

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Council**

**21 October 2014**

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#### **Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division**

**To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning,  
Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property and Waste**

#### **Question 1**

Over the past few months I have received endless complaints that replacement and new waste bins haven't been delivered within the 28 days which I understand is Council policy. I have today (14.08.14) received a complaint from a resident that is still waiting after 4 months. Some of the reasons given for this disgraceful service have been amazing. The latest being blaming the floods of last winter.

- 1) Can you tell me why residents are being forced to wait so long for replacement and new bins to be provided?
- 2) How much stock does the Council keep to ensure that replacements are provided within 28 days?
- 3) Will the Council make a public apology to the residents affected by this disgraceful level of service?
- 4) As well as a public apology can I suggest you write a letter of apology to those affected?

#### **Response**

1) I am pleased to report that we have now caught up with bin deliveries in the west of the county and we are complying with the 28 day delivery policy. There are a number of reasons why the service fell behind with delivering bins. West Wiltshire District Council introduced wheeled bins from 1994. Given the age of those original bins we experienced an unprecedented failure rate earlier this year following a period of bad weather, during which many bins were damaged having been blown over. It also became apparent that there was a fault with some of the lids on the plastic bottle and cardboard bin lids. The supplier has reimbursed the costs associated with replacing these lids, but this additional demand for service added to the backlog of deliveries. We have also had difficulties with staff shortages and during such times we prioritise the collection of waste and recycling over the delivery of bins. Additional resources have been deployed to enable us to clear the backlog and we have reviewed the number of people we need to deploy on this activity to ensure we meet our delivery times.

2) Historically we have ordered new bins once the stock levels fall to 800 bins for each type used. Given the increase in demand we are increasing these levels to 1,000 bins to ensure we don't run out of stock.

3) Any resident who has contacted the council to ask why their replacement bin has not been delivered has received an apology for the delay.

4) Those residents who complained in writing have received a written apology. Given that the backlog has now been cleared, it would not be a cost effective use of resources to write retrospectively to those residents who were affected.

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**From Councillor Jeff Osborn, Trowbridge Grove Division**

**To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning,  
Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property and Waste**

**Question 2**

For a number of months I have been trying to obtain a full list of all the sites/properties that Wiltshire Council has for disposal as capital assets.

To date despite a series of requests in various quarters, I have obtained only what can at best be termed a partial list.

Please can this situation be rectified so that I, and all members, can be provided with a comprehensive list at Full Council?

**Response:**

1. The list of "assets held for sale" that was requested by and provided to Cllr Osborne was an extract from the accounts and was, in accordance with the code of practice for the accounts, a list of those assets that the Council is beginning to sell rather than a full list of assets declared surplus for disposal. It was therefore a partial list.
2. Wiltshire Council has a full list of the land and property assets owned by the authority and also a list of potential assets that could be declared surplus by the Council. A full list of sites/properties that Wiltshire Council has for disposal as capital assets will not be provided at full council as this information is deemed to be commercially sensitive in that publication could materially affect the saleable value / capital receipt for sites/ properties and undermine the council's ability to secure the best consideration reasonably obtainable in accordance with its duty under section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.
3. The programme for property asset disposals is subject to changing circumstances and is managed closely by the Strategic Asset Management Team and Finance Team and decisions are made within the governance framework of the Cabinet Capital Assets Committee (CCAC).

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**From Councillor Jeff Osborn, Trowbridge Grove Division**

**To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband**

**Question 3**

A month or so back Hatts Travel went into administration. Much hard work was put in by our officers to get the services this company supplied retendered.

May I please have a statement documenting the extra cost involved in this retendering exercise?

Were all services satisfactorily retendered?

Where did the extra money come from?

What are the budgetary implications for the next and future financial years?

**Response**

The additional cost to the authority in the current financial year is £586,000. Most of this is due to significant increases in the cost of public transport contracts, including the Salisbury Park & Ride.

All of the public transport, education transport (both SEN and Mainstream) and social care contracts have been successfully re tendered in line with current procurement regulations and there were no disruptions to the travelling public. Due to the size of the contract (14 vehicles) the Park & Ride service is still being operated under short term arrangements by two of the local operators whilst a full scale procurement exercise is carried out to secure a long term operator.

Although, due to a lot of hard work by staff over the summer, all of the contracts were replaced without any break in service, Hatts' demise has created a situation where there is an acute shortage of buses and PCV drivers in Wiltshire at busy periods. As a result it is now proving difficult to deal with some of the capacity issues that normally arise at the start of the new school year.

The additional costs will have to be met from the Passenger Transport budgets.

The additional costs incurred are the equivalent of a full financial year impact of £746,000. However, due to the need to maintain continuity of service the contracts

have currently been let for relatively short periods, and it is expected that prices will fall again to some extent when they are next retendered and when the market has begun to adjust to Hatts demise. It is not known by how much this will reduce the additional costs, but it is likely that there will remain a significant longer term increase in costs. These extra costs will add to the financial pressures already facing the passenger transport budgets and make further reductions in bus services inevitable.

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**From Councillor Jeff Osborn, Trowbridge Grove Division**

**To Councillor Stuart Wheeler, Cabinet Member for Hubs, Heritage & Arts, Governance (including information management), Support Services (HR, Legal, ICT, Business Services, Democratic Services)**

**Question 4**

Does the Council HR department operate a compromise agreement policy when staff leave our employment?

Does such a policy apply on a general or selective basis, that is, does it apply to all staff or only in exceptional cases?

**Response**

The council does not have a policy on settlement agreements and therefore these are not routinely used. However, the council reserves the right to use settlement agreements on occasions should the situation require it.

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Helen Osborn, Trowbridge Lambrok Division**

**To Councillor Stuart Wheeler, Cabinet Member for Hubs, Heritage & Arts, Governance (including information management), Support Services (HR, Legal, ICT, Business Services, Democratic Services)**

**Question 5**

I'm sure that I am not the only Wiltshire Councillor that receives complaints from members of the public, concerning the length of time it takes for the telephone to be answered by Wiltshire Council – customer care - at certain times of the day.

What is the average time, it takes for a call to be answered, how many calls are lost, or go un-answered in an average month?

How many staff are employed on the Council switchboard at present compared to 4 years ago?

**Response**

The current average connection rate for Customer Services is 86%, which is below the corporate target of 90%. This is largely due to a high turnover of staff over the last few months (around 10% of the workforce). This provides the challenge of recruiting and training new staff, as well as taking staff away from answering enquiries to provide the necessary training.

Average time to answer calls is currently running at 50 seconds.

The current structure in Customer Services is 71.9 FTEs, which covers dealing with enquiries from the public and associated administration on multiple access channels; i.e. Telephone, Face to face, Email/Letter, social media, e-form and application forms.

Staffing of Customer Services 4 years ago amounted to 108 FTEs.

NB: The subsequent reduction in staffing includes removing 2 layers of management from the team and responsibility for Revenues & Benefits enquiries being moved back to the service with additional resource transferred from Customer Services. It may also be useful to know that telephony demand has been managed down over time, the current average call volumes being approximately 50,000 calls per month, as opposed to an average of 70,000 calls per month 4 years ago.

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**From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division**

**To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband**

**Question 6**

Homes on the main A365, in Shurnhold, and Shaw, were flooded on the night of 24<sup>th</sup> September, it could be alleged, to the fact that Wiltshire Council have neglected in the duty to clear drains and gullies on this busy main road.

Would you not agree that by the photos, I have provided with this question it could be alleged that these drains haven't been touched for several years?

Would you agree, that as Cabinet Member for highways, that you should make a public apology on behalf of the Council that have let these residents down so badly?

Do you also feel that the Council should offer compensation to residents whose homes have been flooded, and seen their cars written off?

**Response**

I refer you to the Officer's response on 28<sup>th</sup>/29<sup>th</sup> September 2014.























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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Jeff Osborn, Trowbridge Grove Division**

**To Councillor Richard Tonge, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance, Risk,  
Procurement and Welfare Reform**

**Question 7**

- a) How much has the Council borrowed over the last twelve months?
- b) How much interest are we paying on this?
- c) How much more can we borrow before we hit the “ceiling”?
- d) Will this be sufficient to finance the Campus programme?

**Response**

The answers to the first three questions can be found in the following papers. If Councillor Osborn could have these reports at hand on his Ipad I will refer to them in my verbal response.

- 1. How much has the Council borrowed over the last twelve months?**
- 2. How much interest are we paying on this?**
- 3. How much more can we borrow before we hit the “ceiling”?**

Cabinet 16<sup>th</sup> September 2014

[http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s80038/Quarterly%20report%20on%20Treasury%20Management%20Strategy%202014-15\\_Qtr%20Ended%2030%20June%202014.pdf](http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s80038/Quarterly%20report%20on%20Treasury%20Management%20Strategy%202014-15_Qtr%20Ended%2030%20June%202014.pdf)

Cabinet 24<sup>th</sup> September 2013

[http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s63742/Quarterly%20report%20on%20Treasury%20Management%20Strategy%202013-14\\_Qtr%20Ended%2030%20June%202013\\_Updated%20for%20Cllr%20Ton.pdf](http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s63742/Quarterly%20report%20on%20Treasury%20Management%20Strategy%202013-14_Qtr%20Ended%2030%20June%202013_Updated%20for%20Cllr%20Ton.pdf)

Council 25th February 2014

<http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s70043/Treasury%20Management%20Report.pdf>

- 4. Will this be sufficient to finance the Campus programme?**

The current programme is covered in the Treasury and Capital plans.

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**From Councillor Jeff Osborn, Trowbridge Grove Division**

**To Councillor Richard Tonge, Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance, Risk, Procurement and Welfare Reform and Councillor Jonathon Seed, Cabinet member for Communities, Campuses, Area Boards, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding**

**Question 8**

- a) What was the total budgeted cost of Corsham Campus?
- b) Has it come in under budget, on budget, or over budget?
- c) If it is the latter, can we please told by how much?
- d) What are the implications for the overall campus programme?

**Response**

- a) The initial budget allocated for the design and build of the campus was £12.5m
- b) The first phase of the campus opened in July this year. The second phase which includes the refurbishment of the existing leisure centre has uncovered the need for investment into new pipes and plumbing, new electrics and the removal of asbestos. This investment along with additional enhancements to reflect community need have resulted in the allocation of additional budget from the overall campus capital funding.
- c) The additional works and investment are estimated at £1m.
- d) The approved campuses (x 7) will be delivered within the overall campus capital funding budget.

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**From Councillor Jeff Osborn, Trowbridge Grove Division**

**To Councillor Jonathon Seed, Cabinet member for Communities, Campuses,  
Area Boards, Leisure, Libraries and Flooding**

**Question 9**

Please may the Council be informed of the governance structure and responsibilities of the newly opened Corsham campus?

Is this likely to be a blueprint for other campuses as they are rolled out?

**Response**

The first phase of Corsham campus opened this July (2014). The campus will be fully open in 2015. The governance arrangements are still being developed for Corsham and other campuses. It is likely that a blueprint will be developed to ensure community input into an operational campus.



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**From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division**

**To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband**

**Question 10**

Over the past year local residents have had to dodge a large pothole outside The Bear Garage Atworth on the A365. This has damaged cars entering and leaving the garage which isn't good for trade, this has been reported a number of times.

I welcome the fact that this has been repaired on a temporary basis this week, but am also horrified to learn that this is the seventh time this year alone that a temporary job has been done.

How much has it cost to repair this pothole seven times on a temporary basis, would you note agree that this is a total waste of public money?

When can we expect a permanent job to be done on this dangerous pothole that has damaged countless cars?

**Response**

I refer you to the Officer's response of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2014 at 9:51.

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Simon Killane, Malmesbury Division**

**To Councillor Jane Scott OBE, Leader of the Council**

**Question 11**

**Use of media broadcasting technology to bring all Important Wiltshire Council Public meetings to the public!**

1) I welcome the progress that is being made with visual and sound recording of Full Council Meetings. I would like to know about how the council will make full recordings available so that the public can use the internet to access the meetings live or when most convenient for them. I would also like to know how it is proposed to make it easy to those who do not have access to computers. Will meetings be played or streamed in public areas at all major council hub buildings?

2) I would also like to know how the public will be able to easily access particular agenda items of interest without the need to trawl through what can be lengthy meetings. Finally I would like to know what plans the council may have to roll out recording to their important Wiltshire Council meetings such as Cabinet, Area Planning, Area Boards and Scrutiny Committees.

**Response**

- 1) The meetings that are recorded will be streamed live to the web and can be accessed in real time as proceedings happen. There will be a link on the Council web site that will allow access to the Wiltshire page on the Public-I site. Once broadcast, recordings will remain available for viewing on the website for a minimum of 6 months and options are being assessed to extend this further.

The broadcast will be available on any device that can access the Council website – mobiles, tablets etc. and can be viewed via this medium. The minutes of the meetings will remain as the formal record and these will be available via the usual channels after the meeting.

The streaming or playing of the broadcasts in public areas of major council buildings is under consideration but will not be provided for the October full Council meeting.

- 2) The agenda and any relevant papers will be available in links and shown in the resources section at the top of the screen during the live webcast. Once completed, the webcasts are listed on the right hand side and opening them

up will display the sections of each meeting plus provide access to the documentation. The name of the lead speaker for each item will also link into details relating to their organisational profile

With regard to the second part of the question there is only a commitment to webcast Full Council meetings at this current time.

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Simon Killane, Malmesbury Division**

**To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning, Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property and Waste**

**Question 12**

**Giving Working Councillors and the General Public the opportunity to conveniently attend meetings about major housing, business or retail developments in their area.**

I and the other members of the Northern Area Planning Committee have been informed that our Monthly Committee meetings are to be re-scheduled to 3pm rather than the current 6pm time. Issues surrounding the locking the building have been touted as the justification for the change.

I am puzzled and dismayed by this change and the flimsy reasons reason given for the change to an earlier time. Firstly, shouldn't all committee councillors be consulted properly and given the opportunity to vote on any time change? It was made clear to us at the previous meeting by the chair that the change was not open for debate at that meeting! How can it be right to make a change that has serious consequences for councillors who need to work to subsidise their incomes! Please note that committee councillors also attend an officer briefing that usually lasts an hour and so would need to be there for 2pm. How can it be right to make it more difficult for members of the public to attend meetings that we all know can be of immense interest and importance to them?

Surely this kind of decision just makes the council more inaccessible to working councillors and the public. Isn't this a backward step that fails to address the need to make the council more representative of the people that it serves?

**Response**

The Chairman of NAPC is conscious of the concerns of some members regarding the timing of committee meetings and has sought to balance the needs of applicants, agents, members and visitors alongside the experience of committees which habitually meet during the working day. The current timing of Northern Area Planning Committees is now in line with council, cabinet, capital assets and other important committee meetings, indeed both the Western Area Planning Committee and Strategic Planning Committee's are held during the day.

It is unfortunately not possible to meet all expectations when scheduling meetings. The change in start time of the Committee has been widely publicised prior to the meeting on 8th October 2014.

We have notified all Parish/Town councils of the change, all local planning agents have been advised, all Division Members in the north and those who are on NAPC have been advised.

The ability to keep Council hubs, including Monkton Park open past 6.00 pm still remains. The change of time for the meeting was agreed with the Chairman for the reasons detailed previously.

The timings of committees will be on the agenda for the next planning committee which takes place on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October and will be discussed then, taking into consideration the needs of all those with an interest in attending the meetings..

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Christ Hurst, Royal Wootton Bassett North Division**

**To Councillor Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning,  
Development Management, Strategic Housing, Property and Waste**

**Question 13**

Why has the Council decided to stop maintaining overgrown trees in Royal Wootton Bassett?

**Response**

The council has not stopped maintaining trees on its land in Royal Wootton Bassett. However, we do not cut back healthy trees simply due to their size. The budget available for tree works is focussed on dealing with trees that are dead, dying or dangerous or causing physical damage to property. These works continue to be carried out in Royal Wootton Bassett just as they do across Wiltshire as a whole. Neighbouring landowners are legally permitted to cut back overhanging branches as far as their boundaries. If a resident wants to carry out additional works beyond their boundary they should agree these with the countryside team and use a suitably qualified contractor who has been approved by Wiltshire Council.

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**From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division**

**To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband**

**Question 14**

Residents in the Melksham area are fed up with litter bins not being emptied. Both I and Melksham Without Parish Council are constantly reporting missed bins. And only this week in the Melksham News, residents in Bowerhill are complaining that bins are not being emptied.

Why is this part of the BBLPs not being monitored, and what will you be doing to ensure it is.

**Response**

The Council retains ownership and is responsible for emptying 3,687 litter bins across the county. Some ownership has transferred or remains the responsibility of the Town or Parish Councils who have their own arrangements for emptying to meet local demand.

The bins which are Wiltshire Council's responsibility are all emptied on a regular schedule basis. The frequency of emptying is predetermined and is set which varies depending on use. It is possible from time to time that some bins can overflow due to unexpected use. The Council will attend to these when brought to our attention through the App or other means. Where it is identified that a change in frequency is needed, this is can be made.

It is not possible to check the condition of every bin all the time, so the Contractor BBLP, is monitored on emptying of these bins on a random basis.

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**From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division**

**To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband**

**Question 15**

Conservative controlled Devon County Council, are cutting back on gritting this winter even suggesting that residents should grit their own roads.

Can you guarantee that Wiltshire Council have no plans to cut the gritting service this winter?

**Response**

The Council has over a number of years identified the roads which form a network of precautionary routes. These consist of all A, B and some C roads which are routinely treated with salt during the winter season. These roads represent the most heavily trafficked and to which finite resources of gritting vehicles, salt and operatives are deployed. In times of adverse weather as these resources become available and where reasonably practicable they are deployed onto other roads.

Following the extreme weather of 2013 and 2014, the Secretary of State for Transport published a report encouraging the transport sector including councils to have robust contingency plans to mitigate against significant weather encountered in the winter seasons. To this end The Department of Transport working with the Met Office and other Government Departments this year has reissued advice in respect of 'Get Ready for Winter' Campaign. As in previous years this includes promoting the advice the Government produced on self-help, known as the Snow Code. ([www.metoffice.gov.uk/get-ready-for-winter/out-and-about/the-snow-code](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/get-ready-for-winter/out-and-about/the-snow-code)) The guidance provides advice on the public clearing snow and ice from footpaths and pavements.

The Council has successfully delivered the 1t salt bags scheme to many Town and Parishes and continues to work with the more remote communities to develop Snow Wardens self help and build resilience.



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**From Councillor Terry Chivers, Melksham Without North Division**

**To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband**

**Question 16**

Looking back at a copy of last Septembers Wiltshire Gazette and Herald, Michelle Donelan Conservative PPC, for Chippenham, had a letter published calling for free parking in the Chippenham area. She also had the support of Eric Pickles MP.

Our local MP Duncan Hames has also started a local petition calling for one hours free parking.

Taking into account the current financial state of this Council, can we deliver free parking in the County, or are Michelle and Duncan headline grabbing?

**Response**

As has been widely publicised, the Council has embarked on a review of car parking service in Wiltshire, including looking at parking charges. Having consulted main stakeholders earlier in the year regarding the review, we are about to start full consultation which will last three months. Everyone including local politicians are invited and encouraged to feed into the consultation and all comments will be given due considered, with a decision by Cabinet expected in March 2015.

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Jeff Osborn, Trowbridge Grove Division**

**To Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

**Question 17**

There has been much media attention recently accorded to a statement from the charity "4 Children" saying that as a result of funding restrictions they will be closing various children's centres just when they are starting to have a positive impact in local communities.

Knowing that 4 Children operate children centres in the county, could I please be informed whether any are scheduled, or likely, to close - particularly in the Trowbridge area.

**Response**

All of Wiltshire's Children's Centre services are provided by voluntary and community sector organisations. The contracts for running these early support services for families with young children expire on 31 March 2016. Discussions on the future delivery of Children's Centre services are starting now so that we can look at how we wish to deliver support for families with young children in the future. These discussions need to take account of the Council's future responsibilities for commissioning Health Visitors and the development of the Council's Early Help Service within Children's Services. The Children's Services Select Committee will be involved in work to look at the future delivery of early support services through Children's Centres.

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Stephen Oldrieve, Trowbridge Paxcroft Division and  
Councillor Ernie Clark, Hilperton Division**

**To Councillor John Thomson, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet  
Member for Highways and Streetscene and Broadband**

**Question 18**

With reference to the construction of the Hilperton Relief Road and on-going discussions we have been having with Officers, please can you:

1. Provide details on provisions to mitigate impact on Bats
2. Provide details of lighting for the proposed road
3. Provide details of landscaping

**Response**

1. The developer has obligations under condition 11 of their planning permission 04/01389/FULES as follows:

*No development shall take place until details have been provided to facilitate the crossing above the road by bats at Middle Lane have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details before the road is opened to traffic.*

This condition was partially discharged by the developer several years ago when details of a bat gantry were provided and approved in writing by the Council. By way of background, bat gantries are wire bridges erected across carriageways along the line of hedgerows or other linear features where they are being breached by a new road scheme. The theory is that where hedgerows are being used by bats for commuting, the wires provide a guide, encouraging them to fly above the height of passing traffic and thus avoid being killed by oncoming cars. Bats are protected throughout Europe by the Habitats Directive 1992 which is enacted in England through the Habitats Regulations. These place a duty on competent authorities to have regard to the presence of protected species. Bat survey work undertaken by the developer at the time of the planning application demonstrated that bats used the hedgerows along Middle Lane for commuting. A bat gantry was therefore proposed as mitigation and duly conditioned.

The Landscape and Design Service was contacted by the developer earlier this year asking whether it was still necessary to implement this condition. Since the permission was granted, scientific research has been conducted on A roads in the

North of England which has cast doubt on the effectiveness of bat gantries. Correspondence between one of the Councils Ecologists and the developers Engineer explored the possibility of alternatives in particular the use of bunds and tree planting to raise the height of bats as they flew towards the road. However it was clear that additional land take would be required to erect bunds and ensure the safe provision of the adjacent pedestrian and horse crossing. The developer did not therefore consider this to be a viable alternative and the intention is currently to erect the bat gantry as agreed.

The gantry could yet be omitted altogether and the council could give proper consideration to this if an application was made to remove the condition. Further consideration would be needed by the Councils ecologist to decide whether there was a sufficient weight of evidence to justify not erecting the gantry. The Ecologist has been in discussion with Lighting Engineers at Atkins to ensure the lighting scheme is designed to minimise impacts on bats.

## **2.**

The lighting plan is in the process of an ongoing technical engineering approval. Officers will be happy to supply the details of the lighting plan once the approval has been obtained.

## **3.**

Landscaping details are contained within the planning file for the Hilperton Relief Road. Planning officers can provide the required details on request, and if there are any further questions on this or other matters relating to the planning permission, officers will be happy to respond to these and provide any information that is required.

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Jon Hubbard, Melksham South Division**

**To Councillor Laura Mayes, Cabinet Member for Children's Services**

**Question 19**

a) Could the cabinet member inform me what the increase in participation in Council Funded youth services has been following the introduction of the new Community Led Positive Activities for Young People which started on 1st October 2014?

b) Is this number in line with your expectations?

**Response**

The model came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> October and as such it is too early to measure participation rates linked to the new model. Community Area Boards, supported by Community Area Managers and Community Youth Officers, are working hard to ensure the development of youth/positive activities in each area. Local Youth Networks (LYNs) are being established and Community Youth Officers have so far been appointed to 17 of the 18 areas – with the interview for the remaining area (Trowbridge) scheduled to be completed by 14/11/14.

Community Youth Officers and Community Area Managers will be work with their Local Youth Networks to embed effective arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the positive activities offer in each area. Overall; this is the responsibility of the LYN and therefore CYOs have a direct responsibility for supporting the monitoring of outcomes. There will however be an onus on providers to report back on positive activity outcomes to the Area Boards. The toolkit that has been issued supports this.

**Examples of the type of activity that is taking place to commence delivery of the new model are summarised below:**

*Corsham* – Campus event for young people planned for 22/10/14. First Local Youth Network (LYN) meeting fixed for 4<sup>th</sup> November which will bring together providers and young people to plan provision for their area. A 12-months sports programme is also being arranged with the charity Sporting Family Change

*Devizes* – The LYN has now met for the first time, and the Community Youth Officer has been consulting with young people through schools. Plans include holding a workshop for young people in order to identify key positive activities required; although activities are beginning to take shape with the Area Board supporting Rowde Parish Council to continue with their youth club, plans for a Year 11 lunch

club at Devzies School, and the official opening of Devizes Skate Park on 18/10/14 which many young people have campaigned for.

*Calne* – The LYN is being set up and an Youth Open Space Event has been arranged for 18/11/14 where there will be opportunities for young people and the community to come together to share ideas on what activities they would like in the area. The Community Youth Officer (CYO) a “positive ticket” initiative for young people in partnership with the Neighbourhood Policing Team which will reward good deeds with a chance to gain prizes and make a presentation to the local Area Board.

*Chippenham* – Use of Riverbank Studios for youth activities looks set to continue with plans for self-defence and anti-bullying classes. The inaugural meeting of the LYN is this week

*Pewsey* – Young people are being contacted via social media through Pewsey Vale School to encourage their involvement in the LYN. The LYN management group is being set and will be undertaking a survey to ask young people what they want and what they consider is missing in their area. The CYO will reach out to ‘hard to reach’ young people in order to ensure that their views are heard.

*Malmesbury* – The CYO has been active in meeting community groups and young people – building contacts and consensus which will inform the makeup of the LYN which will be launched in December.

*Marlborough* – A special youth themed Area Board meeting is fixed for 25/11/14 when the CYO will be launching a draft strategic plan for the area which will set the direction for provision of youth activities in the area.

*RWB, Lyneham, Purton & Cricklade* – Two LYNs are being set up; one for Purton and Cricklade and another for RWB and Lyneham. The CYO is working with local partners including Green Square Housing to set up activities and local schools. There is a plan to hold a regular surgery in the secondary schools so young people can approach and suggest ideas or gain information on youth activities and to make active use of social media.

*Warminster* – A youth conference is planned at Kingdown School on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. The LYN is being set up and taking shape.

*Trowbridge* – A drop-in event for young people is planned for 8<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> November. This will help to collate young people’s views. Consultation with schools and young people online will also take place to determine local priorities.

*Bradford-on-Avon* – The LYN is taking shape with an open day planned for young people and community members 18/10/14 in order to coordinate and harness enthusiasm for setting up the LYN.

*Melksham* – A network evening was held on 24/09/14 bringing together providers of services and to launch the LYN. The Melksham Multi-Agency Forum is also being re-launched to ensure local services work together to provide quality support for children and young people.

*Westbury* – The CYO is setting up the LYN and finalising an action plan. The CYO has been meeting with a range of local organisations and there are plans for a networking event in November

*Salisbury* – The LYN is being set up by the CYO and the area board will be meeting young people at Salisbury teenage market as well as planning a youth assembly conference in November. There will also be a consultation event with young people through Salisbury College.

*South West Wiltshire (Mere & Tisbury)* -The area board and CYO are considering how to ensure transport is available to take people around the area. They are also working with a local charity called Seeds for Success to ensure provision into the future.

*Southern Wiltshire* - Voluntary-led youth clubs in West Dean, Old Sarum and Alderbury are being set up and the area board and CYO are working with existing voluntary-led youth clubs to provide support. The core of the LYN management group has been formed and it has been agreed to set up the LYNs in six clusters for the rural area.

*Tidworth* – The CYO and Area Board have started work setting up the LYN and are planning a youth-themed area board in November as well as a consultation event with Wellington Academy.

From the above, it can be seen that Area Boards have fully embraced the new Community Led Model and are working energetically to deliver on the new agenda. I am confident that we will be able to demonstrate effective outcomes although it must be noted that we will not be able to have our first reports in respect of these until 2015.

**Wiltshire Council**

**Council**

**21 October 2014**

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Chris Caswill, Chippenham Monkton Division**

**To Councillor Jane Scott OBE, Leader of the Council**

**Question 20**

- (a) Why has this administration approved moving Planning Committee meetings from evenings to afternoons, thereby excluding thousands of working people from attending and effectively depriving councillors with day jobs of the opportunity to become members of Planning committees?
- (b) Why has there been no public information, and no public consultation, about the change in the case of the Northern Area Planning Committee? Is it because this change is considered unimportant?
- (c) It has been suggested that the change of time may be something to do with no longer being able to keep the Monkton Park offices open after 6 PM. If so, why is this not possible, given that it has been possible for the last two decades?
- (d) If it is really impossible to keep the building open, why was nothing done to find an alternative venue?
- (e) Will you take this chance to say publicly that the Northern Area Planning Committee meetings will be moved back to evenings as soon as possible?

**Response**

- (a) Why has this administration approved moving Planning Committee meetings from evenings to afternoons, thereby excluding thousands of working people from attending and effectively depriving councillors with day jobs of the opportunity to become members of Planning committees?

The Chairman of NAPC is conscious of the concerns of some members regarding the timing of committee meetings and has sought to balance the needs of applicants, agents, members and visitors alongside the experience of committees which habitually meet during the working day. The current timing of Northern Area Planning Committees is now in line with council, cabinet, capital assets and other important committee meetings, indeed both the Western Area Planning Committee and Strategic Planning Committee's are held during the day.



It is unfortunately not possible to meet all expectations when scheduling meetings. The change in start time of the Committee has been widely publicised prior to the meeting on 8th October 2014.

- (b) Why has there been no public information, and no public consultation, about the change in the case of the Northern Area Planning Committee? Is it because this change is considered unimportant?

We have notified all Parish/Town councils of the change, all local planning agents have been advised, all Division Members in the north and those who are on NAPC have been advised.

- (c) It has been suggested that the change of time may be something to do with no longer being able to keep the Monkton Park offices open after 6 PM. If so, why is this not possible, given that it has been possible for the last two decades?

The ability to keep Council hubs, including Monkton Park open past 6.00 pm still remains. The change of time for the meeting was agreed with the Chairman for the reasons detailed previously.

- (d) If it is really impossible to keep the building open, why was nothing done to find an alternative venue?

We have used alternative venues where Monkton Park has not been available, but this does have cost implications. Members and offices may weight this cost against the potential benefits of an alternative venue as part of any review.

- (e) Will you take this chance to say publicly that the Northern Area Planning Committee meetings will be moved back to evenings as soon as possible?

The timings of committees will be on the agenda for the next planning committee which takes place on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October and will be discussed then, taking into consideration the needs of all those with an interest in attending the meetings.

**Wiltshire Council**

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Chris Caswill, Chippenham Monkton Division**

**To Councillor Jane Scott OBE, Leader of the Council**

**Question 21**

What protocols are currently in place for the desirable maximum time delay for officer responses to (a) members of the public and (b) elected members? Is performance in this area being monitored and encouraged?

**Response**

1. The information relating to officer responses to members of the public is detailed in the customer care performance standards:
  - a. The standard target is for officers to respond to 100% of letters or e-mails from the public within 10 working days of receipt or, if this is not possible, to acknowledge within five working days. Similarly, all councillors are expected to reply to correspondence within 10 days. Paragraph 7 of the Code of Conduct states that members must 'have regard to' the 'Roles and Responsibilities of Wiltshire Councillors' (Appendix 1 to the Code), which states at paragraph 6.8 that unitary councillors will be expected to 'acknowledge any enquiries normally within 4 working days of receipt, and provide a substantive response, where required, within 10 working days if possible'.
  - b. The "public" excludes agents/consultants when acting on the Council's behalf and members of the Council.
  - c. Appendix 1 to Protocol 2 of the Council's constitution regarding Councillor - Officer Relations details that a responses to councillor enquiries via 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
    - a substantive response will be provided within seven working 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.

2. Performance monitoring in relation to response times is unable to be monitored. This is because individuals are charged with sending out their own responses and it is not done via a pool. Many responses are also sent via email, which does not provide a mechanism for monitoring.
3. Complaints and Freedom of Information requests are dealt with separately and responded to corporately within 20 working days as defined in the Freedom of Information Act (2000). Careful monitoring is carried out by the Council's Governance team to ensure compliance with the statutory requirements.

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Chris Caswill, Chippenham Monkton Division**

**To Councillor Keith Humphries, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Protection Services, Adult Care and Housing (exc strategic housing)**

**Question 22**

(a) How much has this Council spent on Local Welfare Assistance schemes to support vulnerable people in each of the Financial Years 2012-13 and 2013-14?

(b) How much is budgeted for the current Financial Year?

(c) Is it your expectation that this Council's expenditure on these kinds of support for vulnerable people will be scrapped in 2015-16 if the Coalition Government goes ahead with its proposed removal of the £347 million? Or if not scrapped, significantly reduced?

**Response**

a -    2012/13    None  
      2013/14    £355,000

b -    £400,000 (includes an additional £50k included for bad weather provision and potential impact of roll out of universal credit)

c –    A verbal answer will be given at the meeting

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**Item 14 - Public Participation**

**From Councillor Chris Caswill, Chippenham Monkton Division**

**To Councillor Keith Humphries, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Protection Services, Adult Care and Housing (exc strategic housing)**

**Question 23**

The Care Quality Commission produced a highly critical report on one of the Council's Help to Live At home providers, Mears, in July this year. The service was deemed to be inadequate in all five of the CQC review areas. As you know, the responses to that Report were reviewed by the Health Select Committee last month, where we were assured that lessons were being learnt and that Mears had an Action plan in place to remedy the many very troubling deficiencies in the services being provided to Wiltshire residents. We were also told that the CQC would be carrying out a follow up investigation.

A second very critical CQC report has now been published. In August, the Mears service to Wiltshire residents was still found not to meet the necessary standard for 'the care and welfare of the people who use its services'? While this latest review reports fewer missed visits, it also found 6 out of 8 care plans were either missing or out of date, office computer records which did not match the records in the visited homes, medical needs not being met, people at significant risk of harm, a lack of responsiveness to peoples' concerns, ill-informed managers and a leadership that is 'not effective'. It bluntly records a major impact of the ongoing deficiencies and states that this Help to Live at Home service is failing to meet the requirements of the law.

- (1) What conclusions have been drawn from this second report, and by whom?
- (2) What actions did the Council take to secure improvement in the Mears service between the two CQC visits and what was achieved by those actions?
- (3) Overall Mears is still listed on the CQC web site as failing to meet standards in four of the five CQC review areas. Mears have been prohibited from taking on any more clients for twelve weeks while these problems are addressed. What is the Council going to do to sort this out in the next weeks rather than months?

What lessons have been learnt from this unfortunate saga about the effectiveness of the Council's commissioning processes?

## **Response:**

### **(1) What conclusions have been drawn from this second report, and by whom?**

The question refers to the second report that was issued as a result of a visit by the CQC to Mears which took place over nine weeks ago. There have been significant improvements since then.

At the Health Select Committee meeting in September attended by the CEO of Mears, their chief operations manager and James Cawley, Associate Director a very full and frank explanation of the sudden problem that had occurred was given and a copy of the detailed Mear's recovery plan was presented. A full debate took place at the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting can be viewed at:

<http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1123&MId=8191&Ver=4>

The action plan can be viewed at:

<http://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/documents/s80299/Mears%20CQC%20Action%20Plan.pdf> .

The council's view is that that following the first report there were significant issues that it would be unlikely could be overcome in a few weeks. Time would be required to ensure that the robust action plan could be fully implemented and work continues with Mears to ensure this is the case.

In a later inspection report published on October 3<sup>rd</sup> the CQC noted that improvements have been made. They also stated that the outcome in respect of care and welfare of customers no longer required enforcement action.

Weekly reports are provided to the Council detailing hours delivered, staff recruited (and left), missed visits and arrangements made to manage these. Copies of these reports are going to be provided to the Chair, Vice-Chair of the Health Select Committee and the Chair H2L@H task group

### **(2) What actions did the Council take to secure improvement in the Mears service between the two CQC visits and what was achieved by those actions?**

In addition to analyzing and reviewing the weekly reports mentioned above an officer of the Council spends one day a week in the Mear's office checking delivery of the service and back office functions.

Mears, at our request, have introduced an electronic monitoring system that records all visits, appointed a service manager and senior manager to work exclusively in Wiltshire and are undertaking customer and staff surveys.

In addition, the Council's quality assurance team is meeting with 60 customers to review their support plans and obtain their views of the service. Officers are also monitoring Mears' plans for ensuring every customer has a support plan in their home and that staff receive the required training and supervision.

The situation regarding missed visits last for the week 6<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> October was

No. of planned visits	Missed visits	Late visits	Alternative arrangements
6845	2	0	0

**(3) Overall Mears is still listed on the CQC web site as failing to meet standards in four of the five CQC review areas. Mears have been prohibited from taking on any more clients for twelve weeks while these problems are addressed. What is the Council going to do to sort this out in the next weeks rather than months?**

Mears continue to deliver a service to their existing customers. Until the company are allowed to take new clients we source alternative services if required.

The CQC web site shows the results of the inspection in August and should be updated following the planned inspection in November. We are confident that the actions Mears have taken will be reflected in this follow up inspection.

It is worth noting that unemployment figures in this part of the county are low and care staff are in short supply. Mears have a plan to address this which includes offering all members of staff the opportunity to become salaried rather than have a zero hours contract. Sixteen new members of staff are in the pipeline.

Wiltshire Council is working with the company to explore a range of options to assist with recruitment including providing accommodation for staff.

**What lessons have been learnt from this unfortunate saga about the effectiveness of the Council's commissioning processes?**

The care of our elderly and vulnerable residents is of the highest priority for the council and accordingly great effort was put into ensuring that the best possible outcome of the tender process for the H2L@H service was obtained.

Mears were appointed as a result of a very robust tender process which was completed in accordance with the Council's procurement regulations. It resulted in a number of bids which were subjected to a full assessment process. The Corporate director, Cabinet member for Adult services and Wiltshire CCG Chief accountable officer were involved in the final selection panel as were customers, and operational staff. This panel reviewed all the evidence from the various assessments and the company presentations. There is no doubt that the process was rigorous and that the best bidder won both on quality and price. The final decision was unanimous. The service offered by Mears in the south was working well (as it continues to do in the east) until late May. The problem which occurred was unique to the circumstances and despite due diligence by Mears could not really have been foreseen at the time for the reasons already explained to the members of the Health Select Committee and in the paper provided by Mears for that meeting. It should be noted that earlier this year the council received a national award, assessed by an independent panel, as the best council in the country for its commissioning, specifically the H2LaH service. It should be further noted that on November 12<sup>th</sup> the council is due to receive another national award, assessed by a different organisation, as the countries best council for commissioning of services for the over 50s.