

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

23 FEBRUARY 2010

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS CASWILL
CHIPPENHAM MONKTON DIVISION

TO COUNCILLOR JANE SCOTT
LEADER OF COUNCIL

Question 1

What was the rationale for locating Community Safety in the Department of Health and Wellbeing, rather than in Neighbourhoods and Planning?

Response

The rationale for the location of Community Safety was related to the consideration of the need to have strategic oversight and co-ordinated operational management of our public protection services, and to strengthen further partnership working. In that context the term 'public protection' is to be interpreted in its broadest sense and thus it encompasses Community Safety and Emergency Planning. The strategic oversight of these areas at Corporate Director level has been designated as falling within the aegis of the Corporate Director (Public Health and Well Being). Service Director responsibility was adjusted accordingly in that Public Protection and Community Safety will be managed by the newly appointed Service Director, Public Protection.

TO COUNCILLOR KEITH HUMPHRIES
CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Question 2

- (a) How many professionally trained environmental health officers were employed by the four Wiltshire District Councils at the end of 2009, prior to the change to a unitary council?

Response

Pre local government reorganisation, 32 qualified Environmental Health Officers (including 5 managerial posts) plus 3 vacancies.

In addition there were 15 qualified Environmental/Technical officers, 13 Trading Standards Officers and 13 Trading Standards Enforcement Officers.

(b) How many professionally trained environmental health officer posts will be on the Wiltshire Council 2010-11 complement, after the cutting of three posts which is planned in this year's budget proposals (page 44)?

Response

For 2010/11 we have 32 qualified Environmental Health Officers (including 2 managerial posts with previous 3 vacancies filled)

In addition 16 qualified Environmental/Technical officers, 12 Trading Standards Officers and 13 Trading Standards Enforcement officers)

Additional information

The environmental/technical officers are also qualified staff albeit in more specific areas (e.g. food safety, health & safety, environmental protection)

TO COUNCILLOR JOHN NOEKEN
CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

Question 3

- (a) How many posts are to be cut from the Council's Democratic Services complement in the £46000 a year reduction being planned in this year's budget proposals (p.45)?
- (b) Will this involve the loss of a post or posts which are currently filled?
- (c) Does this involve any reduction at all in the support for the Council's Overview and Scrutiny work?
- (d) What services to backbench members are to be reduced, or removed?

Response

There is no reduction in posts within Democratic Services. The text attributed to the savings of £46,000 is incorrect. The majority of these savings are made up of the 4% vacancy factor applied to all staffing budgets.

There will therefore be no reduction in service to any councillors or group of councillors.

TO COUNCILLOR DICK TONGE
CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

Question 4

(a) What has been the cost of introducing the recent parking restrictions in Ivy Road in Chippenham?

Response

Reviews of parking have been undertaken consecutively in a number of towns. The costs have not been attributed to individual restrictions. The work following the Chippenham review is not quite finalised but the costs of the traffic regulation order and installation of the signs and lines for the parking restrictions throughout the town are estimated at £15,000.

(b) What led him and the Council's officers to think that these changes were needed?

Response

It is a commitment that following the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement, when responsibility for enforcing parking controls passed from the Police to the council, parking problems in the towns would be reviewed.

Requests from residents and others for controls to deal with obstruction or safety problems have been investigated and where appropriate restrictions formulated.

Representation was received from a resident of Ivy Road that parked cars were obstructing access for refuse collection vehicles.

(c) How many residents made representations to the Council that additional parking restrictions were needed, before the initial recommendations were published?

Response

As indicated above a complaint was received about the obstruction of the highway.

The Town Council, former District Council and local Members were consulted on the preliminary scheme for Chippenham prior to the proposals being finalised and advertised for public comment.

- (d) Does he accept that the real cost of these changes is now being borne by the majority of residents, who have lost parking spaces for no apparent benefit?

Response

Yellow lines have been placed across vehicular accesses in Ivy Road at the request of residents of Bath Road who indicated, in response to a survey undertaken by officers, that access to rear off-road parking was subject to obstruction by parked vehicles. Also in agreement with the occupiers of commercial premises in Ivy Road, parking has been prohibited at two vehicular access points. The yellow line restrictions will ease access for the refuse collection vehicle.

In respect of lost parking spaces, vehicles parking in the locations where yellow lines have been placed in Ivy Road would obstruct access for off-road parking.

Question 5

- (a) When the parking restrictions were introduced in Esmead in Monkton Park in Chippenham, concerns were expressed about the likely displacement of parking by users of the train station into Cocklebury Road, one of the busiest roads in the area. Is he aware that this displacement is occurring daily, causing considerable difficulties to the residents of Cocklebury Road?

Response

In response to the advertising of the new parking restrictions in Chippenham over sixty letters of objection and support were received, together with two petitions. Comments were received that individual restrictions did not go far enough but overwhelmingly there were objections on the grounds that the proposals were excessive.

Conscious of the controversial nature and because of the frequent challenges to their justification, new parking restrictions are generally formulated to deal with the problems identified.

Yellow lines were installed in Esmead, as requested by the residents, to deal with obstructions problems. It is difficult to judge where and to what extent displacement parking will take place and to then justify restrictions beyond the location where complaints have been received.

- (b) Will he take this chance to restate the commitments made at that time to an early review of these knock-on effects, and give a timetable for that review?

Response

New parking restrictions are monitored to assess the need for new traffic regulation orders to reduce the extent of restrictions or introduce additional controls.

The programme of work for 2010/11 allows for the making of traffic regulation orders to address problems identified from the monitoring of the restrictions introduced following the review of parking in the towns including Chippenham.

- (c) Given the continuing parking problems in Chippenham, will he agree to start the much needed process of an overall review of parking options, including a fresh look at residents' parking schemes?

Response

The Council's term consultants Mouchel have recently been commissioned to undertake a review of the current Wiltshire Local Transport Plan – Parking Plan which dates from 2000. As part of the commission Mouchel will review and recommend a range of parking policies and options, including policy for the introduction of residents parking schemes.

Question 6

- (a) Is he aware that in vetoing any further work on engineering solutions for the anti-social behaviour problems in the Bath Road car park in Chippenham, he is blocking the investigation of solutions requested by a large majority of members of the Chippenham and Villages Area Board?

Response

I understand that officers recommended use of mobile CCTV to combat the problem and this was approved for implementation. Investigation of other solutions is a recommendation by the Area Board. If Chippenham Area Board feels that this matter is a priority they can fund the feasibility study in the new financial year. They may also wish to explore whether Chippenham Town Council wishes to work in partnership and match fund this as the Car Park is in the town

Wiltshire Council has a duty to all residents when considering allocation of funding and resources.

(b) What evidence did he consider in coming to the conclusions that the situation here is “comparable to many other car parks in Wiltshire”, and not a high priority?

Response

The Council does not have comparable and consistent information on anti-social behaviour in its car parks that would allow a like-for-like comparison. However, feedback from the Police Authority and the Crime Reduction Team has been considered.

(c) Which car parks did he use to make this comparison?

Response

Anti-social behaviour has been experienced in Castle Combe Car Park in Chippenham, Methuen and Somerfield Car Parks in Corsham, Multi Storey Car Park in Trowbridge to name a few.

(d) Why did he overlook the commitment made at the Area Board to involve local residents in a working group which would take forward possible solutions?

Response

This commitment was taken by the Area Board and the Cabinet member. I understand that the Head of Crime Reduction will convene a working group meeting with residents. A meeting has been arranged for 10th March at which time residents will be invited to contribute to identifying possible solutions.

TO COUNCILLOR JOHN THOMSON
DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES

Question 7

Where in the Area Board Handbook or other published guidelines does it specify that Area Board requests for action by officers must be referred to a Cabinet member to establish that the action can be taken?

Response

Page 31 of the Handbook makes clear that delegation of powers to area boards and officers operates in conjunction with the Scheme of Delegation to Cabinet Members. This is intended to ensure that area boards and officers act within the corporate policies and resources of the Council. In cases where expenditure is proposed by an area board where no specific budget provision exists the officers involved would be expected to seek the views of the Cabinet member or the full Cabinet.