

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011

JANE SCOTT OBE, LEADER OF WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

It is generally recognised that local authorities throughout the country have had a difficult time in preparing budgets for the immediate years ahead in view of the quite drastic cuts in funding received from central government. Although we have had to make some difficult decisions, I am pleased that our recent amalgamation of 5 councils into one has made our task so much easier than it would otherwise have been.

In fact, far from cutting any of our principal front line services, we are one of the few authorities that will invest in, rather than reduce, the services we know matter most to our residents. We have a 4 year business plan that will see an additional £34 million invested into protecting and safeguarding vulnerable adults reflecting the increasing number of our elderly residents. Over £4 million will be added to safeguard vulnerable children and another £3 million will help to improve the attainment and progress of children's learning. Further appreciable amounts will be invested in our leisure facilities, the maintenance of our roads and the improvements in our waste collection and recycling policies. We will also invest to support the local economy.

All this considerable investment will be made possible, not only by the savings resulting from the creation of Wiltshire Council, but by additional savings of over £100 million over the 4 years by a root and branch inspection of the way we organise and deliver our services, the way we procure our needs and the number of buildings and staff we need and with no immediate increase in council tax. In other words, we will, over the next 4 years, transform the Council into a new and streamlined organisation, helping communities to help themselves but retaining and improving all the essential services our residents may need and deserve.

Reports from each of my Cabinet Members are attached which detail some of the achievements of the administration over the past year.

Jane Scott OBE
Leader, Wiltshire Council
March 2011

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JOHN BRADY, CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PLANNING AND HOUSING

Economy & Enterprise

Employment

Through the Future Jobs Fund (FJF), we remain on target to reach the target of 495 jobs being filled by the end of March 2011. This will provide Wiltshire's unemployed young people the chance of real work in a real job and developing them as assets for the Wiltshire economy. The onward destination of FJF Employees following the 6-month apprenticeship reveals that in excess of 60% remain in full-time employment.

Wiltshire Council was awarded the Youth Employment Award in the 2010 JCP Employer Awards (South West) and the Wiltshire bid was highlighted as a national and regional model. The Wiltshire programme has attracted national recognition as a leading example of a local authority and central government department working effectively together.

We are working in partnership with Wiltshire Enterprise, the Business Division of Wiltshire College, to support its Wiltshire 100 in 100 Apprentices campaign that aims to introduce 100 new apprentices into the working environment to fulfil the needs of local businesses and to help young people start their career within 100 days. The campaign launched on 10 January and to date 56 new apprentices have enrolled on the scheme.

Inward Investment

We remain active in encouraging new businesses to Wiltshire. Greggs the baker group are building a new regional centre in Amesbury that will create up to 250 jobs.

Forward Planning in Wiltshire

With a new Coalition Government being elected in 2010, the first action they took was to abolish the regional spatial strategy (RSS). This time last year, the South Wiltshire Core Strategy had gone through both Cabinet and full Council and was being examined in public by the government appointed inspector. The projected housing and business land requirements had been determined by central government through the RSS and with it being scrapped, we had an opportunity to go back and review the figures. The inspector agreed this. The review saw the number of houses drop from 12,400 to 9,900 which is a much more realistic figure for South Wiltshire. This was approved by full Council at the February 2011 meeting and is now back in the hands of the inspector. We are continuing to progress the Core Strategy for the rest of Wiltshire with a timetable for adoption early in 2012.

The Vision Boards for Salisbury, Chippenham and Trowbridge are making good progress. Salisbury in particular now has a detailed plan and timescale for implementation and the renovation of the Market Square is now at the final planning stage.

Planning

The management structure of the service has been reviewed resulting in the east and west hubs being merged to form a new central team reducing the number of hubs to three. A countywide enforcement team has been established and the stand-alone conservation teams have been incorporated into the Development Control Teams. The new structure will not only bring about savings, but will also result in improved efficiencies. We are using 4 different software systems at present inherited from the old district councils. With the new 'planning' software due to be installed within the next 12 months, further efficiencies are envisaged, as we will then have a common platform across the County.

The Wyndham Road planning office in Salisbury has successfully moved into Bourne Hill.

During the year a successful series of enforcement seminars were provided for Councillors and Parish and Town Councils across the county in local venues.

The Development Control Service dealt with 6,240 planning applications in 2010.

The Building Control service has retained its market share (80%) and is receiving extremely positive feedback from service users.

Housing and Homelessness

We have a total of 28,000 'affordable' homes in Wiltshire, with 5,400 units in the south of the county in our control as council housing. We remain the most successful county in the south west for delivering new affordable homes. In 2010 we delivered a total of 564, which included the completion of the first new council houses in Wiltshire for over 20 years. Built to sustainable homes level 4, the new tenants are now living in some very attractive homes in Trowbridge. A further 22 council houses are being built in Salisbury and should be available by the end of the year.

We continue to minimise the use of temporary homes for homeless people. We have been very active in preventing homelessness, completing a number of mortgage rescues and with the help of our tenancy support officers we have enabled private tenants to remain in their homes. We closely monitor the number of 'rough sleepers' in Wiltshire and with the help of our partners in the voluntary sector, were able to accommodate their needs during this very cold winter.

This year we also completed a thorough review of the Homes4Wiltshire policy and used feedback from partners and tenants to amend our policy and some procedures to provide a speedier service. We also responded positively to the Governments proposals to introduce 'fixed term' and 'affordable rent' tenancies and changes to rules around waiting lists. This is going to be our biggest challenge over the next 12 months with the new self-financing rules coming in to effect from 1 April 2012.

John Brady
Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Housing
March 2011

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FLEUR DE RHÉ-PHILIPPE, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RISK

Wiltshire Council has successfully managed a difficult financial year. Several grants, totalling £3 million, were cut last summer by the incoming coalition government and this, combined with the substantial increase in demand for social care and the effects of the severe weather before Christmas, put considerable pressure on the current year's budget. However, due to careful management and targeted efficiencies, the Council is intent on achieving a balanced budget at year end.

This, plus early decisions to rationalise management, puts the Council in a strong position going forward into 4 years of reductions in government funding. The Council has in place a solidly achievable Financial Plan for 2011/12 and a Business Plan which sets the direction for the next 4 years. Over that period, the Council will protect front line services, particularly those for the vulnerable; streamline its operations to achieve necessary savings; and, most importantly, invest in highway maintenance, improved leisure facilities, the economy and other services vital to our community.

Fleur de Rhé-Philippe
Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance and Risk
March 2011

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LIONEL GRUNDY, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Children's Services have had a positive year reflected by an Ofsted rating in December 2010 of "Performs Well".

The 30 Children's centres in Wiltshire continue to thrive and have recently been re-commissioned to re-focus what they deliver to families and save on management costs. Early years achievement at foundation stage profile continues to be strong with continued progress in closing the gap between the most vulnerable and their peers. In addition to the existing free early years provision for 3 and 4 year olds, free nursery education is provided to 120 most disadvantaged 2 year olds.

Schools premises continue to be improved with a number of projects including the new Oak School in Melksham being opened and replacement buildings at Wellington Academy near completion. The new Sarum Academy opened in September and government money has been secured for building works there too.

GCSE results have been the best ever with 56% of young people getting at least 5 A*-C GCSEs including english and maths, above the national figure of 53%, though there is still some improvement to be made in closing the gaps for our more vulnerable young people, eg those with special educational needs or in receipt of free school meals. A Level results continue to be strong.

Extended schools services continue to thrive, providing a range of services outside of school hours for primary and secondary school age children, their families and the local community. These include access to childcare, activities and support for learning. Most schools also have achieved the Healthy Schools Award which links good health, behaviour and achievement through a whole school approach.

Youth work continues, with advantage being taken of new technology through Sparksite, Wiltshire's website and webcast radio station for young people which goes from strength to strength letting people know what's going on. The Youth Offending Service has been working with young people and has reduced frequency and seriousness of offending in Wiltshire.

Social Care services have been reorganised and there is now a single point in Devizes which handles referrals for the whole of Wiltshire. There are also dedicated teams that look after our children in council care. Our short break provision for children with disabilities and their families continues to be valued by parents who remain crucial to the continued review and development of services. This scheme has received national recognition as an example of good practice.

Lionel Grundy
Cabinet Member for Children's Services
March 2011

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KEITH HUMPHRIES, CABINET MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Public Protection Services deliver a wide range of Council services including Air Quality and Water Supply Monitoring, Food Standards, Infectious Disease Control, Animal Health, Licensing Activities, Trading Standards, Health and Safety, Community Safety and Emergency Planning amongst many others.

It has been a very busy year for the Service which has included a number of new initiatives:

- The offence of persistently possessing alcohol in a public place (OOPPAPP) is currently being trialled in the Salisbury area, and it is hoped the power will be rolled out for use in other areas in the late spring.
- Members of the Safer Communities Team attended the Wiltshire Landlords' Forum on 9 March 2011.
- Safer Communities, Consumer Protection and Communications Team officers have been working on an innovative project to raise awareness of doorstep safety.
- Petrol Safety and Health Awareness days – working with business to improve health and safety for employees and the public on forecourts have been held.
- Thirteen candidates from Indian food premises successfully passed the CIEH level 2 Award in Healthier and Special Diets.
- Guidance to be issued to sandwich shops on how to make a healthier sandwich.
- The Community Resilience Programme has been rolled out to nearly all Community Area Boards.

Keith Humphries
Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
March 2011

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JOHN NOEKEN, CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

This year has been a year of delivery, performance improvement and cost reduction for the department after the successful launch of Wiltshire Council and the Business Management Programme the previous year.

The Workplace Transformation Programme has delivered Bourne Hill in Salisbury on time and below budget; the new library in Pewsey was opened; a new facility for young people and adults with learning difficulties was opened; 500 staff were relocated to Shurnhold in Melksham and we delivered plans for 2 new children's homes in the county. We have also become the first council in the country to take over a PFI deal from the private sector in Chippenham, saving our taxpayers over £400,000 per year.

ICT underpins the operation of the whole Council and all of its 350 plus services. We in-sourced this service from the private sector to deliver improved performance for our customers (the first time fix rate is up from 30% to 60%) and reduce our costs by over £2 million. Work continues to develop the service for the needs of a 21st century organisation as evidenced by the roll out of 700 new Windows enabled laptops for front-line staff and members to work flexibly to better serve our customers.

Our Housing Benefits Service underwent external inspection by the Audit Commission. It showed a fair performing service with promising prospects for improvement – equal to the best of the new unitary councils created in 2009. We implement a single all-new benefits system later this year to further improve the service.

Our website has recently been externally audited. It has improved from 2 to 3 stars and is now in the top 25% of council sites in the country.

Better procurement – a fundamental part of our new Business Plan – is starting to deliver. First year savings of up to £11 million have been identified and are being re-procured to deliver the cost reduction required in our 2011-12 budget.

Improvement work using Systems Thinking methodology from the private sector manufacturing industry continues to drive up performance and reduce cost. Customer Services demand (our customers contacting the council) has been reduced by 30% as we identify and eliminate avoidable contact.

John Noeken
Cabinet Member for Resources
March 2011

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TOBY STURGIS, CABINET MEMBER FOR WASTE, PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT

Waste

Following the General Election, the consultation on the waste collection harmonization was carried out resulting in over 70% support for the proposed new scheme incorporating kerbside collection of plastic bottles, cardboard and free garden waste. Having agreed the financial plan at last month's council meeting, bins and vehicles are now being acquired to start the roll out this autumn with garden waste in the spring for areas not already receiving this service. This has the aim to increase recycling to over 50% reducing the amount of landfill tax paid (landfill tax is rising to £80 per tonne). Further reductions of waste to landfill will be achieved when the Mechanical and Biological Treatment Plant is built at Westbury, terms have now been agreed and this will divert 60,000 tonnes from landfill.

Property

The programme to rationalise the inherited property portfolio continues. The opening of Bourne Hill allowed staff to move into modern, efficient offices, designed for the new ways of working and the council can now dispose of surplus offices in the Salisbury area. Another example of completed work is the new covered salt store at the Marlborough Business Park next to the HRC which opened on 23 March. Work has commenced on modernisation of County Hall following the temporary relocation of staff to the old George Ward School at Melksham.

Environment

The coalition government have changed the Carbon Reduction Commitment trading allowance scheme to a straight levy, which is estimated to cost the council £600,000 in 2013. The financial plan provides funding for some investment to reduce our energy usage in our buildings and through the street lights to control the anticipated increases in this levy. A large amount of this levy is from our school buildings, where the Council has little if any control. The recent adoption of the Energy, Change and Opportunity Strategy and the Carbon Management Plan will provide the framework to achieve the maximum energy efficiency utilising our investment resources.

Toby Sturgis
Cabinet Member for Waste, Property & Environment
March 2011

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JOHN THOMSON, CABINET MEMBER FOR ADULT CARE, COMMUNITIES AND LIBRARIES

Adult Care

The main challenge has been the higher than expected demand for our services and I am very pleased that the Council has been able to and has decided to invest an extra £52 million over the next 4 years into protecting and safeguarding vulnerable adults.

A 10 year 200 million accommodation development strategy which will modernise the way that older people's accommodation is provided ensuring the best use of increasingly scarce resources and responding to local needs in local communities. This programme will deliver 715 units of extra care, 338 specialist dementia care placements and 539 additional nursing home beds through working in partnership with community and voluntary sector organisations, housing associations and private providers.

Area Boards and Communities

The number of people attending meetings is holding up well with an average of 61 participants at each of the 108 meetings held in the year so far - a total of 6588 people. This compares to 64 people per meeting in Year 1. Satisfaction levels with Area Board meetings has increased with 79% of participants rating the meetings as 'good' or 'excellent' compared to 59% in Year 1. The number of people signed up to the community area network has increased to 12,878 from 9,762 in 2009/10.

Over the last year 1,387 issues were referred to the Area Boards of which 1,006 (72%) have now been resolved or closed. There will be a major publicity campaign around the issues system later in the spring now that the system is working so well.

The Community Speedwatch scheme has exceeded all targets set for Year 1 and is continuing to grow. Since its launch in October 2009, 155 separate speeding issues have been referred to the Speedwatch programme through the Area Boards' Community Issue system. Over the same period, 35 CSW groups were established, 295 volunteers were trained by the Police and 567 kerbside CSW sessions were delivered which equates to around 3,750 hours of volunteer time. Over the same period the incidence of speeding monitored at the CSW sites reduced by over 50%.

Voluntary Sector

Working alongside the voluntary sector to make best use of council funding which has not been cut (approx £22 million) has seen several organisational mergers. In 2010, from 4 CABs to one countywide organisation and from 4 funded voluntary sector services to one countywide service. In 2011, from 4 carers' organisations to one countywide service. Age UK, Wiltshire Blind Association and Mind West Wiltshire working together to share back office functions and reduce costs. There are lots more collaborations in the pipeline, including one countywide credit union service in 2011 to offer affordable banking and credit to people who are otherwise unable to access it.

We have set up an innovative Good Neighbour Scheme for older people which is provided by a partnership of organisations including AgeUK and Community First. It is aimed primarily at older people, helping them with information and accessing services in rural areas.

Libraries

During the last year a vision for the library service has been developed, which places libraries as one of Wiltshire Council's priorities, and will also ensure Wiltshire Council can retain all 31 libraries and 5 mobile libraries in the county with the help of volunteers to run 10 community libraries. The Council is also investing in self service technology to enable communities to support and, where possible, extend opening hours to meet community need.

John Thomson
Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Communities and Libraries
March 2011

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DICK TONGE, CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

As with other parts of the Council the year has been dominated by planning savings that can be achieved with minimal effect on front line services.

Public Transport

Over 4 million bus journeys are subsidised by the Council annually. Many people depend on buses, 17% of families do not own a car and many others only have one car that the breadwinner uses to go to work leaving their families without transport. Without buses life would be very difficult for this group. Money has been saved by tendering for new contracts and renegotiating existing ones, finding efficiency savings and using some of the money raised from parking charges. This is part of the Transformation Project for Passenger Transport which aims to provide a better and less expensive service by looking at all policies, procurement, systems and management. The result is that the changes to bus services will be small. No community will lose its services completely and many will see no change at all.

Trans Wilts Rail

The Council has been working with the Chambers of Commerce to improve the services between Swindon and Salisbury serving Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge, Westbury, Dilton Marsh and Warminster, with the possibility of a station at Wootton Bassett in the future. Proposals are being made with the rail company to Government with the objective of having rolling stock added to this route. More details can be found at transwiltsrail.org.uk. We will know in mid-year whether the Government will support this. Confirmation of the electrification of the route from Paddington to the west is good news in relation to the possible re-opening of Corsham station at some time in the future.

Winter and the Highways

The winter of 2010 was one of the coldest and most persistent for many years only to be followed by an even worse one in 2011. We received an additional winter grant from government in 2010 which, with an increased budget from the Council, enabled more extensive carriageway repairs to be carried out. As a result the roads stood up to the 2011 winter with less damage than in previous years. The Council has increased the budget for highways in 2011 despite the financial restraints it is under. The net effect will be that the condition of the roads will continue to improve.

Road Safety

The Council and the Police have continued to support Community Speedwatch to address speeding concerns. The safety partnership of the Council, Police, Fire & Rescue and other bodies share resources to promote good driving habits and continue to stress the need for careful driving to statistically accident prone groups such as the 18 to 25 age group and motor cyclists.

Area Boards

Some monies have been delegated to Area Boards for small transport schemes and for street light turn off between midnight and 5.30 am. Community Area Transport Groups have been set up to consider the priority of local schemes. These initiatives have the objective of delegating decision making to communities.

Integration

Significant savings have been made by integrating the street cleansing, grass cutting and amenities activities from the former Districts with the Highways Maintenance teams from the former County. The savings mean that we can continue to provide these services without significant reductions in performance.

Dick Tonge
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
March 2011

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STUART WHEELER, CABINET MEMBER FOR LEISURE, SPORT AND CULTURE

Leisure Facilities

The Council continued to financially contribute towards the management and operation of 23 leisure centres across the county.

During the year we completed the leisure review which had been anticipated last year. A detailed report with a set of suggested options was prepared and sent out to all identified stakeholders for consultation. This was supported by a presentation to all Area Boards and also individual presentations to a large number of groups. The consultation produced more than 3,000 responses.

The results of this major consultation exercise were presented to Cabinet in December 2010 and then formed an important part of the Campus development paper approved by Cabinet in February 2011 which sets out the agreed procedure for both the construction of various campuses around the county together with a road map for potential innovative methods of managing and delivering the services to be provided by these campuses. The leisure component in all campuses and the results of the Leisure Review comprise an important part of this work and will give a clear message about our commitment to providing high quality and efficient local services. The budget approved by full Council in February contained funding allowing the start of work on the 5 pilot campus projects and will ensure that the indoor leisure facility service is enhanced, creating more opportunities for local people to actively pursue a healthy lifestyle.

We have also recently agreed to extend the 2 leisure management contracts with DC Leisure for a further 2 year period until March 2013 to dovetail with the indicative Campus timeline.

Play

We successfully completed 19 of the Year 2 Playbuilder sites by 31 March 2011, with the final project Queensway, Warminster planned to commence installation on 23 May 2011.

Outdoor Recreation

Leisure Services in conjunction with Trowbridge Area Board has helped establish the formation of the Trowbridge Outdoor Sports Pitches Forum with the aim of addressing the current deficiencies in terms of Outdoor Sports Pitch provision in the Trowbridge area. The short term objective of this group is to establish changing accommodation at Stallard Street (deadline September 2011) and Seymour Park Recreation Areas with the long term objective being to establish a Multi Sport Hub Club in Trowbridge.

Sport and Physical Activity Development

We have worked hard over the past year to develop new and consolidate existing partnerships with key services and organisations, including Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour, Aiming High, Children and Families, Youth Service, Health Improvement Partnership, NHS Wiltshire and the PCT, Team Wiltshire, Housing Associations and AgeUK.

This has ensured an increase in participation rates and at the same time supports and contributes to the delivery outcomes of these other agencies and service areas.

The 2010 local area estimates for adult participation in sport and active recreation (formerly NI8), measured by Sport England's Active People Survey show that participation rates in Wiltshire are 3.6% higher than the national average putting Wiltshire in the top quartile of local authorities.

The work of the Sports and Physical Activity Team contributes directly to this. Participation rates and throughput for 2010/11 are already exceeding the previous year's figures, with one final reporting period to come. The service has so far attracted 22,693 participants with a throughput of 77,770. Throughput is expected to exceed 100,000 this year. £300,778 of external funding attracted into the service to deliver projects, an increase of £50,000 on 2009/10.

The Culture portfolio covers a very wide area

The Archive Centre was notable for provisionally achieving a 4 star rating from the National Archives Assessment exercise. This represents a climb from one star to 4 star status in just 3 years, placing the centre in the top 10% of similar resources.

The Archaeology team have received the necessary funding from a variety of sources allowing investment in a new database and mapping system for the 20,000 known sites and monuments that exist in Wiltshire and Swindon.

The History Centre in Chippenham welcomed over 1,000 visitors at its summer open day, and was also visited by more than 20,000 individual users during the year.

The Arts service calculate that based on six month figures in 2010 we will pass the 2009/10 figure of 650,000 visits to events funded to some extent by the Council. The team led the Council's involvement with White Horse Pictures who attracted £400,000 funding from the lottery to be invested in improving cinema projection standards in various venues across the county allowing greater access to more local communities.

The Council did not reduce its funding to major arts providers in the county. This includes our support to the biggest single such provider the Salisbury Playhouse. It is significant that based on their research the Playhouse calculate their own economic impact was in excess of £9 million.

Also the Museum service continued to support museums across the county who attracted more than 357,000 visitors in 2010. This attendance will be increased this year we hope as Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum is hosting a nationally important exhibition focussing on Constable and Salisbury in summer 2011.

Stuart Wheeler
Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture
March 2011