Climate Strategy, in order to simplify and clarify action and governance. It builds on the progress to date, and the foundation laid in key areas such as county-wide retrofit, and decarbonisation of the council's buildings and fleet.

The new Climate Delivery Plan combines actions for both the council's operations as well as the county-wide action towards carbon neutrality and resilience to climate impacts.

This new single plan highlights the actions the council will prioritise in 2025. It sets out the how these actions will contribute to the long-term ambitions to be carbon neutral as a council, and county.

The plan will be refreshed annually and be supported by internal monitoring and reporting. The Climate Emergency annual update report will continue to be presented to Cabinet and Council in the Autumn.

## **Proposals**

Cabinet is asked:

- 1) To note the conclusions of the review of the Climate Strategy Delivery Plan 2022/24 and the Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-24

2) To note and endorse the draft Climate Delivery Plan 2025, to be approved by the Corporate Director, Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment.

**Reason for Proposals**

To provide Cabinet with a concluding review report in relation to the Climate Delivery Plans, for the period 2022-24.

To introduce the draft Climate Delivery Plan for 2025, and to provide an opportunity for Cabinet to comment on the draft, with any necessary adjustments made before final approval.

**Parvis Khansari**  
**Corporate Director - Place**

## Wiltshire Council

### Cabinet

21 January 2025

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**Subject:** Climate Delivery Plan

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Dominic Muns - Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment

**Key Decision:** Non Key

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### Purpose of Report

1. This report introduces the proposed new Climate Delivery Plan for 2025, which has been developed following a review of the existing delivery plans at the conclusion of the plan period (2022-24). The report summarises the conclusion of the review, demonstrating performance against the existing delivery plans. This complements information on the 'Update on the council's response to the climate emergency' (annual [Climate Update 2024](#)), which was reported to cabinet in September.
2. The draft Climate Delivery Plan 2025 is presented to Cabinet, to provide an opportunity for any comment, and to ask Cabinet to endorse the plans subject to any necessary final adjustments being made and the plans approved by Corporate Director for Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment.
3. The draft Climate Delivery Plan 2025 sets out the priority activities that will contribute to delivery of the Climate Strategy 2022-27 and shows how these will help the council to progress towards its carbon neutrality ambitions.

### Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

4. The programme of work to 'seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030,' will contribute to all four business plan priorities (2022-32) of:
  - Empowered People
  - Resilient Society
  - Thriving Economy
  - Sustainable Environment
5. Whilst many of the actions within the draft plan are designed primarily to deliver under the 'Sustainable Environment' priority, the Climate Delivery Plan 2025 actions identify co-benefits, which will help to deliver shared outcomes such as, health and wellbeing, air quality, biodiversity, reducing social isolation, reducing vulnerability (particularly to the impacts of climate change), supporting jobs and the local economy.

## Background

6. [Wiltshire Council's Climate Strategy 2022-2027](#) was adopted in February 2022 and set out the objectives and 'areas of focus' that will help the county to become carbon neutral. Subsequently two delivery plans were published to set out how Wiltshire Council would deliver these objectives through to December 2024.
7. The [Carbon Neutral Council Plan](#) 2022-2024, focuses on achieving the council's commitment to be carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030 for scope 1 and 2 emissions<sup>1</sup>. The second delivery plan - [Climate Strategy Delivery Plan for Wiltshire 2022-2024](#) - was outward-facing and focused on actions that Wiltshire Council can take either alone or in partnership with others to lead the transition to a carbon neutral county.
8. Now that these plans have run their course the actions and progress has been reviewed. A new single plan has been created to show how the council will prioritise its climate action in 2025 to continue to work towards being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, as well as seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral.
9. When the Wiltshire Climate Strategy was approved by Council in [February 2022](#) Cabinet delegated permission to the Corporate Director for Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for climate change, to approve delivery plans for the climate strategy once developed.

## Main Considerations for the Council

10. This report provides an overview of the review of the 2022-24 climate delivery plans, at their conclusion. Cabinet is asked to note the conclusions of the review and to endorse the draft Climate Delivery Plan for 2025 (Appendix 1), subject to any comments.

### Performance against 2022-24 delivery plans

11. The annual report '[Climate Update 2024](#)' was presented to cabinet (September 2024) and Full Council (15 October 2024) and included an overview of progress made towards the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) associated with the Climate Delivery Plans, and examples of specific projects related to deliverables of the plans. The examples demonstrate work across many different council service areas as well as partnership work with external stakeholders.
12. In addition, the council's annual [Greenhouse Gas Report 2023-24](#) was published on the website in September 2024.
13. A short summary is provided to give context to the progress towards the Climate Strategy outcomes of reducing carbon emissions and increasing resilience to the impacts of climate change:
  - **Carbon Neutral Council** - Council to be carbon neutral by 2030 in its own operations (Scope 1 and 2)

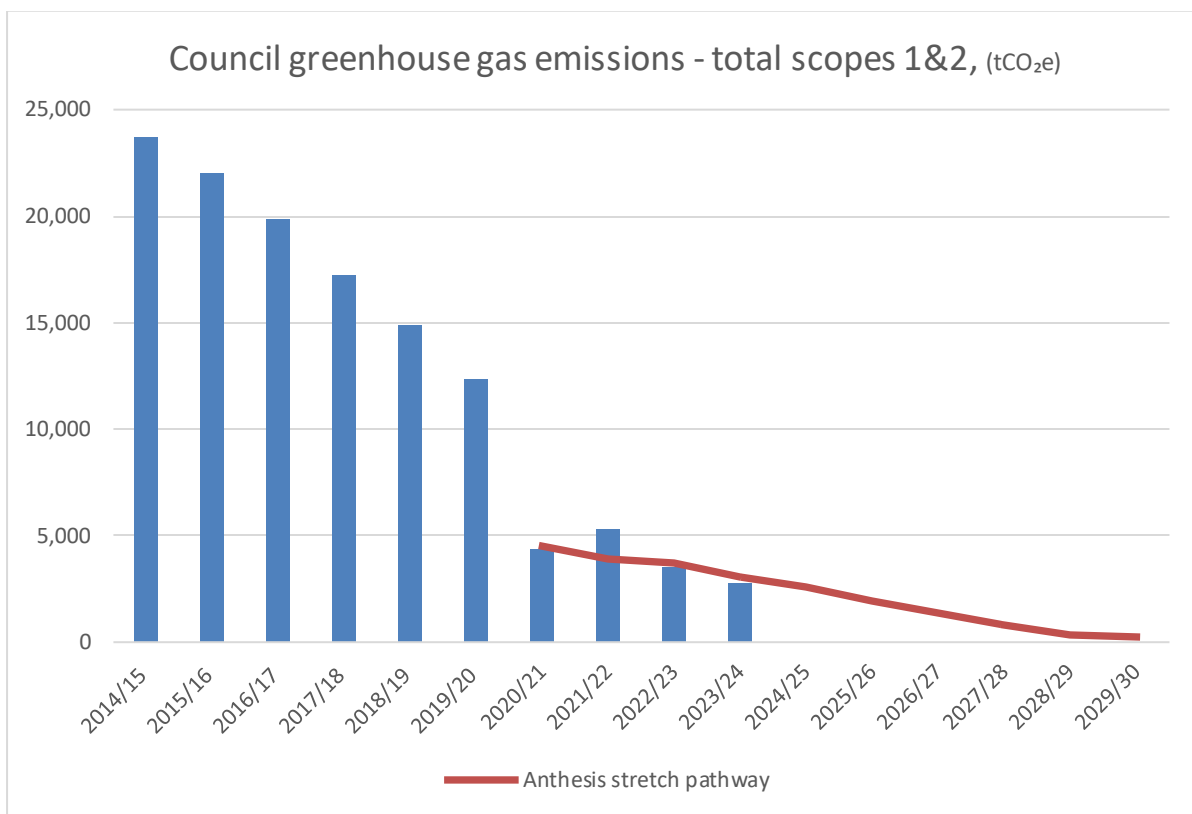
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<sup>1</sup> The Carbon Neutral Council Plan, page 4-5, explains the council's operational emissions and scopes

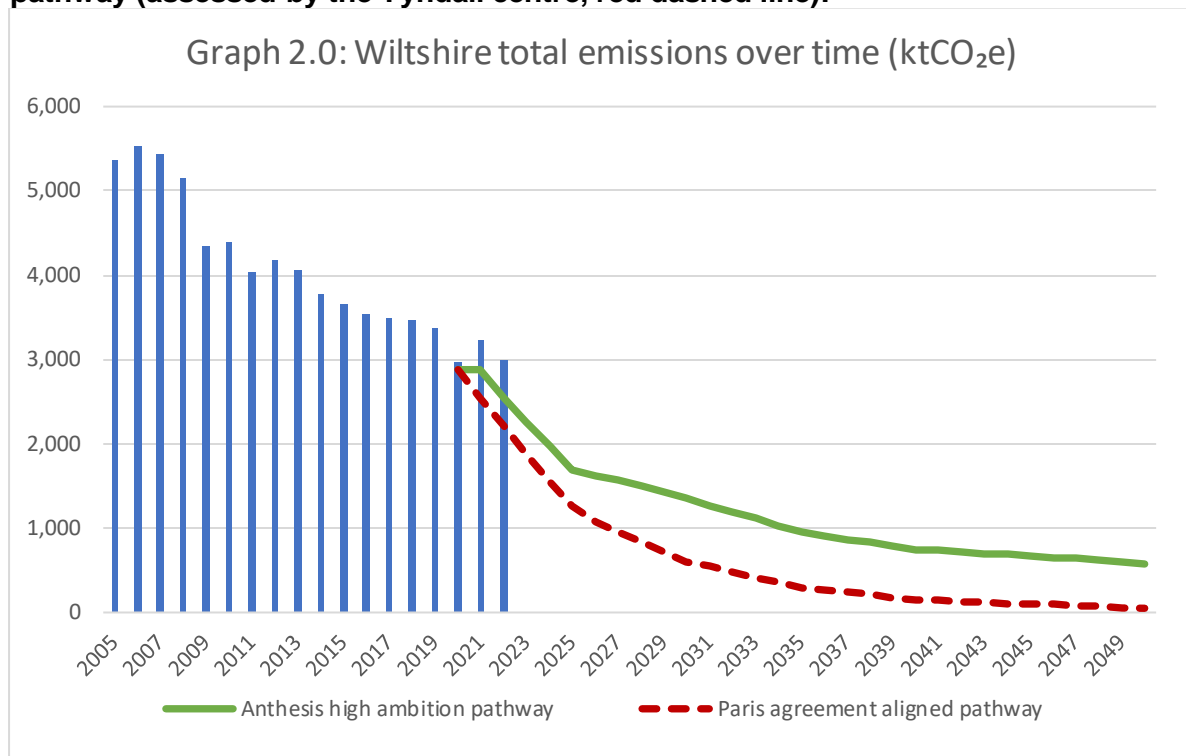
- **Wiltshire county carbon neutral** - Seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030
- **Adaptation and Resilience** - Plan to be resilient to the impacts of climate change associated with a 2°C rise in global temperatures.

14. The data shows that the council is on track to be carbon neutral for scope 1 & 2 emissions by 2030, predominantly due to carbon reduction work being undertaken by Energy and Fleet teams to decarbonise buildings and directly operated vehicles.

15. **GRAPH 1.0: Council’s greenhouse gas emissions from 2014, against the pathway to carbon neutral (as assessed by Anthesis, from the 2020 baseline).** The sharp drop after 2019/20 is partly due to the green tariff, allowing emissions from electricity to be recorded as zero. Emissions without the effect of the green tariff are reported in the Greenhouse Gas report.



16. **GRAPH 2.0: Wiltshire county-wide emissions from 2005, against the high-ambition pathway to carbon neutral (as assessed by Anthesis, green line), and the Paris-aligned pathway (assessed by the Tyndall centre, red dashed line).**



17. The county emissions are reducing in line with national trends, however the reduction is not fast enough to make the county of Wiltshire net zero within the timeframe required. Whilst national government policy has a significant role to play, the council's role is to explore all means available to influence the county's emissions.

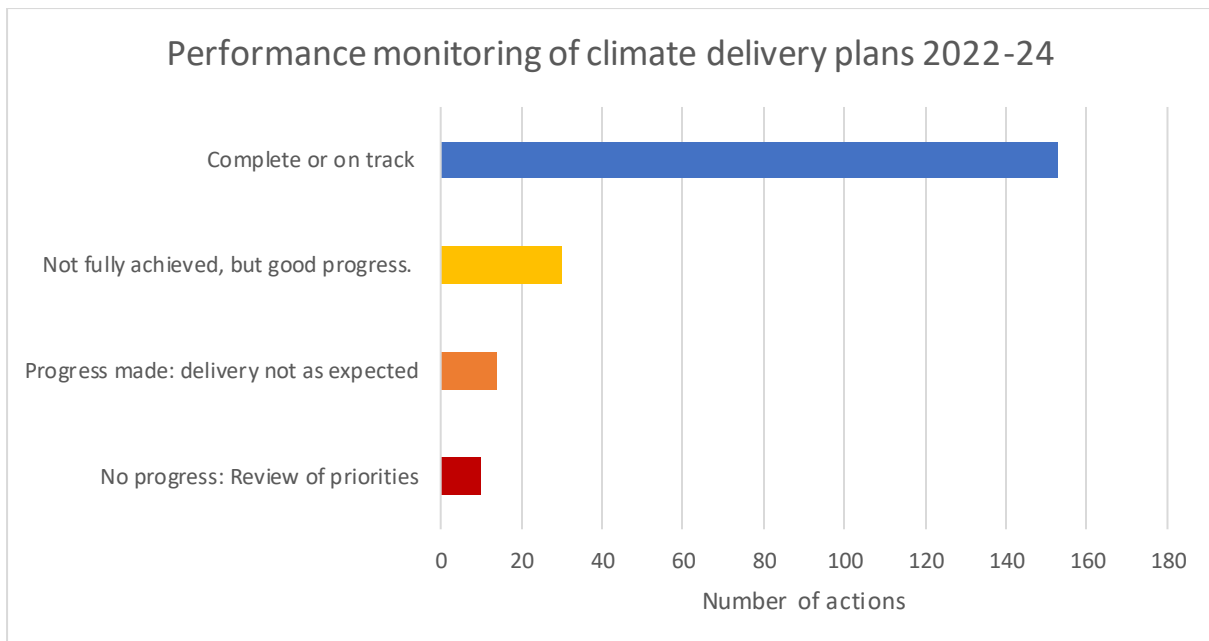
18. The council's indirect emissions (Scope 3) are not included in the 2030 goal, however there is work being done to monitor and help reduce these emissions. Sources include emissions from schools, waste collection fleet and employee commuting but by far the largest source is the council's outsourced services and contracts, which are estimated to result in 269,000 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per year, based on a conversion factor relating to expenditure on contracts. The actual emissions are reported in the annual Greenhouse Gas Report, subject to data availability. A focus in 2025 will be on finding out more about Scope 3 actual emissions and working with suppliers to reduce them.

19. Whilst Adaptation and Resilience has not historically been tracked by indicators or data, significant progress has been made over the past 12 months on assessing the resilience and risk of climate change, to council service delivery. It will be challenging for a KPI to track the council's preparedness, but carrying out risk assessment and embedding necessary actions within the council's risk register and service planning will contribute. National guidance indicates that society should prepare for the impacts of a global temperature increase of 2°C while assessing the risk of impacts associated with a 4°C rise.

20. Apart from the above summary of progress against our key outcomes, the purpose of this report is not to repeat the information provided in the annual update report, but to summarise the review of the current delivery plans and show how this has led to the prioritisation and areas of focus for the new plan.

21. The review has shown that the majority of over 200 actions within the delivery plans were implemented to the expected stage by the end of 2024, as shown by the blue bar in **Graph 3.0** (below). Thirty actions made very good progress (yellow bar) however the milestones set at the outset of the 2022 they have either not been fully met yet or were late. For example, the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) did not meet the milestone of being published by the end of 2023, as national government guidance was not forthcoming, however the draft LTP4 has now been published (November 2024). Twenty-four actions (orange and red bars in the graph) had progress that was limited, or slower than expected, which can be due to a number of reasons, for example cycle lanes not being able to progress due to land ownership issues or actions delayed or changed due to external factors such as changing funding streams or policy. In other cases, the action has been reviewed, as it was necessary to give precedence to alternative service priorities.

**Graph 3.0: Monitoring performance against the actions of the Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-24 and the Climate Strategy Delivery Plan 2022-24, shows that 88% of delivery plan actions (2022-2024) are on track or have made good progress.**



22. The review highlighted some areas that were not able to progress as expected during the delivery plan period. Whilst the planned milestones were not achieved, nevertheless there has been ongoing activity in these areas and this will continue into the 2025 delivery plan. For example, the Offsetting Strategy, Tree and Woodland Planting Strategy, Adaptation Plan – these plans or strategies are not yet in place, however they are expected to be complete in 2025, and this has not stopped action taking place in these areas.

- Carbon offsetting: Work was carried out by consultants Anthesis to provide an options paper for the council to offset its own emissions, as well as explore how the county’s emissions might be offset. With the Climate Team becoming part of the wider Climate and Environment service, there are multiple opportunities to incorporate carbon measurement and potential offsetting options in relation to nature-based projects both on council land and within communities, not least due to our own tree planting and enabling activity. Offsetting is a swiftly moving area

and the experience and learning attained during the last year sets us in good stead to put appropriate plans and projects in place, and to carefully consider options that are not subject to greenwashing claims.

- Tree and Woodland Planting Strategy: Getting trees in the ground, via the Grant Application and Planting Support programme, has taken priority over the Tree and Woodland Planting Strategy, which will be finalised early in 2025.
- Adaptation and resilience work has been ongoing with a focus on resilience of and risk to delivery of council services. This impacts the community who rely on the services, as well as the council's own business continuity and incident response. The Adaptation Plan will collate the actions and priorities that have been identified as result of this work, based on Climate Change Risk Assessment of key services. The Adaptation Plan is expected to be completed in early 2025.
  - Individual actions within other themes may not have been delivered for a number of reasons, but are now on track, or more appropriate actions have replaced them.

23. Slower delivery in these few areas has been necessary in order to prioritise some of the more impactful areas, and in order to follow up opportunities for funding as it became available. Therefore, as with previous plans, our delivery plans going forward will need to accommodate some flexibility as council and government priorities and drivers can evolve, and new funding opportunities become available that can help bring forward some projects earlier than others. This is a reason to move to an annual plan and review period.

24. The review of the plan not only looked at progress on each action, but also the success in implementation and monitoring. Early in 2024 an Internal Audit was carried out by South West Audit Partnership (SWAP), which also fed into the delivery plan review. The audit's aim was to assess whether the council has the systems, governance and policy in place to deliver on its carbon neutral ambitions. The audit found that there is a sound level of governance, risk management and control systems in place. However, the audit recommended actions in relation to allocation of funding/resources and consideration of climate within decision-making, which will further aid the council to achieve its climate objectives. The new delivery plans aim to provide clearer links to KPIs and outcomes, demonstrate deliverability by including costs and impacts of specific actions where possible.

25. Our review showed that climate delivery could benefit from strengthening the governance, monitoring and reporting processes in order to help keep climate delivery on track and embedded into council wide delivery. To further aid this there is now a new monitoring and dashboard system to support progress of the plan through regular internal reporting. This will also help feed into the annual update report to Cabinet and Council.

### Climate Delivery Plans 2025

26. The Climate Delivery plan sets out strategic priorities as 'areas of focus' similar to the previous delivery plans, and accords with the Climate Strategy priority areas, however these have been streamlined to provide a more succinct and focussed approach.



27. Each 'area of focus' has one or more deliverables, which are assigned to the responsible team within the council and key stakeholders, indicative costs, carbon impacts and co-benefits are also now identified.
28. Where possible, the deliverables show the impact they will make on the council's three main outcomes: reducing the council's carbon emissions; reducing the county's carbon emissions, and; adaptation and resilience to the impacts of climate change.
29. The delivery plan will be reviewed annually going forward, so this plan is for 2025 only. However, it includes interim milestones and longer-term goals showing how these will contribute towards the overarching goals of being carbon neutral and being resilient to the impacts of climate change.
30. Whilst the Climate Delivery Plan sets out key information in relation to each deliverable, it must remain agile to changes such as to new policies or funding opportunities. Implementation steps and milestones will be used internally to manage and monitor delivery.
31. Many of the areas of focus are existing areas of work and will be delivered using core staff resource. However, where additional budget has been allocated or funding will be sought, this is indicated. The deliverables are therefore assigned a priority according to deliverability as well as impact.
32. It is important to highlight the work being done to embed climate into council decision-making, risk and performance management and service delivery. This work underpins the council's ability to deliver agreed outcomes of the business plan, and work towards the council's climate ambitions. The Climate Delivery Plan has been co-developed with multiple service areas across the council and aligns with other council strategies such as, the Business Plan, Economic Strategy, Local Transport Plan, Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. The Climate Strategy, and commitments to carbon neutral span a timeframe beyond many of these strategies, and therefore the purpose of the Climate Strategy and Climate Delivery Plans is to explore longer term activity that will help maintain progress on the pathway to carbon neutral (as assessed by Anthesis in 2022). The aim is that strategies such as the Local Plan, Local Transport Plan, Culture Strategy, all contribute to delivery of the council's climate objectives.
33. Likewise, the engagement of residents, community groups, businesses and other stakeholders is key. The council's scope 1 and 2 emissions account for approximately 0.2%, so it is important that the area-wide emissions are also addressed through engagement and partnership working. The council's work will continue to expand engagement and partnership work. There are elements that the council is not able to implement on its own, or able to prioritise in the shorter-term. We will continue to engage with organisations such as Area Boards, Town and Parish Councils, Wiltshire Climate Alliance and other ongoing partnerships, to encourage and support projects and communications with their networks, which will complement what the council is doing.
34. Development of the Climate Delivery Plan is not a statutory requirement, but it is necessary to achieve the council's commitments to carbon neutrality and resilience to the impacts of climate change. This plan was developed by the Climate Team working with climate leads in all relevant council service areas, in order that the climate

deliverables are embedded into service delivery. In addition, early input was sought from the Cabinet Member for Waste and Environment, the Climate Emergency Task Group and Wiltshire Climate Alliance. The council is also part of regional and national networks with other local authorities sharing experience on tackling climate change, whereby experience of others has been considered through the development of this plan, where replication of projects or lessons learnt are relevant for Wiltshire.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

35. The impacts of climate change are amplifying safeguarding issues and falling heavily on vulnerable people both globally and in the UK.
36. Evidence suggests that vulnerable demographic groups experience disproportionate effects on their health outcomes from climate related impacts.
37. This includes young children, babies and older people who are particularly affected by extremes in temperature and the disruption caused by severe weather such as flooding<sup>2</sup>. People with physical or mental health problems have a lower ability to act due to physical constraints or a lower awareness of their circumstances. People with low personal mobility or living in areas with lower accessibility of services tend to have less ability to respond and recover because it may take them longer to help themselves or to seek and receive help from others. Therefore any safeguarding implications from project developed as a result of the proposed Climate Strategy Delivery Plan will be assessed as appropriate.

### **Public Health Implications**

38. Climate change and public health are inextricably linked. The council's Climate Delivery Plan, which aims to reduce carbon emissions in Wiltshire, and decrease vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, will have a significant and positive impact on the health of the population. Actions from implementing the plan contributes to improving health outcomes for all residents and helps reduce health inequalities. For example, better home insulation and energy efficiency will not only reduce emissions but also provide healthier homes for some of our most vulnerable people. Active travel schemes will help increase levels of physical activity, connecting people to their local communities and potentially leading to improved air quality through reduced car use.

### **Procurement Implications**

39. There is no direct procurement implication of this report, however the Climate Delivery Plan will involve some activity that will necessitate procurement of consultants or delivery partners. Project leads will be engaging with Procurement directly and in line with the council's procurement policy
40. One of the key areas of action of the Climate Delivery Plan is to ensure that the council's procurement processes integrate questions and requirements relating to climate objectives. The Procurement Team, Climate Team and relevant contract managers and commissioners will work together on key contracts to ensure suppliers

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.climatejust.org.uk/socially-vulnerable-groups-sensitive-climate-impacts>

are contributing to reduction of their emissions (the council's Scope 3 emissions), and preparing for the impacts of climate change.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

41. One of the key principles is for the Climate Strategy to be equitable, ensuring the transition to low carbon, climate resilient future is fair, and the benefits are accessible to all.

42. The delivery plan sets out high level areas of activity and also identifies co-benefits, including

- 'accessibility' which might relate to accessibility to services of underrepresented groups, or reducing isolation for example rural mobility projects.
- 'fair transition' – means that the project has benefits of becoming carbon neutral, that are designed to be accessible to vulnerable or underrepresented groups, such as the current projects encouraging home energy retrofits, Solar Together and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG), jointly provide an offer to those that are 'able to pay', and those that are on low incomes, and thereby these groups of people will be able to benefit from houses that are cheaper to run and healthy. Data is used to help target projects towards certain groups, as well as making sure the council's budget is spent on those that need it the most and that projects will be efficient and effective. The Local Area Energy Planning project aims to identify the most cost effective way to achieve net zero in Wiltshire, and this will be refined to look at specific locations and neighbourhoods.

43. Evidence suggests that vulnerable demographic groups experience disproportionate effects on their health outcomes from climate related impacts.

44. This includes young children, babies and older people who are particularly affected by extremes in temperature and the disruption caused by severe weather such as flooding. People with physical or mental health problems have a lower ability to act due to physical constraints or a lower awareness of their circumstances. People with low personal mobility or living in areas with lower accessibility of services tend to have less ability to respond and recover because it may take them longer to help themselves or to seek and receive help from others.

45. The Climate Delivery Plan at Appendix 1 includes high-level actions. As specific detail and projects are developed to implement the plan, project development will consider the target groups, and desired impacts, any negative impacts, through the equalities impact assessment process. The council will incorporate monitoring to show how our climate projects are benefitting and impacting different groups within Wiltshire.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

46. The Climate Delivery Plan is part of the council's response to environmental and climate change considerations following the acknowledgement of a climate emergency and agreement by Full Council to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.

## **Workforce Implications**

47. The draft Climate Delivery Plan sets out the necessary resources to deliver the actions. The plan identifies priorities for 2025, which will be delivered through existing workforce capacity within the relevant services. The plan also identifies additional activity that will be started when funding can be secured, or a proposal for additional staff capacity will be put forward through the appropriate processes for subsequent years and budgets.
48. The most immediate priorities to ensure that this plan is deliverable are to ensure that the Climate Team has capacity to support engagement with the community and stakeholders, to meet the need for the council to expand its climate activity into projects that help the county of Wiltshire to become carbon neutral, and to adapt the impacts of climate change. It is also important to maintain capacity within the teams responsible for transport, planning, business and farm engagement, as well as FM (Energy Team) and Fleet, to continue the existing progress on property and fleet decarbonisation, and to make sure the largest areas of emissions in the county are addressed.

## **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

49. Progress towards the council's climate objectives helps to mitigate the strategic risks of not achieving the council's objective to be carbon neutral by 2030, and increasing vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. The draft Climate Delivery Plan has prioritised action based on its impact on climate objectives, and therefore its potential to mitigate these risks. The plan aims to provide a framework whereby ongoing prioritisation and monitoring will help to demonstrate whether the council is on track, and where further action or mitigation may be necessary.
50. The plan sets out the impacts of actions, and therefore if the actions are not taken it should be clear what the impact of inaction will be, and how this will affect the risks, namely how this will affect the council's pathway to carbon neutral, or towards adapting to the impacts of climate change.

## **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

51. By implementing action towards being a carbon neutral council, and a carbon neutral county, the council risks using measures that may be accessible to some members of the community and not others, or measures may be beneficial to some residents and have a negative impact on others. This is mitigated by carefully considering the range of impacts of measures, carrying out due diligence, using data and evidence to help inform decisions, and discussing with cabinet members and scrutiny members as part of developing projects. Consultation is also undertaken where appropriate. For example, the council's Climate and Environment Forum may be used as a sounding board before rolling out projects or communications to the wider community.

## Financial Implications

52. The proposed Climate Delivery Plan priorities for 2025 are to be funded within the budget for the 2024/25 financial year as already agreed, and within the proposed budget for 2025/26.
53. The plan also includes activity that does not yet have funding allocated, or requires further funding in order for the activity to continue. The plan sets out clearly where resources are already allocated, and highlights areas where activity needs to be supported through additional funding.
54. For future delivery, funding will be sought, or approval of allocation of funds from future budgets will be proposed, according to the relevant service area leading on projects and activity.
55. There will be further cost and resources required in order to achieve the council's climate commitments. Where there are upfront costs, there are often savings over the longer term e.g. from running costs, or efficiencies. The Pathways [reports](#) by Anthesis consultants published in May 2022 set out anticipated costs and benefits to the council and to the Wiltshire economy of delivering carbon neutrality. This estimated indicative costs for the council to be carbon neutral in its direct emissions (Scope 1 & 2) was approximately £29.11 million. The capital costs relating to building decarbonisation measures is estimated to payback over a period of 5-12 years (depending on the measure) due to lower operational costs.
56. If the council is able to achieve the 'stretch' pathway to carbon neutral as assessed by Anthesis, there should be approximately 250 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e residual emissions to offset. Based on 2022 carbon credit prices, this would cost the council a minimum of £9,379 in 2030 with prices rising in subsequent years. If the council is not able to achieve the 'stretch' pathway, this could result in an estimated 3,500 t CO<sub>2</sub>e at 2030, with associated carbon offsets estimated to cost an additional £123,614 per year (in 2030, and more over time)<sup>3</sup>.
57. County-wide carbon reduction measures are estimated to cost in excess of £5.3bn and revenue costings analysis indicates that over £4.5bn worth of potential savings may be realised by 2045. However, the council will only bear a small proportion of the significant investment required, as the responsibility lies with the entire county.
58. We will continue to update our evidence base and analysis, to check our progress against the pathways, and ensure that any financial implications will be updated.

## Legal Implications

59. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

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<sup>3</sup> [Wiltshire Council Carbon Emissions Baseline and Reduction Pathways](#) (Anthesis, 2022a). Page 38 explains how the council might use offsetting to achieve carbon neutrality, using carbon credits at £38 per tonne, as per 2022 prices.

## Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

60. During development of the proposed Climate Delivery Plan, the Climate Team met with the Climate Emergency Task Group on 18 October 2024 to obtain early input into the draft plan.

## Options Considered

61. The only option considered was to renew the Climate Delivery Plan, as the existing plans were concluding at the end of 2024. Different options for the time period of the plan were considered. The previous plans covered three years, and during this timeframe some of the actions became out of date, due to the fast pace of the climate agenda, as well as changing opportunities and priorities. Therefore, a one-year plan period has been chosen, to allow for the plan to be reviewed annually, and to be agile in order to respond to changing national government policy, new funding streams and to allow for our data analysis and performance monitoring to be reflected in any necessary changes to the plan.

## Conclusions

62. In conclusion, the cabinet is asked to note the draft Climate Delivery Plan and endorse it subject to any comments. This is a council-wide plan, with impacts that help the council to deliver against the resolution to seek to make the county of Wiltshire to be carbon neutral by 2030, to become a carbon neutral council by the same date and to help the county prepare for the impacts of climate change.

63. The plan is supported by governance and monitoring systems, whereby the cabinet will be notified if progress is not on track. Many of the activities have an initial cost to the council, whereby payback or savings will be made over the project lifetime. However, not all costs will be recovered by the council, which therefore represents an investment by the council in the important climate outcomes that it is committed to.

64. The plan being proposed has been co-developed with the relevant service areas, so that it is realistic, deliverable and aligns with the council's Business Plan and service delivery.

## Sarah Valdus – Director, Environment

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Wiltshire Council Climate Delivery Plan 2025

## Background Papers

[Climate Strategy](#)

[Wiltshire Council's Climate Strategy 2022-2027](#)

[Climate Strategy Delivery Plans](#)

[Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-2024](#)

[Climate Strategy Delivery Plan for Wiltshire 2022-2024](#)

Pathways report for council operational emissions:

[Anthesis, 2022a. 'Wiltshire Council Carbon Emissions Baseline and Reduction Pathways.'](#)

County-wide emissions pathways report:

[Anthesis, 2022b. 'Wiltshire Carbon Emissions Baseline and Reduction Path ways.'](#)

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## Wiltshire Climate Strategy Delivery Plan 2025

### Introduction

Wiltshire Council acknowledged a climate emergency in February 2019 and committed to becoming carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030. The council also committed to seeking to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral in the same timeframe.

The council adopted its Climate Strategy in February 2022, which sets out objectives and 'areas of focus' to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and increase resilience to climate change for the county of Wiltshire for the period 2022 - 2027.

Delivery plans were put in place in 2022 to set out the steps towards implementation of the strategy. The [Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-24](#) and the [Climate Strategy Delivery Plan 2022-24](#) have been reviewed during 2024, both in terms of progress towards carbon reduction and climate adaptation outcomes and performance against the actions that the council committed to.

This plan now sets out the focus for the council's action on climate change for 2025.

Whilst this plan sets out priorities for one year, it also includes medium and longer-term implementation steps that will be necessary and puts this into context of where we are in relation to the long term goals (pathways to carbon neutral).

### Summary of Key Areas of Opportunity in 2025

Key areas of opportunity for the coming year will be:

- To support residents in improving energy efficiency of their homes, which can also help with comfort and bills through retrofit programmes and support
- Supporting and encouraging developers to build to net zero standards, while progressing the Wiltshire Local Plan with its new policies on net zero development, embodied carbon and renewable energy
- Adopt and implement the Local Transport Plan 4 which has decarbonisation of transport at its centre
- Produce an Adaptation Plan and develop projects to contribute to ensuring the county is prepared for the impacts of climate change
- Develop an Offsetting Strategy and projects to help the council offset its residual emissions, and encourage others in Wiltshire to do the same
- Embedding climate considerations as business as usual for the council, including carbon literacy training
- Develop a Local Area Energy Plan, including supporting community-led energy projects
- Continue the council property carbon reduction programme, and implement a roadmap to scope 3 emissions reduction
- Continue to embed climate awareness and objectives into the council's business as usual delivery

We will seek to deliver tangible results through specific projects, working in collaboration with relevant partners to develop projects and bids for funding that help to deliver the following:

- Council property decarbonisation
- Support council suppliers to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change
- Land or nature-based projects that aim to achieve climate objectives such as carbon sequestration, biodiversity net gain and flood mitigation
- Retrofit projects for community buildings and homes
- Community energy projects
- Business support and grants for energy efficiency
- Community climate action and awareness
- Sustainable transport infrastructure and encourage take up of available options

The Wiltshire Climate Strategy principles mean that we will follow the greenhouse gas hierarchy, aim to achieve a just transition and maximise co-benefits of climate measures.

#### **Wiltshire Council Climate Strategy principles**

- Be inclusive – ensuring the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient future is accessible to all sectors of society, including our rural communities and businesses.
- Be evidence led – using the best available science and analysis, while working to increase knowledge in areas where there are gaps. Our evidence base has been informed by feedback from a wide range of stakeholders.
- Follow the Greenhouse Gas Hierarchy, making sure that low carbon technologies and offsetting do not take the focus away from reducing energy use in the first place.
- Deliver co-benefits – where action to tackle carbon emissions also yields health or financial benefits, such as air quality and physical exercise benefits from walking and cycling.
- Further embedding climate considerations in decision-making.

## **Measuring success**

Progress will be tracked against Key Performance Indicators, reporting annually to Cabinet and Full Council and published on the council's website. In addition, the governance and internal monitoring processes that support implementation of the Climate Delivery Plan have been updated and strengthened to enable the council and all services involved in delivery, to monitor progress and adjust actions as necessary, using quarterly reviews.

The county-wide emissions reduction will ultimately be shown by the Key Performance Indicators for 'Wiltshire-wide emissions' which draws on national government data (DESNZ).

## Overview of the plan

The following sections set out what the council will focus on in 2025 and how this contributes to our long-term goals. The plan is structured according to the Delivery Themes of the Climate Strategy<sup>1</sup>

For each deliverable, carbon impacts are shown where this is measurable and attributable, and indicators are specified to track how each deliverable will contribute to achieving the outcomes of carbon reduction and climate resilience. Impacts and co-benefits are shown whereby co-benefits align with Business Plan and other strategic objectives.

## Summary of ‘areas of focus’ and ‘deliverables’

Area of Focus	Deliverable
<b>Carbon Neutral Council.</b>	
C1. Council Building Decarbonisation	Develop and implement a retrofit and renewable Energy Programme on the council's operational estate.
C2. Fleet Decarbonisation	Achieve a carbon-neutral council fleet by 2030.
C3. Staff Travel	Encourage staff to travel to work by sustainable travel options
C4. Supply Chain and Scope 3	Achieve carbon reduction and resilience in supply chain.
C5. Household Waste Management	Develop the council's waste management service to help achieve climate objectives
<b>Transport</b>	
T1. Electric Vehicles	Increase availability of Electric Vehicle (EV) chargepoints to promote the transition from fossil fuel to EVs.
T2. Active Travel	Increase options for active travel across Wiltshire.
T3. Sustainable Travel	Improve sustainable transport in Wiltshire.
<b>Homes and the Built Environment</b>	
B1. Domestic Retrofit	Develop and implement a comprehensive Retrofit Strategy that is available to all housing centred on enabling more homeowners to take up energy assessments and home energy improvements.
B2. Commercial and community Retrofit	Develop programmes to support decarbonisation of commercial and community buildings
B3. New Builds and Land Use	Promote low-carbon, climate-resilient development and sustainable land use planning

<sup>1</sup> The original ‘Resources and Waste’ theme has been merged with ‘Green and Circular Economy’ and into ‘Carbon Neutral Council’ for the activities that relate to council's operational emissions.

<b>Natural Environment, Food and Farming</b>	
N1. Nature recovery, carbon and resilience	Implement a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy to protect biodiversity, absorb carbon and increase resilience.
N2. Tree Planting	Increase tree planting in Wiltshire, to sequester carbon and enhance outcomes for biodiversity/nature recovery and resilience.
N3. Sustainable agriculture	Work with farmers and landowners on nature recovery, carbon reduction and climate resilience projects
<b>Energy</b>	
E1. Community-led Energy	Support the development of community energy groups and empower communities to develop energy projects.
E2. Local Area Energy Plan	Develop and begin implementation of LAEP framework, to identify strategic priorities for grid upgrades, and create an energy system to support the net zero transition.
<b>Green and circular economy</b>	
G1. Upskilling and Green Skills	Increase green skills and training opportunities to support delivery of climate objectives.
G2. Commercial decarbonisation and Circular Economy	Work with Wiltshire organisations, contractors, and businesses to reduce carbon emissions from their operations, including commercial waste and supporting circular economy initiatives.
<b>Climate Adaptation</b>	
A1. Climate Adaptation	Implement a Climate Adaptation Plan that enhances the resilience of Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire communities to climate change.
<b>Cross-cutting, enabling and empowering</b>	
X1. Staff Engagement and Training	Develop and roll-out Carbon Literacy Training across council staff, and support staff to integrate climate objectives into business-as-usual.
X2. Decision-Making and processes	Embed Climate Objectives into Council Processes and Decision-Making
X3. Green finance and carbon offsetting	Develop green finance, carbon accounting and offsetting, to enable projects that sequester carbon, avoid carbon emissions, and adapt to climate change.
X4. Engagement with stakeholders	Provide information and actively engage with stakeholders to maximise the impact on climate change in Wiltshire
X5. Community Climate Action	Empower Wiltshire communities to contribute towards climate action

# 1. Carbon Neutral Council

The Climate Strategy Objectives for a ‘Carbon Neutral Council’ are:

- To become carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030
- Provide leadership locally and nationally, sharing learning

Wiltshire Council, has committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030, focusing on cutting direct emissions from our own operations (Scope 1 and 2). We are also tackling Scope 3 emissions from our outsourced services and purchases.<sup>2</sup>

The [Carbon Neutral Council Plan 2022-24](#) focussed on reducing emissions from council buildings and fleet, embedding climate considerations into council processes, understanding and reducing Scope emissions by working with council suppliers, and reviewing the councils Climate Adaptation Plan. The ‘Pathways report’<sup>3</sup> informs interim targets and actions.

Due to the actions undertaken, council emissions continue to decrease, and the same ‘areas of focus’ remain important for 2025.

For the full breakdown of council emissions, see our annual [Greenhouse Gas Report 2024](#).

The ongoing activities and new priorities for 2025 are set out in the following tables.

C 1	Area of Focus:	Council building decarbonisation
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Develop and implement a Retrofit and Renewable Energy Programme on the council's operational estate	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Council carbon reduction	
<b>Governance:</b>	Responsible directorate / service: Director of Assets; Head of Strategic Asset & FM. Service lead: Energy Team; HEEP programme. Stakeholders: Climate Team; All services using buildings, particularly leisure managers.	
<b>Overview:</b>		
<u>Emissions directly controlled by the council (Scope 1 and 2)</u>		
The largest source of the council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions is buildings. The council has identified 2 main pathways to reducing carbon emissions from its buildings. These are:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reduce direct Scope 1 emissions from burning fossil fuels such as gas and oil at our sites by switching heating fuels to electricity or biomass.</li> <li>• To eliminate all scope 2 carbon emissions from electricity use by generating on site renewable energy and by purchasing the remaining demand through a green electricity tariff.</li> </ul>		
These are underpinned by an overarching drive to increase efficiency and reduce overall energy demand.		

<sup>2</sup> The Carbon Neutral Council Plan, page 4-5, explains the council's operational emissions and scopes

<sup>3</sup> [Wiltshire Council Carbon Emissions Baseline and Reduction Pathways](#), Anthesis 2022a

A pipeline of projects has been developed within the Property Carbon Reduction Programme. The programme covers projects that are reducing both scope 1 (emissions from combustion) and scope 2 emissions (emissions from electricity).

The programme was allocated £10.4m budget in 2019, and the council has also allocated an additional £3.5m to a Carpark Solar Canopy budget.

The programme covers:

- energy efficiency projects to reduce energy use and costs,
- renewable energy projects to improve resilience and reduce costs,
- carbon reduction projects to reduce building related carbon emissions by replacing heating from fossil fuel sources with low carbon fuel sources such as electricity and biomass
- financial contribution to improved energy efficiency or low carbon measures in newly built assets.

The council will fully investigate mechanisms for achieving carbon neutrality on electricity use, in addition to the green tariff, such as entering into a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) directly with a renewable energy generator. That may be a Community Energy generator or via a commercial scheme.

The council will also use the Environmental Mitigation Framework, to review council sites for potential renewables projects and carbon offsetting through nature-based solutions.

Sections B3, C4, and X2 also include measure that contribute to the carbon neutral council, and overseen by assets directorate.

### Scope 3

The Assets Directorate will explore how it can monitor, measure and reduce scope 3 emissions from property in the future.

The council has a stock of 5,300 council houses, the emissions from which are scope 3. The Housing Energy Efficiency Programme (HEEP) designed to improve the energy performance of the housing stock, reducing energy consumption, carbon emissions, and the cost of household bills, with the aim of all council homes to be EPC B. The programme will continue to be delivered over the next 8 years (overall reduction of between 15,000 and 20,000 tonnes of carbon emissions).

The Council House Build Programme (CHBP) will continue to deliver new builds to net zero carbon in operation, on council-led schemes.

Council house acquisitions aim for new builds to have a minimum EPC rating of C, and for non new builds the aim is for minimum EPC E and be capable of improving.

All commercial lettings are now subject to Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) regulations and works are undertaken prior to letting.

### **Property decarbonisation - What's next for 2025**

- Our asset management strategy will clarify the future roles and functions of our assets, which will enhance planning for net zero and resilient properties.
- Continue to use energy usage data for better carbon reduction.
- Rolling out further upgrades at high-energy sites.
- Exploring smaller scale opportunities to generate electricity, that can be fed back to the grid rather than used within buildings, providing a carbon offset opportunity.
- Decarbonising heating at five additional sites.
- Developing an offsetting strategy for council emissions.
- Installing a second solar car park canopy at Springfield Community Campus

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Leisure, Culture and Communities' teams will continue to focus on understanding energy management and reducing buildings usage.</li> </ul> <p><b>Longer term activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider opportunities for council to develop its own large scale renewable energy development, which could provide a supplement or alternative to the green tariff.</li> <li>• Review energy procurement and consider purchasing from additional renewable energy sources</li> <li>• Install energy efficiency measures at all 5,300 of our properties, where feasible, over the next eight to nine years through the HEEP programme.</li> <li>• Explore how to measure and monitor scope 3 emissions from council buildings</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Decarbonisation programme is critical to carbon reduction of the council operational estate. Reducing carbon emissions from approx. 4,500 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2020, to 250 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2030. Impacts of green tariff = approx. 3670 tonnes in 2023/24. Council Home Energy Efficiency Programme has an impact on tenant cost of living as well as reducing carbon emissions.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Capacity building and efficiency; Leading by example
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
C1 Wiltshire Council's Carbon Footprint	Carbon neutral by 2030 (Emissions reduced to 250t CO <sub>2</sub> e by 2030, and this is offset). Interim annual targets, as per Anthesis pathway.
C5 Renewable energy generated on the council estate (kWh)	To generate a minimum of 20% of the total operational estate electricity use from renewable site-based assets.
C7 Tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e saved through energy efficiency and renewable energy projects on the council estate (reduction compared to annual baseline emissions)	3,446 t CO <sub>2</sub> e by 2030 (Anthesis) To be reviewed in October 2025
C9a Energy consumption (kWh) of gas used in corporate buildings	292,560 kWh by 2030 (Anthesis) To be reviewed in October 2025
C9b Energy consumption (kWh) of electricity used in corporate buildings	24,524,018 kWh by 2030 (Anthesis) To be reviewed in October 2025
B2 number of council homes retrofitted for energy efficiency/renewable energy(cumulative total) – <b>Review:</b> change to 'number of measures implemented'. <b>Review in 2026:</b> consider adding a KPI to show carbon savings from the HEEP programme, using data from carbon credits sold to HACT.	Retrofit all council homes to EPC B by 2030/31

C 2	Area of Focus:	Council fleet decarbonisation
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Achieve a carbon-neutral council fleet by 2030	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Council carbon reduction	
<b>Governance:</b>	Responsible directorate / service: Director of Highways and Transport; Head of Highway Operations. Service lead: Fleet Services Stakeholders: Climate Team; Passenger Transport; Housing Team; Waste services; Any services using Wiltshire Council fleet. FM (for electric) Fleet Governance Board	
<p><b>Overview:</b></p> <p>The <a href="#">Fleet Strategy 2023-2030</a> sets out how the council will use, run, manage and optimise fleet that is owned or leased by the council. The approach is for a transition to electric lighter vehicles – cars and vans and e-bikes – and also for larger vehicles where possible, with alternative fuels such as HVO where required. Measures also include using telematics data to inform driver training, and vehicle and EV charging needs. The council’s baseline fleet transition to carbon neutral travel has capital and revenue funding allocated through to 2029, with cost savings / avoidance taken into account.</p> <p>The existing Fleet Strategy actions and baseline includes the council’s core fleet, however there are several additional areas (Passenger Transport and Housing) that were not part of the original baseline and need to be fully incorporated into the Fleet Strategy to achieve the corporate ambition. This will form an integral part of the work in 2025, with Passenger Transport Unit and the Housing Service already having identified a capital requirement and revenue for their fleet provision and will produce a carbon reduction plan in due course. Housing Service has commenced the transition to electric vehicles, with further action planned.</p> <p>The Fleet Strategy covers <b>Scope 1 and 2 emissions</b> of vehicles owned or controlled directly by the council, whereby Scope 1 emissions are caused by direct combustion of fossil fuels or alternative fuels such as HVO, and Scope 2 emissions from electricity used by vehicles.</p> <p>The Fleet Strategy principles are to be incorporated into future vehicle procurement or contract arrangements for additional vehicles that are accounted for under Scope 3 (i.e. refuse collection vehicles see Household Waste Management).</p> <p>Electric vehicle chargepoints are being installed to support the transition to electric vehicles. A watching brief on the best technology to transition the larger / heavier vehicles with Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) being the interim fuel that many councils and companies are using.</p> <p>The new Depot Plan aims to house vehicles in the area of work demand and support the transition to electric and other alternative fuels.</p> <p><b><u>Fleet decarbonisation – What’s next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An additional 70 charge points will be installed across council sites, to enable further decarbonisation of fleet.</li> <li>• 50 further vehicles will follow once the charge points have been installed.</li> <li>• The first depot renewal project will look at how EV charging at depots can support fleet decarbonisation.</li> <li>• The Passenger Transport Unit Service is trialling an electric Demand Response Transport in the Warminster Mere area</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Longer term activity</u></b></p>		



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depot renewal programme supports transition to low carbon fleet by incorporating EV chargepoints and futureproofed by designing in flexibility for other alternative fuels</li> <li>• All services purchasing and using council fleet will develop a carbon reduction plan and integrate this into vehicle replacement plans.</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Fleet decarbonisation is a key part of emissions reduction in relation to council operations, though not as high as the impact of council buildings. Direct carbon savings can be achieved through replacement and efficient use of the council's core fleet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reducing fleet emissions from baseline of 837 t CO<sub>2</sub>e to 703 t CO<sub>2</sub>e (Year 1-2)</li> <li>- Further reduce to 613 t CO<sub>2</sub>e (Year 3-4)</li> <li>- Reach 533 t CO<sub>2</sub>e (Year 5-6)</li> <li>- Achieve 256 t CO<sub>2</sub>e (Final phase before 2030)</li> </ul> <p>Additional fleet within Passenger Transport Unit (PTU), Housing and Waste can be decarbonised in accordance with the Fleet Strategy principles. Baseline emissions from Housing and PTU services are 95.58 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Air quality; Health and Wellbeing; Fair and inclusive; Vibrant, well-connected communities
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
C4 Number of EV charge points at council sites (workplace chargepoints)	20% annual increase year on year. Interim targets as per Fleet Strategy: 90 chargepoints for 2025/26
<b>Review:</b> New KPI 'Electric vehicles as % of all fleet'	Targets from Fleet Strategy

<b>C 3</b>	<b>Area of Focus:</b>	<b>Staff Travel</b>
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Encourage staff to travel to work by sustainable travel options	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Reducing council's scope 3 emissions	
<b>Governance:</b>	Responsible directorate / service: HR &OD; Highways and Transport; Service lead: HR / staff engagement. Stakeholders: Climate Team; HR &OD; Parking services.	
<b>Overview:</b>		
<p>With over 5,000 staff at Wiltshire Council, commuting patterns have a role to play in reducing emissions. Refresh of Staff Travel Plans and parking strategy will be a focus going forward, with the first to be produced in conjunction with the developing plans for the new Trowbridge Leisure Centre adjacent to County Hall.</p> <p>Staff surveys will help to understand current patterns and needs, staff travel planning will be complemented by promotion of the schemes offering bicycles and ultra-low emissions vehicles through a salary sacrifice mechanism.</p> <p><b>Staff Travel – What's next for 2025</b></p>		

- Continue to promote schemes to staff, promoting sustainable travel, and allowing purchase of bikes and ultra-low emissions vehicles through salary sacrifice.
- Work with staff on a new travel and parking strategy for County Hall, in tandem with development of the new Trowbridge leisure centre

**Longer term activity**

- Develop and update travel plans for all Wiltshire Council office hubs

<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Low</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This deliverable aims to work with staff to encourage them to make switches to more sustainable commuting, where possible. It is challenging given the needs of many staff to drive to work, dependent on their mobility, location and individual circumstances, caring duties etc. Therefore, the potential to shift to other modes is unknown at present. Through this work there is the added impact of having conversations about climate impacts and the knock-on effects of staff disseminating this information further.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Air quality; Health and Wellbeing; Fair and inclusive; Vibrant, well-connected communities
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
No KPI to date. Suggestions TBC:	
<b>Review</b> – new KPI: Proportion of staff using private car as a single occupant	Reduced % using private car as a single occupant.
<b>Review</b> – new KPI: Number of Cycle Scheme uptakes	Increase over baseline
<b>Review</b> – new KPI: Number of Tusker Ultra-low emissions vehicle scheme uptakes	Increase over baseline

<b>C 4</b>	<b>Area of Focus:</b>	<b>Supply Chain and Scope 3 emissions</b>
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Achieve Carbon Reduction and Resilience in Supply Chain	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Reducing council's scope 3 emissions	
<b>Governance:</b>	<p>Responsible directorates: Director of Finance and Procurement (for all procurement, pension fund; Director of Commissioning (for social care contracts only).</p> <p>Responsible services: Head of Procurement; Head of Adults Commissioning; Head of Families and Children Commissioning</p> <p>Service leads: Strategic Procurement / Social Value; Adults Commissioning, Families and Children Commissioning. Climate team to help coordinate.</p> <p>Stakeholders: Adult Social Care; Waste Services; Highways; Capital Projects; All services – commissioning and contract managers; Engagement and Partnerships</p>	
<b>Overview:</b>		

The council's purchased items and outsourced contracts are classed as Scope 3 emissions and outside our direct control. While existing contracts often limit the council's ability to mandate GHG reductions, it can help to engage suppliers to assess their climate actions.

Priority focus will be on high-emission contracts, such as highways and waste, as well as the cumulative emissions from adult social care contracts. The council is also collaborating with smaller organisations, like care providers, to identify opportunities for carbon reduction and support their decarbonisation efforts. We use data to inform our approaches, and will report using the LGA tool and our own annual Greenhouse Gas report.

### **Supply chain and Scope 3 – What's next for 2025**

- Use estimated Scope 3 data, and work on obtaining further actual data to inform target areas for carbon reduction
- Continue to engage with the top 10 council suppliers (in terms of their greenhouse gas emissions)
- Working with care providers through the Care Provider Forum to identify opportunities and support on emissions reduction and climate resilience
- Continue to incorporate climate objectives into all tenders and contracts, and further develop the council's procurement policy, process and guidance, building on the existing Socially Responsible Procurement Policy.

### **Longer term activity**

- Develop a system for greenhouse gas emissions data collection from all suppliers
- Showcase and share best practice of council suppliers
- Continue to build up reporting on Scope 3 emissions in the annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report (e.g. schools, Wiltshire Pension Fund, contracts)

<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Level:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> While there is currently insufficient quantitative data to fully assess the carbon impact of this deliverable, a previous <b>estimate</b> by Anthesis (Anthesis, 2022a) indicates that Scope 3 emissions from Procured Goods and Services account for approximately 269,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. Although this specific deliverable may not result in a complete reduction of these emissions, it has significant potential to make a meaningful contribution to reducing the carbon footprint in a high-impact area of council operations. By engaging with suppliers, and using specific requirements within contracts, there is a high potential impact on carbon emissions.</p> <p>Scope 3 emissions work will need to include further engagement with suppliers and collection of data in order to accurately assess the specific carbon impact of this specific deliverable.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Leading by example; Efficiency and capacity building
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
G1 Emissions from Wiltshire Council's key suppliers in CO <sub>2</sub> e <b>Review:</b> consider adding a KPI to reflect the number of suppliers engaged per annum.	Target not yet defined.
C2 Carbon Footprint of pension funds investments. (CO <sub>2</sub> e /\$m invested) <b>Review:</b> to align with Wiltshire Pension Fund annual reporting	Decreasing. Carbon neutral by 2050

C 5	Area of Focus:	Household waste management
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Develop the council's waste management service to help achieve climate objectives	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Reducing council's scope 3 emissions	
<b>Governance:</b>	Responsible directorate / service: Director of Environment; Head of Waste Services Service lead: Waste Manager Technical Stakeholders: Climate Team; Highway operations (Fleet Services & Depot Strategy); Comms	
<p><b>Overview:</b></p> <p>The objectives of the Climate Strategy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work towards zero avoidable waste in Wiltshire and decarbonising the waste management process</li> <li>• Manage waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy, increase the amount and quality of waste recycled and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill</li> </ul> <p>The council's waste management service handles household waste collection and management through external contracts. While commercial waste falls under the 'Green and Circular Economy' theme, there are opportunities for cross-sector knowledge sharing to explore circular waste streams. Efforts are focused on understanding actual emissions, embedding carbon monitoring and reduction targets in future contracts, and aligning with the Waste Strategy and Environment Act requirements. Carbon analysis has targeted high-emission areas, such as reducing landfill waste from Household Recycling Centres (HRCs). The service continues to prioritise waste reduction, recycling, re-use, and landfill diversion, with future plans addressing the 2027 changes to waste collection services and the carbon impact of residual waste processing.</p> <p>The council is also reviewing its waste collection fleet, starting with trials of electric waste vehicles in Wiltshire and exploring alternative fuels like HVO.</p> <p>The council has a dedicated Waste Engagement Officer working with residents on ways to reduce waste and increase re-use and recycling.</p> <p>The waste management services have carried out a Climate Change Risk Assessment to ensure the service is resilient to the impacts of climate change, and resulting actions are included in the emerging Climate Adaptation Plan.</p> <p><b><u>Household waste management - What's next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued focus on promoting reuse of materials that would otherwise be disposed of as waste, with the proposed launch of a new reuse shop reselling items donated for reuse at Wiltshire household recycling centres in Devizes in Q4 24/25.</li> <li>• Increase activity to prepare for the delivery of new dry recycling collection and food waste collection services from 2027, following Cabinet decision on 19 Nov 2024.</li> <li>• Progress the trial of a new electric Refuse Collection Vehicle on operational collection rounds throughout 25/26 and consider use of alternative fuels on a trial basis.</li> <li>• Establish baseline and monitoring for greenhouse gas KPIs for household waste management (see below)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Longer term activity</u></b></p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to use greenhouse gas emissions data within decisions on household waste management service options and strategy, and within the tender and contract management process for waste contracts</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Carbon emissions from waste contracts is estimated to be the council's second highest greenhouse gas emitting contract, based on contract spend in 2020. There are also savings to be made on the gross emissions by continuing to follow the waste hierarchy.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Air quality; Health and wellbeing; Renewable energy (energy from waste, landfill, anaerobic digestion)
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
R1. Amount of household waste (kg waste produced per household)	Below 880kg
<p><b>Review:</b> - delete R2a, R2b, and R2c – these are already included in the corporate scorecard, and other KPIs may provide specific focus on the carbon emissions impacts of the waste service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>R2a. Proportion of household waste managed, by destination: Recycled or composted (%) ('recycling rate')</li> <li>R2b. Proportion of household waste managed by: Landfill diversion (%)</li> <li>R2c. Proportion of household waste managed by: Landfill (%)</li> </ul>	
R3. Impact of waste management services on GHG emissions (carbon and methane emissions from waste management services, including fleet in t CO <sub>2</sub> e)	Currently establishing baseline and monitoring.
<p><b>Review:</b> consider additional KPIs to help monitor the actual carbon emissions from household waste management, as well as the carbon savings due to specific practices such as recycling, landfill diversion</p>	

## 2. Transport delivery theme

The Climate Strategy objectives for transport are:

- To achieve a transport system in Wiltshire that has zero carbon emissions, acknowledging the different solutions for our towns and city versus rural villages
- Creating the infrastructure for increased walking, cycling, shared and public transport and use of alternative fuels, including electric vehicle charging points
- Achieving high-quality public transport and transport hubs that offer a pleasant and convenient way to get around, and seamless combined journeys
- Locating and designing new developments to reduce the need to travel

Surface transport is the largest proportion of greenhouse gas emissions in Wiltshire (38% of territorial emissions, DESNZ, 2024). The emissions decreased slightly between 2021 and 2022, but the trajectory is nowhere near close to the pathway that is needed to reach carbon neutral by 2030 or even 2050, and this follows the trend seen in other local authority areas and nationally.

Wiltshire Council's fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4) sets the holistic vision and strategy for transport in the county, and is on track to be adopted by Full Council in 2025, subject to consultation and any necessary changes. Whilst it is acknowledged by the national [Transport Decarbonisation Plan](#) that decarbonising vehicles will not be enough to achieve net zero transport, it is accepted that rural areas may need different approaches than urban. Wiltshire Council is mindful that being a rural county, there will be a significant amount of private vehicle travel that is necessary for many residents and businesses. Initiatives such as demand responsive transport and car clubs will be expanded, alongside integrated mobility hubs, and these concepts are supported by the national guidance for rural areas '[Future of Transport: supporting rural transport innovation](#)'.

The approach will be to support the uptake of electric vehicles, by increasing electric charging infrastructure, and providing sustainable travel options and encouraging take up. In scenarios where people are able to travel by cycling, walking and wheeling, for shorter journeys we will continue to increase the provision of safe routes and publish Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans. Demand for car clubs will also be explored.

### Challenges

- The draft Wiltshire Fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4) identifies that in order to close the emissions gap of the DfT transport decarbonisation pathway (to 2050) an approximate 35% reduction from current emissions levels would be required. In 2035 this would equate to a 70% reduction from the current (2023) levels. Whilst the draft LTP4 includes measures to support the decarbonisation of transport and contribute to closing this emissions gap, these measures are assessed to achieve approximately one third of the carbon reduction needed. This aligns with the notion that local authorities are thought to be able to influence approximately one third of area-wide emissions<sup>4</sup>. LTP4 measures will require support of residents, businesses and local organisations to ensure success.
- Beyond the influence of the Local Transport Plan, there remains a substantial emissions reduction to be made. National and regional policy and changes are required, where the council and LTP4 have limited influence, such as freight and other journeys through the county. Therefore, individuals and organisations located and operating within Wiltshire can help to achieve the carbon reduction required, on top of what will be carried out under the context of the LTP4.
- Wiltshire is above national average for EV adoption, but below where we need to be on pathways to net zero. The [Zero Emissions Vehicles \(ZEV\)](#) mandate is an important part of closing the emissions gap.
- Travel which is not directly included within the LTP4 may be influenced by the council, e.g. The council's suppliers that have high mileage are an area we will explore, e.g. care providers' vehicle use.

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<sup>4</sup> Climate Change Commission, 2020. P16 <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget/>

The ongoing activities, and priorities for 2025 are set out in the following tables.

T 1	Area of Focus: <b>Electric Vehicles</b>
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Increase availability of electric vehicle (EV) chargepoints to promote the transition from fossil fuel to EVs.
<b>Outcome:</b>	County carbon reduction
<b>Governance:</b>	Responsible directorate / service: Director Highways and Transport; Head of Major Highways Projects. Planning Service Service lead: EVI manager and team Stakeholders: Climate Team; Highway Operations; Highways Development Management.
<p><b>Overview:</b></p> <p>The council has established a team of officers, funded through the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) capability funds, to develop an updated EV strategy focused on delivering charging networks and facilities in areas with limited or no off-street parking. This initiative aims to expand EV charging infrastructure to encourage EV adoption, particularly in locations where home chargers cannot be installed.</p> <p>The strategic direction is informed by the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) EVI sub-strategy.</p> <p>The planning system will support and encourage developers to ensure new and refurbished developments provide residents accessible EV charging facilities, enabled by the upcoming Air Quality SPD which increases minimum requirements beyond those in Building Regs AD-S.</p> <p><b><u>Electric Vehicles – What’s next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a Wiltshire Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy for 2025-28, which will be adopted as part of the LTP4.</li> <li>• The Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) project will be the focus of activity – aiming to significantly increase the number of public EV chargepoints across the county. To include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Community engagement with Wiltshire parish/town/city councils and residents, to ensure public participation in the location of new council led EV charger builds.</li> <li>○ Engagement with electricity distribution network operator to identify and overcome barriers to chargepoint infrastructure rollout</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b><u>Longer term activity</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roll out the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy, once this is adopted as part of the LTP4</li> <li>• Work with business fleet operators (e.g. taxis, buses, commercial logistics) to identify needs of their fleet, and potential to collaborate in EV infrastructure provision</li> <li>• Explore future plans for the Wiltshire Council owned and operated public charging network</li> <li>• Conduct trial deployment of cable channel products to enable resident on-street home charging</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> NEVIS modelling through LEVI project details potential emissions reductions based on predicted EV adoption, inc CO<sub>2e</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub> &amp; PM<sub>2.5</sub>.</p>



	<p>The carbon impact of this deliverable is projected to be high, based on an assessment of the potential savings from transitioning 88% of cars within the county by 2030 in line with Anthesis forecasts (Anthesis, 2022b). The impact has been calculated using projected 2030 carbon factors. Whilst the council's activity to install chargepoints is not the only factor in increasing uptake of electric vehicles, it is impactful and can give confidence to those considering switching to an electric vehicle.</p> <p><b>Annual Carbon Savings (Based on 2030 Carbon Factors):</b> 552 ktCO<sub>2e</sub>.</p>	
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Air Quality; Fair and inclusive (social equity of charging provision); Vibrant, well-connected communities; Energy supply resilience (less reliant on imported fossil fuels)	
<b>KPI:</b>		<b>Target:</b>
X2 Total transport GHG emissions for Wiltshire in kt CO <sub>2e</sub> (territorial). Figures now include CH <sub>4</sub> , NO <sub>2</sub> & CO <sub>2</sub>		1054kt for 2021; 933 kt for 2022 (based on transport emissions as % of total) (DESNZ, 2022, is most recent data)
T3 Total number of EV charge point locations in Wiltshire (all publicly available charging points including those owned by the council). Measured quarterly by DfT as 'number of devices per 100,000 population', see <a href="#">Quarterly DfT reporting</a>		Increasing in line with SW average (75 per 100,000 population in April 2024)
T2 Air quality: number of annual exceedances of NO <sub>2</sub> (nitrogen dioxide) over 40 µg/m <sup>3</sup> target in Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)		No exceedances (NO <sub>2</sub> remains below 40 µg/m <sup>3</sup> ) and aiming to revoke AQMAs
<b>Review:</b> New KPI: Electric vehicles as % of total county vehicle parc. (Parc is European term for all vehicles registered in a geographical area)		3.8% @ Autumn'24 33% by 2030 (NEVIS)
<b>Review:</b> Consider adding a new KPI to help track EVI utilisation rate for Wiltshire Council public devices (Fast and Rapid)		

<b>T 2</b>	<b>Area of Focus:</b>	<b>Active Travel</b>
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Increase options for active travel across Wiltshire	
<b>Outcome:</b>	County carbon reduction	
<b>Governance:</b>	<p>Responsible directorate / service: Director Highways and Transport; Head of Major Highways Projects. Planning Service</p> <p>Service lead: Principal Planning and Development Manager</p> <p>Stakeholders: Climate Team; Highway Operations. Highways Development Management</p> <p>Active Travel Steering / Delivery Group</p>	
<b>Overview:</b>		
<p>The council will implement Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) to develop active travel infrastructure, ensuring that walking and cycling are safe, connected and convenient options for residents in Wiltshire's larger settlements. This work will be supported by sourcing external funding streams to deliver the necessary infrastructure.</p> <p>Through the planning system, the council will work with developers to secure sustainable transport outcomes in new developments, supporting new homes and businesses while also</p>		



retrofitting the existing built environment with infrastructure for walking, cycling, and public transport. Active Travel England are a statutory consultee in the system.

In 2025 we will continue to focus on delivering infrastructure using the funding available to the council from Active Travel England and other sources, such as S106 development funding.

**Active Travel – What’s next for 2025**

- Continue developing LCWIPs for all of our towns and produce a pipeline of active travel schemes that will be delivered when funding becomes available.
- A grant of approximately £300,000 has been awarded to the council by Active Travel England for cycling and walking infrastructure.
- Bikeability, WalkSafe and Scootability will continue, with a £229,573 grant for 2024/25.
- Continued focus on [air quality](#): Carbon reduction and air quality objectives go hand in hand and better air quality makes active travel more inviting.
- Continue to offer support to schools in developing their School Travel Plans
- Explore partnerships with others to achieve messaging and activity to encourage shifts to more sustainable modes of travel.

**Longer term activity**

- Embed active travel in the design of new developments and town centre regeneration projects by enhancing the public realm and improving pedestrian and cycling access infrastructure as well as advocating for travel plans that should incentivise alternatives to the private car.

<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This deliverable has the potential for a medium impact due to its ability to drive modal shifts away from vehicle use, reducing transport-related emissions (a major contributor to Wiltshire’s overall carbon footprint – 33.2% (Anthesis, 2022b)). Under a High Ambition Pathway, active travel mileage share in Wiltshire would need to increase by over 200% compared to 2020 levels, from 3% in 2020 to 9% in 2045 (Anthesis, 2022b). As active travel is considered zero carbon, any increases in this mode will directly correlate with reducing emissions from cars.</p> <p>Due to the way funding is administered by Active Travel England, additional funding may need to be sought to carry out some of the behaviour change measures necessary to achieve this impact.</p> <p>It is also important to recognise that the urban/rural geography of Wiltshire, including narrow roads in market towns and areas of heritage can cause challenges in designing active travel plans. Furthermore mode shift is not always feasible due to longer distances travelled within rural areas.</p>	
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Air quality; Health and Wellbeing; Thriving economy and right skills; Awareness and Empowering; Fair and inclusive; Green and blue infrastructure; Vibrant, well-connected communities	
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>	
X2 Total transport GHG emissions for Wiltshire in kt CO <sub>2</sub> e (territorial). Figures now include CH <sub>4</sub> , NO <sub>2</sub> & CO <sub>2</sub>	1054kt for 2021; 933 kt for 2022 (based on transport emissions as % of total) (DESNZ, 2022, is most recent data)	

T2 Air quality: number of annual exceedance of NO <sub>2</sub> (nitrogen dioxide) over 40 µg/m <sup>3</sup> target in Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)	No exceedances (NO <sub>2</sub> remains below 40 µg/m <sup>3</sup> ) and aiming to revoke AQMAs
T4 Cycle Training: Number of children and adults trained through Bikeability	TBD
T5 Local Cycling and Walking Plans (LCWIPs) produced (cumulative total)	16 produced by 2025
<b>Review:</b> consider adding KPIs to help monitor the Number of active travel projects implemented; funding secured for active travel projects; increased usage of active travel modes.	

T 3	Area of Focus:	Sustainable Travel
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Improve sustainable transport in Wiltshire.	
<b>Outcome:</b>	County carbon reduction	
<b>Governance:</b>	<p>Responsible directorate / service: Director Highways and Transport; ALL Highways and Transport services.</p> <p>Service lead/teams: Passenger Transport &amp; National Bus Strategy managers. Highways and Transport. Highways Asset Management.</p> <p>Stakeholders: Climate Team; Highway Operations; Highways Major Projects. Active Travel Steering / Delivery Group; LTP4 Board</p>	
<b>Overview:</b>		
<p>Sustainable transport in Wiltshire includes public transport and active travel, but it's important to recognise that many are currently, and will remain, reliant on private vehicle use to live in our rural context. Wiltshire Council can work with others to try to ensure that public transport provision is reasonably priced, convenient, and reliable so far as possible. We can work with bus operators to support the transition to EVs in public transport, such as the ZEBRA project with Salisbury Reds. The council will work with rail companies to improve current and new train stations in the county, such as that proposed for Corsham and Devizes.</p> <p>Through the planning system, the council will work with developers to secure sustainable transport outcomes in new developments that support the new homes and businesses but will also help to retrofit the existing built environment with walking, cycling and public transport infrastructure too.</p> <p>Carbon assessment of all transport projects, in partnership with council contractors and suppliers is an area to be further explored. The council will aim for consistency of data and methodologies for reporting, moving from estimates based on conversion factors, to scheme- and material-specific assessment where possible.</p>		
<b><u>Sustainable Travel – What's next for 2025:</u></b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalisation and adoption of the fourth Wiltshire Local Transport Plan (LTP4)</li> <li>• Continue to work in partnership to deliver transport and climate objectives, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Enhanced Partnerships with bus operators</li> <li>○ School travel planning</li> <li>○ Work with business on freight decarbonisation and EV infrastructure</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Explore further rollout of Demand Responsive Transport e.g. in Marlborough, Mere and Warminster areas</li> <li>• Work closely with the Department for Transport (DfT) and the rail industry to enhance train services across Wiltshire</li> </ul>		

<b><u>Longer term activity</u></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore how best to work with residents, community groups and organisations in Wiltshire to encourage the shift away from private vehicle use, where possible, and where alternatives are realistic</li> <li>• Ensure sustainable transport options are integrated into new developments, engaging with developers early to implement an agreed avoid, shift and improve framework.</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Emissions from transport represent 38% of Wiltshire’s emissions profile (DESNZ, 2024), making them a key source to target action. Therefore, this deliverable has the potential for a medium impact due to its ability to drive modal shifts away from vehicle use, reducing transport-related emissions. However, we recognise that given the rural nature of Wiltshire, mode shift may not always be feasible due to the longer distances travelled.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Air quality; Health and Wellbeing; Thriving economy and right skills; Awareness and Empowering; Fair and inclusive; Green and blue infrastructure; Vibrant, well-connected communities
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
X2 Total transport GHG emissions for Wiltshire in kt CO <sub>2</sub> e (territorial). Figures now include CH <sub>4</sub> , NO <sub>2</sub> & CO <sub>2</sub>	1054kt for 2021; 933 kt for 2022 (based on transport emissions as % of total) (DESNZ, 2022, is most recent data)
T1 Number of passenger trips on both the commercial and supported bus networks	10% per year (8.4 million in 2023/24)
T2 Air quality: number of annual exceedance of NO <sub>2</sub> (nitrogen dioxide) over 40 µg/m <sup>3</sup> target in Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs)	No exceedances (NO <sub>2</sub> remains below 40 µg/m <sup>3</sup> ) and aiming to revoke AQMAs
<b>Review:</b> consider adding KPIs to help monitor Number of active travel projects implemented; usage of active travel modes; bus patronage and reduction in car usage.	

### 3. Homes and the Built Environment

The Climate Strategy objectives for Homes and Built environment are:

- New buildings, including homes, to be net zero carbon and adaptable to climate change as soon as possible (including measures such as water efficiency)
- Existing buildings in all sectors to be retrofitted to improve energy efficiency and decrease energy demand through low carbon technology
- New and existing buildings to be adapted to climate change for both heating and cooling, and to include measures of benefit to the wider environment where possible.

Buildings, and specifically homes, are one of the largest sources of greenhouse gases in Wiltshire. With over 194,000 homes in the county there is a huge challenge but also significant benefits to ensuring that these are warm or cool enough and can be run efficiently so that bills and emissions are reduced. The council will focus on domestic retrofit, but will

also explore how to support the commercial sector to decarbonise and move its buildings towards net zero emissions.

Our approach to retrofit and new build advice will also make sure that consideration of adaptation and resilience measures are included, such as ventilation, shading and cooling and mitigating flood risk.

The draft Wiltshire Local Plan sets out a framework for delivering up to 36,740 new homes by 2038. The plan also includes new policies requiring net zero development, assessment of embodied carbon as well as policies relating to the design of new development to ensure that sustainable travel options are incorporated, which will work alongside the existing Wiltshire Design Guide.

The ongoing activities, and new priorities for 2025 are set out in the following tables.

B 1	Area of Focus:	Domestic Retrofit
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Develop and implement a comprehensive Retrofit Strategy that is available to all housing sectors, centred on enabling more homeowners to take up energy assessments and home energy improvements	
<b>Outcome:</b>	County-wide carbon reduction	
<b>Governance:</b>	Responsible directorate / service: Director Environment; Head of Climate and Environment Service lead: Retrofit Development Manager Stakeholders: Climate Team; Economy & Regeneration; Education and skills; HRA; Strategic Assets & FM - Energy Team; Comms Registered providers retrofit working group	
<b>Overview:</b>		
<p>Wiltshire has various retrofit projects, initiatives, and grants led by different organisations, but overcoming barriers to retrofitting requires a comprehensive, collaborative strategy. The Retrofit strategy will promote a whole-house approach supported by a One Stop Shop to guide residents through the retrofit process, with community engagement ensuring designs are tailored to local needs. It will include blended funding models to make retrofitting accessible to all and focus on building a skilled supply chain through recruitment and training. A robust and compelling supplier journey will play a vital role in engaging, recruiting and training a skilled supply chain.</p>		
<b><u>Domestic Retrofit - What's next for 2025</u></b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting residential retrofit through advice, and targeted projects such as Solar Together and HUG.</li> <li>• Solar Together scheme 3 opened for registration in June 2024 with over 3,000 registrations in Wiltshire by the September 2024 closing date. Installations will be complete by end of March 2025. Solar Together scheme 4 planned to open in June 2025.</li> <li>• Start developing a retrofit strategy for Wiltshire: building on existing activities, reviewing data and using the Local Energy Net Zero Accelerator (LENZA) tool to inform our approach.</li> </ul>		
<b><u>Longer term activity</u></b>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the Retrofit Strategy and promote it to be used as a framework for delivery by the council and other stakeholders working on retrofitting in Wiltshire.</li> <li>• Explore setting up a Lendology fund to provide loans for home retrofit</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Approximately, 50% of emissions in Wiltshire originate from buildings (Anthesis, 2022b) which underscores the significant role that building emissions play in overall the county's emission profile. Consequently, interventions to decarbonise this sector, such as retrofitting, will generate a substantial impact. Additionally, the emissions reductions from retrofitting are cumulative and multiply with the number of homes retrofitted, making this intervention scalable and impactful.</p> <p>Retrofit savings have been based on a typical medium-sized home (2–3-bedroom house) (Ofgem, 2024). Energy efficiency measure savings have been based on the CCC Sixth Carbon Budget Balanced Pathway. Heat Pump installation savings have been based on assuming that a typical home has a gas boiler and is replaced with an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) unit. Solar PV calculations are based on average UK performance and array size, assuming all electricity is used in the home.</p> <p><b>Energy Efficiency Annual Carbon Savings:</b> 270 kgCO<sub>2e</sub> per home.</p> <p><b>ASHP Annual Carbon Savings:</b> 1790 kgCO<sub>2e</sub> per home.</p> <p><b>Solar PV Annual Carbon Savings:</b> 150 kgCO<sub>2e</sub> per home.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Health and Wellbeing; Local economy;
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
B4. EPCs certificates rated A to C / all EPCs registered that year (rolling 3 year average) for all dwellings in Wiltshire (%)	Increasing, and above SW benchmark (54%)
B6a. Energy efficiency of existing dwellings: EPC C and above in Wiltshire. (% of total EPCs registered that year)	Increasing, but below SW benchmark (49%)
B6b. Space heating demand for existing homes in Wiltshire per dwelling (kWh/m <sup>2</sup> /year)	Decreasing, above SW benchmark (241)
<b>Review:</b> consider adding KPIs to help monitor number of heat pumps installed per annum; percentage of homes with solar PV.	

<b>B 2</b>	<b>Area of Focus:</b>	<b>Commercial and community retrofit</b>
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Develop programmes to support decarbonisation of commercial and community buildings	
<b>Outcome:</b>	County-wide carbon reduction	
<b>Governance:</b>	<p>Responsible directorate / service: Director Environment; Head of Climate and Environment</p> <p>Service lead: Retrofit Development Manager; LAEP and community energy lead officer.</p> <p>Stakeholders: Climate Team; Economy &amp; Regeneration; Education – schools commissioning; Engagement and Partnership Team; Strategic Assets &amp; FM; Comms</p>	

**Overview:**

A key proportion of business carbon emissions are those produced as a result of heat and power use in buildings. This area of focus will be centred around information and signposting to services for businesses and making use of any grant schemes that become available. Retrofitting of commercial buildings will be a mix of optimisation, light retrofit and deep retrofit.

In addition, schools are a source of emissions that could be reduced through targeted retrofit projects planned around school operational times. There is interest from communities in decarbonising buildings such as village halls, and this will also be supported through information and signposting.

The council will also develop more targeted projects aimed at supporting businesses to decarbonise their wider operations, and supply chains, and this will overlap with the deliverable on 'Commercial decarbonisation'.

**Commercial and community retrofit – what’s next for 2025**

- Provide a briefing note for community organisations with information on how to decarbonise buildings such as village halls. Resulting projects have potential to be a focus for local energy awareness and community energy projects.
- Seek grant funding to support decarbonisation of businesses (see section on Commercial Decarbonisation).
- Explore the potential for the council to provide capital loans to schools to fund projects to install renewable energy and reduce their energy consumption and costs.

**Longer term activity**

- Develop a Retrofit Strategy to understand retrofit needs of commercial and community buildings
- Continue to deliver and seek funding for further targeted projects aimed at supporting businesses to decarbonise their wider operations, and supply chains. Where appropriate, this will include promoting the benefits of the community energy model to roof-owners, including those in business parks, community-owned assets, and commercial properties.

**Impact:**

**Direct emissions reduction impact:** High

**Overall impact:** Medium

**Priority:** High

**Rationale:** Approximately, 50% of emissions in Wiltshire originate from buildings (Anthesis, 2022b) which underscores the significant role that building emissions play in the county’s emission profile. However the commercial and community sector is a smaller share of emissions than domestic buildings. Nevertheless, interventions to decarbonise this sector, such as retrofitting, will generate a substantial impact. Additionally, the emissions reductions from retrofitting are cumulative and multiply with the number of buildings retrofitted, making this intervention scalable and impactful.

Community buildings such as village halls have relatively low energy use, so low potential for GHG emissions reductions. However, they may be important for community buy-in, awareness raising, and adaptation and resilience. There is potential to extend projects to generate renewable energy that is not just used in the building, but serves EV chargers, heat networks and local energy markets.

Retrofit savings have been based on the commercial and public sector emissions for the county in 2019 (Department for Energy Security and Net

	<p>Zero, 2024). Energy efficiency measure savings have been based on the CCC Sixth Carbon Budget Balanced Pathway. Heat Pump installation savings have been based on assuming that each building with a gas boiler is replaced with an ASHP unit. Solar PV calculations are based on average UK performance and a single panel (as roof size is not known for the council's buildings), assuming all electricity is used on-site.</p> <p><b>Commercial Energy Efficiency Annual Carbon Savings:</b> 29 ktCO<sub>2e</sub>.</p> <p><b>Commercial ASHP Annual Carbon Savings:</b> 33 ktCO<sub>2e</sub>.</p> <p><b>Public Sector Energy Efficiency Annual Carbon Savings:</b> 26 ktCO<sub>2e</sub>.</p> <p><b>Public Sector ASHP Annual Carbon Savings:</b> 42 ktCO<sub>2e</sub>.</p> <p><b>Solar PV Annual Carbon Savings:</b> 20 kgCO<sub>2e</sub> per panel.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Health and Wellbeing; Local economy;
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
No KPI to date. Suggestions TBC:	
Number of commercial and community buildings with PV; number of SMEs engaging in the programme	
Number of schools taking part in Energy Sparks / with PV	
Consider how to monitor measures being used to decrease vulnerability to climate change impacts	

<b>B 3</b>	<b>Area of Focus:</b>	<b>New builds and land use</b>
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Promote low-carbon, climate-resilient development and sustainable land use planning	
<b>Outcome:</b>	County-wide carbon reduction; Council carbon reduction; Adaptation and Resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	<p>Responsible directorate / service: Director Environment; Head of Climate and Environment</p> <p>Service lead: Retrofit Development Manager; Climate-buildings &amp; planning-technical lead officer</p> <p>Stakeholders: Strategic Planning; Development Management; Education – schools commissioning; Capital Projects; Estate and Property - Residential Development (council homes new build).</p>	
<b>Overview:</b>		
<p>Planning policy is the main way that the council can influence new builds and land use, in tandem with providing guidance and engaging with developers more generally.</p> <p>The Local Plan Review is central to the council's approach to supporting low carbon and climate resilient development. Until the new Local Plan is adopted, the council continues to use the planning process to highlight the benefits of renewable and low-carbon energy projects and encourage nature-based solutions to mitigate any negative impacts while maximizing co-benefits through the mitigation hierarchy.</p> <p>Climate and Planning teams will continue to work together to ensure Neighbourhood Plan groups have appropriate evidence that supports climate action.</p>		

The council aims for its new developments to achieve net-zero targets in accordance with its Environmental Policy. A two-page guidance document will be provided to businesses with practical advice on addressing climate change in new developments.

**New builds and land use – What’s next for 2025**

- Use Modern Methods of Construction for council home delivery, including sites underway at Corsley Heath and Rowde.
- The Local Plan Review is progressed through examination towards adoption, to embed planning policies that advance climate objectives. The plan includes a monitoring framework to track the impact of policies on carbon emissions in Wiltshire.
- Early engagement with applicants, developers and businesses to establish industry best practice in new developments regarding net zero and climate resilience.

**Longer term activity**

- Ensure all council new builds integrate climate adaptation measures and meet high standards for low carbon and net zero operation, facilitated through requirements of the capital bid process

**Impact:**

**Direct emissions reduction impact:** High  
**Overall impact:** High  
**Priority:** High  
**Rationale:** Approximately, 50% of emissions in Wiltshire originate from buildings (Anthesis, 2022b), highlighting the critical importance of ensuring new developments are both energy-efficient and low-carbon. While the council’s current Draft Local Plan (Policy 85) does not mandate Passivhaus standards, it does set robust targets for energy efficiency and renewable energy integration (Wiltshire Council, 2023) including that new developments will demonstrate the following:

- Space heating demand less than 30kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum
- Total energy use less than 40kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum
- On site renewable energy generation to match the total energy use, with a preference for roof mounted solar PV, subject to building orientation and heritage considerations
- Connection to a district heating network where one is available

Policy 86 outlines support for renewable energy proposals, which contributes to the wider decarbonisation of the electricity grid, providing further benefit than quantified below and also outlines support for renewable energy proposals. Policy 87 supports lower emissions from embodied carbon, which will provide additional benefits that have not yet been quantified.

Given national uncertainties surrounding new build standards, carbon impact evaluations have been modelled across a range of building standards including current Part L Regulations, Policy 85 Standards, as well as Future Homes Standard and Passivhaus for reference.

**Annual Carbon Savings from Buildings at Policy 85 Standards, compared to Current Part L:** 1230 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e per home without Solar PV, or 1420 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e per home with Solar PV.

**Annual Carbon Savings from Building at Future Homes Standard, compared to Current Part L:** 1180 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e per home.

**Additional Annual Carbon Savings from Building at Passivhaus, compared to Future Homes Standard:** 240 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e per home.

**Co-benefits:**

Health and Wellbeing; Local economy;



<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
B4. EPCs certificates rated A to C / all EPCs registered that year (rolling 3 year average) for all dwellings in Wiltshire (%)	Increasing, and above SW benchmark (54%)
B5a. Energy efficiency of new dwellings: EPC B and above in Wiltshire. (% total EPCs registered that year)	Increasing, and above SW benchmark (91%)
B5b. Space heating demand for new homes in Wiltshire per dwelling (kWh/m2/year)	Decreasing, and below SW benchmark (86)
<b>Review:</b> add KPI to monitor the number of projects where the climate team have been engaged in RIBA Stages 0-2 across Wiltshire	
<b>Review:</b> add KPI to monitor the Number of planning and pre-application consultations provided by climate team, and % within set deadline	Number of consultation responses 100% target for responses provided by deadline.
<b>Review at end of 2025:</b> add KPI to help monitor embodied carbon in new developments, once new Local Plan policy is adopted. Measures as per the Local Plan monitoring framework for Policies 85, 86 and 87	Below 900 kgCO <sub>2</sub> /m <sup>2</sup>

#### 4. Natural Environment, Food and Farming theme

The Climate Strategy objectives for the Natural Environment, Food and Farming are:

- Efficient and environmentally sensitive use of land, providing for the needs of an increasing population and nature: food production, renewable energy generation, housing and transport, alongside woodland creation and nature recovery
- Absorbing carbon, by plants and well-managed soils
- Sustainable, low-carbon food and farming systems
- Protect and extend our network of green spaces and land and water habitats. Make best use of this network of green and blue spaces for biodiversity, active travel, recreation, cooling, shade and absorbing carbon
- Natural water management – improving climate resilience by reducing flood risk and summer droughts, and reducing water use

There are many opportunities to link climate, natural environment and health and wellbeing objectives. The council's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is a framework that combines these themes, and the council will focus on projects that achieve outcomes in combination. In terms of climate change, the focus for 2025 will be quantification of carbon reduction associated with nature-based projects, and supporting farmers and landowners, as well as the council, to undertake projects that remove carbon dioxide, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience to climate change impacts.

The council will continue to develop its Local Nature Recovery Strategy and identify and implement land-based, nature recovery, biodiversity and nutrient management projects, that will also have positive outcomes for resilience to the impacts of climate change and carbon sequestration.

The approach of working with farmers and landowners through farming networks and clusters will be expanded, with climate adaptation and resilience, and regenerative farming practices at the forefront.

The council's existing tree planting initiatives will continue to build towards the target of an increase of 444 Ha of new trees per year in Wiltshire.

The ongoing activities and new priorities for 2025 are set out in the following tables.

N 1	Area of Focus: Nature recovery, carbon and resilience
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Implement Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy to protect biodiversity, absorb carbon and increase resilience
<b>Outcome:</b>	County-wide carbon reduction; Council carbon reduction; Adaptation and Resilience
<b>Governance:</b>	Responsible directorate / service: Director Environment; Head of Climate and Environment Service lead: Ecology Manager and lead officers for nutrient neutrality, local nature recovery and GAPS team Stakeholders: Climate Team; Spatial Planning; Development Management; Estate and Property – County Farms.
<p><b>Overview:</b></p> <p>The council will develop and implement projects that enhance green and blue infrastructure and deliver nature-based solutions for biodiversity, nutrient neutrality, flood risk mitigation, health and wellbeing, carbon sequestration, and climate resilience. Key initiatives include wetland restoration, partnerships with farmers, and projects that integrate access to green spaces, heritage, and active travel. The council will adopt a LNRS for Wiltshire and work within a new Nature Partnership alongside key stakeholders to implement its responsibilities.</p> <p>The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will be delivered through place-based community engagement, creating local visions or 'settlement strategies' with management objectives and community-led projects.</p> <p><b><u>Nature recovery, carbon and resilience - What's next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carbon assessment of projects, to help understand the potential for reducing emissions, increasing carbon sequestration, informing further work with farmers, landowners and partner organisations.</li> <li>• Local Nature Recovery Strategy adoption</li> <li>• Continue to implement the Nutrient Management Plan to reduce pollution from agricultural run-off and improve water quality</li> <li>• Continue to provide input into planning applications with expert feedback in relation to ecology, landscape, design, archaeology and climate</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Longer term activity</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with communities to develop place-based 'settlement strategies', incorporating nature recovery, GBI, climate resilience and energy</li> <li>• Identify and deliver projects with communities, landowners and stakeholders for climate adaptation and resilience, also co-delivering outcomes for health and wellbeing, biodiversity, nature recovery.</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Low-Medium

	<p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This deliverable has the potential for a low carbon impact as it primarily focuses on strategy development and habitat restoration. However, it could increase to medium dependent on the scale and implementation of the measures identified within the strategies. While its direct emissions reductions may be limited compared to other interventions, it will contribute to resilient, adaptive and biodiverse ecosystems, which has a potentially high impact in terms of carbon sequestration and resilience to the impacts of climate change as ecosystems are strengthened. Currently, there is insufficient quantitative data to enable a detailed assessment of this deliverable's carbon impact. Wiltshire Council is the responsible body for the purposes of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire, so this is an important role and influence for the council on this potential impact.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Health and Wellbeing; Local economy; Awareness and empowering; Resilient environment and society
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
No KPI to date. Suggestions TBC:	
KPI to help monitor the number of restoration projects implemented; number of different species recorded per annum.	
KPI to help monitor the amount of carbon sequestered by tree planting, and other nature recovery projects	
kgTP/yr removed (Nutrient Neutrality) (total phosphorous)	no target – just for information

<b>N 2</b>	<b>Area of Focus:</b>	<b>Tree Planting</b>
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Increase tree planting in Wiltshire, to sequester carbon and enhance outcomes for biodiversity/nature recovery and resilience	
<b>Outcome:</b>	County-wide carbon reduction; Council carbon reduction; Adaptation and Resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	<p>Responsible directorate / service: Director Environment; Head of Climate and Environment</p> <p>Service lead: Manager and lead officer for GAPS team;</p> <p>Stakeholders: Climate Team; Estate and Property – County Farms; Local Highways; Engagement and Partnerships; Economy and Regeneration, Major Projects and Highways have options to support this work.</p>	
<b>Overview:</b>		
<p>The council will continue to facilitate tree planting by working with landowners, as well as the council planting trees on its own land. The Grant Application and Planting Support (GAPS) Team will provide support to landowners, community groups and local Town and Parish Councils, to deliver more tree planting across the county. This will be done in partnership with Swindon Borough Council's Great Western Community Forest project. The approach is to help to define the scope and aims of projects, help to choose the right tree for the right place, and to find funding suitable for the projects.</p> <p>The team will finalise the Tree and Woodland Planting Strategy and guidance to support these projects, and the council's tree planting practice.</p>		

Any tree planting projects will aim to quantify the carbon sequestered, and carbon credit schemes will be used as appropriate.

**Tree Planting – What’s next for 2025**

- Continue to work with Wiltshire landowners, organisations and community groups to support tree planting and maintenance plans. The GAPs team has identified the following for 2024-25 planting season so far: 68 Ha of Woodland / 50 individual trees / 6379 m of hedgerow
- Developing a Wiltshire Council Tree and Woodland Planting Strategy to establish targets and advice on planting the right tree in the right place

**Longer term activity**

- Continue to support the network of Tree Wardens, engaging residents in tree planting, care and maintenance.

<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Medium-High</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Carbon sequestration from tree planting develops gradually, making this deliverable less impactful in the short term but increasingly significant over decades. Planting trees of one hectare (broadleaf woodland with minimal intervention/thinning with low disturbance) sequesters 386 tCO<sub>2e</sub> over 100 years, therefore the cumulative effect of scaling up tree planting across Wiltshire could lead to substantial carbon savings. Additionally, the broader environmental, social, and resilience benefits make tree planting a vital component of any comprehensive climate strategy, even if short-term carbon impacts are moderate.</p> <p><b>5 years from planting:</b> 0 tCO<sub>2e</sub> per hectare.</p> <p><b>10 years from planting:</b> 6 tCO<sub>2e</sub> per hectare.</p> <p><b>50 years from planting:</b> 322 tCO<sub>2e</sub> per hectare.</p> <p><b>100 years from planting:</b> 386 tCO<sub>2e</sub> per hectare.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Health and Wellbeing; Local economy; Air Quality; Biodiversity; Flood risk mitigation; Awareness and empowering; Resilient environment and society
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
NE2 Hectares of trees planted in Wiltshire. (Includes woodland (0.5ha or more); trees outside woodland (individual trees or areas <0.5ha; hedgerows)	Plant 422ha or 675,000 trees per year on average in the period 2022-2045.  111 Ha during winter season 2023/24. 222 Ha during winter season 2024/25
<b>Review:</b> Consider adding a KPI to help monitor the amount of carbon sequestered by tree planting, and other nature recovery projects	

<b>N 3</b>	<b>Area of Focus:</b>	<b>Sustainable agriculture</b>
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Work with farmers and landowners on nature recovery, carbon reduction and climate resilience projects	

<b>Outcome:</b>	County-wide carbon reduction; Council carbon reduction; Adaptation and Resilience
<b>Governance:</b>	Responsible directorate / service: Director Environment; Head of Climate and Environment Service lead: Climate Team and GAPS team. Stakeholders: Ecology; Landscape; Heritage and Archaeology; Estate and Property – County Farms; National Landscapes teams; Engagement and Partnerships; Economy and Regeneration.
<b>Overview:</b>	
<p>To complement the action outlined in Deliverable N1 and N2, the council will also explore projects with farmers to enhance the agroforestry landscape with benefits for farm business resilience in a changing climate. Any land-based projects will aim to quantify the carbon sequestered, and carbon credit schemes will be used as appropriate.</p> <p>The council will continue to work with farmers (including County Farms) to explore opportunities for farm business resilience through delivery of objectives for nature recovery, tree planting, carbon reduction and climate resilience in Wiltshire with a focus on supporting farm business case development.</p> <p>The National Landscapes teams work with the council to support farmers in nature recovery and regenerative farming projects, as part of Farming in Protected Landscape schemes.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that agriculture is a significant source of greenhouse gases in Wiltshire, and this is mainly due to methane emissions from livestock, as well as greenhouse gas emissions from farm operations. The council will carry out a study of methane emissions in Wiltshire to find out more about the potential to reduce emissions and identify the role for Wiltshire Council specifically in supporting farms. Opportunities could include farm businesses using anaerobic digestion to produce renewable energy.</p> <p>The council will continue partnership-working with other organisations, such as Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, to deliver climate/nature recovery objectives in the farmed landscape. We will explore partnerships and knowledge sharing with local authorities, universities and business that aim to support reduction of carbon emissions from food and farming, reduction in inputs to farmland and help ensure viability of our rural economy.</p>	
<b><u>Sustainable agriculture – What’s next for 2025:</u></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with landowners and local farmers to adopt Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) that improve soil health, sequester carbon and enhance biodiversity</li> <li>• Increase farmers' awareness and knowledge of farm business opportunities from climate/nature recovery to the farming community such as the Avon catchment local nutrient mitigation fund availability, and carbon credits</li> <li>• Continue to develop links with the farming community such as Wiltshire Young Farmers and NFU.</li> <li>• Carry out a study to identify the key sources of methane emissions in Wiltshire, identify the role of the council to influence these emissions.</li> </ul>	
<b><u>Longer term activity:</u></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in partnership with farmers (and waste operators) to reduce methane, as informed by the study above</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Medium-High <b>Overall impact:</b> Medium

	<p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Agriculture accounted for 23% of Wiltshire's total emissions in 2022 (DESNZ, 2024), making it a significant sector to target for decarbonisation. Interventions could yield meaningful reductions in the county's overall carbon footprint while simultaneously providing co-benefits for biodiversity, soil health, and rural communities. The potential scale of impact has been estimated based on the National Farmer's Union 2040 Net Zero Plan, evaluating the impact of various measures to boost productivity and reducing emissions across Wiltshire's agricultural emissions. Potential for emissions reduction, and the council's influence in the farming sector is moderate, so the overall impact and priority is assessed as medium for the short term.</p> <p><b>Annual Carbon Savings:</b> 180 ktCO<sub>2e</sub>.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Health and Wellbeing; Local economy; Air Quality; Biodiversity; Flood risk mitigation
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
No KPIs to date. Suggestions TBC:	
Agricultural emissions & Methane emissions in Wiltshire (DESNZ data)	TBC based on study
% of farmers who have adopted ELMS - this data may be available through the RPA (Rural Payments Agency)	TBC
Projects delivered on farms	
Consider adding a KPI to help monitor the amount of carbon sequestered by tree planting, and other nature recovery projects	

## 5. Energy

The Climate Strategy objectives for the Energy delivery theme are:

- Existing energy use in Wiltshire to be reduced to allow for decarbonisation
- Heat and electricity to be decarbonised (moving from fossil fuels to alternatives)

In addition to the council's own property carbon reduction and council home energy efficiency programmes, the goals of increasing energy efficiency and using renewable sources of energy are transferable to the Wiltshire-wide objectives, and require delivery in partnership with others, to promote energy demand reduction, a move to cleaner energy sources and overcoming electricity grid constraints. The council tracks the capacity of renewable energy in the county and would like to see more renewable energy being delivered through community-led projects.

Part of the Climate Strategy's energy theme objective is to investigate and progress joined-up Local Area Energy Planning, which is critical to delivering the County's net zero target. Local Area Energy Planning can identify the most cost-effective, integrated, energy systems for a local area to contribute to national and local Net Zero targets, and scale investment faster.

The ongoing activities, and new priorities for 2025 are set out in the following tables.

E 1	Area of Focus: <b>Community-led energy</b>
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Support the development of community energy groups, and empower communities to develop energy plans
<b>Outcome:</b>	County-wide carbon reduction; Adaptation and resilience
<b>Governance:</b>	Owner: Director, Environment; Head of Climate and Environment Service lead: Climate Team energy lead officer and manager Stakeholders: Economy and Regeneration; Climate Team - Retrofit; Capital Projects; Strategic Assets & FM - Energy Team; School Commissioning. LAEP Internal Working Group Community Energy roundtable
<p><b>Overview:</b></p> <p>Community energy involves community-led renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, typically owned by the community, and is an effective way to accelerate the rollout of energy initiatives. Many organisations and businesses in Wiltshire, including community energy groups, are already leading renewable energy projects, and these efforts can be built upon.</p> <p>Beyond addressing climate change, energy security, and fuel poverty, community energy initiatives foster trust and cooperation by providing common ground for communities that may not usually interact. These models enable renewable energy installations where building owners lack capital by allowing community groups to raise funds and install technologies like solar panels. In local energy markets, the benefits can extend to local residents, offering discounted energy when not in use by the building. The council plans to explore these models and collaborate with communities to develop visions and plans for community-led energy projects, empowering individuals and bringing economic benefits to the area.</p> <p><b><u>Community Energy - What's next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future Energy Landscapes project with Centre for Sustainable Energy, working with a small number of communities in Wiltshire to develop a vision and plan for community-led energy</li> <li>• Continue to convene regular roundtable with community energy groups operating in Wiltshire to ensure the council is supporting where needed</li> <li>• Encourage businesses, schools and community organisations to consider viable models for renewable energy generation, including community energy</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Longer term activity</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify community-led energy projects, through the Future Energy Landscapes project, and Local Area Energy Plan.</li> <li>• Access support and feasibility studies through the South West Net Zero Hub to develop projects and investment.</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This deliverable primarily focuses on building capacity, fostering collaboration, as well as progressing potential renewable energy projects. Therefore, the impact will be dependent on the scale, technology and implementation of these projects. Currently, there lacks sufficient quantitative data on the types of projects that will be progressed to enable assessment of the carbon impact.</p>

	However, increasing the amount of community energy projects in Wiltshire will help to decarbonise the electricity grid and provide zero carbon / renewable energy sources for Wiltshire communities often at lower cost and return on investment for community shareholders. It can also be a helpful, positive way to engage communities with energy and climate issues, and if this approach is successful, the impact could change to high in this respect.
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Lower energy bills. Resilient environment and society (Community cohesion). Awareness and engagement.
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
No KPI to date. Suggestions TBC:	
Number of renewable energy / community energy projects implemented Total energy generated (kWh) from renewable sources Capacity installed via community energy projects	
Surveys, evidence, Stories or testimonials highlighting positive impact of projects. Numbers of households / communities / investors involved in community-led energy projects	

E 2	Area of Focus:	Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP)
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Develop and begin implementation of LAEP framework, to identify strategic priorities for grid upgrades, and create an energy system to support the net zero transition.	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Council carbon reduction; County-wide carbon reduction; Adaptation and resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	Owner: Director, Environment; Head of Climate and Environment Service lead: Climate Team energy lead officer and manager Stakeholders: Economy and Regeneration; Spatial Planning; Climate Team - Retrofit; Capital Projects; Strategic Assets & FM - Energy Team; Major Projects; School Commissioning; Highway Operations. LAEP Internal Working Group	
<b>Overview:</b>	<p>Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP) are recognised as the leading method for translating national net zero targets into local energy system action with plans that are collaborative, data-driven, and cost-effective. LAEPs are led by local government and developed collaboratively with defined stakeholders. The results are a fully costed, spatial plan that identifies the change needed to the local energy system and built environment, detailing 'what, where and when and by whom'. LAEP sets out the total costs, changes in energy use and emissions, and sets these out over incremental time periods to meet the 2030 target of a 68% reduction in emissions, and the 2035 target of a 78% reduction in emissions, and net zero by 2050.</p> <p>The council has started work to understand Wiltshire's current energy system and to identify the most cost-effective way to contribute to national and local net zero targets. This project will pave the way for a formal Wiltshire LAEP. Wiltshire Council is also piloting the 'Local Energy Net Zero Accelerator' (LENZA) tool from Scottish &amp; Southern Electricity Networks</p>	



(SSEN) as part of its LAEP. LENZA will aid in baselining, data analysis, and developing the LAEP, along with planning EV infrastructure, renewables, and retrofits.

**Local Area Energy Planning - What's next for 2025**

- The council will continue to work on early stages of Local Area Energy Plan process, and prepare the engagement and data to support a formal Wiltshire Local Area Energy Plan.
- Work with South West Net Zero Hub and south west local authorities on LAEP project to progress into the stage of engaging stakeholders to incorporate their energy uses and future plans into the Local Area Energy Plan

**Longer term activity**

- Work with partners to identify renewable energy projects, through the Local Area Energy Plan and Economic Strategy.
- Access support and feasibility studies through the South West Net Zero Hub to develop projects and investment.

<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Low-Medium</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> Whilst developing the LAEP is critical for ensuring a cohesive plan for energy decarbonisation across Wiltshire, as the deliverable primarily refers to strategy development the direct carbon impact is anticipated to be low. However, the outputs of the LAEP and resulting projects will be critical to supporting energy decarbonisation and could have a <b>high</b> impact. Currently, there is insufficient quantitative data to enable a detailed assessment of this deliverable's carbon impact.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Improved Decision-Making. Stakeholder Engagement. Policy Alignment. Future-Ready Planning. Innovation Opportunities. Cost Optimisation. Accelerated Implementation. Investment Attraction. Social and Economic Benefits (e.g., job creation and reduced energy poverty)
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
No KPI to date. Difficult to monitor with an indicator or measure, but signs of success would be:	
LAEP framework developing, with resulting pipeline of projects. – Number of projects with feasibility study, and financial implementation plan	
Number of grid upgrades (number may not be important)	
Renewable energy projects / installed capacity	
Measure of transition to a low carbon energy system: Reduction in energy consumption from fossil fuels (DESNZ data set)	

## 6. Green and Circular Economy

The green economy section of the climate strategy has two main objectives:

- To grow the green economy in Wiltshire, increasing capacity and skills in key sectors to meet demand and delivery targets
- Wiltshire businesses take action to become carbon neutral and climate resilient

According to national data on *territorial* emissions, the sectors with lower sources of emissions within Wiltshire are waste and commercial / businesses, however this is still an area with a lot of potential for carbon reduction and perhaps more importantly for innovation and supporting the transition to a low carbon economy. The council's role may be limited, as commercial interest may override the motivation to reduce carbon emissions, especially for smaller enterprises. However, businesses above a certain size are required to report their emissions and action plan progress through the [Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme \(ESOS\)](#).

Supporting green businesses to grow in size and number will be aided by the Local Area Energy Plan and the Economic Strategy. The LAEP will clarify potential for growth in the renewables and energy sector, and identify a pipeline of deliverable and investable projects to support the transition to low carbon energy system and economy. Opportunities include renewable energy development, home energy retrofit installation, future fuel refuelling infrastructure (including EV charging, and potentially hydrogen), sustainable construction as well as innovation in circular resource use, recycling and waste management. This will need to be supported by training to develop the right skills in the workforce.

On the doorstep, Swindon is home to the Innovation Centre for Applied Sustainable Technologies (iCAST), a joint collaboration between the universities of Bath and Oxford to drive forward innovation and commercial application of groundbreaking research in sustainable chemicals and chemical engineering.

Green growth encompasses concepts of lower-carbon travel aligned to new housing and employment, with opportunities underpinned by the development and delivery of Local Area Energy Plans.

The ongoing activities, and new priorities for 2025 are set out in the following tables.

G 1	Area of Focus:	Upskilling and Green skills
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Increase green skills and training opportunities to support climate objectives	
<b>Outcome:</b>	County-wide carbon reduction; Adaptation and resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	Owner: Director for Education and Skills Service lead: Targeted Education. Stakeholders: Economy and Regeneration; Climate Team (Energy, Retrofit); School Effectiveness. Education and Skills (Directorate)	
<b>Overview:</b>		
Nationally there is a shortage of installers with the skills necessary work to carry out retrofit of buildings. In Wiltshire there is more demand than supply of skilled engineers and other STEM qualified workers. There are opportunities to increase skills, inspire and retain young people		

and innovate in this theme. Green skills and knowledge are important to make sure the changes from the other themes can be implemented.

The low carbon and renewables sectors, and green skills are an important part of future-proofing and diversifying our economy and workforce. The draft Economic Strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire 2025/26 includes increasing green skills to match the needs of the workforce to support the transition to a low carbon economy and energy system. Upskilling of the business community includes sustainability awareness and general management skills for any business wishing to improve its sustainability performance.

Our focus will continue to be on stimulating local supply chains through investments in housing and renewable technologies. We will also work with training providers, such as Wiltshire College and the National Self Build and Renovation Centre in Swindon, to increase the courses and training opportunities for trades and students wishing to upskill. There is also potential to build on the council's existing work to support the farming sector through agri-tech and carbon sequestration projects that can help to generate income and a resilient business model.

Implementation will be via the Economic Strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire and link to the needs and priorities for training identified in the [Local Skills Improvement Plan](#) (LSIP) which helps to match skills to the future jobs, including those needed for the net zero transition.

#### **Green skills – What's next for 2025**

- Work with training providers (e.g. Lackham; Swindon Self-build centre) Wiltshire Careers Hub to improve skills required for Net Zero
- Work with Business West, and relevant partners, to understand the current skills and qualifications in the local workforce to support retrofit and renewables, carry out an audit of existing training available. Identify opportunities for the council to support skills and training in Wiltshire.

#### **Longer term activity**

- The draft Economic Strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire seeks to use green construction techniques and drive the development of green skills within our workforce

<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Low</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This deliverable serves as a critical enabling deliverable to ensure Wiltshire is well-prepared for the net zero transition, fostering a skilled workforce capable of implementing a range of decarbonisation technologies. While the direct carbon impact of this action is anticipated to be low, its importance lies in laying the groundwork for future emissions reductions across multiple sectors. Currently, there is insufficient quantitative data to enable a detailed assessment of this deliverable's carbon impact.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Awareness and empowering; Resilient environment and society; Capacity building and efficiency; Thriving economy and right skills
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
No KPI to date. Suggestions TBC	
Number of existing / new training programmes; workforce skill improvement; participation in training programmes.	

G 2	Area of Focus:	Commercial decarbonisation and circular economy
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Work with Wiltshire organisations, contractors, and businesses to reduce carbon emissions from their operations, including commercial waste and supporting circular economy initiatives	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Council carbon reduction; County-wide carbon reduction; Adaptation and resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	<p>Owner: Director, Environment; Head of Economy and Regeneration.</p> <p>Service leads: Economic Development Service Manager; Swindon and Wiltshire Business Growth Unit</p> <p>Stakeholders: Climate Team (Energy, Retrofit); Waste services; Engagement and Partnerships.</p>	
<p><b>Overview:</b></p> <p>The council aims to support businesses in moving towards increased energy efficiency and resilience to the impacts of climate change. We want to encourage investment in green and renewable business in Wiltshire and build up skills and supply chains to support delivery of retrofit and renewables.</p> <p>The council's role is through the (draft) Economic Strategy for Swindon and focusses on integrating climate objectives into existing activity and partnerships.</p> <p>Additionally, the council can also provide information via business e-newsletters and business networks and targeted projects will assist businesses with their energy efficiency (see 'Commercial and community retrofit' deliverable).</p> <p>According to national data on <i>territorial</i> emissions, the sectors with lower sources of emissions within Wiltshire are waste and commercial / businesses but they could have a wider impact outside of Wiltshire's borders, for example from their supply chains, transport and freight. We also want to work with waste operators to explore the potential for short term methane reduction.</p> <p>We want to understand more about the carbon emissions associated with Wiltshire businesses and their potential to reduce emissions from operations and supply chains, and to adapt to the impacts of climate change. We want to support businesses in learning from each other and find out how the council can enable businesses to achieve impacts at scale.</p> <p>Ongoing support to businesses via the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub and the council's Economy and Regeneration programme will integrate climate objectives into delivery.</p> <p><b><u>Commercial decarbonisation and circular economy - What's next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the <a href="#">Chippenham Avon Project</a>, which includes measures for flood risk mitigation</li> <li>• Continuing, through the Towns Programme, to seek out and encourage new opportunities of national funding sources to support new tree planting in our urban areas</li> <li>• Seek funding to continue providing grants to businesses to incentivise reducing energy consumption and decarbonisation, such as the Fit for Net Zero scheme.</li> <li>• Proactive work to clarify planning requirements - with developers, businesses investing</li> <li>• Broadband Programme delivery through Project Gigabit</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with commercial waste operators to explore the potential for methane reduction and circular solutions, including setting up re-use and recycling schemes that involve Wiltshire businesses and their supply chains.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Longer term activity</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Green and renewables sector – focus on retrofit, and making sure these benefit local suppliers and economy where possible</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This deliverable has the potential for a medium carbon impact, driven by its focus on reducing emissions from commercial waste management and promoting circular economy practices. While the carbon reductions from this initiative may vary based on the scope and uptake of proposed strategies, the collaborative approach and targeted interventions in high-emission areas position it to deliver meaningful benefits. Currently, there is insufficient quantitative data to enable a detailed assessment of this deliverable's carbon impact.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Thriving economy and right skills; Awareness and empowering; Capacity building and efficiency
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
G1. Emissions from Wiltshire Council's key suppliers in CO <sub>2</sub> e Review: consider adding KPIs to measure Councils Scope 3 emissions; Contractors measuring and recording their scope 1,2 & 3 emissions.	
Review: consider KPIs to monitor Reduction in emissions associated waste (DESNZ data); commercial waste diverted from landfill, through circular economy projects; Businesses signing up to projects such as Fit for Net Zero	

## 7. Adaptation and Resilience

The Climate Strategy objectives for Adaptation and Resilience are to plan to be able to cope with the impacts of climate change associated with a 2°C rise in global temperature

The findings of the Climate Change Committee (CCC) in their March 2023 report indicated that the UK is not adequately planning for the impacts of climate change associated with a 2°C rise in temperature and should also be considering the impacts of scenarios associated with a 4°C rise.

Wiltshire Council is responsible for ensuring our services, assets and activities are resilient to the impacts of climate change. Climate change is already bringing more severe weather to Wiltshire. The impacts for Wiltshire will be warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers, with more instability in weather patterns. More heavy rain is causing increasing fluvial and surface water flooding, storms are causing structural damage, and heatwaves are damaging infrastructure and putting the health and wellbeing of vulnerable groups at risk. In future years we can expect to see more extreme weather events as global temperatures continue to increase.

Wiltshire Council supports many vulnerable residents, and we want to make sure that everyone is included and able to become resilient to the impacts of climate change.

A 1	Area of Focus:	Climate Adaptation
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Implement a Climate Adaptation Plan that enhances the resilience of Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire communities to climate change.	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Adaptation and resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	Owner: Director, Environment; Head of Climate and Environment. Service lead: Climate Team - Adaptation lead officer and manager. Stakeholders: Key services - Adult Social Care, Commissioning; Families and Children; Highways; Waste Services; Strategic Assets and FM; Climate and Environment (Ecology, LNRS, Nutrient Neutrality, BNG; Landscape – GBI, Tree Planting); Comms; Emergency Planning; Customer Services; Public Health; Planning; Libraries, Culture and Communities; Education and Skills.	
<p><b>Overview:</b></p> <p>During 2024 there was a fundamental review of the Wiltshire Council Climate Change Adaptation Plan, with a new plan due to be adopted in 2025. This shows the councils commitment to implement actions that enhance Wiltshire’s resilience to climate change. These actions will be linked to specific climate risks, with clear ownership, timelines, and monitoring, developed in collaboration with key services, embedding the consideration of climate risk, and necessary mitigation into council business, using climate change risk assessments.</p> <p>The council will monitor its responses to severe weather, such as flooding incidents or heatwaves and associated follow up investigation and action, to inform additional mitigation or resources needs over time.</p> <p>Focussed efforts on flooding with continue to be via the North and South Operational Flood Working Groups including key messaging to communities, and we will continue to encourage Town and parish councils to participate in the flood working groups and to develop Flood Plans and Emergency Plans for their areas.</p> <p>Existing networks will support community prevention, preparedness and response to future sever weather events, including working through the Strategic Engagement and Partnerships Team, Area Boards, and Town and Parish Councils.</p> <p>Learning from delivering the Marlborough Rapid Adaptation Pathway Assessment (RAPA) will inform future engagement with stakeholders to make places and communities more resilient to future climate change including mid-century and end of century scenarios.</p> <p><b><u>Climate Adaptation – What’s next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wiltshire Council Climate Adaptation Plan to be produced by March 2025</li> <li>• Make the Climate Adaptation Plan available to stakeholders, as a basis for their own adaptation planning and potential partnership working with the council</li> <li>• Council service areas will continue to identify risks to their service and customers due to the impacts of climate change, understand the adaptation actions needed, and timeframe for delivery, and build adaptation and resilience into projects and service delivery</li> <li>• Continue to deliver environmental mitigation projects, and quantify the climate benefits as much as possible</li> <li>• Continue to chair and convene Wiltshire and Swindon Local Resilience Forum</li> </ul>		

<b><u>Longer term activity</u></b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify specific need and opportunities to work in partnership to improve resilience in Wiltshire communities.</li> </ul>	
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Low</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This deliverable is an enabling mechanism, focusing on formalising a structure of reporting and monitoring as well as engagement with the local community. While the direct carbon impact of this deliverable is expected to be low, its importance lies in ensuring that the council is preparing to be resilient to climate impacts, so that it can continue to deliver its services, and respond to severe weather events, managing one of the council's strategic risks. Over time the focus will broaden to supporting residents, businesses and organisations, and the natural environment to be resilient to the impacts of climate change. Impacts will depend on how well the plan (this deliverable) and its actions are embedded into council's delivery programme, and progress toward climate objectives is effectively tracked, measured, and communicated.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Awareness and empowering; Resilient environment and society; capacity building and efficiency; Leading by example
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
KPIs to be developed as part of the Adaptation Plan	

## 8. Cross-cutting, Enabling and Empowering

Cross-cutting areas of action are those that help to deliver across all themes of the Climate Strategy and involve all service areas of the council. Our approach and a critical part of implementing this Climate Delivery Plan is ensuring that climate considerations are integrated into council projects, processes and decision-making, and part of business as usual. This way all of the council's activity can be aligned and help to deliver our carbon neutrality and resilience aspirations for the council and the county. In addition to business-as-usual activity being adjusted towards climate goals, the council will use the available data (such as DESNZ local authority emissions data) and commission additional work as needed to ensure that decisions and project development are based on up to date evidence.

As well as directly influencing activities that can contribute to climate objectives, the council also wants to partner with key organisations and empower residents and communities to take action on climate. Our approach to date has mainly been with and through town and parish councils, Community Area Boards, as well as working with relevant stakeholders on specific projects. Details of some of the environmental projects that have been supported through £60,000 area board funding was included in the '[Climate Update 2024](#)'.

We plan to engage more with communities and relevant partner organisations, through projects, and increasingly through place-based, place-shaping and visioning approaches which will empower communities to reach a shared goal for transition to net zero and resilience, alongside other important aspects such as open space, access to services, support with health, wellbeing, local economy and jobs. It will also help the council, with



communities and partner organisations, to understand needs and aspirations of communities and identify specific projects, for which to seek funding.

A key part of this plan has been to clarify costs where currently available, and as the detail of delivery is refined, we will develop realistic and innovative ways to finance the plan. Green finance options will be explored, including inviting private investment, harnessing carbon offsetting mechanisms, crowd funding and community bonds, contributions from council suppliers and developers.

The ongoing activities, and new priorities for 2025 are set out in the following tables.

X 1	Area of Focus:	Staff engagement and training
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Develop and roll-out Carbon Literacy Training across council staff, and support staff to integrate climate objectives into business-as-usual	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Council carbon reduction; County-wide carbon reduction; Adaptation and Resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	Owner: Director, Environment; Head of Climate and Environment. Service lead: Climate Team lead officer and manager. Stakeholders: Climate and Environment service – as trainers; Democratic services; ALL services	
<p><b>Overview:</b></p> <p>The council will continue to encourage staff and elected members to undertake in-house training accredited by the Carbon Literacy Project. Each participant of the course must pledge two actions for carbon reduction in the workplace. These actions not only support the council's climate objectives, but also help to ensure that climate awareness and considerations in project development and decision-making becomes part of business as usual.</p> <p>The council is already a Bronze award recipient, and aims to achieve the Silver award from the Carbon Literacy Project, which involves training over 800 staff.</p> <p>To support the implementation of pledges and share ideas of how colleagues are incorporating climate objectives into their work and homelife, the Green Scene staff network has been set up. This will be a channel for communication among over 5,000 staff, and an opportunity to gain feedback on council initiatives and communications before sharing with the wider public.</p> <p><b><u>Staff engagement and training - What's next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to offer Carbon Literacy training for staff and councillors</li> <li>• Establish the 'Green Scene' as an internal communication and sharing network for staff</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Longer term activity</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim to accredit an increasing number of staff through the Carbon Literacy Project (CLP), working towards having trained 15% of staff (over 800) to achieve the CLP Silver award</li> </ul>		
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Low – Medium (difficult to quantify)</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p>	



	<p><b>Rationale:</b> The development and roll-out of carbon literacy training is an enabling deliverable that primarily focuses on building awareness and capacity among council staff to support Wiltshire's climate objectives. While the direct carbon impact of this initiative is anticipated to be low, its indirect impact can be significant over time, as it empowers staff to embed carbon-conscious decision-making and practices across the organisation. It also supports behaviour change and the cascade effect, with training being discussed with family, friends &amp; colleagues.</p> <p>Currently, there is insufficient quantitative data to enable a detailed assessment of this deliverable's carbon impact.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Health and wellbeing, fair and inclusive, resilient environment and society, awareness and empowering, leading by example + others depending on the nature of the pledge/action.
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
C8 Number of staff completing carbon literacy training <b>Review:</b> Change KPI to match the target: 'Number of staff accredited through Carbon Literacy training' (and include % to tie into target of 20%)	Bronze carbon literacy award by July 2023; Silver carbon literacy award by end 2025 (20% staff certified carbon literate)

X 2	Area of Focus:	Decision Making and Processes
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Embed Climate Objectives into Council Processes and Decision-Making	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Council carbon reduction; County-wide carbon reduction; Adaptation and Resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	<p>Owner: Director, Environment; Head of Climate and Environment. With Legal and Governance</p> <p>Service leads: Climate Manager &amp; Senior Corporate Manager – Executive Office</p> <p>Stakeholders: Capital Projects; Data &amp; Insight; Legal and Governance; Corporate Governance Group; ALL Key services</p>	
<b>Overview:</b>	<p>Embedding climate objectives into business operations is a core aim of this plan, supporting all delivery themes. By continuously reviewing council processes and integrating climate considerations, alongside carbon literacy training, the council ensures that staff align service delivery with climate goals. This contributes to the Climate Strategy across regulatory roles, community and business engagement, and the management of infrastructure and the natural environment.</p> <p>The existing Environmental Policy sets out how the council is mitigating its environmental impacts. Flowing from this it will be important to ensure that all business cases include relevant climate impacts and associated costs, savings and co-benefits, in order to inform decisions and strategic planning. Therefore the area of focus to 'embed climate objectives into council processes and decision-making' underpins the delivery plan, and is supported by Carbon Literacy Training.</p> <p>In this way, delivery of the climate objectives will be shared across the whole council, and delivered through business as usual, and will involve partnerships with organisations outside the council as necessary.</p>	

Governance supporting delivery will include oversight at a senior management level of performance against this delivery plan, as well as management of the strategic climate risks included in the corporate risk register.

**Decision-making and processes - What's next for 2025**

- Develop further guidance and tools to ensure proportionate carbon assessment is part of any project (e.g. on council land or external projects), procurement and decisions.

**Longer term activity**

- Ensure that all climate projects fully consider and monitor impacts on wider council objectives, especially any unforeseen or avoidable negative impacts on vulnerable or underrepresented groups, aiming to work towards a 'just and fair transition' to a carbon neutral Wiltshire

<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Medium</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This is a foundational and enabling deliverable with the potential to drive medium carbon impact over time by integrating climate considerations into all aspects of the council's operations. While the direct carbon reductions from this initiative may be low, its systemic approach ensures that all council activities contribute to meeting climate targets and reducing emissions.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Capacity building and efficiency; Awareness and empowering; Leading by example
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
<p>No KPI to date</p> <p>Difficult to monitor with an indicator or measure, but signs of success might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how many cabinet reports incorporate relevant climate considerations (% target)</li> <li>• Impact assessment process developed and adopted</li> <li>• Capital projects including climate considerations in their business case.</li> <li>• Service plans integrating Climate Delivery Plan actions</li> <li>• Council's own new build (and budgeted) is designed to be net zero in operation</li> <li>• Procurement tenders and key contracts all include climate requirements. Key contracts all provide climate data and have a carbon reduction management plan. All key sectors for resilience have this built into their contracts</li> </ul>	

<b>X 3</b>	<b>Area of Focus:</b>	<b>Green Finance and carbon offsetting</b>
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Develop green finance, carbon accounting and offsetting, to enable projects that sequester carbon, avoid carbon emissions, and adapt to climate change.	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Council carbon reduction; County-wide carbon reduction; Adaptation and Resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	Owner: Director, Environment; Head of Climate and Environment. Service lead: Climate Manager	

	Stakeholders: Ecology; Finance and Procurement; Climate Team – retrofit, energy. GAPS team. Strategic Assets & FM; Estate and Property; Engagement and Partnerships.	
<p><b>Overview:</b></p> <p>To achieve carbon neutrality, the council will offset residual emissions from its operations. The principles for offsetting will be discussed and agreed upon, with options presented to the cabinet for consideration.</p> <p>By 2030, the Wiltshire area will also have residual emissions that need to be offset to reach carbon neutrality. While these emissions are not the council's responsibility, it can play a role in facilitating offset opportunities, ideally through local projects that benefit residents and businesses. Offsetting may include both carbon emissions avoidance and carbon dioxide removal, through initiatives such as tree planting, soil regeneration, wetlands, and energy efficiency projects. These projects will also provide co-benefits such as improved biodiversity, energy efficiency, and flood risk mitigation.</p> <p>A detailed proposal for offsetting will be presented to the cabinet in 2025. The council will explore setting up a 'Climate Fund' to attract green finance, enabling projects that may not otherwise be feasible.</p> <p><b><u>Green finance and carbon offsetting - What's next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive Carbon Offsetting Strategy and Action Plan will be proposed in 2025, to discuss the options for carbon offsetting.</li> <li>• Develop the financial implementation plan for this Climate Delivery Plan as further detail is known about specific delivery and projects, with associated impacts and costs</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Longer term activity</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore setting up a dedicated Climate Fund to finance carbon reduction and climate adaptation projects and develop a marketplace to connect local projects with funding opportunities</li> </ul>		
<b>Impact:</b>	<p><b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Low - Medium</p> <p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This deliverable has the potential for a low-medium carbon impact, but its effectiveness is highly dependent on the scale, scope, and successful implementation of the initiatives, as well as their primary focus. If the deliverable emphasises carbon removals, such as through nature-based solutions or soil carbon sequestration, the impact is likely to be higher. Conversely, if the focus is primarily on offsetting mechanisms, the carbon impact may be lower. Additionally, the lack of sufficient quantitative data at this stage limits the ability to accurately evaluate its overall carbon impact. Additional impact will come via the ability of an offsetting scheme to generate finance for carbon reduction projects in the county, and this would have a potentially high impact.</p>	
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Awareness and empowering; Capacity building and efficiency; Green and Blue Infrastructure	
<b>KPI:</b>		<b>Target:</b>
<p>No KPI to date. Suggestions TBC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of projects initiated / money paid out to support projects; measures related to the outcomes of specific projects</li> </ul>		No target in the first year – just for information and monitoring.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of businesses using the council's climate fund / mechanism to invest or donate funds in climate projects</li> <li>• Money drawn into the climate fund</li> <li>• Volunteer hours banked</li> </ul>	
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X 4	Area of Focus:	Engagement with stakeholders
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Provide information and actively engage with stakeholders to maximise the impact on climate change in Wiltshire.	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Council carbon reduction; County-wide carbon reduction; Adaptation and Resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	Owner: Director, Environment; Head of Climate and Environment. Service lead: Climate Team – managers and project / theme leads. Stakeholders: Communications. Engagement and Partnerships. Waste services. GAPS team. Sustainable transport. Economy and Regeneration.	
<p><b>Overview:</b></p> <p>The activity in this section covers general comms and engagement methods with businesses and encompasses all the council does to engage with stakeholders, participate in knowledge sharing, networks and events, and develop projects with partners.</p> <p>The council actively collaborates with partners and suppliers on projects like the Home Upgrade Grant and supporting Wiltshire Climate Alliance in running Green Open Homes events. The council also leads the Public Sector Climate Working Group, and participates in national and regional boards to share insights and expertise. The council (particularly elected members and the Leader of the council as well as senior officers) use these networks and individual opportunities to influence and lobby national policy and programmes.</p> <p><b><u>Engagement with stakeholders - What's next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council will continue to use its communications such as press articles, e-newsletter, website and social media to share best practice and encourage sustainable practices by businesses, and these messages may be combined with waste, transport and air quality themes.</li> <li>• The council is working with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to pilot their Blue Business Awards and businesses will be encouraged to take part in reviewing their impact on the water environment as part of wider climate and environment good practice.</li> <li>• Work in partnership with Wiltshire Climate Alliance, businesses, local councils and community groups towards a Wiltshire event to showcase sustainable practices and journeys towards decarbonisation. A particular aim is for businesses to increase visibility of net zero targets and action plans, including meaningful decarbonisation of their supply chains and plans for climate adaptation and resilience.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Longer term activity</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek to develop projects and identify funding, in partnership with key organisations, to deliver carbon reduction and climate adaptation projects</li> <li>• Ensure that existing networks and partnerships continue to benefit from knowledge sharing, as well as developing collaborative projects where this is appropriate and can add value to what organisations are doing individually</li> </ul>		
<b>Impact:</b>	<b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Low	

	<p><b>Overall impact:</b> High</p> <p><b>Priority:</b> High</p> <p><b>Rationale:</b> This deliverable primarily focuses on building capacity and fostering collaboration and lacks sufficient quantitative data on the types of projects that will be progressed to enable assessment of the carbon impact. However, as an enabling deliverable, it plays a critical role as the council cannot achieve carbon neutrality for Wiltshire without working in partnership with key local organisations.</p>
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Awareness and empowering; Resilient environment and society; Thriving economy and right skills; Capacity building and efficiency; Leading by example
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>
No KPI to date. Suggestions TBC:	
Businesses engaging with climate fund	
e-newsletter articles each quarter / year.	

X 5	Area of Focus:	Community Climate Action
<b>Deliverable:</b>	Empower Wiltshire communities to contribute towards climate action.	
<b>Outcome:</b>	Council carbon reduction; County-wide carbon reduction; Adaptation and Resilience	
<b>Governance:</b>	<p>Owner: Director, Environment; Head of Climate and Environment.</p> <p>Service lead: Climate Team – managers, and community engagement officer to be proposed.</p> <p>Stakeholders: Communications. HR Staff Engagement; Engagement and Partnerships. Waste services. GAPS team. Sustainable transport.</p>	
<b>Overview:</b>	<p>Effective communication and engagement with residents and community groups are essential as the council focuses on county-wide climate action and partnerships. The council aims to clarify where it can influence and support action, and where others should lead, with council support such as providing data and guidance on impactful, scalable actions.</p> <p>Area boards and town and parish councils offer key channels for communication and action, with many already including climate priorities in their action plans. Communications on climate action will continue through broad messaging via social media, press releases, and newsletters, while tangible engagement will focus on specific, place-based projects, like the Future Energy Landscapes project.</p> <p>Wiltshire’s Climate and Environment Forum serves as a sounding board for council initiatives, and the council will partner with relevant organisations to host events, such as the Climate and Environment Summer Showcase, to bring stakeholders together for action. Community Conversations and place-based groups will help develop local carbon reduction, energy generation, and adaptation projects. The council will also work with partners to explore how carbon literacy training can support county-wide action.</p> <p><b><u>Community climate action – What’s next for 2025</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to use the council's e-newsletter, social media, website and press articles to promote community action on climate change</li> </ul>	

- Explore climate awareness or training for communities
- A 'menu' of project ideas has been created for Area Boards, and this will be followed up with Area Boards to support climate and environment projects within the context of their annual action plans
- Explore how activity within Area Boards and good practice can be shared, and further guidance and support developed.
- Schedule a programme of topics for the Climate and Environment Forum to help shape the council's communications and projects
- Wiltshire Council will continue to work in partnership with Wiltshire Climate Alliance and Area Board groups to create events, building on the success of the 2024 Climate and Environment Summer Showcase, to bring together multiple stakeholders including residents, to share ideas and good practice, and generate tangible action to tackle key areas of emissions in Wiltshire.
- Roll out 'Green Scene' champions network, intranet site and resources to support staff to implement climate objectives in their workplace and at home.

**Longer term activity**

- Ensure that the council's website clearly explains how residents can get involved in implementation of climate actions within their communities, and contribute to the further development of the council's Climate Strategy delivery

<b>Impact:</b>	<b>Direct emissions reduction impact:</b> Low <b>Overall impact:</b> High <b>Priority:</b> High <b>Rationale:</b> This deliverable primarily focuses on building capacity and fostering collaboration and lacks sufficient quantitative data on the types of projects that will be progressed to enable assessment of the carbon impact. However, as an enabling deliverable, it plays a critical role by equipping communities, raising awareness, and fostering local ownership of climate solutions. These foundational efforts are essential for driving future, more impactful climate initiatives.	
<b>Co-benefits:</b>	Awareness and empowering; Resilient environment and society;	
<b>KPI:</b>	<b>Target:</b>	
X8 – social media engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website and social media engagement in response to climate campaigns (Total click-throughs on climate-related posts)</li> <li>• Reach (reflects times a post is read)</li> <li>• Engagement rate (reactions to a post in relation to views)</li> </ul>	Consistent level of engagement in relation to posts and press releases	
Review: consider adding a KPI to reflect e-newsletter articles each quarter / year.		
Review: consider adding a KPI to monitor funding secured to deliver community projects, perhaps via area board funding.		

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**21 January 2025**

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**Subject: Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025-2036**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Richard Clewer - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Military-Civilian Integration, Health and Wellbeing, Economic Development, Arts, Heritage, and Tourism**

**Key Decision: Non-Key**

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## **Executive Summary**

This paper presents the Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025-2036 to Wiltshire Council's Cabinet for approval. The strategy is also being presented to Swindon Borough Council's Cabinet for approval on 4 February 2025.

The government requires the production of an economic strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire as part of its policy to transfer the functions of local enterprise partnerships (LEP) to upper tier local authorities. The completion of the strategy was also a core funding condition for 2024/25. The purpose of the strategy is to present the strategic priorities required to deliver economic growth for the next ten years. It also sets the wider context for any future requirement to produce a 'local growth plan' that is, capital investment priorities requiring government funding for delivery or enabling works.

The functions of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) transferred on 1 April 2024 and the SWLEP team transferred to Wiltshire Council on 1 June 2024, operating as the Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit within Economy and Regeneration. There are joint governance arrangements across Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council to oversee the operation and management of the Business and Growth Unit including the establishment of a business growth board, known locally as the Economic Advisory Board (EAB). Its role is to act as the business voice for the area and comment on strategic economic plans. The EAB has been consulted along with officers and SWBGU business engagement groups.

The version of the strategy presented to Cabinet in appendix 1 is a pre-design version of the strategy.

## **Proposals**

That Cabinet approve and agree:

- 1) The Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025-2036; and
- 2) To delegate to the Corporate Director, Place, to sign off the designed copy of the strategy for publication.

**Reason for Proposals**

The production of an economic strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire is a government requirement.

**Parvis Khansari**  
**Corporate Director, Place**



## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Cabinet**

**21 January 2024**

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**Subject: Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025-2036**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Richard Clewer - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Military-Civilian Integration, Health and Wellbeing, Economic Development, Arts, Heritage, and Tourism**

**Key Decision: Non-Key**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. This paper presents the Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025-2036 to Wiltshire Council's cabinet for approval. The strategy is also being presented to Swindon Borough Council's cabinet for approval on 4 February 2025.

### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. The strategy aligns to the Council's priorities and objectives in its Business Plan because it seeks to deliver a thriving economy; supports the skills development and economic inclusion of people; and helps to build a sustainable environment.

### **Background**

3. This paper presents the Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025-2036 to Wiltshire Council's cabinet for approval. The strategy is also being presented to Swindon Borough Council's cabinet for approval on 4 February 2025.
4. The government requires the production of an economic strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire as part of its policy to transfer the functions of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) to upper tier local authorities. The completion of the strategy was also a core funding condition for 2024/25. The purpose of the strategy is to present the strategic priorities required to deliver economic growth for the next ten years. It also sets the wider context for any future requirement to produce a 'local growth plan' that is, capital investment priorities requiring government funding for delivery or enabling works.
5. The functions of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) transferred on 1 April 2024 and the SWLEP team transferred to Wiltshire Council on 1 June 2024, operating as the Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit within Economy and Regeneration. There are joint governance arrangements across Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council to oversee the operation and management of the Business and Growth Unit including the establishment of a business growth board, known locally as the Economic Advisory Board (EAB). Its role is to act as the business voice for the area and comment on strategic economic plans. The EAB has been consulted along with officers and SWBGU business engagement groups.

6. The version of the strategy presented to Cabinet in appendix 1 is a pre-design version.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

7. The strategy has been developed by the Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit in collaboration with officers at both Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council. Two closed consultation exercises were undertaken during its development, seeking the views of:
  - a. officers across a range of service areas;
  - b. two external business engagement groups: the Business Intelligence and Network Group and the Rural Economy Sector Group;
  - c. the Economic Advisory Board; and
  - d. The Leaders of both Council's through the joint governance arrangements for the Business and Growth Unit.
8. The consultations were undertaken to firstly: test the vision statement and strategic priorities to be included in the strategy; and secondly, to seek comments on the draft strategy document.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

9. The economic strategy is designed as an overarching framework setting out the area's economic growth priorities to assist with securing new or additional public and private sector investment. It does not include specific programmes for delivery, the detailed delivery plan will be a separate exercise following approval of the strategy. If new funding is secured, delivery will be designed to meet any safeguarding requirements by the relevant service area as needed.

### **Public Health Implications**

10. The strategy seeks to improve skills development, the creation of good quality jobs and encourage greater economic inclusion. In such a way, its delivery will support better health and wellbeing outcomes, support the creation of new jobs and improve the skills base of residents and workers.

### **Procurement Implications**

11. There are no procurement implications from the approval of the economic strategy. The strategy can be used as part of the evidence base to bid for funding but does not have any specific funding attached to it at this stage.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

12. The strategy provides a framework for the delivery of a a wide range of activity if funding is secured. The scope of the strategy is aimed to increase economic inclusion and social mobility across a broad range of groups and communities for example: those out of work or on low incomes or furthest from the workforce; raising educational aspirations where appropriate; supporting former armed service personnel and leavers into work; and enabling the sustainable economic growth of rural communities through better digital connectivity. Delivery of the strategy will also encourage employers to consider adopting more inclusive and flexible employment practices for example to people with special education needs and disabilities or with health issues to a support

their inclusion and social mobility. Delivery will extend across two local authorities and multiple service areas. The equalities impact of the delivery of the strategy therefore will be broad and outputs and impacts will be monitored according to respective local authority and service areas' equalities and funding requirements.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

13. Sustainable economic growth is a cross-cutting theme within the strategy. Examples include activities which will assist with reducing carbon emissions, support green construction techniques, encourage green skills development, support resource efficiency, and secure flood mitigation scheme investment.
14. The approval of the economic strategy will not directly result in energy consumption. The delivery of future projects will be subject to their own review and decision making.
15. The approval of the economic strategy will not directly result in carbon emissions. The delivery of future projects will be subject to their own review and decision making.
16. The approval of the economic strategy will not directly result in any environmental management risks. The delivery of future projects will be subject to their own review and decision making.
17. The strategy does not last longer than 20 years however projects implemented as a result of the strategy could be long term, and resilience to the impacts of climate change should be taken into consideration in project design.

### **Workforce Implications**

18. The approval of the economic strategy will not have any direct staffing implications. The delivery of future projects will be subject to their own review and decision making.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

19. Risk 1: The development and approval of the economic strategy is a government requirement. Failure to do so would mean that the core funding condition the Council agreed to when taking on the accountable body, and managing body role for LEP functions, would not have been met.
20. Risk 2: Swindon and Wiltshire's economic growth priorities will not be fully considered within the government's emerging policy framework and forthcoming comprehensive spending review, and the area may miss out government and private sector investment as a result.
21. Risk 3: reputational damage for Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council for failing to deliver a LEP core function following the transition of responsibilities to upper tier authorities.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

22. The economic strategy covers the existing functional market area of Swindon and Wiltshire with a review or refresh in three-years. The devolution agenda means that

the geographic coverage may change in the future and the review or refresh may need to be undertaken in two years.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no immediate financial implications from the approval of the strategy. The document sets out where government funding is needed to deliver the strategy effectively and where private investment will need to be sought. If any investment is secured it will go through the appropriate approval routes.

### **Legal Implications**

23. No legal implications have been identified.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

24. The work of the Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit operates under a shared governance structure with Swindon Borough Council and under a Service Level Agreement between the two councils. The draft strategy has been presented to the Joint Oversight Partnership which operates as the scrutiny function for the work of the Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit.

25. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Environment Select Committee will be briefed on the report on 16 January 2025.

### **Options Considered**

26. The production of the strategy is a government requirement.

### **Conclusions**

27. The strategy has been socialised and consulted on within both Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council, as well as a closed group of businesses and business representative organisations. It has been updated based on their feedback, and it is proposed for approval.

### **Parvis Khansari - Corporate Director, Place**

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### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 -Draft Economic Strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire 2025-2036  
December draft attached as a pre-design version.

### **Background Papers**

None

Innovators | Manufacturers | Producers | Guardians

## Emerging Economic Strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire 2025-2036

Pre-design copy  
December 2024



Swindon and Wiltshire  
BUSINESS AND GROWTH UNIT

Wiltshire Council

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For further information, please contact:

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## **Our Vision to 2036**

**To ensure all our communities benefit from inclusive and sustainable growth, making the Swindon and Wiltshire area world-renowned for its convergence of innovation, entrepreneurialism and great quality of life.**

Final draft for approval



## Foreword – Add photos of Leaders?

We are pleased to publish the Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy for 2025-2036 which presents our shared commitment to driving the sustainable and inclusive growth of the area. This strategy represents the next chapter of Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council working together on our common goals to deliver a better and thriving economy, a fairer and more resilient society, and providing our communities with greener and sustainable infrastructure.

Our geographic location underpins our competitive advantage and for decades the area has attracted innovators, manufacturers, producers, and defence and security experts. Our wonderful setting remains the foundation for our future economic growth. We open our doors to new investment, which is key to delivering jobs growth, attracting talent and ensuring we have vibrant and inclusive settlements and communities, and a great quality of life.

We have sectorial strengths and capabilities that align with the government's priorities in advanced engineering, creative industries, digital technologies, finance and professional services, as well as green industries. Moreover, we want to drive the development of our emerging clusters in life sciences and pharmaceuticals, defence, and cyber resilience positioning ourselves at the cutting edge of innovation, research and supply chain development. Our priority sectors will provide high-value jobs, secure additional investment and stimulate new business development across Swindon and Wiltshire.

To maximise our opportunities to deliver sustainable and inclusive growth we need to:

- Provide the infrastructure required to deliver economic growth;
- Make places work;
- Address skills gaps and demands to support economic growth and increase aspiration;
- Support the start-up, survival and growth of businesses with the potential to grow and deliver good quality products and services; and
- Harness research and innovation to underpin growth.

In this strategy, we have set out our ambitions and the priorities we want to deliver over the next decade. These can only be realised by securing the necessary additional public sector funding as the enabler. This in turn will unlock access to large scale, new private investment that will drive resilient, long-term economic growth and deliver greater, more inclusive outcomes for our residents and businesses. We have worked in collaboration to agree our priorities against the backdrop of the government's emerging growth policy framework and in anticipation of the 2025 spending review. We will keep this strategy under review to ensure we use our resources efficiently to contribute to national growth aspirations.

We are keen to explore the opportunities that devolution presents, allowing us to unlock new investment and increase decision-making at a local level to achieve improvements to transport, infrastructure resilience, and skills and education provision.

We are extremely proud of our area, our businesses, people and communities. Our economy has continued to grow despite difficult economic conditions in recent years. We know there is more to unlock, and the Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025-2036 provides a clear pathway for us to realise that potential.

Jim Robbins, Leader  
Swindon Borough Council

Richard Clewer, Leader  
Wiltshire Council



## Introduction to Swindon and Wiltshire

The Swindon and Wiltshire area prides itself for its long-standing economic resilience and breadth of economic growth assets.

Swindon has benefitted from being an attractive location for the global headquarters of internationally mobile companies and the town is a long-established location for the ICT, advanced engineering and manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and financial services sectors. As a result, it has out-performed similar towns of its size, far exceeding national average productivity rates.

Wiltshire is the sixth largest local authority area in the country and is proud of its sector strengths in advanced engineering and manufacturing, its defence and military presence. It is also home to internationally significant expertise in life sciences research and development, couched in an outstanding landscape and vibrant market town and rural economy.

Our central southern location, framed by the M4 to the north and by the A303 to the south, means we are a prime location in terms of access to London and the south east, to Bristol, Newport and Cardiff looking west and as an important entry point to the rest of the south west region and routes to and from the south coast ports and Avonmouth.

## Our approach

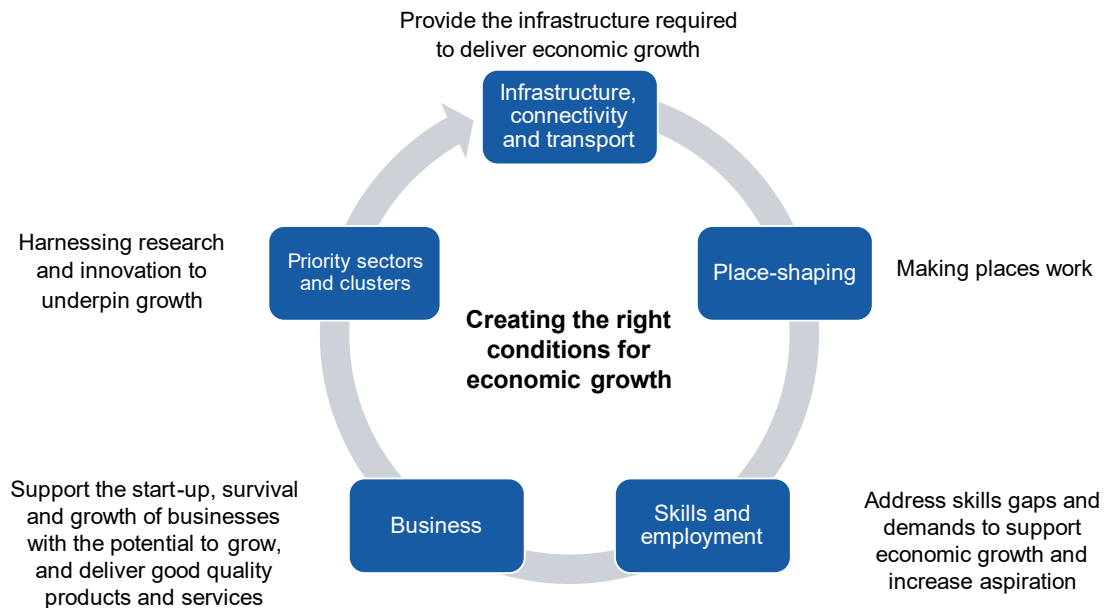
There is a framework of national and local strategies which forms the backdrop for the development of our local economic growth approaches. This strategy replaces the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Industrial Strategy which was published in March 2020. It represents the next chapter of Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council working together on our common goals to deliver a better and thriving economy, a fairer and resilient society, and communities underpinned by greener and sustainable infrastructure.

In doing so, we set out our priorities for economic growth and investment under five objectives: infrastructure; place-shaping; transport and connectivity; skills and employment; business; and priority sectors and cluster development. All five of these are underpinned by innovation activity and driving clean, productive growth.

To be successful, we will continue to work creatively to maximise the impact of local government resources and strive to secure additional private sector investment. We encourage government to deliver the conditions necessary for economic stability and growth through timely and joined up policy development and efficient funding mechanisms to unlock our growth potential. The economic strategy for Swindon and Wiltshire sits at the heart of a wide framework of national and local strategies, drawing together priorities to support the delivery of economic growth. The strategy clearly presents our goals alongside:

- what we want to deliver across Swindon and Wiltshire to enable growth to take place;
- what we need from government in order to deliver the strategy effectively;
- where we need public sector funding to undertake enabling work; and
- where we are looking to the private sector to invest.

## Our goals



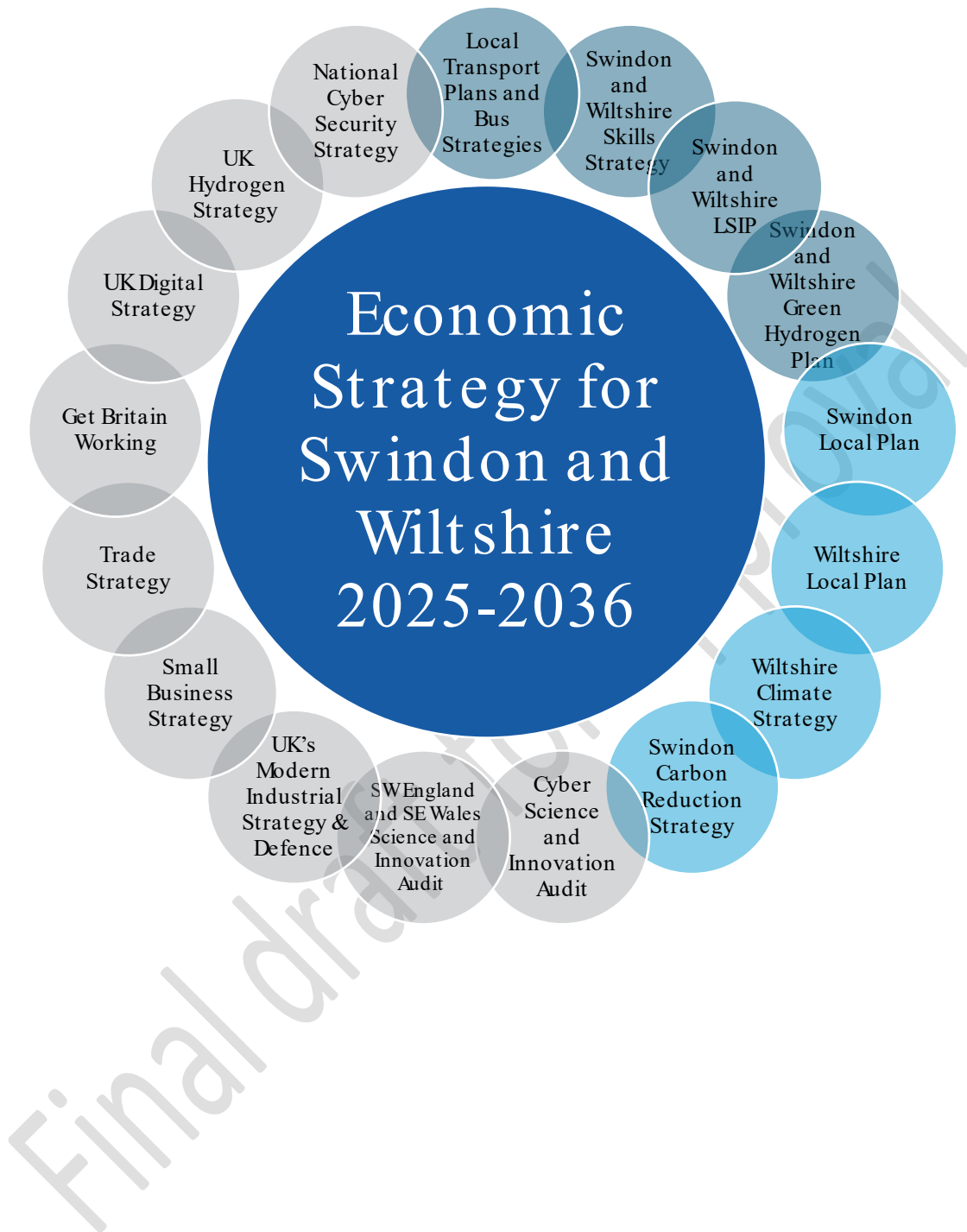
### Priority sectors and clusters

- Professional business services
- Advanced manufacturing and engineering
- Low carbon
- Life sciences
- Creative industries
- Digital ICT and cyber
- Defence

### Our productivity challenge

Our productivity performance varies greatly within the area; Wiltshire's long-term position relative to the national average has not kept pace and Swindon's recent performance, although strong, has shown signs of levelling out. This economic strategy has been developed to address this position and set the framework for longer-term sustainable economic growth.

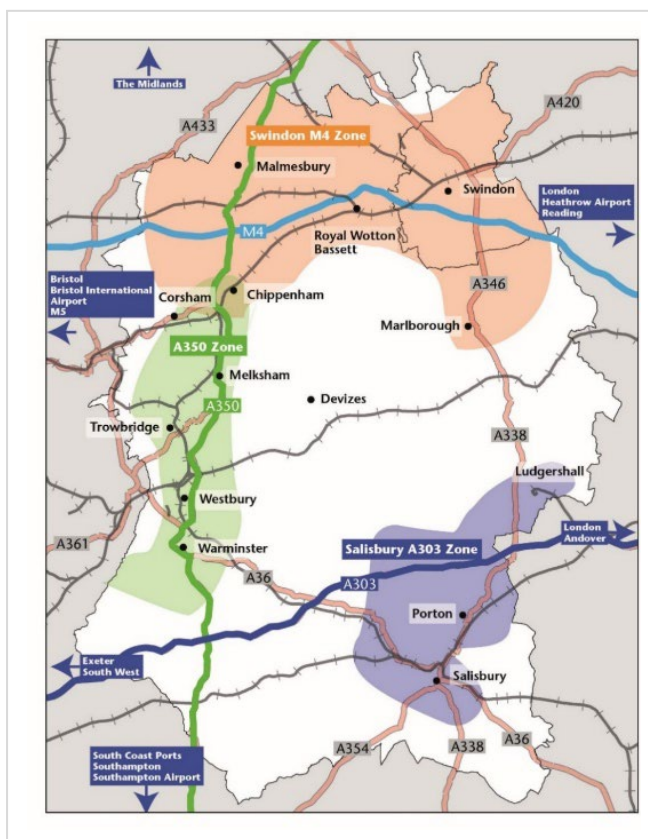
## National and local strategic backdrop



## Our Growth Zones

We have three growth zones which are the areas with the capacity for future growth and surrounding them, our wider rural communities. The growth zones are: Swindon and the M4, the A350, and Salisbury and the A303. Principal settlements in the area are Swindon, Chippenham, Trowbridge and Salisbury.

The Swindon and M4 growth zone is the largest and has the highest density of businesses. Swindon is the biggest settlement followed by Chippenham and other market towns include Corsham, and Malmesbury. Key sector strengths in this zone are: advanced engineering, financial services, pharmaceuticals and defence including cyber. The M4 underpins the importance of this zone in multiple ways including its role in transport, logistics and distribution. The zone is also well connected by rail especially east-to-west with a mainline route from London stopping at Swindon and Chippenham to Bristol and routes through to Cardiff and Swansea.



The A350 growth zone connects north and south Wiltshire by road and also benefits from the most railway stations. This growth zone is strong in advanced engineering and high value manufacturing, ICT and the visitor economy. Trowbridge is the county town, and other important settlements for economic activity and connectivity include Melksham, Westbury and Warminster. The A350 is one of the most important roads in Wiltshire; it is a primary north-south route with regional significance, connecting the south coast with the M4 and national motorway network. This growth zone connects to the Swindon M4 growth zone at Chippenham and Corsham.

Salisbury and the A303 growth zone excels in life sciences and defence technologies and can boast the largest concentration of MOD defence research in the UK and a significant life sciences

presence. The medieval city of Salisbury is the largest settlement with a rich history, attractive retail and visitor environment alongside the health research and technical expertise at the hospital's Foundation Trust. Military settlements in this zone include Bulford, Amesbury, Tidworth, Ludgershall, Porton and Boscombe Down. The A303 is a primary route in the area connecting southern England with the south west region, and this connectivity has established Amesbury as an important regional distribution centre. Salisbury is connected by rail through another direct route to London and through to the south west.

The rest of the Swindon and Wiltshire area which does not fall within a growth zone also plays an important role in our economy, and its diverse environment contributes 14% of total GVA. It has the capability to grow especially as the result of improvements in digital connectivity, roads, and better and timely connections to the national grid.

## Growth Zones snapshot

Growth Zone	% Total GVA	Employment top 3	% LSOAs in 20% most deprived in England, IMD	Deprivation domains LSOAs in 20% most deprived in England
Swindon-M4	60%	39% Professional, scientific and technical 11% Health 11% Retail	11%	19% Crime 18% Education and skills 14% housing and services
A350	14%	16% Manufacturing 14% Retail 11% Professional, scientific and technical	6%	18% housing and services
Salisbury-A303	12%	18% Professional, scientific and technical 11% Health 11% Retail	6%	20% education and skills 15% housing and services
Rest of area	14%	16% Manufacturing 14% Retail 11% Professional, scientific and technical	0%	44% housing and services 25% living environment

## Opportunities and barriers for economic growth

Our area performs well compared to the national average on a wide range of economic indicators, and we have identified opportunities where this performance can be developed further with the right mix of investment, ambition and creativity. That said, economic growth opportunities vary geographically, and some of our people, communities and sectors experience particular barriers.

### Opportunities for economic growth

- **Place:** renewing and regenerating our principal settlements, supporting the revival of our high streets, cultural, and visitor offer through greater and improved town centre living and better working environments. This will ensure Swindon and Wiltshire can support new growth and continue to attract investment and good quality employment. For example, Swindon is one of the UK's economic powerhouses, far exceeding the national average for output per hour worked and is an important economic growth asset in our area.
- **Infrastructure and transport:** we are a predominantly rural area which has an important role as part of the UK's strategic transport and logistics network. Investing in our strategic road and rail network would open-up access to new employment sites, tackle bottlenecks in our towns and support additional economic growth.
- **Skills:** improving the employability and employment prospects of our residents and workers will help deliver economic growth and increase the wellbeing of our people through access to good jobs, and the creation of new high value employment opportunities.
- **Priority sectors and clusters:** delivering strategic employment sites to drive the growth of our priority sectors, attracting new investors as well as extending Swindon's strengths in exporting. This includes opportunities to grow our emerging clusters in life sciences, defence and low carbon technology, and explore options to repurpose airfields for new employment uses.
- **Green growth:** offering lower-carbon travel aligned to new housing and employment opportunities underpinned by the development and delivery of Local Area Energy Plans. Access to a low carbon refuelling infrastructure for vehicles and investment in sustainable passenger transport would make it easier for people to access employment, education, housing and services, as well as reduce emissions and improve air quality.

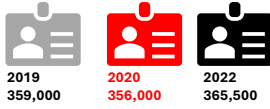
## Barriers to economic growth

- **Improving economic opportunity:** we have areas of nationally significant deprivation in our larger settlements, as well as dispersed deprivation in our rural areas which is harder to identify and to support. Social mobility and access to transport and services are issues and rural connectivity to centres of employment needs improvement. We have seen a rise in the number of workless households since 2022, a persistent number of residents who are not in work due to long term sickness, and constrained disposable household incomes.
- **Education:** We have areas where educational attainment is low, and we need to raise aspirations as well as increase participation in technical, vocational and higher education.
- **Infrastructure:** access to the national grid and connection capacity, within the necessary timescales, is a major challenge and hinders new investment and job creation in the area.
- **Investment:** access to the capital investment required for enabling works to attract private investment is constraining our economic growth potential and limiting the ability to bring forward key sites and new housing developments etc. In addition, the limited availability of angel networks and other private investment to support business scale-up is another limiting factor for economic growth, with regional investment deals being concentrated in the south east and Bristol.
- **Development constraints:** development challenges and costs, including environmental mitigation and infrastructure requirements in Wiltshire, are constraining the ability to attract investment.
- **Net Zero:** reducing carbon emissions from domestic properties is a significant issue, particularly in more rural areas which are off-grid. The cost of alternative low carbon heating options and retrofit, is proving to be a barrier to adoption.
- **Demography:** we have an ageing population and a reducing number of people of working age, which places pressure on recruitment and access to services. We also struggle to retain our young talent to live, learn and work in our area, particularly those who leave to study at university.
- **House price affordability:** access to good quality housing, as well as affordable housing, also impedes economic growth and tackling this issue is imperative, especially if we are to attract key workers, particularly in Wiltshire.
- **Image:** some of our town centres, which includes Swindon, are struggling to attract inward investment because of their poor-quality environment.

## Our economy

### Business and output

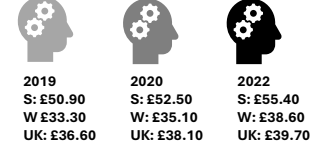
#### Employment



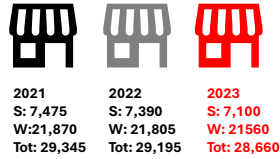
#### GVA (inflation adjusted)



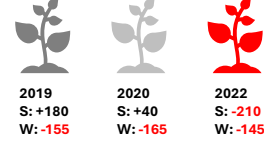
#### GVA per hour worked



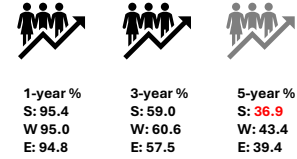
#### Business count - enterprises



#### Net business births vs deaths

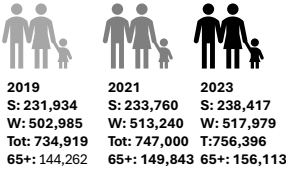


#### 5-year business survival rate 2018-23

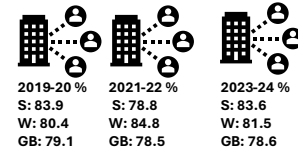


### People

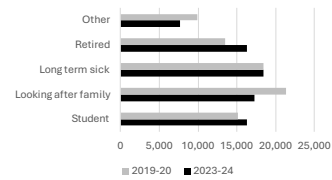
#### Population: forecast 800,000 in 2043



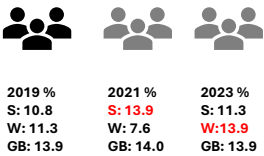
#### Economic activity rates



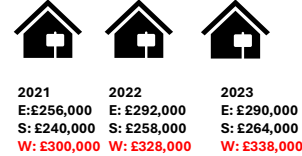
#### Economic inactivity 2024: 77,700



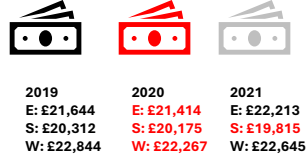
#### Workless households: 22,900



#### Median house price



#### Disposable household income



Priority Sector	Employment	Business Count
Professional Business Services	40,000	6,355
Creative Industries	16,000	2,825
Low Carbon	20,000	1,020
Life Sciences	14,000	90
Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	36,000	1,975



## Infrastructure

*Provide the infrastructure required to deliver economic growth*

Creating the conditions to realise our economic growth potential by having the right physical, digital and transport infrastructure in place to meet the needs of our settlements, businesses, residents and workers and welcome new investors into Swindon and Wiltshire.

### Our priorities

**National grid constraints:** tackle grid capacity constraints and connection times, which restrict economic growth and impede new investment in our area.

**Digital connectivity:** improve digital connectivity for hard-to-reach communities to improve their productivity and inclusion in a digitally enabled future.

**Employment land supply:** improve access to sufficient and suitable employment land so businesses can expand and attract new, higher value employment into the area.

**Roads:** tackle congestion and carbon emissions on our roads and improve the flow of goods and people especially on primary routes between the north and the south of our area, and along the A303. This includes continuing our programme of road dualling and town bypasses.

**Rail:** improve rail provision and open new railway stations to support better connectivity and greener options for travel to work, education and tourism and leisure purposes.

**Passenger transport:** extend the provision of greener passenger transport options and services to improve connectivity and access to employment centres.

**Low carbon energy and refuelling infrastructure:** reduce the carbon footprint of the area through the development and delivery of the Local Area Energy Plans for Swindon and for Wiltshire, and work with neighbouring areas to enable the future fuels refuelling infrastructure, including electric vehicles and hydrogen, to be delivered.

### Our achievements

**Digital connectivity:** overall digital connectivity in our area is good, however, there are rural areas which have consistently fallen behind. Project Gigabit funding has been secured for delivery in south Wiltshire and more recently for north Wiltshire through a regional contract.

**Employment land:** secured the acquisition of the former Honda site as a strategic investment location by Panattoni with the aim that the site will be developed for transport and logistics, and potentially some manufacturing uses. In addition, we have capital investment prospectuses for sites across Wiltshire to attract private and public sector investment which will create new jobs and support economic growth.

**Road:** sections of the A350 have been dualled around Chippenham, as well as sections of the A420 between Swindon and Oxford, which have unlocked new housing and employment sites. In addition, we have invested in improvements at Junctions 15, 16 and 17 of the M4 to ease traffic flow and enable the New Eastern Villages and Wichelstowe schemes to progress. We have also invested in the use of smart town technologies to improve the movement and flow of people and traffic, reducing congestion and carbon emissions in Salisbury.

**Rail:** we have developed a Rail Strategy prioritising those new stations with the greatest potential for unlocking economic growth which has led to the submission of the business case for the Devizes Parkway station to Restoring our Historic Railways, and feasibility work on reopening Corsham station. We are active partners in England's Economic Heartland and the

15



Western Gateway sub-national transport bodies' work on respective rail strategies including a new direct pilot route between Swindon and Oxford.

**Passenger transport:** we have invested in Swindon's new bus station, active travel hub, Salisbury station forecourt interchange and improvements at Chippenham station.

### What we want to deliver



**Rail:** improvements to Swindon's railway station and environs as the welcome point to the town, better connecting the development opportunities to the north of the station with the centre. We want to secure investment needed for improvements to the northern entrance to Salisbury Station, a new station at Devizes Parkway and further develop plans for a station at Corsham.

**Employment land:** we want to consider bringing forward additional employment sites along the M4 and A350. At Junction 16, this would include increasing the presence of green technology manufacturing, and testing use cases for additional investment at Junction 17 and along the A350. In addition, we want to protect key employment land allocations from alternative development in the area, including airfields such as Kemble, Boscombe, and Colerne and extend employment land allocations to respond to future requirements to ensure the area's economic growth potential is realised.

**Energy planning:** produce and deliver Local Area Energy Plans for Swindon and for Wiltshire presenting the delivery pathway for further decarbonisation within the area; including increasing the capacity for renewable and low carbon energy production which can connect to the national distribution network.

## What we need from government

Ensure the investment required to re-enforce the national grid takes place promptly to enable key investments to proceed across our area.

Ensure we have the water, waste and sewerage infrastructure and energy resilience to enable inclusive and connected growth to take place.

A single pot allocation from DfT, MHCLG and Homes England to enable us to bring forward strategic sites such as Knowledge Central in Swindon, maximise the electrification of the mainline west of Chippenham to unlock housing on brownfield land and overcome the viability gap for private sector investors.

Establish a closer collaborative relationship with agencies, such as National Highways and the Environment Agency, on the development and delivery of our economic growth aspirations to smooth the delivery of investment priorities from concept and design, through to completion.

Government to fund the business cases for growth priorities for Swindon, which includes Junction 16 of the M4, as well as for development at Junction 17 of the M4 in Wiltshire, and consideration of further investment to support economic growth. These would enable the Swindon-M4 growth zone to become the growth focus for southern England.

We are keen to establish a close relationship with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation regarding the best use of military land assets to support economic growth, recognising the unique local research and development assets and relationships in the area. In particular, we want to protect the airfields for employment land opportunities.

## Place-shaping

### *Making places work*

Deliver vibrant communities through the regeneration and renewal of town centres and commercial areas, creating new employment opportunities and attracting younger people to live and work in our area.

## Our priorities

**Town centre investment:** regenerate sites which are vacant or no longer fit for purpose and attract investment which creates new good quality employment opportunities.

**Renew:** the use of our heritage assets for economic, cultural and leisure purposes.

**Revitalise high streets:** enhance the attractiveness of our places by developing a broader retail and night-time offer alongside enabling greater town centre living and inclusion which is supported by active travel plans.

**New homes:** we want to encourage greater town centre living as part of our sustainable approach to place-shaping priorities. We will also work with government to consider the constraints Wiltshire faces in responding to the additional new homes requirement in future local plans.

**Affordable homes:** to enable lower paid workers and young people to live near to work.

**Green construction:** embrace new green construction techniques and reduce the carbon footprint of delivering our capital investment priorities and developing new skills.

**Resilience:** improve the flood defences in our major towns to ensure the resilience of our town centres and provide improvements in green, healthy spaces and enhanced amenities for residents and visitors to enjoy.

**Premises:** encourage the provision of good quality business and office accommodation and premises in our town centres and rural workspaces.

## Our achievements

**High streets:** we secured Future High Street Fund investment in Swindon, Trowbridge and Salisbury which has unlocked private sector investment, regenerated town centres and improved access.

**Town centre renewal:** Towns Fund investment in Swindon has unlocked Kimmerfields, the town's flagship regeneration scheme, the Carriage Works and public realm works to facilitate connectivity to ensure the town centre is a more attractive investment opportunity.

**Heritage Action Zone:** this is a catalyst for Swindon's historic railway area becoming a cohesive heritage destination and innovation hub developing a clear sense of place within the town.

**Master planning:** we have refreshed and extended the Trowbridge masterplan, developed a masterplan for Chippenham and the Salisbury Central Area Framework as guides for future development, making these settlements more vibrant, attractive and sustainable places to live, work and visit.

**The Wiltshire Towns Programme:** this has funded town councils to drive footfall and fill vacant premises with new and expanding business activity in the heart of settlements.

**Area identity:** the Wiltshire Marque has been developed alongside a 'Heritage Trail and Events' app to increase awareness of locally produced goods, improve the visitor experience, drive new leisure and tourism trips, and increase footfall across the county.

**Flood mitigation:** Salisbury Riverpark has been completed to better manage and mitigate flooding in the heart of the city, protecting the integrity of activity further downstream as well as regenerating a central section of the city as an attractive amenity.

**New homes:** Phase 2 of Kimmerfields will deliver 400 high quality homes in the centre of Swindon based on the infrastructure we have delivered to enable it to come forward

**Natural capital:** we have baselined the value of our natural capital and are seeking ways to embed its consideration in decision making whilst supporting economic growth and enabling new investment to take place.

### What we want to deliver

We have identified our list of priorities which we want to bring forward, or enable, with private sector investment. These will transform our settlements as attractive places to live and work, unlock further employment opportunities and deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth, drive innovation and improve quality of life including enhancing opportunities to develop our creative, art and cultural amenities. Our priority schemes are at different levels of maturity and encompass both urban and rural locations. We want to access the capital investment to progress these aspirations as well as secure funding to develop our business cases through to delivery. They include proposals for:

**Town centres:** we want to continue investment in town centres;

**Renewal:** we want to deliver neighbourhood renewal schemes working with Homes England building in greater flexibility to help facilitate delivery;

**Master planning:** we want to continue our master planning development as well as access the capital funding required to enable their delivery.

**New homes:** to deliver new homes, including affordable homes, and explore the options for new settlements to cater for the future needs of our area. This includes supporting the development of our priority sectors and emerging clusters by aligning new and additional employment with the provision of new homes and sustainable travel options.

**Sustainability and resilience:** our priorities include investing in additional river park developments to manage the risk of flooding alongside creating attractive amenities for residents and visitors to enjoy. Our priorities will also seek to use green construction techniques and drive the development of green skills within our workforce.



### What we need from government

We need to secure large-scale public sector investment for enabling works to attract private sector investment to bring forward our priorities, specifically we need a single pot allocation and local determination under our current partnership working and through future devolution plans. This includes securing both capital investment and project management funding to continue our master planning and development priorities; continue investment in town centres; and deliver neighbourhood renewal schemes,

Working with departments we want to:

- undertake flood mitigation forecasting and bring forward schemes with the Environment Agency;
- work with Homes England on an affordable housing plan and for land remediation to bring developments forward;
- work with Network Rail (Department of Transport) and UKRI (Department of Science, Innovation and Technology) to maximise investment opportunities across landholdings to deliver Knowledge Central in Swindon; and
- have a clear planning framework, supported by policies that enable economic growth to take place by supporting the delivery of new employment land; facilitating access to clean energy; meeting housing needs; and proportionately balancing nature and the environment to facilitate delivery.

## **Skills and employment**

*Address skills gaps and demands to support economic growth and increase aspiration.*

Address the imbalance between skills demand and supply to improve the performance of our businesses and increase economic inclusion. This will be achieved through improving access to good employment opportunities for which residents and workers are appropriately skilled to perform; raising educational aspirations in areas where attainment is low; increasing participation in further and higher education; and delivering good quality careers advice.

### **Our priorities**

Support the upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce to meet the needs of employers.

Strengthen our engagement with employers to better understand their future skills needs.

Encourage employers to commit to invest in the training and development of staff and inclusive recruitment practices.

Raise aspirations and increase social mobility to improve educational outcomes.

Support our residents to access sustained employment focussing on young people aged 16-25 and those with health issues, disabilities and other wider barriers.

### **What we want to deliver**

Improve young people's progression into sustained employment post-16 education.

Improve the pathways for technical and vocational training, including short courses, to meet sector needs.

Encourage employers to invest in training and development to upskill and reskill their workforce.

Increase the opportunities for the economically inactive to enter work through encouraging employers to engage in employment programmes and help meet skills demands.

Engage employers in programmes which support economic growth through improving employee health and well-being working with public health, local hospitals and Integrated Care Boards.

Provide good quality careers advice for people of all ages.

Support higher level skills progression through increasing local provision and raise its profile amongst employers.

Work with providers and employers to maximise the levy to deliver greater uptake and achievement of skills and training opportunities.

Work with employers to identify those sectors where apprenticeships are the best pathway to address high demand sector needs.

Maintain local evidence base and business skills engagement to help inform national as well as local skills delivery programmes.



Explore additional skills development pathways for roles in critical high demand occupations including the education and health care settings, professional scientific and technical and manufacturing industries.

Explore pathways to enable migrants in our area, where English is not their first language, to secure roles which they are qualified to perform.

Strengthen our higher education offer and build on our existing relationships with universities outside of our area.



### What we need from government

Establish a direct link into Skills England to help inform and deliver government policy and programmes taking into account both local and national priorities.

Commitment to integrate the health and work agenda through joined up commissioning between Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Health, and Department for Education.

Commitment to multi-year funding to ensure longevity of delivery to maximise outcomes.

Clearly outline employers' role in implementing the government's skills reforms and delivery framework taking into consideration different business sizes and capacities.

Ensure there is clear and strong messaging between the National Careers Service, Job Centres and other sources of careers provision to ensure local provision is effective.

## Business

*Support the start-up, survival and growth of businesses with the potential to grow and deliver good quality products and services.*

Enable businesses to reach their potential and achieve productive and greener growth through the delivery of good quality business information, advice, guidance, and routes to investment.

### Our priorities

Build and co-ordinate the network of business support provision to simplify routes to access advice and cross-referral opportunities to meet the needs of business and deliver positive outcomes.

Broaden access to investment finance including venture capital and patient capital through wider partnership working with national and private sources of finance.

Encourage businesses to invest in leadership and management training to build resilience and respond to new opportunities as well as tech adoption skills to transform their operations and maximise their productivity, growth and digital transformation, for example, generative AI, cloud-based tech, automation, and e-commerce applications.

Recognise and respond to the specific needs of rural businesses and their opportunities to thrive enabled by digital connectivity and accessible business support services.

Raise the profile of the area as an advantageous and attractive location to new and overseas investors aligned to our place-shaping and infrastructure investments working with the Department for Business and Trade and regional opportunities.

Encourage business to adopt greener business practices and processes.

Foster innovation and increase productivity through working with our university and research organisations to commercialise and adopt new technology, ideas and business operations including Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and engagement in specialist sector development initiatives.

Enable the sustainable growth of the visitor economy to offset the slow economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Streamline the way in which businesses engage with council services to facilitate their growth ambitions.

Explore ways in which commissioning and procurement spend of the public sector in the area can be opened up to a greater proportion of local business and share best practice through our business networks.

### What we want to deliver

Maintain the delivery of the Growth Hub as well as extend its reach to engage with businesses in communities which are harder to support, for example, land-based and rural businesses, and minority communities.



Extend the use of our Growth Hub resources to co-ordinate and raise awareness of business schemes including broadband vouchers, low carbon energy programmes and retrofit schemes.

Bring forward new avenues to finance working with the British Business Bank and establish new venture capital and angel investor networks.

Continue to support inward investment activities working with the Department for Business and Trade.

Maintain our business engagement networks to ensure we are listening to, and responding to, changing business conditions.

Continue to develop skills through close working relationships with skills delivery programmes and education providers including supporting the delivery of Skills Bootcamps and Career Hub priorities, and with Public Health on promoting healthy workplaces and wellbeing practices to our business community.

Working across services, share our knowledge on the demand for appropriate employment land, commercial and office space provision and help inform the forward pipeline of investment needs.

Build on the research we undertook with the University of West of England to identify the issues which rural businesses face in a post-pandemic living and working environment.



### What we need from government

We need multi-year funding settlements for the delivery of nationally funded programmes to be delivered locally. This includes:

- a 3-to-5-year UKSPF funding settlement from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to tackle issues which restrict the growth of 'every-day' businesses and enhance the functioning of communities and rural areas;
- a 3-to-5-year funding commitment for Growth Hub provision by the Department for Business and Trade; and
- a 3-to-5-year funding allocation to support the continued working relationship with the Department for Business and Trade for inward investment activity, to refresh the

promotional materials and website content to help to attract new and overseas investors to locate in our area.

Final draft for approval

## Priority growth sectors and emerging clusters

### *Harnessing research and innovation to underpin growth*

Enable the expansion of our priority sectors and specialist clusters by creating the right conditions for growth and investment.

### Our priority sectors

**Advanced engineering:** we have strategic sites which could extend our existing expertise in advanced engineering and high value manufacturing activities. These include the 350-acre Panattoni Park in Swindon and the future potential of land at Junctions 16 and 17 of the M4, and sites along the A350 growth zone.

**Creative industries:** our creative industry assets are wide ranging and include plans for the centre of Swindon to become a creative hub comprising film, dance, theatre and art alongside content creation and design. Plans are in place for a new soundstage studio on Science Museum Group's campus in Wroughton. In addition, we have a strong base of design, architecture and advertising and marketing professionals operating in the area

**Digital technologies:** we are keen to grow our digital technologies sector from the nascent Tech Trowbridge cluster which focusses on gaming and esports, through to the development and application of digital technologies for wider industry use such as defence technologies and drones, data centres and cyber resilience applications.

**Financial and professional services:** Swindon is a key location for financial services sector representing 7% of total employment, which is 4.5 times greater than the average for England and over double that of London (3.2%), it is home to big names including Nationwide and Zurich. We want to retain and grow this specialism.

**Green industries:** We are home to innovators in sustainable technologies and aim to extend activity in green construction and low carbon and renewable energy generation developing the skills for the future to meet our net zero ambitions. Swindon is home to the Innovation Centre for Applied Sustainable Technologies (iCAST), a joint collaboration between the universities of Bath and Oxford to drive forward innovation and commercial application of groundbreaking research in sustainable chemicals and chemical engineering. Its research gateway for businesses based in the UK and overseas is based at the Carriage Works in Swindon.

## Our emerging clusters

**Life sciences:** Porton in Wiltshire is a government designated Life Sciences Opportunity Zone with international strengths in vaccinology. It is home to research and innovation activity undertaken by the UK Health and Security Agency alongside a growing cluster of life sciences businesses at the Porton Science Campus. In addition, there is complimentary activity in the pharmaceuticals sector in Swindon and Chippenham.

**Defence cluster:** Wiltshire has a strong military history based on its Army and Royal Air Force presence. We are part of the defence supply chain through our precision and advanced engineering expertise and we are working with partners in western England to map our defence cluster which includes advanced manufacturers, cyber defence and the burgeoning space industry 'Space West', alongside Ministry of Defence (MOD) assets in Corsham. As part of this work, we want to create collaborative pathways for small and medium sized enterprises as a route into the defence supply chain and links through to the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA).

**Defence estates:** we are keen to establish a close relationship with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation regarding the best use of military land assets to support economic growth, recognising the unique local research and development assets and relationships present in the area. In particular, we want to protect the airfields for employment land opportunities.

**Cyber network:** we are continuing to build the network of cyber defence businesses and professionals working across industries through the Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Cluster as part of the UK's Cyber Cluster Collaboration, building on the presence of MOD Corsham.

## What we want to deliver

We will encourage closer collaboration with, and between, businesses and universities and research organisations to create more spin-offs, enable the commercialisation of research, and attract inward investment and new innovation-active firms into the area. This is expected to lead to the creation of high value jobs, helping to increase productivity, and secure greater investment in research and development.

We will work with the private sector to deliver future phases of the Porton Science Park to attract additional investors to the area which are working on national health security research programmes. This will include links through to Salisbury Health Education and Technology project (HEAT).

The Salisbury HEAT project aims to create a sustainable, integrated and environmentally sensitive, net zero carbon development around Salisbury District Hospital. In doing so it will bring together new education, training and research activities with new hospital facilities, deliver research and development activity, and open-up new supply chain and employment opportunities in the city and more widely.

We will work with the Science Museum Group to enable it to continue to deliver its master plan for its Wroughton site as a low carbon technology research and innovation campus.

We will work with the Institute for Sustainability on the consolidation of iCAST's presence in Swindon and surrounding region, expand the number of universities and industrial partners in its cluster and make iCAST the go to place for companies working in sustainable chemical technologies. Public and private investment will be required to build a 5,000m<sup>2</sup> state-of-the-art facility employing 50 technical staff that will allow it to support companies with promising sustainable technologies to scale up both regionally and nationally.

Creation of a new knowledge cluster in the heart of Swindon, 'Knowledge Central', anchored by the Carriage Works and presence of UKRI, which will attract new innovation-led businesses and research organisations into the centre of the town.

Explore regional working opportunities to deliver wider business support and innovation programmes such as the Made Smarter Programme and Place-Based Innovation Impact Accelerators (PBIAA).

Work with the providers we identified under the infrastructure objective to overcome the barriers to sustainable economic growth and bring forward our priorities.



### What we need from government?

We want to work with UKRI to maximise the benefits we have of the research councils being based in Swindon, and the role it can play as part of the development of the Knowledge Central. Through our engagement activities we will disseminate and encourage our business community to engage in innovation calls, programmes and research initiatives to help build the local research and innovation ecosystem.

We seek capital investment for business case development and the enabling works needed to secure the private investment required to deliver these priorities.

## **Governance, monitoring and evaluation**

### **Governance**

To ensure intended outcomes are reached, Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council will work together to deliver their sustainable economic growth priorities through the joint governance arrangements established for the Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit which covers many of the functions of the former Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership. These will continue whilst devolution discussions with government mature and future delivery pathways are agreed and established.

Successful implementation will require close collaboration between local and national government, local businesses, public services, universities, regional partnerships, and other local organisations. Collaborations to deliver improvements reaching beyond the boundaries of Swindon and Wiltshire, will require new joint governance arrangements to be agreed to oversee delivery.

### **Monitoring**

We will develop an implementation plan to frame the delivery of this strategy covering the next 10 years, setting out clear milestones, actions, intended outputs and outcomes, timescales, roles, and responsibilities. We will also develop and maintain a risk register. We will monitor progress against key milestones and produce an end-of-year report to ensure that we are progressing work to achieve our strategic objectives.

The Swindon and Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025-36 will be used to guide the allocation of future funding streams including applications to, or allocations of, future local growth funds, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other investment and resources which may become available in the future. The list of priorities and actions outlined in this strategy is not exhaustive and there may be other activities of strategic importance that are currently in progress, in planning stages, or which may arise in the future.

### **Evaluation**

We will develop an evaluation process to assess progress against the objectives outlined in this strategy. This will involve setting a set of key performance indicators (KPIs), which will be monitored and reported to government according to its funding requirements as well as through usual local authority performance and monitoring arrangements.

We will undertake a three-year review of this economic strategy which will include the production of an updated local economic assessment for the area.

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**21 January 2025**

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**Subject: Wiltshire Council's Housing Board Annual Report to Cabinet**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Phil Alford - Cabinet Member for Housing**

**Key Decision: Non Key**

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## **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to update Cabinet regarding the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board (WCHB) between October 2023 and November 2024.

The primary role of WCHB is to develop and approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan and then to ensure that the Plan is being implemented by the HRA Housing Management Services (HMS) and provide scrutiny to and seek assurance from the service.

Throughout the year, WCHB is regularly updated about the HRA budget position, HRA Scorecard (key performance indicators), and other key activities and issues across the service.

This Annual Report was presented to WCHB at the AGM on 27 November 2024. It will be presented to the Environment Select Committee (ESC) on 14 January 2025. It is being presented to the Cabinet on 21 January 2025.

WCHB is in its third cycle of 4 years, linked to the council's local electoral cycle; this cycle commenced after elections in May 2021 and will run until May 2025.

## **Proposal**

To note this Annual Report.

## **Reason for Proposal**

WCHB Terms of Reference require an Annual Report to be presented to WCHB AGM and Cabinet.

**Lucy Townsend**  
**Chief Executive**



## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Cabinet**

**21 January 2025**

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**Subject: Wiltshire Council's Housing Board Annual Report to Cabinet**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Phil Alford - Cabinet Member for Housing**

**Key Decision: Non Key**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. In accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Housing Board, to update Cabinet regarding the activities of Wiltshire Council's Housing Board (WCHB) between October 2023 and November 2024 and provide an overview of the activities and performance across the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) service.

### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. This report supports the Business Plan 2022 to 2032, in particular our mission to ensure 'The people of Wiltshire are empowered to live full, healthy and enriched lives', 'Our communities continue to be beautiful and exciting places to live', 'Our local economy thrives and is supported by a skilled workforce' and 'We lead the way in how councils and counties mitigate the climate challenges ahead'. Additionally, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) actions support: 'We have vibrant, well-connected communities', 'We ensure decisions are evidence-based', 'We live well together', 'We have the right housing', 'We take responsibility for the environment' and 'We are on the path to carbon neutral (net zero)', and more around supporting vulnerable customers and supporting the local economy.

### **Background**

3. The current WCHB was appointed between May and July 2021 following a recruitment process and interviews by the Cabinet Member for Housing and senior officers. WCHB meets bi-monthly to consider all matters relating to the delivery of the HRA Business Plan and the activity of Housing Management Services (HMS). The Board considers policy, performance, strategy, and high-level operational issues relating to the delivery of that service.
4. Development and Investment ('Place') Sub-Committee covers: investment programme, asset management plan, design guide (including climate change), garage strategy, sheltered housing strategy, development programme, audit, regeneration strategy (including better use of stock) and local plan policies as consultee (including Neighbourhood Development Plans).
5. Finance and Policy ('Pounds') Sub-Committee covers: business plan, income (including bad debt), rents and service charges, budgets, efficiency and audit.



6. Performance and Risk ('People') Sub-Committee covers: operational policies, key performance indicators (including benchmarking) in the HRA Scorecard, challenge and change group (scrutiny) reports, risk register, community and resident engagement, regulatory framework, customer satisfaction, service development (for example, voids process and specification), audit, annual report and TPAS (tenant participation advisory service).

## **Main Considerations for the Council**

### **Context**

#### **New Regulatory Agenda**

7. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) plays a crucial role in overseeing the new Regulatory Framework for local authority social housing. Its primary responsibility is to ensure that housing providers comply with legal and regulatory standards focusing on tenant safety, service quality, and value for money. Under the new framework, the Regulator enforces stricter accountability, including regular inspections, tenant feedback, and the monitoring of repairs and maintenance standards. By holding local authorities to higher standards, the Regulator is aiming to drive improvements in the housing sector. This enhanced scrutiny ensures that tenants live in safe, well-maintained homes while fostering transparency, trust, and better overall service delivery from housing providers.
8. From April 2024, the RSH introduced an inspection regime for all social landlords based on a revised set of 'Consumer Standards'.
9. These standards are:
  - The Safety and Quality Homes Standard
  - Neighbourhood and Community Standard
  - Tenancy Standard
  - Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
10. The RSH will inspect large landlords (over 1,000 stock) at least once every four years and publish gradings as follows:

<b>Grading</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>C1</b>	Our judgement is that overall the landlord is delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord has demonstrated that it identifies when issues occur and puts plans in place to remedy and minimise recurrence.
<b>C2</b>	Our judgement is that there are some weaknesses in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and improvement is needed.

<b>C3</b>	Our judgement is that there are serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards and significant improvement is needed.
<b>C4</b>	Our judgement is that there are very serious failings in the landlord delivering the outcomes of the consumer standards. The landlord must make fundamental changes so that improved outcomes are delivered.

### Housing Ombudsman

11. A co-regulatory approach between the Housing Ombudsman and RSH has been adopted. A statutory Complaint Handling code now applies requiring streamlined, two-stage complaint processes, clear timescales and transparent reporting. The Ombudsman will monitor compliance, and non-compliance could result in public Complaint Handling Failure orders. This aims to improve resolution rates and address barriers to tenant complaints.
12. A noticeable shift in the way the Housing Ombudsman is reviewing complaints has been noted by the council and confirmed amongst our partner social housing providers of the more rigour and investigation that the Ombudsman is now giving to all complaints.

### Cost of Living Pressure

13. We continue to support tenants who are struggling with cost-of-living pressures and utility prices. Support is provided via our Tenancy Sustainment team who have access to various funds which offer financial support. In the last 12 months we have completed 703 cases and attained £844,530 in financial gains for our tenants.

### Inflation

14. The CPI rate of inflation dropped over this reporting period. However within the key area of property maintenance the cost of materials and services continued to rise above the CPI rate adding budget pressure. Much of the activity in this area is non-discretionary and providing good quality, well maintained and safe homes for our tenants is a regulatory requirement. Therefore, the inflationary increases result in increased levels of spending across all areas of maintenance, which then exerts pressure and creates challenges in all other areas of the budget.

### HRA Business Plan Pressure

15. All of the pressures described so far collectively exert pressure on the HRA Business Plan. Rising costs of building, maintaining and improving the housing stock have an impact on the long-term financial performance of the service. The general requirement to improve the standard of housing and the relationship we, the provider, has with our tenants requires increase in spend on both maintenance activity and staff resources. These increases need to be delivered within a comparatively static level of income from rent, with increases in income not meeting the increase in demands.

## Prioritised action plan

16. In response to the new regulatory regime and changes across the sector, the service has been working to improve the following areas in a consolidated HRA Action plan:

- Addressing gaps in service provision.
- Increased the outward reach by engaging more with sector partners and professional organisations (eg: HouseMark, Advantage Southwest, Local providers)
- Assurance re performance and compliance
- Managing our reputation and profile.
- Complaints
- Data and insight improvements

## Overview of Key Achievements over the past 12 months

### **17. HRA Action Plan**

The service has amalgamated several action plans into one master action plan (HRA Action Plan). This incorporates all areas of our business and is reviewed periodically by our Housing Board for progress.

### **18. Compliance data review by Savills**

The service commissioned Savills to undertake a comprehensive data review of all compliance activity against the regulatory requirements. The result was a high degree of assurance that the council's data is in good standing with only very few queries raised and now actioned.

### **19. Electrical Safety Testing Improvements**

Previously, the service undertook a 5 yearly Electrical Safety inspection programme, however, some due in year 5 of our cyclical programmes were going over the 5-year anniversary of the last inspection. This has now been addressed and all inspection are now within the 5-year cycle. As a result of the changes, our compliance has risen from 90% to almost 99% compliance.

### **20. Damp and Mould Cases**

The sector has seen a huge increase in the number of reported damp or mould cases and Wiltshire Council is no exception. The service has now created a system where all reports of damp and mould are now handled in the case management system. Cases are categorised and severity rated and the service has created a robust in-house inspection survey carried out by surveyors on mobile devices. Active cases have reduced through 2024 due to the categorisation process where cases move from "active" cases to "monitoring" cases and where necessary to "Tenancy" cases, depending on each individual case.

### **21. Compliance Audit programme**

The service has established a regular review of all compliance activity carried out by South West Audit Partnership (SWAP). Gas Safety, Fire Safety and Housing Rents have been completed this period. Gas Safety received a "Reasonable Assurance" with 1 x minor action. Fire Safety received a "Reasonable Assurance" with only 2 x minor actions. Housing Rents received a "Substantial Assurance" with only 1 x minor action to resolve.

## **22. HouseMark Mock Inspection**

The service commissioned HouseMark to carry out an inspection against the RSH Consumer Standards. The key objective of this inspection was to assess the council's compliance with the four current consumer standards. The council had 'limited' 'adequate' and 'substantial' assurance across the four standards. Of the total 77 applicable criteria across all standards, nine were 'substantial', 38 were 'adequate', and 30 were 'limited'. The actions from the mock inspection have been incorporated into the HRA action plan. The service has resolved some of these actions and is working on those remaining as part of the HRA Action plan.

## **23. Complaints Process Review**

In response to the Housing Ombudsman's requirements and the new regulatory framework, the service has undertaken a full review of the complaints process and procedures. All staff have undergone mandatory training and dedicated officer support for complaints has been put in place. This has led to a 100% compliance in the handling of complaints.

## **24. Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) completed**

The service has now carried out the second year of the TSMs in accordance with the RSH requirement. From this, an Action plan has been produced and incorporated into the master HRA Action Plan. Results from 2024 showed a clear improvement from the 2023 results.

## **25. Decent Homes data cleanse**

The service has undertaken a review of all Decent Homes data and data cleansing has resulted in an improvement which, as at November 2024, is at 98.2%. Average compliance in England was 8% of homes were non-decent during 2022/2023. The council reported 4% non-compliance in 2022-2023 and only 2% in 2023/2024.

## **26. Reduction in Void homes**

The service has established a voids working group to intensely manage the void properties. As a result, the number of voids has reduced by approximately 50%. Work continues on trying to reduce this further despite the challenges of contractor resource and increasing numbers of new properties coming through, including new properties purchased under the "Homes for Ukraine" and "Homes for Afghan" scheme.

## **27. Stock Condition Programme established**

A full Stock Condition Survey programme is currently underway with Penningtons Choices Ltd, which includes full stock condition, EPC (Energy Performance Certification) survey and HHSRS (Housing Health & Safety Rating System) inspection. The programme started in September 2024 and is due to deliver 1,600 full surveys by the end of February 2025. Following this first phase the programme will be extended with the intention to have 100% coverage of Stock Condition Surveys by the end of the 2025/2026, with a further procurement exercise undertaken to achieve this if required.

## **28. Reduction in Arrears**

The service has reduced Current Tenant Arrears over the last twelve months by 1.34% of the Gross Rent Debit with cash value of £305k. The arrears percentage, at end of October 24, is 2.32% against a target of 2.50%. There is high confidence that arrears will continue to reduce towards year end.

### **29. New HRA Scorecard**

The service has undertaken a complete re-write of all performance reporting and consolidated into a single scorecard which is used for many of the service reporting areas including the Housing Board, Senior Management CLT and other performance reporting bodies.

### **30. Mobile working expanded**

The service has introduced an array of new mobile working forms for officers. All mobile forms have background processing that update our Housing IT system and produce all necessary reports automatically, meaning a huge reduction in administration for all officers using mobile devices. All development has taken place in-house using line of business software but with no consultancy required – saving time and money. This includes:

- Tenancy Check inspections
- Tenancy Sign up forms
- Pre-End Tenancy forms
- Damp and Mould Inspection forms
- Repairs and Inspection processing forms
- Case management forms
- Post Void inspection forms
- Fire Door safety
- Mutual Exchange forms

### **31. Housing Board Review**

Members were notified of the Director – Asset's intention to review Housing Board arrangements. Private meetings were arranged between Board members (except 1 former member) and the Director – Assets. Housing Board arrangements were updated; this included updating the Terms of Reference. All 3 sub-committees were retained as they provided a good forum for informal discussion of topics and were seen as successful by Board members. For the main Housing Board meetings, there would be 3 held in-person (May, November and January) and 3 held remotely (July, September and March). Strategic Planning and Development Days (half-day sessions) would be scheduled for 2 times per year, held in-person and immediately before an in-person main Housing Board meeting; these would be in May and November. ModGov access was extended beyond Councillors and officers, to all Board members, which includes independents and tenants. A SharePoint external collaboration site would be retained. Performance reviews conducted by the Chairman would be incorporated into a board development plan, along with one-to-one performance review meetings.

### **32. HRA Business Plan Review**

The significant budget pressures arising from the increase in construction costs and the impact on the Council House Build Programme, and the increase in maintenance costs were such that a full review of the HRA Business Plan was required. In late 2023 the review took place and a report was produced by Housing Finance Specialists. The report was included in the HRA Budget and Rent Setting, and 30-Year Business Plan Review that went to Cabinet in February 2024.

33. The review and report concluded that the business plan model was showing a sustainable long-term HRA that supported its investment plans. Repayment of existing and new borrowing is achieved over the life of the plan and minimum balances are maintained.

However the resilience of the plan was considered to be limited particularly in the early years of the plan due to the investment in the Council House Build Programme.

34. A further review of the plan has been undertaken in the autumn of 2024. A specific review of depreciation and an increased understanding of the revenue pressures caused by increased maintenance have been included in the recent review and further modelling is underway. This will inform the budget setting process for 2025/26 and Cabinet will be updated of the full financial position at its meeting in February 2025.

### **Community Support** **Continuing Actions**

35. The Housing Support Services stats listed below are reported from the last twelve-months (Tenancy Sustainment and Mental Health Housing Support combined):

**128** cases currently being actively worked on  
**703** completed cases  
**31** pending referrals  
**413** Drop-in presentations out in the community

Additional yearly income generated: **£549,200**  
Backdated benefits: **£77,625**  
Grants: **£217,705** (including HSF rent arrears £118,010,79)

**Total additional financial gains generated: £844,530**

36. Plus an abundance of extra help for tenants, with non-monetary value such as: food bank parcels, bus passes, disabled parking badges and clothing.

37. Housing Income have also just secured another £60,000 from the Household Support Fund provided by the Government to support our tenants through the winter months who are suffering financial hardship and may need help with food, fuel, white goods, flooring, unexpected expenses and emergencies. This is to be distributed from October 2024 to the end of March 2025.

38. The Housing Income Team have also recruited an enhanced Tenancy Sustainment Officer who's role is to concentrate on property conditions and supporting those tenants with hoarding tendencies.

### **39. Resident Engagement**

- Monthly Neighbourhood Reviews with improved outcomes and improved capture and reporting systems.
- Scrutiny ("Challenge and Change Group") continued with in-person meetings and optional remote attendance where necessary. New projects undertaken by the group and presented to the service and reported at Housing Board meetings.
- Return to in-person engagement as well as continued online sessions.
- Resident Engagement Plan 2024-2027.
- Final Small Improvement Bids delivered.
- Community Club and Sheltered Scheme meetings held.
- Live cookery training sessions plus an online cookery course delivered.

- In response to addressing issues in the TSM results, the team is looking more at supporting 'core services' and addressing better communications across all areas of the service.
- Continued the physical edition of the Housing Matters magazine every year
- Monthly newsletter to all tenants via email is in operation , including a monthly Haper draw (in collaboration with Tesco).
- Communications group (“Comms and Tech Group”) now established and meeting regularly to discuss service communication
- Feedback to our tenants through “you said – we did” and Resident Engagement visits.
- Sheltered Housing Forum now re-established
- Continued expansion and presence of social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram)
- Partnership working with contractors on social value projects across the housing sheltered schemes.

### **Planned Investment in Homes**

#### Planned Maintenance Programmes

40. The majority of the planned maintenance works are delivered across a range of works contracts. All of these were re-procured in 2023 with new contracts starting in October. The new number of contracts increased with a previous single contract for fabric works being split into 5 separate lots, encouraging smaller and more specialist providers to bid for the works. These contracts have been mobilised and new work programmes have been agreed.

#### Housing Energy Efficiency Programme (HEEP)

41. Progress has continued with the works to improve the energy performance, reduce costs for tenants, and reduce carbon emissions from across all properties in the HRA. Work has focused on those properties with the lowest EPC rating and include the installation of Air Source Heat Pumps and solar panels, and the upgrading of insulation, ventilation systems, doors and windows. The council continues to receive positive feedback from tenants who have benefited from HEEP works.

42. The key achievement this period was the completion of two model properties in the same street in Bemerton Heath. Each has been fully refurbished with identical insulation, fixtures and fittings including solar panels and electric vehicle charging points, but with different heating systems. One house uses an Air Source Heat Pump, the other is heated by infra-red panels. We will be working with the tenants to monitor performance and cost from each system.

#### Council House Build Programme – Phase 3, 1000 homes (1 x single phase)

43. Programme headlines:

- a) 157 homes completed, 421 homes in the pipeline, including:

- i. Total of 380 of the above land-led homes delivered as zero carbon in use, with air source heat pumps, PV panels and EV charging.
  - ii. 53% of the programme is acquisitions (ex-local authority homes, purchases from the market, and new build s106 and development agreements), leaving the remainder of the programme to be delivered as land led on council owned land.
- b) Current land led schemes are all MMC (save for ECH and Sheltered). including:
- i. Completed scheme at Durrington (1 unit)
  - ii. Under construction at Corsley and Rowde (18 units) with occupations to take place in early 2025.
  - iii. Planning achieved in Ludgershall (18 units) and Salisbury (7 units).
  - iv. Planning submitted in Devizes (32 units) having acquired the site from the NHS and Salisbury (6 units).
- c) Acquisitions continue to feature heavily in the programme:
- i. Homelessness properties completed via SHAP funding (9 units).
  - ii. S106 sites in Semington and Trowbridge (20 units), Salisbury (13 units) and Chippenham (13 units) all either secured or on site, with some completions having taken place.
  - iii. Local Authority Housing Fund for Ukrainian and Afghan Refugees, also part funded by Homes England (30 units) all completed.
  - iv. ex-MOD accommodation in Devizes (18 units) have completed.
- d) Shared Ownership Sales – The team now has dedicated resource with currently 21 units available for sale.
- e) Customer satisfaction – New build/s106 acquisition occupied homes achieving an average of 91% satisfaction rate from residents.
- f) Breakdown of the current programme by delivery type:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Programme Units</b>	<b>Average Cost per Home</b>
S106 Acquisitions	85	£189,565
Individual Purchases	146	£236,202
MMC Land Led – Agile	7	£264,313
Development Agreement Acquisition – Additionality	20	£288,450
MMC Land Led – Rollalong	176	£383,604
Sheltered Housing Land Led	144	£453,264
Sheltered minus Communal and Core Areas	N/A	£299,463
<b>Total</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>£302,123</b>

#### 44. Programme risks and experiences:

- Increase in house prices, impacting costs of market and s106 acquisitions.



- Increased build cost to meet space standards and achieving zero carbon in use.
- General needs homes using MMC solutions currently delivered at a premium.
- New Build Sheltered Schemes have viability challenges due to high levels of communal and circulation spaces. Additional costs due to need for decanting/home loss payments.
- Inflation and pressure on the economy remains high.
- Whilst materials cost increases have stabilised, not seen in lower costs.
- Labour costs increase, as part of wider challenges for the industry.

#### 45. Programme Expenditure:

<b>Current Budget Allocation</b>	<b>Spend to Date 19/11/2024</b>	<b>Committed Budget</b>	<b>Headroom for further delivery</b>
£195,000,000	£50,584,710	£184,414,489	£10,585,511

- All current projects (578 units) within the programme within the agreed £195m cabinet approval.
- To achieve 1,000 units further capital will be required, with amount to be confirmed as part of budget setting 2025/26.

#### 46. Future programme:

- a) Development Strategy being drafted awaiting completion of Business Plan review to understand programme affordability. Plan likely to increase level of acquisitions on cost basis.
- b) Financial viability under review as 40 years payback parameter for land led is challenging, with options being considered.

#### 47. MMC 3 Year procurement process update:

- a) In 2023, 3-year contract via Southwest Procurement Alliance Framework entered into with MMC partner (Rollalong) to deliver homes for Wiltshire Council and Magna Housing Association.
- b) Magna Housing collaboration enables competitive price against contracting alone. It also creates the opportunity for shared knowledge and lessons learned with all parties involved.
- c) The tender included fixed price guarantee for period of time, resulting in initial order for 83 homes, across 3 sites.
- d) Working with Rollalong to improve on their on-site delivery performance and lessons learnt on the MMC process/experience as further sites and projects develop.

## Service Performance and Tenant Satisfaction

48. The service has replaced its Key Performance Indicator(s) document with a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Scorecard which was first presented to the Housing Board in draft in November 2023. It was intended that the HRA Scorecard would continue to be developed over time. As the data presented for Residential Development was considered unhelpful, the Board agreed at its meeting held in September 2024 to remove this from the HRA Scorecard and instead have performance against annual targets for that area presented in the General Housing Services Update paper, which it receives on a monthly basis. The HRA Scorecard will continue to be developed with input from the Board.
49. The HRA previously carried out a STAR Survey every 2 years to understand our residents' views about our services. In 2023 the STAR survey was replaced with the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey. This approach involves surveying one-half of our tenants each year, with the pattern repeated every 2 years.
50. The ARP Research (research partner) report states that:

*"The survey was carried out between 08 June and 19 July 2024, with a half census of 2,599 LCRA (low cost rental accommodation) tenant households. In the first phase, an email invitation and reminders were distributed to all 2,061 households for whom a valid email address was available inviting them to complete the survey online, resulting in 385 eventual responses (19%).*

*In the second phase, a paper survey was distributed to the 2,279 households that did not complete online within the first 2½ weeks.*

*In total 781 tenant households took part in the survey, which represented a 30% response rate (error margin +/- 3.2%). The returns exceeded the stipulated TSM target error margin of +/- 4%. Over half of the responses were received online (54%).*

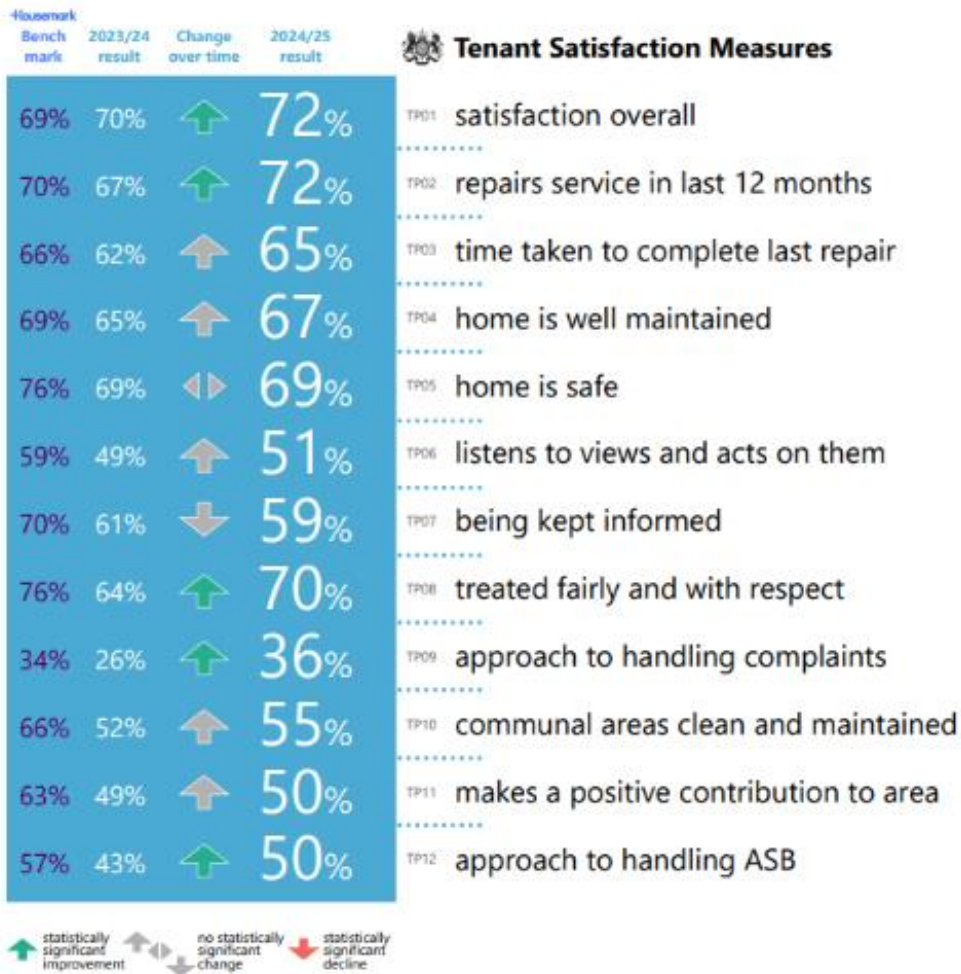
*The final survey data was weighted by interlaced age group, property type and stock type to ensure that the survey was representative of the tenant population as a whole."*

*As with the STAR survey, the service takes the results of the TSM and the information it provides about the tenants' views of our service and generates an improvement action plan to address the areas of concern. The service has reviewed the results of the TSM survey and for each measure has produced an action plan.*

*The survey will be repeated in July 2025 to the remaining households that were not surveyed this time in order to gain a full census survey.*

*The questions are benchmarked against ARP Research's (research partner) client database of completed TSM compliant surveys. For the overall satisfaction score this includes 14 landlords, amongst which 7 are local authorities and 3 are ALMOs.*

51. The Executive Summary is replicated below (TSM Survey 2024, page 2):



52. In September 2024, report outcomes were presented to the Housing Board. The Housing Board agreed to note the contents of the cover report and the full Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) report that was attached to it.

53. In November 2024, the Housing Board were asked to comment on and have input into the action plans which were presented to the Housing Board.

iHousing portal

54. More residents are signed up to use our digital option.

Customer Facing iHousing Portal: Approximate Registered Users				
Former iHousing	New iHousing			
to November 2020	October 2021	14 November 2022	27 October 2023	11 October 2024
900	1,900	2,467	2,576	2,890

55. More efficient and positive outcomes for customers.

## Resident Engagement Plan

56. A new Resident Engagement Plan was due to be introduced for 2024 onwards. The Housing Board agreed to introduce this new Resident Engagement Plan at its meeting held on 29 November 2023. Outcomes since implementation have continued to be delivered, benefitting residents and their families throughout the year.

## Challenge and Change Group

57. Repairs Reporting Guide, Tenant Handbook, and Damp and Mould Guide.

58. Customer Interface Element of Responsive Repairs: Appointments, Communication and Customer Care (suggested by the Director – Assets).

59. Key Performance Indicators (this may not be progressed as the HRA Scorecard has already been introduced).

60. This was recorded in the Housing Board minutes, 27 March 2024, as being “either something coming from the Housemark Mock Inspection or Service Charges. If a Housemark Mock Inspection topic were inserted, then the Service Charges topic would remain but be pushed back and a new topic inserted before it.” The service charges topic may be pushed into the next financial year so that it is aligned with the service charges audit, which the Board agreed on 25 September 2024, as per the draft minutes, “That, once completed, a service charges audit should follow the rents audit.”

61. Membership and Attendance Record (October 2023 – November 2024)

<b>WCHB Member</b>	<b>29/11</b>	<b>19/12</b>	<b>31/1</b>	<b>27/3</b>	<b>29/5</b>	<b>31/7</b>	<b>25/9</b>	<b>27/11</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Councillor Member 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8 (100%)
Tenant Member 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	7 (87.5%)
Tenant Member 2	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	5 (62.5%)
Councillor Member 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8 (100%)
Former Tenant Member	✗	✗	✓	Not a member.					1 (33.3%)
Independent Member 1	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	5 (62.5%)
Tenant Member 3	Not a member.						✓	✓	2 (100%)
Independent Member 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	7 (87.5%)
Independent Member 3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	6 (75.0%)
Councillor Member 3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	7 (87.5%)

62. Attendance relates to Board meetings only (that is, the figures exclude Away-Days, sub-committees, etcetera).

### **Safeguarding Implications**

63. There are no specific safeguarding implications associated with this report.

### **Public Health Implications**

64. There are no specific public health implications associated with this report. The quality, condition and security of a home is one of the more direct ways housing can affect the

health and wellbeing of our residents. This annual report demonstrates the work being undertaken to provide healthy homes which are affordable, warm and stable and somewhere safe that meets the diverse needs of our tenants and helps them connect to their community, work and services.

### **Procurement Implications**

65. There are no significant corporate procurement implications associated with this report; although should the Board make recommendations regarding procurement of services to be delivered to residents, then this will become a consideration.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

66. All Board members operate in and treat all residents in a fair and balanced manner, maintain their independence and make recommendations to Housing Management Services. Board members do not represent a particular area; they represent all council residents in the county of Wiltshire and make recommendations in the best interests of all council residents in Wiltshire. The service continually works toward Housing Board membership better reflecting council house residents, in respect of the protected characteristics of the Equalities Act.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

67. There are no significant environmental or climate change implications associated with this report. That is because the report is for noting not making a decision. Members may consider the HEEP programme discussed above and net-zero MMC housing in relation to environmental and climate change considerations.

### **Workforce Implications**

68. There are no significant workforce implications associated with this report.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

69. Wiltshire Council's Housing Board would fail to meet the requirements of its Terms of Reference, namely to provide an Annual Report to Cabinet.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

70. Vacancies can occur from time-to-time; there is a risk that there may not be any applicants for vacant posts, however recent experience demonstrates that there was a wealth of applicants for member types (councillor, independent or tenant). We will continue with the same recruitment approach, where necessary.

### **Financial Implications**

71. There are no significant financial implications directly associated with this report.

### **Legal Implications**

72. There are no significant legal implications associated with this report.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

73. This Annual Report is for noting by Cabinet. This Annual Report was presented to WCHB at the AGM on 27 November 2024. It was presented to the Environment Select Committee (ESC) on 14 January 2025. It is being presented to the Cabinet on 21 January 2025.

### **Options Considered**

74. A formal report to Cabinet is required. No alternative options were considered.

### **Conclusions**

75. There is increasing evidence that Wiltshire Council's Housing Board is having a positive impact on the quality of service provision to residents and their families, has itself created an additional opportunity for residents to engage with the service and shaped further engagement opportunities.

### **James Barrah - Director of Assets**

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### **Appendices**

None

### **Background Papers**

None

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**21 January 2025**

---

**Subject: Insurance Services Tender**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Nick Botterill - Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management, and Strategic Planning**

**Key Decision: Key**

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## **Executive Summary**

Our current 5-year contracts for insurance services end on 31 March 2025. These contracts cover our potential financial liabilities for a variety of insurance claims such as public and employers' liability, motor vehicles and buildings.

A procurement process commenced in December 2024 to secure insurance cover from 1 April 2025, to ensure that the council has the right cover in place, including those covers that are required by law.

This report seeks approval for delegation to the Director of Finance and Procurement in conjunction with the Corporate Leadership Team to award the insurance cover to the successful bidders.

## **Proposals**

That Cabinet notes:

- 1) The insurance lot structure and intended insurance arrangements;

That Cabinet agrees:

- 1) To delegate the award of the relevant contracts to the winning bidders to the Corporate Director, Resources, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management, and Strategic Planning.

## **Reason for Proposals**

Not having insurance cover in place would expose the Council to significant financial risk.

**Lizzie Watkin**  
**Corporate Director, Resources**

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Cabinet**

**21 January 2025**

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**Subject: Insurance Services Tender**

**Cabinet Member: Cllr Nick Botterill - Cabinet Member for Finance, Development Management, and Strategic Planning**

**Key Decision: Key**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. To set out the process being followed to obtain tenders for the council's insurance cover; the timetable being followed, the lot structure, claims self-handling arrangements, the agreed evaluation criteria and the award of contract(s) to the winning bidders.

### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

2. The provision of insurance cover helps to maintain all aspects of the Business Plan by providing a level of financial certainty in a volatile claims market.
3. Insurance is a financial mechanism whereby an individual or organisation can transfer an unknown potential liability into the certainty of a smaller but fixed annual cost.

### **Background**

4. Our current insurance cover was awarded under a contract that commenced in March 2020 for a maximum of five years following the last tender process. The annual cost of the contract for the financial year 2024/2025 was £1.3m.
5. An insurance tender has been drawn up to reflect the current areas of cover that the council has as well as other areas where it currently chooses to self-insure but depending on the proposals received, it may be advantageous to change the approach. It has been made clear in our tender that the Council can choose not to purchase certain types of cover and that it can choose to purchase different lots from different providers if that is the outcome of the evaluation
6. The council has appointed Arthur J. Gallagher Insurance Brokers Ltd to advise on the tender, best industry practices and the current state of the insurance market.
7. The Brokers have assisted with the structure of the tender lots and the evaluation criteria for each lot and will be part of the evaluation process once the tenders are submitted. The Council will also independently review and assess the tenders received.



## Main Considerations for the Council

8. The current insurance cover as awarded under various contracts that commenced on 1 April 2020 for a maximum period of five years following the last tender process. The annual costs of the contracts for the financial year 2024-2025 was £1.4 million.
9. The council is committed to ensuring that it maintains an optimum balance between internal and external insurance within a framework of prudent financial management.
10. In determining the balance between internal and external insurance the council will seek to:
  - Insure risks internally where it is financially prudent and advantageous to do so
  - Purchase external insurance or arrange cover through an alternative risk transfer arrangement:
    - i. Where required by law, i.e. Employer's Liability and Motor Insurance
    - ii. To cover catastrophic events
    - iii. To limit the financial exposure of the council to the cumulative effect of multiple small losses.
11. An insurance tender has been drawn up to reflect the current areas of cover that the council has, as well as other areas where it currently chooses to self-insure but, depending on the proposals received, it may be advantageous to change the approach.
12. It has been made clear in the tender that the council can choose not to purchase certain types of cover and it can choose to purchase lots from different providers if that is the outcome of the evaluation.
13. The council has appointed Arthur J Gallagher Insurance Brokers Ltd to advise on the tender, best industry practices and the current state of the insurance market. The brokers have assisted with the structure of the tender lots and the evaluation criteria and will be part of the evaluation process once the tenders are submitted. The council's procurement and insurance teams will also independently review and assess the tenders received.
14. The lot structure is as follows:
  1. Lot 1 – Property – split by type, i.e. general, education, housing
  2. Lot 2 – Industrial and Commercial Property (where the council is the owner and landlord)
  3. Lot 3 – Casualty – which includes public liability, employers' liability, official's indemnity and professional negligence covers
  4. Lot 4 – Motor (for vehicles that the council owns, rents or leases in)
  5. Lot 5 – Personal Accident and Travel – for school trips and outings
  6. Lot 6 – Leasehold and Shared Ownership Housing (where the council is the vendor/freeholder)
15. The tender was released on 18 December 2024, then followed a period for prospective bidders to submit clarification questions, with final tender submissions to be received by 31 January 2025.

16. This allows the council to take a full view on what lots to award, decide on levels of self-insurance, and other matters regarding coverage.
17. A report with recommendations as to the cover to be taken out will be produced by the Procurement team, in conjunction with the broker and Insurance Manager, and presented to the Director of Finance. The council will notify all bidder(s) of the outcome and cover will commence on 1 April 2025. The contract(s) will be for a maximum of 5 years (3 years with an optional 2 year extension).
18. The Excesses will be set against each of the policies for the major risk areas. These currently vary depending on the insurance category and are set out in the appendices.
19. Arrangements for dealing with claims also varies according to type and value and these are included in the same table.
20. The council also has a limit known as a "stop loss" which caps the maximum amount that can be paid in any one insurance year. These limits vary across the different insurance types ranging from £0.65m to £1.5m. Once the relevant limit is reached and additional claims are paid in full by the insurer, regardless of the value.
21. Currently it is not envisaged that the way claims are handled or the in-house limits will alter.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

22. There are no safeguarding implications associated with this tender exercise.

### **Public Health Implications**

23. There are no public health implications associated with this tender exercise. :

### **Procurement Implications**

24. The Procurement team have been closely involved in the design and operation of this tender exercise. The Procurement team have been responsible for releasing the tender, dealing with clarification questions and collating the final bids.
25. The tender will be conducted in line with relevant UK Procurement legislation, the Council's constitution and applicable policies.
26. The Insurance Team and brokers, as subject matter experts, have also had close involvement.
27. The evaluation of the final bid(s) will be a collaboration between Procurement, the Insurance Team and the brokers.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

28. There are no specific Equalities impact relating to the proposal.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

29. There are no specific considerations outside of the Council's existing policy.

30. There will be no changes to energy consumption.
31. There will be no changes to emissions relating to this proposal.
32. There are no environmental risks associated with the proposal.
33. This contract is planned to run for a maximum of 5 years.

### **Workforce Implications**

34. This proposal will be supported by existing workforce capacity.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

35. If insurance cover is not in place for 1 April 2015 the council will directly bear the cost of all claims made against it, which represents a significant financial and reputational risk, as well as threatens service delivery,

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

36. Claims against the council will continue to be received and will continue to be managed in line with existing practices.
37. It is possible that due to worsening market conditions, the insurer(s) breaks the long-term agreement. The council then has the option of accepting the change or can chose to go back to the market via another tender process.
38. Insurance can be seen a risk management tool whereby unavoidable risks can be managed by converting some of the risk into an annual fee, the value of which is known. This is a form of risk transfer.
39. Conversely, good risk management processes and associated controls and checks can reduce insurance claims occurring and, when claims are made, can be used to defend the Council against the claims.

### **Financial Implications**

40. The full financial implications will only be known when all the tenders have been received and evaluated. As part of the evaluation, consideration will be given to the levels of excess and stop losses which will also have an impact on the premium for each lot
41. The aim is that by balancing these risks that the council takes in terms of self-insurance and third-party coverage; the cost will not be greater than that currently paid.
42. However, due to high levels of inflation over recent years and changes to the insurance market, if this is not possible then the balance of premium and retained risk will be assessed and balanced so that the most prudent option is chosen.

## **Legal Implications**

43. This procurement exercise is being carried out in line with relevant UK Procurement legislation, the Council's constitution and applicable policies.
44. The tender will include the Council's terms and conditions of contract.
45. Legal advice will be sought where necessary.

## **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

46. No specific consultation with Overview and Scrutiny has taken place

## **Options Considered**

47. The options are as follows:

- Do nothing/self-insure all losses – This would give rise to a significant and unmeasurable ongoing financial burden. There would be no limit to the value of claims that the council could face, whereas with insurance and stop losses there is. A small number of large value claims could have a catastrophic effect on finances and adversely affect service delivery.
- The council to establish its own captive insurance company as a method of alternative risk transfer – This would allow the council to directly access the reinsurance market, whilst self-insuring its own risks. In effect, the "premiums" paid would be reinvested into paying for claims and for risk management. However, this is currently not a feasible option due to high start-up costs and large amounts needing to be set aside (often offshore) to allow for claims to be paid, thus being only feasible for much larger organisations. Central government have issued a consultation in November 2024 on the introduction of a UK-based captive insurance framework which would sit outside of Solvency II regulation. Depending on the outcome and any resultant legislation, this is an option that we will continue to monitor. (see appendix 2)
- Purchase insurance cover from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – this is the only current feasible option and allows for certainty. Even if options a or b above were taken, some kind of insurance would have to be taken out in relation to employers' liability and motor insurance as these are legally required.

## **Conclusions**

48. The conclusion is that purchasing insurance is the most sensible and suitable option, and that for practicality purposes, authority to make the award will be delegated to the Director for Finance.

## **Lizzie Watkin - Corporate Director, Resources**

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Report Author: Kay Beckett, Insurance Team Lead

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Current excess levels and claims handling arrangement  
Appendix 2 – Overview of captive insurance

## **Background Papers**

None

## Appendix 1

### Current Excess levels and claim handling arrangements

	Property Damage	Employers Liability	Public Liability (Injury)	Official Indemnity / Land Charges / Professional Indemnity	Motor (Own Damage)	Motor (Third Party Damage)
Current excess	£250,000	£400,000	£400,000	OI £400,000, PI & Land £100,000	£1,000 third party fire and theft	nil
Handling arrangements	Self handle up to excess	Insurer handles whole	See note 1	Insurer whole process	see note 2	Insurer handles whole process. See note 2

#### NOTES

- 1 Property damage or injury claims valued up to £25,000 are handled by the Insurance Team. Claims over this amount, complex claims or issued claims valued up to £50,000 are dealt with by In-House Legal Services. Above £50,000 claims are notified to Insurers who may then take on the claim handling if they wish, leave it In House, or appoint their own Solicitor.
- 2 Non-insured or below excess self-handled. Theft or fire claims over excess dealt with by Insurer. Non-fault own damage claims sent to Insurer for referral to Uninsured Loss Recovery agent.

## **Appendix 2**

### Overview of Captive Insurance

The establishment of a captive insurance company as a method of alternative risk transfer instead of insurance is not a feasible option for the council to transfer/mitigate its risks at this time.

Local authorities tend towards conservative management of financial risks, which without the certainty of insurance could be unlimited. The insolvency of Municipal Mutual Insurance (with a vast financial impact on its Local Authority policyholders, including this authority) being a noted case in point.

We acknowledge that the placement of risks via captive schemes has the potential to be less costly than via traditional insurance placements, however, insurance is an established method of capping and transferring risk.

The council's insurance portfolio already makes use of large deductibles, reinsurance and stop losses to retain certainty of its maximum financial liability and effectively self-insure all but the largest risks.

The council's Insurance Team also handles claims (dealing with lower most level claims in-house) and works alongside the corporate risk function to advise on operational risk matters.

As it stands, the council cannot afford to self-insure all its risks without an effect on service delivery, and additionally is not approved by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to be able to do this. There is also the matter of compulsory insurances such as Employers' Liability and Motor insurance which are statutory requirements.

Central government have issued a consultation in November 2024 on the introduction of a UK-based captive insurance framework which would sit outside of Solvency II regulation. The consultation runs until early February 2025 and secondary legislation would be likely to be required to allow the captive framework to operate.

While we will follow the outcome of the consultation with interest and will certainly investigate it further as an option at the end of the next fixed term (potentially with the pooling of risks with other local authorities). There is also the possibility of the government providing either seed capital or parental guarantee to the Local Government Mutual, which has thus far not been able to establish itself as a viable alternative to commercial insurance.

#### Current Risks/limitations:

- Timescales involved – 6-12 months (not possible before 1/4/2025)
- Capital requirements as required by Solvency II
- Most captives are held offshore
- Limited market for direct reinsurance
- Same PRA/FCA requirements for authorisation And ongoing compliance as standard insurers
- High initial set-up costs
- Uncertainty of maximum financial liability

#### Potential benefits:

- Reduced cost of premium

- Ability to reinvest premiums into increasing insurance claim reserves and potentially as a source of funds that can be spent on service delivery
- Taxation advantages
- Ability to directly access the reinsurance market

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Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

21 January 2025

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**Subject:** City Hall - Salisbury

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Richard Clewer - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Military-Civilian Integration, Health and Wellbeing, Economic Development, Arts, Heritage and Tourism

**Key Decision:** Key

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## Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide a recommendation to agree a lease with the preferred tenant to remobilise Salisbury City Hall as an arts, entertainment, and cultural venue.

In October 2022 Cabinet considered three options for the venue

Option	Description
1	Source a third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council
2	Wiltshire Council to manage and operate City Hall internally, using same model as prior to the venues closure in 2020
3	Sell/Asset transfer venue to a suitable external organisation for use as an entertainment venue

Cabinet resolved to source a third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council.

Wiltshire Council engaged Savills to market a 25–35-year lease. The marketing exercise has now completed and a recommendation to proceed with a preferred tenant is being presented in this report.

## Proposals

That Cabinet approves:

- 1) The preferred tenant as the third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council subject to financial due diligence and agreement of the Heads of Terms
- 2) That the allocated Capital Receipt Enhancement (CRE), budget for Melksham Blue Pool is repurposed to complete the necessary external works to City Hall prior to lease commencement, and that a virement of £0.045m of the 2024/25 budget and £0.255m of the 2025/26 budget from the CRE capital scheme line is made to the Facilities Management Investment Estate capital scheme line.

3) That future decisions relating to the Heads of Terms and lease for City Hall are delegated to the Corporate Director - Place, in consultation with the Director - Assets, and the Leader of the Council.

**Reason for Proposals**

To bring City Hall back into use as an arts and entertainment venue.

**Parvis Khansari**  
**Corporate Director - Place**

## Wiltshire Council

### Cabinet

21 January 2025

---

**Subject:** City Hall - Salisbury

**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Richard Clewer - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Military-Civilian Integration, Health and Wellbeing, Economic Development, Arts, Heritage and Tourism

**Key Decision:** Key

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### Purpose of Report

1. To provide a recommendation to agree a lease with the preferred tenant to remobilise Salisbury City Hall as an arts, entertainment, and cultural venue, with consideration for the following:
  - The preferred tenant as the third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council subject to financial due diligence and agreement of the Heads of Terms
  - That the allocated Capital Receipt Enhancement (CRE), budget for Melksham Blue Pool is repurposed to complete the necessary external works to City Hall prior to lease commencement, and that a virement of £0.045m of the 2024/25 budget and £0.255m of the 2025/26 budget from the CRE capital scheme line is made to the Facilities Management Investment Estate capital scheme line.
  - That future decisions relating to the Heads of Terms and lease for City Hall are delegated to the Corporate Director, Place, in consultation with the Director, Assets, and the Leader of the Council.

### Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. The remobilisation of City Hall supports the Business Plan with the aim of creating thriving economies and supporting our communities to become beautiful and exciting places to live. The venue will help to empower the people of Wiltshire to live full, healthy, and enriched lives by providing access to a programme of arts, entertainment, and culture.

### Background

3. In October 2022 Cabinet considered three options for the venue:

Option	Description
1	Source a third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council
2	Wiltshire Council to manage and operate City Hall internally, using same model as prior to the venues closure in 2020

3	Sell/Asset transfer venue to a suitable external organisation for use as an entertainment venue
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4. Cabinet resolved to source a third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council.
5. A Market Engagement event was delivered to further engage with prospective operators to gain insight from attendees on potential operating model and to provide tours of the venue. Procurement attended to answer any questions relating to the process. Estates provided tours and Economy and Regeneration presented on the economic landscape of Salisbury and local area.
6. This was followed by a Prior Information Notice process to ascertain: Type of management arrangement; the Length of agreement and any willingness to undertake any maintenance work as indicated in the condition survey. Returns indicated that a long-term lease was the preferred management arrangement.
7. Wiltshire Council engaged Savills to market a 25–35-year lease. The marketing exercise has now completed and a recommendation to proceed with a preferred party is being presented in this report.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

8. As part of the work to develop the [Salisbury Central Area Framework \(CAF\)](#) a public consultation took place in 2019 and 2020. The consultation highlighted that one of the top reasons to come to the city was for entertainment and that the public ‘strongly agree/agreed’ for the development of ‘space for culture, leisure and entertainment’.
9. Salisbury’s city centre is a vibrant and attractive place and is responding to recent economic challenges with an established partnership of supportive stakeholders and significant investment.
10. Salisbury was awarded £9M (£16M including match funding) of investment through the Future High Streets Fund and has also seen £24M of investment through the River Park project. In addition, there has been investment by all partners into a competitive brand positioning for the city, with a new communications and marketing platform in Experience Salisbury and the city has seen an increase in retail investment.
11. Adopted in July 2024, the Wiltshire Cultural Strategy 2024-2030: Connecting through creativity, aims to shape a county that is:
 

*‘a better-connected place where culture is the heartbeat of every village, town, city and landscape. Through creativity, shared experiences, a collective commitment to our environment and access for all, we aim to foster a sense of belonging that resonates with everyone.*

*Wiltshire will be a place where culture supports health and happiness, where young people and creative enterprise can flourish and where economic growth is stimulated through distinctive and vibrant places where people want to visit, live, work, and raise a family.*

*We want all residents in Wiltshire to enjoy the benefits that culture brings including those who face additional barriers to cultural engagement and creative participation’.*
12. [City Hall was listed as an Asset of Community Value](#) following a nomination by Salisbury City Council. An Asset of Community Value is defined as:

*“A building or other land is an asset of community value if its main use has recently been or is presently used to further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community and could do so in the future.”*

Salisbury City Council did not wish to apply for an interim moratorium on the ‘disposal’ of the grant of a lease of more than 25 years.

13. An external report has been commissioned to quantify the cost of bringing the external fabric to a suitable standard. Investment from Wiltshire Council is deemed necessary to repair the external fabric of the building, prior to lease commencement. It is estimated that the external works will cost £300,000 (this includes a contingency sum of £40,000). The final cost will however be subject to formal procurement.
14. The proposed lease of 25-35 years will mean that the Council must follow the provisions relating to s123 in the Local Government Act 1972 for best consideration.

### **Marketing exercise**

15. Wiltshire Council engaged Savills to market City Hall as a 25–30-year full repairing lease opportunity.
16. The property was fully and openly marketed, commencing in early July 2024 on Savills website and through external property portals such as Rightmove and Estates Gazette Propertylink. Additionally, a targeted e-marketing campaign utilising Savills applicant database with additional direct marketing to a list of national and regional live music/events companies, was undertaken.
17. Further marketing boards were erected at the property to capture local enquiries. The property also received press interest with articles highlighting the opportunity written in the Salisbury Journal and Arts Professional publication.
18. Viewings were undertaken with all interested parties, with the property made available for follow up visits and additional investigations.
19. The marketing information issued, included a brochure, floor plans and proposed Heads of Terms, with detailed surveys provided to interested parties.
20. Informal interest was received for the property from occupiers seeking to use City Hall for alternate uses. However, given the marketing brief for the property to remain as an arts and entertainment venue, this interest was noted but not pursued.
21. An initial deadline was set for the end of October for rental offers, with four being received. An assessment of the offers established that several of the interested parties wanted investment by WC to facilitate a letting, and the Council commissioned a survey to establish the cost of bringing the external fabric into a suitable condition. These works will be undertaken to the site either in advance of the lease starting or concurrently with any fit out by the occupier.
22. Savills provided interested parties with the revised condition survey, setting out the Council’s willingness to invest in the building seeking confirmation of their offers. At the same time, one of the offers was rejected due to insufficient information having been provided.
23. Following the production of the survey, one party withdrew from the process, one party confirmed their offer, and one party made an improved offer.
24. The party who withdrew subsequently submitted a revised offer outside of the deadline.

25. The final offers were considered and resulted in the recommendation to proceed with a preferred tenant. Appendix A (Part 2 item) of this report sets out the assessment of the offers to arrive at this decision, including financial considerations, obligations relating to s123 for best consideration, and potential timescales for reopening.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

26. There is no direct safeguarding implications associated with this decision .

### **Public Health Implications**

27. A vibrant and exciting programme of events and activities at a remobilised City Hall will have a positive impact on people's mental health and also the wider community as a whole. [BMC Public Health Study](#) conclusion states:

*“Arts engagement amongst the population, may help enhance positive mental health and life satisfaction and protect against mental distress. These results are independent of a wide range of time-constant confounding factors.”* The 2017 Arts Council England [Creative Health and Wellbeing study](#) states: *“Making and experiencing creativity and culture transforms people and communities' quality of life.”*

### **Procurement Implications**

28. The Council have offered the site by way of a leasehold, meaning this is not a procurement process. The proposed enabling works will be tendered to ensure best value is obtained and in line with the Council's procurement strategy.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

29. There are no direct equalities impacts arising from the proposal.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

30. There are no direct environmental or climate impacts arising from the proposal, although it is anticipated that the preferred provider will undertake improvements to the site that will reduce energy consumption.

### **Workforce Implications**

31. There are no direct workforce implications arising from the proposal.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

32. The building will continue to remain empty whilst alternate providers are found, incurring greater cost to the Council and the risk of no provider being found.

### **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

33. The proposal is a commercial lease which brings with it commercial operator risk, although the financial due diligence undertaken will ensure there is sufficient surety to protect the Council's interests.

### **Financial Implications**

34. The offer received provides a rental income to the Council for the term of the lease, albeit a rent-free period is being granted in line with normal commercial practice to reflect that the building has not been in use recently.
35. Investment from Wiltshire Council is deemed necessary prior to lease commencement. A range of external works to the fabric of the building are planned to bring the building up to a lettable standard.

36. It is estimated that the external works will cost £300,000 (this includes a contingency sum of £40,000). The final cost will however be subject to formal procurement.
37. It is proposed that the Capital Receipt Enhancement (CRE) capital scheme line budget is used for this purpose. This budget provides funding for enabling works to enhance the value of the relevant asset. The majority of the CRE budget was approved by Cabinet to specifically cover the cost of demolition and essential works at Melksham Blue Pool. As these works are no longer required and as the City Hall works are to be delivered by the council's Facilities Management team, Cabinet is requested to approve the use of the Melksham Blue Pool budget for this purpose along with a virement of £0.045m of the 2024/25 budget and £0.255m of the 2025/26 budget from CRE capital scheme line to the Facilities Management Investment Estate capital scheme line. This budget line is funded by General Fund Receipts. The Council has received sufficient funds to cover the required capital and so there will be no further revenue impact to the 2024/25 budget as a result of the proposed movements.
38. The offer from the preferred tenant would generate income for Wiltshire Council over the first ten years of the lease in excess of the cost of the works required to bring the building up to a lettable standard.
39. The grant of a full repairing lease results in no further expected expenditure by the Council during the term of the lease.

### **Legal Implications**

40. Any disposal of local authority property requires a local authority to comply with s123 of the Local Government Act 1972, which ensures that a local authority may not dispose of land for less than best consideration reasonably obtainable unless it obtains the consent of the Secretary of State.
41. The proposed lease of 25-35 years requires the Council to comply with s123. It is for the Council to demonstrate that it has achieved best consideration: if best consideration is not obtained, Secretary of State approval is required.
42. Where an offer meets the 'best value' requirements a decision can be taken by officers or by Cabinet.
43. The analysis of whether the offers received comply with the requirements of s123 is set out in the assessment at Appendix A, however, the bid from the preferred tenant is s123 compliant.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

44. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Environment Select Committee were briefed on 10 January 2025.

### **Options Considered**

45. To remobilise City Hall as an arts and entertainment venue via an alternate model, with the below three options presented to Cabinet in October 2022.

<b>Option</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	Source a third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council
2	Wiltshire Council to manage and operate City Hall internally, using same model as prior to the venues closure in 2020
3	Sell/Asset transfer venue to a suitable external organisation for use as an entertainment venue

46. Options 2 and 3 rejected. Cabinet resolved to source a third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council.
47. To accept an alternate offer – rejected as the other offers received were of a lower value and therefore not s123 compliant and likely to result in greater costs being incurred by the Council. In addition, the period to bring the site back into use detailed within the other offers carried greater uncertainty.

### **Recommendations**

48. It is recommended that Cabinet approves:
- i. The preferred tenant as the third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council subject to financial due diligence and agreement of the Heads of Terms
  - ii. That the allocated Capital Receipt Enhancement (CRE), budget for Melksham Blue Pool is repurposed to complete the necessary external works to City Hall prior to lease commencement, and that a virement of £0.045m of the 2024/25 budget and £0.255m of the 2025/26 budget from the CRE capital scheme line is made to the Facilities Management Investment Estate capital scheme line.
  - iii. That future decisions relating to the Heads of Terms and lease for City Hall are delegated to the Corporate Director Place, in consultation with the Director for Assets and Leader of the Council.

### **Conclusions**

49. The offer from the preferred tenant meets the resolution by Cabinet in October 2020 to only reopen City Hall once it was “both financially viable and safe” to do so.
50. The offer from the preferred tenant meets the resolution by Cabinet in October 2022 to seek a third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council.
51. Accepting the best financial offer to operate City Hall on a long-term lease as an arts and entertainment venue ensures compliance with the provisions of s123 in the Local Government Act 1972 for best consideration.
52. The offer from the preferred tenant provides the best financial return to the Council, enables the building to be reopened in a reasonable timescale and secures use of the site for a long period of time.
53. It is therefore recommended to proceed with the preferred tenant as the third-party organisation to operate City Hall as an entertainment venue on behalf of Wiltshire Council, subject to financial due diligence and agreement of the Heads of Terms.

### **Parvis Khansari - Corporate Director, Place**

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### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Assessment of offers and financial implications (Part II item)

### **Background Papers**

[13 October 2020 Cabinet Report – City Hall Salisbury item 14](#)

[11 October 2022 Cabinet Report – Remobilisation of City Hall Agenda item 11](#)



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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