

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

**ANNUAL COUNCIL
18 MAY 2010**

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS

**QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR ERNIE CLARK
HILPERTON DIVISION**

**TO COUNCILLOR JOHN BRADY, CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING AND HOUSING**

Question 1

Under the proposed revision to the Housing Revenue Account debt plan, Wiltshire Council's 'council housing' debt will increase from £4million to £119million. Is the council in broad agreement to this £115million increase? If so, why?

Notwithstanding grants currently available exclusively to councils, would it not be prudent for this council to encourage its tenants to allow a transfer of the housing stock to either a RSL or an ALMO with existing WC staff TUPE'd to the new body?

Response

As you have correctly identified, proposals were circulated by the previous Government for alternatives to the current Housing Revenue Account subsidy system. At this time, we do not have any information as to the status of those proposals and whether or not they will be carried out by the new Government.

With regard to stock transfer as you probably know Salisbury District Council balloted its tenants for a second time on a transfer to a newly formed housing association in 2006 but 72% decided to stay with the council. Since that time the financial position of the HRA has marginally improved and therefore it is our view that tenants are less likely to vote for a transfer. Overall the reasons for tenants to vote for transfer have decreased rather than increased. A transfer ballot is a very costly and time consuming exercise likely to cost approximately £500k. We do not detect any desire amongst tenants to reopen the stock transfer debate and the proposals for the subsidy change currently being consulted on may further reduce the desire for a transfer.

The main priority for the council is to provide a period of stability and certainty about the future of council housing during which we can deliver a service improvement programme that will over the next two years ensure that our housing management service is a high performing, quality service that is responsive to the needs of our tenants.