

From Councillor Caswill

**WILTSHIRE COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL**

**13 JULY 2010**

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**COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS**

**QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLOR CHRIS CASWILL**  
**CHIPPENHAM MONKTON DIVISION**

**TO COUNCILLOR JANE SCOTT**  
**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**Question 1**

- 1) Did she raise any objections to the Grant Guidance recently issued to Area Boards?
- 2) Is she aware that it provides for Boards to "use a proportion of their funding for projects which fall outside the criteria of the Community Grant Scheme"?
- 3) Why did she intervene at the Chippenham Area Board to try and prevent the Board from exercising this choice?

**Response**

I did not raise any objections to the Grant Guidance as it is up to individual Area Boards to decide how to manage their grants.

I intervened at the recent meeting of the Chippenham Area Board, because, as a member of that Board, I voiced my objection to a percentage of the grant being placed at the disposal of members to facilitate their particular priorities. The Chairman asked for a show of hands in support, or otherwise, of my views and there was a large majority in support.

It was also felt that, as this item was not on the agenda and there was no supporting information for the meeting to consider, it was sensible to defer a decision until the next meeting.

From Councillor Caswill

## **Question 2**

Is she satisfied that all appropriate and necessary actions have been taken in respect of the payments made by Kennet District Council to staff of that Council in the transition to this unitary authority?

## **Response**

Yes I am satisfied. There is ongoing action in relation to the recovery of two payments, totaling approximately £20,000.

## **TO COUNCILLOR DICK TONGE** **CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT**

## **Question**

At the current rate of expenditure, how long would it have taken the Council to repair the potholes and larger scale road surface damage still visible all over the county?

## **Response**

I would like to thank Mr Caswill for his question as it allows me to tell members of the tremendous work that has been carried out by Highways since the severe winter weather.

The winter had a seriously negative effect on the condition of the road network, but an enormous amount of repair work has already been completed and will continue for the rest of the year.

It is estimated that over 7,000 potholes have been filled so far this year, including those repaired by the Parish Stewards who have been patrolling the network to fix the worst potholes quickly. Over 500,000 square metres of carriageway have been resurfaced, with a further 35,000 square metres currently underway.

Because of the extensive damage a programme of smaller localised repairs is underway with over 5,000 square metres of repairs completed, 17,000 square metres in hand, and further sites being identified in the south and east of the county.

The Velocity Repairers are working on repairing minor roads and have already treated over 15,000 square metres of road surface.

Mr Caswill will know that there is no answer to his question. A road network the size of Wiltshire's needs constant attention. Expenditure is broadly linear but slows as winter approaches as attention is turned to gritting and keeping the roads safe. I would like to point out that the road surface damage and the appearance of a road surface is not the

From Councillor Caswill

main criteria when choosing the schedule of works. The most important factors are skid resistance and where there are underlying structural issues.

The Council is making significant investment in bringing the road network up to standard, and we are seeing improvements across the county, but this is an on going process which will last all year.

**TO COUNCILLOR JOHN NOEKEN**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES**

**Question**

- 1) Does the Council still have standards for the time taken to respond to requests from (a) members of the public and (b) Wiltshire Councillors and what are they in each case?
- 2) What procedures are in place to ensure those standards are met?

**Response**

Members of the public

The standards for responding to members of the public are:

Telephone calls – Answered within 20 seconds.

Email & Letter – Full response within 10 working days. (Emails to be acknowledged within 24 hours)

The flow of calls made to Customer Services is monitored and resources are adjusted as and when there is a spike in activity. Monthly reports are produced, which amongst other things, provides details of average response times. Individual members of customer services staff review their performance statistics in monthly one to one sessions with their line manager.

For emails direct to the customer services email box, there is an automatic acknowledgement which confirms the standard for response time. A number of these emails are forwarded to other service areas for action and response and when this happens, a reminder is given of the response standards with a request that they copy customer services in on the reply. This allows customer services to monitor any emails that may have gone over the 10 days.

You will appreciate that not everything goes through customer services and that most of the email and correspondence traffic goes direct to the individual service areas. Each Service Manager is responsible for ensuring the response standards are met. I hope this answers your question on responding to members of the public, but if you have a particular concern in mind, please do take this up with me after the meeting.

From Councillor Caswill

### Councillors

As far as responding to requests from Wiltshire Councillors is concerned, I would draw your attention to Appendix 2 of the Councillor/Officer Relations Protocol approved by Council and as contained in the Constitution.

*This states that response to Councillor enquiries including emails and telephone calls 'will be acknowledged within two working days of receipt, giving details of an alternative contact if the officer concerned is absent from the office' and that 'a substantive response will be provided within seven days of receipt. If that is not possible an explanation will be given as to the reason for the delay, what action is being taken, and when a response will be sent'.*

I appreciate that there are more and more pressures being placed on officers, but I would hope that these standards are being met. Councillors themselves will be the best judge of that and if you or any other Councillors have any concerns that this is not the case, please discuss this either with myself or John Quinton, Head of Democratic Services after the meeting and we will look into it.