

Leader's budget speech – 19 February (2018)

I was reminded recently of a famous quote;

“It isn't what we say or think that defines us, but what we do...”

Jane Austin penned this – and it's as simple as it is true.

It made me reflect on this council and realise that we are defined by the actions we take and the outcomes we deliver.

I think we should all be proud that even in the toughest and most challenging of times we have continued to deliver services that people need and do all that we can to improve the lives for people in Wiltshire, and, in particular, for those who are most vulnerable.

Since we formed in 2009 - can you believe almost ten years ago!
our vision and priorities have remained the same and we have been united and focused on these.

We build strong communities, protect the vulnerable, and do what we can to grow the economy.

Wiltshire Council is now well reputed, high performing and a multi-award winning authority.

We have earned this reputation based on our track record for delivering radical and innovative transformation programmes.

We've had little choice – we had to do things differently.

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Like other authorities across the country, we've had to manage the challenge of increasing service demands and a continued reduction in central government funding.

Our most recent Business Plan, published last July, sets out our ambitious agenda for the next ten years.

This plan focuses on these three priorities and it also sets out what actions we will take.

These actions reflect what matters to residents and local communities and we mustn't lose sight of this.

People care – they care about the place where they live; how it looks, how clean it is and that it has the facilities that the local community needs to come together and to thrive.

As you are all aware we continue to experience an unprecedented growth in children's and adult social care services.

We have to transform and change what we do, if we are to meet these demands and continue to protect those who are most vulnerable.

Our recovery and transformation of children's services (following the Oftsed inspection on 2012) was recognised last year by the LGA peer review team.

They stated that we were an exemplar of cross council working.

The first phase of the transformation has integrated children's services, bringing Early Help and Safeguarding and Assessment together.

The next phase, which is underway, will engage staff, partners and service users in delivering integrated, family-focused provision and better outcomes for children.

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The earlier we can intervene and provide the support that's needed, the greater the benefits including a reduction in the escalating costs.

The approach to children's transformation is helping to guide the adult transformation programme, which is also well underway.

In adult care, across the whole country there are huge challenges.

Our population is ageing and life expectancy is increasing, bringing with it rising demand and cost.

In Wiltshire we have the third largest older population, with 100,000 of our 475,000 residents aged over 65, and – as you know - this is projected to rise by around 25% in the next five years.

In the 2018/19 budget - that we are discussing today - we are again proposing to raise the Social Care Levy by 3% - but, let's be clear... this won't raise anywhere near enough to keep pace with demand - so we have to do something radical.

The transformation of adult social care sets out a vision to support independent lives in local communities and make our adult care the best in the country by 2020.

Although this is projected to save around £8 million - it isn't about cost-cutting - it's about improving outcomes for all those who need support and help.

Whilst we've increased the adult social care budget over the last four years by 11% - that's £13.5 million, we have to rethink how care is going to be provided going forward, as we cannot sustain an ongoing investment that will meet the increasing demand.

We want to continue to help people to live at home for longer and enable them to take responsibility for their own wellbeing.

We need to build on the success of the Help to Live at Home scheme, which so far has helped around 6,500 people to stay independent.

The provision of care services is changing and by bringing some of these services in-house we can start a reablement service.

We are ahead of the curve in recognising that things have to change.

Wiltshire's effective and award winning Health and Wellbeing Board is already delivering several programmes that are integrating health and social care services.

An example - which you may be aware of - is the single view of the customer.

This allows an individual's data to be collected once and then shared – as required to avoid duplication, excess time and the frustration for the customer or patient.

The result is a more efficient and joined up service that delivers real outcomes for the individual and provides the care package and support that they need to live a healthier life at home, in their local community, where we know they prefer to be.

Also, as part of the recent tier one restructure to appoint the corporate directors, we introduced a new role – a corporate director for health and adult social care.

This is a joint role with the NHS Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group and this post holder will also be their Chief Accountable Officer.

This is a radical move and one that demonstrates the commitment and realisation that these services must integrate at all levels including the most senior level, if we are to meet the growing demand and deliver the best possible social care services in the future.

The post will be advertised soon, and I anticipate that it will have a lot of interest given that this is new and different and that very few local authorities and health services have gone down a similar approach. Although based on the pressures I suspect this will change and we will see more shared roles.

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The programme of transformation in both children's and adults have involved staff, partners and service users.

We know by working with others we can make a huge and positive difference.

A recent example was the pressures on the acute hospitals.

Interestingly, the admissions of people from Wiltshire with respiratory problems - one of the major pressures on the health service at this time of year - has been much lower than many other counties.

This has been attributed to the high take up of the flu vaccine in Wiltshire, which is one of the highest in the country.

This is the result of our public health team working with GPs, schools, communities and businesses to encourage people to get vaccinated and take responsibility for their own health.

It proves that preventative action reduces service pressures and high costs.

The more that communities and individuals can take responsibility for their health and wellbeing the bigger the impact.

We recognise that we need to invest in our local communities to encourage and empower people to take more responsibility.

Our model of community working is well established and nationally recognised,

but - we need to do more...

We need to increase capacity

Whilst there are currently more than 6,000 volunteers helping to deliver council services across Wiltshire including locally based flood wardens, people who help to

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clear and maintain our rights of way, sports coaches and 868 people who support the library service...

We need to encourage **everyone** in local communities to do a little to help others.

As Martin Luther King said;

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is what are you doing for others? “.

We are creating places for our communities and so far we have invested more than £41 million in new facilities including three community campuses and three hubs across the county.

Work is currently underway to invest a further £33 million in facilities in Pewsey and Royal Wootton Bassett, and to complete the final phase of the programme in Melksham, Cricklade and Calne.

Future provision of facilities, in other areas, will focus on community hubs based on the successful model implemented in Calne, Devizes and Malmesbury, which have seen significant returns both in income and social capital on comparatively small investment.

These hubs are providing a wide range of services and flexible space that is being used by the community and commercial organisations.

We have seen a significant rise in visitor numbers - up to 128% increase in some places - and we have also seen a rise in the number of volunteers helping to provide services.

We need to do all that we can, working with local communities, to ensure that their local facilities and services are sustainable in the future and will not be reliant on any subsidy from the council.

We need these hubs – these community places.

Did you know that a recent study showed that 200,000 UK pensioners had not had a conversation with a friend or relative in more than a month!

That's really shocking.

And, right now more than 9 million people in the UK say they regularly feel lonely.

The impact of loneliness and isolation is one of the biggest demands and costs to the health service.

Research states that loneliness can be as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

We have to take action and we have to do what we can to help combat this issue.

I'd like to highlight the Malmesbury hub, known as the Riverside Community Centre that opened its doors a year ago and quickly established itself as a 'must-book venue' for local groups and clubs.

From the well-attended Saturday morning drop-in brunch club - as this is evidenced as the peak time when people feel most lonely - to running clubs, girl guides, a choir and a band, the centre offers something for everyone whatever their age.

The hub is run by Friends of Riverside, a group of volunteers that also run activities at the centre; such as Saturday Friends Sessions for seniors, especially welcoming those with dementia. They collect people from local care homes by minibus so that these older people can continue to socialise with friends and others.

The hub is a really important place and it's making a positive difference to many people's lives.

If every community was able to emulate this approach and support those that need it most we would be able to allocate our resources where they are most needed.

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Our communities do so much already, but together we need to look at what more they can do; what services they can deliver and support and what more they can do to help others.

As Margaret J Wheatley an expert in community leadership says;

“There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about”.

We know that communities care.

They care about people and about their environment and their local facilities.

Thousands turn out each year to take part in community litter picks tackling the hot spots and helping to clean-up our county and reduce the £2.5m we spend on picking up rubbish.

As I've said before, if everyone is encouraged to make a small contribution to help others, to help the environment, and to help make their place better – then what a positive impact can be made.

No one can do everything but, everyone can do something.

That is why we will continue to invest in communities and devolve services that are best delivered locally.

I have, therefore, decided to propose an amendment to the budget and to allocate £669,000 from the recently announced Rural Fund to go into street scene services to help to improve the environment, including combating litter and fly tipping.

If we are to meet the challenges ahead, we will need to increase the capacity in our communities and continue to work with our partners.

We also know how important it is to have a strong and robust local economy.

We recognise the impact that a strong economy can have on the overall health and wellbeing of the county.

Growing the economy is one of our three priorities.

More than £300 million has been allocated in the capital programme to be spent on infrastructure to improve access and transport across the county, regenerate our market towns, deliver housing and improve connectivity.

Protecting and creating new jobs and making sure that businesses in Wiltshire can recruit the skills they need, is vital to supporting the growth of the local economy.

Working with colleges, businesses and the Local Enterprise Partnership we will continue to promote and support apprenticeships and help people to access higher education and training.

We will do all we can to help develop the workforce that Wiltshire needs.

As a council we will become more business-like, but we won't be a business.

We will offer more through digital options allowing our residents to self-serve at a time that's convenient to them.

We need to continue to drive change and transformation and look to the future.

As Richard Branson once was quoted:

“unsuccessful organisations make decisions based on their current situation – successful organisations make decisions based on where they want to be.”

The LGA peer challenge team also stated that this council has strong, visible and accessible leadership that gives clear direction.

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We know what we need to do and the budget before you today continues the journey to transform and improve this council - so that we make Wiltshire an even better place to live, work in and visit.

My thanks go to the corporate team and my cabinet and in particular to Michael Hudson as finance director and Philip Whitehead as my lead member for finance, for delivering one of the most challenging budgets that this council has had to manage.

It clearly sets out how we will continue to deliver our priorities and make the savings required.

I would like to acknowledge and commend the innovative thinking, commitment and business-like approach from everyone involved in proposing this balanced budget for consideration by this council today...