

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**24 March 2020**

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**Question from Anne Henshaw on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)**

**Agenda Item 5 – Public Participation**

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

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

**Councillor Toby Sturgis – Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management and Investment**

1. In view of Wiltshire Council's declaration of a climate emergency just over a year ago and its pledge to make Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030

**Question 1**

Does the Council have a strategy to meet this target and if so, where may it be seen?

**Response**

In February 2019 Wiltshire Council resolved to acknowledge the climate emergency and to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. Wiltshire Council's Cabinet subsequently committed to make the council carbon neutral by 2030.

The council had commenced gathering evidence to inform the development of a new carbon reduction strategy for the county of Wiltshire. The intention had been for full Council to consider the draft strategy at its meeting on 20 October 2020. However, given the current circumstances this will not be feasible. The council will review the programme once the resources are available to do so.

**Question 2**

what measures is the Council taking in order to meet the 2030 target within the next nine years?

## **Response**

As set out above, the council is developing a new carbon reduction strategy. The programme for its completion and consideration by full Council will be published once the council has the capacity to do so.

The council is carrying out a review of its Local Plan as reported to Cabinet on 24 March 2020. The council is developing its fourth Local Transport Plan and both documents will contain policies and actions to enable carbon reduction. The council is currently developing a Green Infrastructure Strategy. From this we will develop a woodland and tree planting policy.

A climate emergency and global warming task group has been established and the members of the group are working on the following themes

- Renewable energy generation, energy use and efficiency
- Planning
- Transport and air quality
- Waste
- Land use
- Business and industry.

In parallel the council has implemented a number of actions to reduce carbon. These include investing in the energy efficiency of the council's buildings, new renewable energy installations on the council's property and developing a business case for use of canopy based solar panels at all viable park and ride sites.

Significant progress has been made in exchanging the existing street lighting for LED lights.

There have been a number of events held in community areas and the council is developing a carbon reduction engagement strategy.

The council is engaging with other public sector organisations through the Wiltshire Public Service Board.

The council is a member of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) which enables engagement with business and industry in Wiltshire. The SWLEP is about to publish its Local Industrial Strategy which includes commitments to improving the strategic energy infrastructure, decarbonising our economy and helping to deliver the national climate change targets.

£350,000 has been allocated in the revenue budget from 2020-21 onwards which will be used to fund new roles for staff to focus on carbon reduction

work, with interviews having taken place for the Head of Carbon Reduction on 20 March 2020.

£100,000 has been allocated for 2020-21 to fund posts to target external funding for additional footpath and cycle path networks.

### **Question 3**

will the Council review its position on the following in order to support its 2030 carbon neutral target?

- i) a distributor road to the east/southeast of Chippenham; and
- ii) the A303 Stonehenge improvement scheme

### **Response**

The council has acknowledged the climate emergency and resolved to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030. Achieving carbon neutrality will require the council not only to account for carbon in development plans and in every scheme it is bringing forward, but also to find ways of delivering new development with significantly reduced carbon emissions and for which any residual carbon emissions are offset or sequestered so that the net input into the atmosphere is zero carbon emissions.

Defined requirements for new infrastructure, homes and businesses will be delivered alongside the need to protect and enhance the environment, with net environmental gains being achieved. Natural capital approaches which allow for the monetisation of ecosystem services, including the social cost of carbon, will be employed in better informed cost benefit analysis for new development.

- i) A programme such as Future Chippenham is the ideal long-term enterprise in which we can develop and deploy initiatives and measures that demonstrate our commitment to these aspects. We will publish as much as we can as soon as we can and will progress our plans with the environmental aspects very much to the forefront.
- ii) The Environmental Statement prepared for the A303 scheme contains a chapter on climate. This chapter addresses the greenhouse gas impact assessment – the effects on the climate of greenhouse gas emissions arising from the scheme, including how the scheme would affect the ability of government to meet its carbon reduction plan targets. The conclusion is that the greenhouse gas impact of the scheme would not have a material impact on the Government meeting its carbon reduction targets. The Council will work with Highways

England as the promoter of the scheme to solve long standing transport and economic issues caused by the existing road and to minimise any adverse impact and bring as much improvement as possible to the environment and heritage values of the area.

#### **Question 4**

Will the recent Heathrow 3<sup>rd</sup> runway Judgement lead the Council to:

- i) review its policy on infrastructure and large development projects by means of wholly different sets of criteria; and
- ii) ensure recognition of the fact that infrastructure and development projects thus reviewed and re-assessed be contained within the review of the Local Plan and any Sites Allocation decisions?

#### **Response**

The implications of the Heathrow decision on local authorities are still being considered but the council is committed to seeking to achieve carbon neutrality. This can be achieved by finding ways of delivering new development with significantly reduced carbon emissions, for which any residual carbon emissions are offset or sequestered, so that the net input into the atmosphere is zero carbon emissions.

Infrastructure planning is an integral part of the review of the Local Plan. Infrastructure needed to support the county's growth to 2036 will be considered as part of the review, in the context of the council's resolution to seek to make the county of Wiltshire carbon neutral by 2030.

2. In view of the Council's declaration of a climate emergency just over a year ago and the ground water flooding alerts to the whole area of the Upper Bristol Avon above Chippenham to Melksham in February 2020,

#### **Question 5**

when will Wiltshire's Flood Risk Strategy be updated?

#### **Response**

Wiltshire Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy was last updated in April 2015. Section 9 (5) of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires the strategy to be consistent with the national flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England.

The Environment Agency is currently revising the national flood and coastal risk management strategy and plan to publish the revised strategy in spring 2020. We therefore think it prudent to wait until the revised national strategy is published before updating the Wiltshire Council strategy.

In the meantime, the Council is reviewing the prioritisation of flood risk at a strategic county wide level. The intention is to understand where investment should be targeted to best increase county resilience to flooding (from groundwater, surface water and watercourses) with reference to the changing climate. The findings of the study will inform the update of the county's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

**Question 6**

Will new assessments, including specific area geology, be incorporated into any future development considerations?

**Response**

As part of the assessment of the site the hydrogeological characteristics of the area will be considered.

**Question 7**

How would the proposed distributor road to the east/southeast of Chippenham and new bridge crossing of the Bristol Avon to the east/Southeast of Chippenham located close to the flood plain meet the stringent requirements concerning flood plain development?

**Response**

The Bristol Avon is a main river, and the Environment Agency (EA) is the relevant flood risk authority for planning consultations and consents. The project team will engage with the EA early on to understand their requirements. Detailed hydraulic modelling will be used to inform the design and ensure that the proposed road and bridge would not increase flood risk.