

Wiltshire Council

Council

25 February 2020

Item 8 – Medium Term Financial Strategy

From Bill Jarvis

To Councillor Simon Jacobs- Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement

Question (20-07)

Your Medium Term Finance Strategy is required to look forward 4 years prudently at likely income and expenditure. At present in your MTFs, Section 6, you've made a £350k allowance for the "Climate Change Team" in 2020-21. Apparently, this is for staff.

As it's only for one year, I assume that this staff allowance is for consultancy. The average rate for this type of consultancy is probably between £500 and £750 per day. This equates to a team of, at maximum, 2 people, completely inadequate to develop the solutions needed. Other Councils have made significantly more and bigger teams available, up to £1m and 10 staff in some instances.

Also, you've only budgeted for one year. Are you assuming that all work on climate change will cease at the end of this financial year? I'm impressed with your optimism.

Surely your Section 151 Officer has to take a different view?

A prudent approach, building up expenditure over the next 4 years to a reasonable estimate of requirements, would avoid the need for a sudden jump. This could be part funded from, say, removing commitments to new highway schemes which only add to our carbon problems.

The estimate could be adjusted as plans develop to align with the likely costs of delivering the many elements for a carbon neutral and environmentally positive county.

Underspend in the early years could be added to reserves, drawn when needed. Again, following other Councils lead.

Carbon and environmental mitigation will reduce costs and create income. Receipts from such could be ongoing well past the need for capital expenditure. A short term investment with long term income, perfectly in line with local government accounting needs.

Please can you therefore:

- i) Confirm that you will increase the Climate Team staff allowance to at least 10 people and that this staff commitment will carry forward for at least the next 5 years?
- ii) Confirm that you will reconsider the capital allowances and make prudent provision in your MTFS to deliver the carbon mitigation measures that will properly address your 2019 commitment?

A verbal response will be provided at the meeting.