

From Councillor Colmer

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

COUNCIL
13 JULY 2010

COUNCILLORS' QUESTIONS

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR PETER COLMER **CRICKLADE AND LATTON DIVISION**

TO COUNCILLOR SCOTT **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Question

What are the quantifiable benefits of the Wiltshire Assembly to the ratepayers of Wiltshire and what are the associated costs in administering the process?

Response

Leading the Wiltshire family of partnerships (the local strategic partnership (LSP)) for the county are the three lead partnerships:

- Wiltshire Assembly conference –a very wide membership that brings together Wiltshire areas and the voluntary, public and business sectors. The Assembly looks at issues across Wiltshire and sets challenges, outlined in the Wiltshire Community Plan (SCS).
- I as Leader of the Council, chair the Wiltshire Public Service Board (PSB). It brings together chairmen or equivalent of the main public sector organisations to put in place arrangements to deliver shared priorities.
- Wiltshire Coordinating Group (WCG), which is chaired by Andrew Kerr and brings together representatives of Thematic Delivery Partnerships (TDPs), WFCAP (community area partnerships) and the voluntary sector to coordinate strategy and bring together information for the Assembly.

'One Wiltshire' is the principle aspiration for Wiltshire Council's in participating in partnership working. This means looking beyond the council's own responsibilities and making productive links with the work of other public agencies, the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and private businesses. Margaret West, Chief Officer, Voluntary Action Kennet, said 'The VCS welcome being involved in the Wiltshire Assembly as it is a gateway to enable the sector to join in at every partnership level and bring knowledge and experience of practically working with communities and making a difference locally. My view is that the VCS has been growing its voice and influence across Wiltshire partnerships, meaning the sector is making a real contribution to partnership working and is acknowledged as a true partner. From this position, the sector then can work with partners to address the challenges ahead'.

Benefits of the Wiltshire family of partnerships

- **Working to a shared agenda.** The Wiltshire vision is cascading through the partnerships and organisations, ensuring our aspirations apply to service delivery in every organisation with less risk of duplication and conflicting interests, and more value for money. Without strong partnership arrangements, this would not be as effective.
- **Supporting local projects and initiatives.** The PSB coordinated the performance reward grant scheme for area boards which has so far allocated £376,604 to local initiatives. PRG of £1m was also allocated to Action for Wiltshire for initiatives to support Wiltshire people and businesses in the recession.
- **New relationships that the public want to see.** The partnerships are excellent networking and learning opportunities and open doors to new organisational links that have already started to make a difference to projects.
- **Making a difference.** Action for Wiltshire has been the most active Wiltshire Assembly project to date. Included in the project outcomes have been temporary job placements and work mentoring for young people, allocation of £288,000 to the Citizens' Advice Bureau to support them to handle extra calls, and a business support service.
- **Commitment and support.** The Assembly conference events are very popular with all member organisations – evident from evaluation feedback. These days provide a unique opportunity for specialists to stand back and take a broader view of Wiltshire, and what needs to happen to secure a successful future for the county.
- **Good governance.** Bringing all of the above together and reaping all the benefits requires good management and strong leadership. Wiltshire Council, as lead organisation and accountable body, provides this.

Partnership costs

Annual administrative costs to the council for each of the three lead partnerships with estimated staff time, based on average salaries provided by HR, are:

Wiltshire Assembly - £17,500. This is an average costs based on the four meetings to date. There has been a reduction in the cost of the meetings since 2008 as a result of negotiation with venues and speakers. In line with this pattern, it is anticipated that costs for 2010/11 can be lower still. To date, all conferences have been funded from regional grants; therefore cost to the Wiltshire council tax payer has been minimal.

Wiltshire Coordinating Group - £4,437. This is based on nine meetings. The majority of this cost is staff time for arranging the meetings (£3987 and meeting venue costs are minimal. These costs do not include any time spent by officers preparing presentations or reports for the meetings.

Wiltshire Public Service Board - £1,957. This includes staff time (£1,673) to prepare for and support the PSB and additional venue costs (£958). Much of the ongoing costs have been funded by grant and therefore are at no additional cost

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to the Wiltshire council tax payer. These costs do not include any time spent by officers preparing presentations or reports for the meetings.

Total annual administrative costs **£23,894**

Further information

More detailed information about the work of the partnerships is available in the Wiltshire Assembly annual report 2009. This is available on the website at <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/wiltshire-assembly-annual-report.pdf>.