

Annual Town and Parish Report for 2022/23

Cllr Richard Clewer - Leader and Cabinet Member for MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism and Health and Wellbeing

Wiltshire Council has set a balanced budget covering not just 2023/2024, but also with every saving required and anticipated expenditure identified up to 2025/2026. This is no small achievement when compared to the unidentified savings that other Councils have in their budgets. We have a very clear business plan as a Council and are now completely focused on delivering it.

I will leave it to my cabinet members to comment on their specific areas of responsibility but wanted to make a few specific comments on mine.

Military Civil Integration has now moved well beyond army rebasing and is now focused on making sure that our military and civilian population are as linked together as possible. We are also working to ensure that the military understand the appropriate people (based around job roles rather than people as in the military in particular posts rotate frequently) to contact at Wiltshire Council particularly around Highways and Planning issues. The military are the largest employer in Wiltshire, and we need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to integrate both service and ex-military personnel and their families into the county. A particular area of concern is how to assist military families with access to NHS dentistry where the 2-year rotation period means that just as they are getting close to the top of waiting lists (where they still exist) they have to move.

We are finalising a new economic development strategy which we will be consulting on later in the year. This aims to provide a realistic view of how we can build on the economic assets and opportunities that Wiltshire already possesses. I am particularly interested in how we can support the military and scientific elements of government already operating in Wiltshire, an example would be the Porton Down Science Park where we have created 450 new jobs outside the wire at a world leading scientific institution.

On the Arts, Heritage and Tourism front we are making progress in a number of areas. We are developing a county wide cultural strategy and also a public art strategy to provide a more evidence based and joined up approach to culture and the arts.

We will be launching the Heritage Trail App in the early summer and would urge any Town and Parish Councils that want to add trails to the app to get in touch. We are developing the What's On in Wiltshire App and also now making progress on creating a Wiltshire Marque to promote Wiltshire produce.

Cllr Laura Mayes – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills

We want to give Wiltshire’s children the best start in life as it is fundamental in improving their long-term life chances and gives them the best opportunity to live full and healthy lives. Children and families are at the heart of everything we do at Wiltshire Council and is at the core of our Business Plan. We are ambitious for them and are determined to see all Wiltshire families reach their full potential.

Children’s Social Care

We have worked relentlessly to improve our services and now deliver consistently *Good* services that ensure the needs of families and children are met at the right time by the right people. This is reflected in the Ofsted inspection report from July 2019 that rated us *Good* across the board.

The Council understands the importance of our Early Help Offer giving support as soon as families need it. Our innovative schemes include our Integrated Front Door, PAUSE (avoiding c 70 babies being taken into care since 2017), Dad’s Matter Too, Family Drug & Alcohol Court (FDAC), Stronger Families Team and our Youth Justice Service. All these programmes help to prevent family break down and reduce the number of families coming into statutory services. We believe that this investment in preventative services have contained the pressures particularly during and following the pandemic which other local authorities have experienced far earlier than ourselves. Overall spend in Children’s Services **will increase from £60.7m last year to £62.7m this year (£1.9m)**. Whilst our care numbers our stable, we are responsible for more care experienced young people until they are 25 years old. In addition, the complexity of cases has increased. It can be hard to find the right provision, so we sometimes have to pay high-cost placements which puts pressure on our budget. Other areas for increased spend include inflation in placement costs of £900k, Placement Increased Demand £2.3m, and increasing the Care Leavers allowance (from £2k to £3k) at a cost of £60k.

Savings include £150k to purchase residential houses using matched DfE grant to create children’s homes and increasing in-house foster carers to save £300k.

Education & Skills

This area is facing significant legislative change and uncertainty, but we remain committed to improving education standards in Wiltshire. We have created the Wiltshire Learning Alliance to get schools to work together to help every child, and we continue to support our maintained schools with our School Improvement Service.

There has been a significant increase in requests for children with SEND to have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP’s) so we are investing an extra £1.3m over three years to increase capacity and staff to meet the demand. Some children with a plan are entitled to school transport and so other key areas for investment include £3.408m for SEN transport demand as the number of specialist school places increases in lien with need and £0.753m for inflation estimates.

The overall budget for Education and Skills is **£29.2m, an increase of £5.8m from last year’s £23.4m**. From the capital budget new bids of £3.165m to support Schools Maintenance and Modernisation to improve the condition of schools and prioritised large

maintenance projects have been agreed. In addition, £12.923m has been added to the programme to support a replacement of the oldest and mobile classrooms and Pratten huts.

Cllr Phil Alford – Cabinet Member for Housing, Strategic Assets, Asset Transfer

- Affordable housing
- HRA
- Housing register
- Service delegation and asset transfer

At the very end of the 21/22 financial year the council agreed its business plan and within that Housing was prioritised as a key part of our agenda throughout 22/23. Improving housing supply is critical for ensuring people can play an active part in their community. Residents need access to high quality and affordable housing that is close to their family, which is right for them and in beautiful places.

Our goal is to:-

- Prevent homelessness and help people remain in a sustainable home.
- Allow families and individuals who need support to have choice and control, with flexible options of support to meet their care and support needs.
- Have a sustainable, robust and flexible care home market that meets the needs of the population and the projected demand for beds.
- Build the highest quality affordable housing with the lowest viable carbon footprint.
- Deliver a planning system that supports swift, evidence-based decisions and encourages the development we want to see.
- Ensure that the needs of communities, businesses and the environment are balanced through robust use of the Local Plan.

To achieve these ambitions we have:-

- Continued to help housing customers to maximise their income and reduce the cost of running their homes.
- Increased work to support tenancies and prevent homelessness.
- continued with the council house build programme for at least 1,000 houses over 10 years.

Council-Owned Housing

In this year we have delivered a significant number of new homes with the council's housing stock, in addition to purchasing homes for Afghan and Ukrainian refugees utilising ringfenced government funding. Furthermore, the heating and energy efficiency retrofit program is also continuing to improve the energy efficiency standard for our tenants. We are striving for an EPC B standard which exceeds both industry regulatory requirements and the EPC C standard being achieved by many other housing associations.

Affordable Housing

Whilst we have limited control over how the Housing Associations operate our housing enabling team are working extensively with them to ensure that new affordable homes are being made available to residents. We have made excellent progress towards meeting our annual 650 new homes target and we are now seeing more affordable homes coming on stream so are expecting to achieve this ambition going into the future.

Open Market Register

Our open market register is now focussing on ensuring that quality low-cost homes are being made to the qualifying residents through shared ownership.

Housing register

Residents in housing need still need to join the housing register, in order to apply through *Homes4Wilts* for affordable housing, but in order to more effectively manage expectations and the efficiency of the register changes were implemented earlier this year. Residents had previously been able to join the register regardless of housing need and this led to a significant increase in the numbers on the register and created a false hope for some trying to rent affordable housing. Consequently, changes were made so that all interested residents must first speak with a housing advisor, this has meant that residents are receiving the best advice first. Fewer people are joining the register and those that do have a clearly identified and eligible housing need. Others are being supported into the private sector. We have also increased the number of tenancy sustainment officers to ensure that more residents are getting the help they need to stay in their homes.

Rough sleeping

Our rough sleeper team continue to work tirelessly with Wiltshire's rough sleeping community to ensure they receive an offer of accommodation and access to food, health care and support. Our numbers are still low with official records showing between 11 and 12 people sleeping on the streets but the group is transient, the numbers change month to month and there is no room for complacency. We work with charities across Wiltshire to address the causes and effects of rough sleeping and have not long seen an opening of a new rough sleeper support centre The Bridge, to help address this problem.

Service delegation and asset transfers

Last month we saw the completion of the Trowbridge Service delegation and asset transfer package. This has provided Trowbridge with the opportunity to take on responsibility for street scene services within the town, the management of allotments in Southwick and a number of assets. Local residents will have more ownership of how their community looks and they will be able to choose the level of service they want to meet the needs of the town. We also continue to transfer assets to local parishes and organisations with cricket and bowling clubs having recently benefitted.

Cllr Ian Blair-Pilling – Cabinet Member for Public Health, Leisure, Libraries, FM, and Operational Assets



Public Health has led the local public health expert response to the Covid Pandemic since 2020: outbreak management, testing, tracing and vaccination across the whole population. Throughout, provision and development of essential public health services has been maintained. The infographic illustrates the foci for public health in Wiltshire over the next ten years. Key developments in each area are highlighted below.

The Health Improvement team have been re-establishing the health promoting services across the county, concentrating on the reduction of health inequalities. They supported General Practices in the recovery of the NHS Health Check programme. This provided a new opportunity for practices to deliver NHS Health Checks in the community, a model which was shown to be successful during COVID vaccination. They have continued to support the work of Bath Rugby in the delivery of two '[Move With Bath](#)' healthy lifestyle programmes, for children and men. In these popular sessions, over 85% of those starting a course completed the 12-week programme, and nearly half (44%) achieved at least a 5% weight loss.

The Building Resilience team successfully completed two large procurements. The new contracts for Substance Misuse and Domestic Abuse support services will take effect from the 1 April 2023. The team has overseen the delivery of central government grant funding in both of these areas helping two of our most vulnerable and at risk populations.

The Knowledge and Intelligence team published the Wiltshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2022 in December. This is a statutory document produced for the local Health and Wellbeing Board to support the production of a joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The 2022 Wiltshire JSNA ([JSNA Wiltshire Intelligence](#)) presents data on the current and future health and wellbeing needs of people in Wiltshire, including over 100 indicators across 6 themes. It enables evidence-based planning for local services to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities.

The team produced a fictitious story of Christine, a Wiltshire resident, which highlights factors impacting her life in our community. The video is a particularly helpful means of illustrating the JSNA data (see link above).

To support residents facing cost of living challenges the team has successfully re-procured the Warm and Safe service which will take effect from April 2023.

The Health Protection team have built on their COVID-19 pandemic response work. Vaccination programmes are led by the NHS, and they have continued to develop a successful partnership with local NHS teams. Our local outreach clinics have continued to support the subsequent booster campaigns and the 'evergreen' offer of first and second doses. Using community engagement and local knowledge, the team have located clinics to improve vaccine uptake and reduce health inequalities, while providing information and signposting to wider support and services. The re-procurement of community sexual health services in Wiltshire ensures continuing delivery by the WiSE sexual health service (Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust).

Key performance indicators are at [Public Health Outcomes Framework - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](https://publichealthoutcomesframework.org.uk/).



Service Plan Priorities

Leisure

The Leisure Service supports the health and wellbeing of residents with a wide range of activities at affordable prices; working in conjunction with other services it contributes to communities and local economies. On 1 Oct 2021, 10 council owned centres, previously operated by Places Leisure, were brought in house. Membership and charging structures have been standardised giving members access to all 20 centres, with discounts for those in receipt of certain benefits.

Recovery from enforced closures, staff redeployment and turnover during the Covid pandemic is going well, with over 1 million visits in the first 10 months of the year. All

membership types have gradually increased. The fitness product has struggled, as some members found alternative exercise options, but swimming and related products now exceed pre-Covid levels.

On 20th March 2023 the total membership was 17,549 with 11,882 swimmers enrolled on the swimming lesson programme and 2135 junior memberships. Working to improve financial and environmental sustainability, Leisure's net financial performance is forecast to be £750k better than budget at year end.

Swimming pools are inherently heavy energy users, but with sound purchasing arrangements and sensible housekeeping measures, such as a small reduction in pool temperatures and the temporary closure of our 7 high energy consuming saunas and spas, costs are being contained and all centres remain open at a time when other authorities have not.

We are investing to improve our centres. The new Melksham Community Campus opened in August 2022 with a large pool, a teaching pool, six court sports hall, fitness gym, two group exercise studios, 2 well equipped meeting rooms and a café facility. The Campus also houses Melksham Without Parish Council and the relocated revitalised library. Fitness membership has grown from 499 to 1967 and swim memberships from 204 to 362. Other funded improvements include:

- the purchase of 8 more virtual studios.
- a digital health and safety monitoring platform reducing paper and improving reporting.
- user controlled Pool Pods for disabled access in all suitable swimming pools by this summer.
- new leisure provision for residents in and around Trowbridge. An initial facility mix and site footprint have been identified and a site options analysis is in hand.
- proposals for other facilities including Warminster, Devizes and Marlborough.

Carbon reduction is a major focus with £5M invested in solar panels, biomass boilers and air source heat pumps. Gas supplies have been switched off in Salisbury (Five Rivers), Chippenham (Olympiad) and Corsham (Springfield) centres. Further solar arrays are to be installed in Salisbury, Royal Wootton Bassett (Lime Kiln), Malmesbury (The Activity Zone) and Calne. The new Leisure Loop recycling scheme helps customers recycle pool equipment and accessories that would have gone to landfill.

Libraries

The Library Service supports reading for pleasure to stretch imaginations and assist wellbeing. Free computer provision supports people to get online safely and learn new skills. Since April 2022, there have been almost 1 million visits across Wiltshire's 30 public libraries and 3 mobiles, and 1.5 million items have been borrowed.

The key priority has been to engage with those who struggled most during the pandemic. Working with other Council services, local and national organisations, since April 2022, the Library Service has:

- registered all libraries as Warm Spaces and trained staff to help people with energy queries. Over 1100 Warm Packs containing a hot water bottle, blanket and thermal mug have been gratefully received by customers.

- delivered over 400 supported on-line computer sessions, helping job seekers, benefit applicants and those who are new to the internet save money, find information and keep in touch with friends and family, improving the confidence of over 90%.
- increased usage of self-help books recommended by Health Practitioners on living with dementia, mental health and long-term health conditions for adults and children by 26%.
- provided rhyme times for babies and toddlers with 11,900 adults and 13,200 children attending. These support parent/child bonding and early years brain development - key to a better start at school. All those surveyed said they felt more connected with their babies.
- run over 5000 cultural events: reading groups, story times, panto/theatre performances and activities supporting the Queen's Jubilee and World Book Day. Future events feature on the larger libraries Facebook pages.

Working in partnership and securing additional funding new initiatives are delivering:

- Multiply Maths Project - In partnership with the Employment & Skills Team, entry level maths support sessions in libraries from April and number-based rhyme times, tutor support and additional learning materials to aid learners are coming soon.
- The Green Libraries project - Wiltshire was one of 15 local authorities to receive Arts Council England library funding to raise awareness of ways to reduce our carbon footprint and live more sustainably with talks, activities and the Green book collections are being shared around the county. In partnership with Sustainable Devizes, Devizes Library hosted a well-attended sustainable lunch, and more talks are planned.

The Library Service continues to develop and innovate, offering a welcoming space at the heart of the communities they serve. Following the success of the Market Lavington Library move to the Parish Council owned village hall in December 2021, Durrington Library reopens as a Community Hub in the village hall in March 2023. Working in partnership with Town & Parish Councils to share buildings in this way helps with running costs and increases access to community spaces for people to meet, take part in activities and increase overall usage.

The 3 mobile libraries continue to serve residents in smaller towns and villages in Wiltshire, including stops at residential homes and sheltered accommodation. Providing access to books, information and the opportunity to meet others the service is a valued part of community provision. Mobile schedules are [\[Wiltshire Council Libraries Information\]](#)

Holiday Activity and Food

Officers from Leisure, Culture and Communities with colleagues from Education and Skills continue to deliver the Government's Holiday Activity and Food programme in Wiltshire (FUEL). It provides children eligible for benefits related Free School Meals with free access to enriching activities and a nutritious meal during the Easter, summer and Christmas school holidays. It also includes children in the care system and referred through social services and refugees.

In 2022 FUEL received 12,215 visits and provided 20,660 meals. So far 1,057 applications have been received for this Easter. We have £1,099,108m from the Department of Education for 2023/24.

Wiltshire Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS)

A new playing pitch strategy is under development, which will provide for an integrated approach towards land use planning and playing pitch provision through the Council's emerging Local Plan Review (LPR) and through decisions on individual planning applications, including the negotiation and securing of S106 contributions towards pitches and facilities.

Cllr Nick Botterill – Cabinet Member for Finance, Strategic Planning and Development Management

Finance

While local government finance in general remains difficult and stretched owing to a period of high inflation and steeply rising energy costs, Wiltshire is in a better place than most other councils. The projected deficit for 2022/23 is at a fairly small level of 1.25% of net spending. Moreover, balanced budgets for 2023/24 and the subsequent two years have now been set. I should stress that this has been achieved without a 'slash & burn' approach adopted elsewhere; for example, no libraries or leisure centres will be closing in Wiltshire as a result. That this has been possible is down to pursuing sound finances and a constant emphasis on organizational development and the transformation of services thereby achieving operational efficiencies year on year. It is forecast that the burden of rises in Council Tax will fall over the coming years and it is the aim of Wiltshire Council not to spend a penny more of residents' money than is absolutely necessary.

Planning Policy

As a council, Wiltshire has been forcefully lobbying government to secure changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) specifically with respect to the adverse impact resulting from a deficit in the Five-Year Land Supply (5YLS) planning indicator. The 5YLS is a somewhat contrived indicator of the number of new homes which will be delivered over the next five years with reference to the government targets set for the area. Wiltshire currently demonstrates 4.72 years but as it is slightly below 5, this allows housing developers to make applications on sites which are not already allocated for housing, and which are hard to resist and invariable are granted on appeal. The result is that the Core Strategy setting out future housing is ignored, Neighbourhood Plans are rendered worthless and local residents are rightly angry at having new unexpected developments in their areas.

It appears that government has listened to the arguments made by Wiltshire and other affected councils. Just recently a consultation was held on the NPPF and there are a number of proposals that will reduce the level of the 5YLS required, reduce the requirement to 4 years supply for councils which have made sufficient progress in reviewing their Local Plans and protect areas from the adverse impact for 5 years from an updated local plan being adopted. It is too early to say categorically that the 5YLS issue is resolved for Wiltshire, but it certainly looks as if significant progress has been made.

Meanwhile progress on the Wiltshire Local Plan Review continues and it is expected that a draft version will be available around the middle of the year with public consultation taking place shortly thereafter. After this consultation is concluded and any changes necessitated by the consultation have been made, the Plan will be sent for independent inspection by a planning inspector before becoming council policy.

Development Management

The COVID period resulted in a perfect storm of more planning applications and fewer planning officers available which in the end led to a considerable planning backlog. The extra number of large-scale planning appeals owing to the adverse impact of the 5YLS (described above) only added to the pressures on workload. I am pleased to say that significant progress has been made over the past year in rectifying this situation and the

times now taken to determine applications is coming back to the sort of levels seen in the past and this progress will continue in the coming months.

Cllr Jane Davies – Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND and Inclusion

There are two service areas within Adult Services; Living and Ageing Well which supports people who develop age related conditions, and the Whole Life Pathway supporting working age adults with disabilities. The key aim of both is to maintain and promote independence for individuals who experience physical, mental, cognitive and sensory difficulties and to support their families, and their unpaid carers. We want the people of Wiltshire to be empowered to live full healthy and enriched lives.

Adult Social Care has a budget of £176 million for this financial year, which includes £26 million growth resulting from demographic pressures seeing more people requiring support, rising cost pressures affecting providers due to the cost of living crisis, minimum wage and energy price increases. This budget equates to £38 in every £100 the Council spends. Whilst this is a lower percentage than many other local authorities, it is imperative to carefully manage spending so that we can meet our responsibilities whilst continuing to balance our budget.

We do a lot of work around prevention and early intervention to reduce and delay ongoing care needs, in line with the Care Act 2014 and our Business Plan theme 'Prevention and Early Intervention'. People are generally happier and healthier if they can remain independent, living as part of their community, in their own homes. Our prevention services include:

- Advice and Contact is our front door information and advice service, available by telephone or email.
- Prevention and Wellbeing service offers support to those on the edge of requiring formal care.
- Wiltshire Support at Home is a short-term service to support hospital discharges and people who require support in their own homes as part of a rapid response service.
- Reablement is a short-term service for people at home provided by specially trained social care staff, including occupational therapists and reablement workers who enable customers to do things and re-learn skills which may have been lost. The service is available to adults who normally live independently at home, but who might have lost physical ability or confidence in carrying out their day-to-day living tasks.
- The Intensive Outreach Enablement and Enablement services offer people with complex needs support to work towards agreed outcomes/goals.
- Hearing and Vision provide a range of services to people who are blind, have limited or impaired sight, are deaf or have an acquired hearing loss or have dual sensory impairment (a person who has a significant combination of hearing and sight loss).
- Shared Lives Wiltshire Scheme provides an opportunity for a different model of care. Its main aim is to support people to live as part of a family, within the carers home, where they receive the support, direction or care they need within a family environment. The service places adults who have an eligible need requiring support for a variety of reasons such as, mental health, learning disabilities, physical impairments, or are elderly or cannot manage to live without support.

In addition, we have a constant focus on organisational development and the transformation of services thereby achieving operational efficiencies. Current transformation projects which will deliver savings thereby mitigating cost increases include:

- Direct Payment Financial Audits project to ensure that people with Direct Payments are getting the support that they have been assessed as needing, as well as returning unspent funds to the council in a timely way.
- Technology Enabled Care (TEC) has the potential to revolutionise the way services may be delivered to individuals.
- Supporting the care market in a way that promotes choice and diversity of supply, develops new care models and ensures best value for money and a fair cost for providers.
- Transformation of Home Care by reshaping the way we commission services and what we commission to support individuals to maintain independence within their community and home settings for as long as possible.
- Ensuring that young adults are supported to move from children's to adult's services by setting up a new transitions service to work with people aged 18-25 to bridge the gap between adult's and children's services, working in partnership with SEND, children's social care, adult's social as well as voluntary and community sector services. The new service will ensure the preparatory work is undertaken to avoid high-cost, restrictive packages being made.

The recruitment and retention of high-quality Social Workers, Occupational Therapists and other professionals is key to our services. We need salaries that are competitive, and caseloads at manageable levels to ensure we have staff who can work effectively. Our budget includes funding to sustain our skilled workforce.

The government mandated Cost of Care exercise has been completed. With the delay to the proposed Adult Social Care reforms for 2 years, the ability of the council to fully address the gap between the rates Local Authorities pay providers and those Self Funders pay is limited. We want to continue to work with providers to make the market sustainable but also affordable for both Wiltshire Council and others in line with the business plan themes of 'Understanding our communities' and 'Working together'. Wiltshire Council will receive £4.269m Market Sustainability and Improvement funding for 2023/24.

Cllr Nick Holder – Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change

Climate Programme

In November 2022, the council was assessed by local authority officers and councillors from other councils as part of a Local Government Association Peer Review. The [final report](#) stated that we are excelling in work to address climate change: *“The council’s work to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change is impressive, with many activities that would be considered exceptional in other organisations being seen very much as the ‘day job’”*.

The council has also recently been awarded the Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation award.

Climate Strategy Delivery Plans were [published](#) in September 2022, setting out our actions over a two-year period.

A facilitated action planning day was offered to all Wiltshire town and parish councils on 27 March 2023 with a follow up session planned for 17 May 2023. 40 staff and councillors attended, representing more than 32 local councils. The day covered the science of climate change, its current and future impacts locally, and their effects on nature, livelihoods and people. Action planning included the levers of influence available to local councils, and the areas of action such as energy generation, transport and waste. The local councils then considered how to engage and communicate with their residents and businesses within their communities. Finally, they decided on actions that they could do immediately.

Following a successful webinar in September 2022 to communicate the council’s approach to electric vehicle charging infrastructure, town and parish councils were able to apply for grant funding to install public EV charging infrastructure in their communities, with Wiltshire Council funded grants of up to £3000 per site. The response was excellent with applications received for 35 sites. These grants can supplement other funding sources such as the government's On-Street Residential Charging Scheme (ORCS).

Wiltshire Council is working in partnership with Swindon Borough Council and independent experts iChoosr to give residents the opportunity to invest in renewables through the Solar Together group-buying scheme for solar panels and battery storage. We are on track to deliver more than 700 installations in Wiltshire totalling more than 5000 solar panels by May 2023, with another scheme planned for delivery in 2023/24. More than 80 private electric vehicle charge points have been installed across Swindon and Wiltshire alongside the solar installations.

Wiltshire Council partnered with Sustrans to deliver a behaviour change project to secondary school pupils to raise awareness of climate change, air quality, and the impact of transport. An action plan was co-developed with the pupils and their schools to overcome barriers to active travel and kick start school led active travel campaigns and initiatives. The 5 schools involved in the project developed action plans, providing a tool to make meaningful and lasting change for the schools. The development of self-led resources means other schools across the county can follow a similar process to increase active travel and reduce their carbon footprint.

Wiltshire Council has submitted a bid to Active Travel England (ATE) for funds to support walking and wheeling routes in the county. ATE looks to fund active travel infrastructure that promotes walking, wheeling and cycling as an alternative to taking the car. ATE indicated a funding allocation of £0.878m for Wiltshire, and the bid's proposed schemes had to meet a minimum assessment threshold to ensure they promote and encourage walking and wheeling. In addition, ATE encouraged bids for the construction of schemes during 2023/24, although the design and development of new facilities will be considered.

Natural and Historic Environment

The Environment Act 2021 is bringing with it some significant changes for ecology. Over the next few years, the team will be working on Local Nature Reserve Strategy (LNRS) where we will be mapping where local habitat improvement and restoration is needed. The LNRS will map specific opportunities for taking priority action for nature recovery and the use of “nature-based solutions” to wider environmental problems like flooding, climate change mitigation and adaptation or poor water quality.

Alongside this, the team will also be working with developers to deliver a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) from November 2023, to ensure that developers have in place strategies to contribute to nature alongside land development. It is a way of making sure the habitat for wildlife is in a better state than it was before development.

We have also developed a Woodland Creation Project with £294,800 grant funding over two-year from DEFRA/Forestry Commission to recruit Woodland Officers to facilitate local small and large scale tree / woodland planting, develop a Woodland and Tree Strategy for Wiltshire, recruit volunteer community ‘Tree Wardens’ to champion trees and identify local opportunities, help with grant funding applications, link communities with partners and landowners and support the development of local provenance tree nursery(s).

This spring we will be launching the consultation on the Wiltshire Design Guide (as supplementary planning document) that will comply with a national government directive to produce up-to-date local design guidance which addresses local priorities and preferences. This document is for developers to ensure they are able to make more informed, early decisions when planning projects before they engage with the planning authority through a formal planning application process. It will ensure that Wiltshire’s strategy for high quality design is not singularly focused on the appearance of new buildings but also addresses all 10 characteristics of good design. It provides a framework for any additional local design guidance that may be produced (i.e. Highways SPD, Neighbourhood Plan Design Guides). It has been designed to ensure the text and presentation is clear, engaging and of practical use to a wide audience and will support the delivery of the Council’s Business Plan objectives and the Core Strategy in particular Core Policy 57.

Sitting alongside the Wiltshire Design Guide, the team have also produced the Neighbourhood Planning Guide. This is a toolkit to take neighbourhood planners through the process of considering how they can integrate high quality design aspirations / policy into their emerging Neighbourhood Plan. It has, however, been developed through a workshop and feedback from 10 different NPG representatives and the feedback has been very good. The Guide has now been distributed to town and parish councils and will be available at local libraries and is on Wiltshire’s website [What is Neighbourhood planning? - Wiltshire Council](#)

Public Protection Services

The food & safety team have undertaken over 2,000 food hygiene inspections in the financial year and have met the targets set by the Food Standards Agency in its post pandemic recovery plan to get Wiltshire's food premises inspection programme back on track after Covid-19. The team also received over 660 registrations in the year for new food businesses. In addition to this work the food safety team took a successful prosecution for an illegal meat cutting business operating from two car washes. The operator of the illegal operation was prosecuted and ordered to pay back over £150K under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

The pest control team has carried out over 1,200 rat treatments in the year, and our dog wardens have collected almost 200 stray dogs during the year, an increase of 25% over the previous year. The dogs which are not claimed are rehomed by the RSPCA. The Anti-Social Behaviour team has issued closure orders on a car park in Devizes to prevent it being used for car meetings which were causing disturbance to local residents.

The Council's licensing officers have dealt with over 5,500 Temporary Event Notices and licence applications. They have worked with the pub and hospitality industry during this very challenging period of financial pressures and have seen a large churn in pub ownership recently with reduced staffing across the sector impacting on both opening hours and food hygiene standards.

The environmental control and protection team is progressing work on a new Air Quality Action Plan for Wiltshire which will be going out for public consultation shortly. Three officers have achieved statutory accreditation for private water supply sampling and the team has dealt with over 2,600 service requests and complaints covering a wide range of issues from noise complaints and contaminated land enquires to pollution issues and consulting on planning applications.

The trading standards team has intervened to help over 100 victims of scams, retrieved over £15,000 from fraudsters in compensation for consumers and prevented over £200,000 being paid to rogue traders. They have also removed over 370 illegal vapes from sale across Wiltshire and found 99 businesses in breach of animal health and welfare legislation.

Waste Services

The service manages the contracts responsible for the collection and management of waste from Wiltshire's 230,000 households, and forecasts that it will manage around 224,000 tonnes in 2022/23.

In terms of waste collection, the service typically provides over 1.08 million scheduled collections of waste, recycling and garden waste each month, and 84,560 households subscribe to the chargeable garden waste collection service. In addition, 'assisted collections' are provided to support those residents unable to place their waste at the kerbside, and separate collections of clinical waste of provided where required.

A new kerbside collection of household batteries was launched in November 2022, aimed at increasing recycling and reducing the risk of fires at waste management facilities and on the collection vehicles. Over the first 3 months of operation, 15 tonnes of batteries were collected, the equivalent of 625,000 x AA batteries (by weight).

Waste Composition analyses have been undertaken to help us understand how residents are using our waste and recycling services. This has shown that a substantial amount of potentially recyclable materials are being put in general waste bins, and that a high proportion of 'non-target' materials are also being placed in the blue-lidded recycling bins. This has led to the launch of the "Recycling - Let's Sort it!" campaign, designed to inform Wiltshire residents of the benefits of putting the correct items into their recycling bins.

The service also provides a network of ten household recycling centres (HRCs); during 2022/23 we have introduced a new paint reuse scheme whereby left-over usable paint can be left at the sites, and people are encouraged to take this away for free for their own small DIY projects.

The reuse of suitable items has also now been extended across the HRC network, with designated walk-in containers provided at all sites where items in good reusable condition can be donated and shared with local reuse charities.

The service has also put new disposal arrangements in place to manage 'Persistent Organic Pollutants' found in domestic upholstered furniture. These chemicals are found in the fire retardants commonly used in furniture and, whilst safe in use and in the home, can accumulate in the environment following disposal. New arrangements were put in place at short notice after councils were advised by the Environment Agency in August that such items must no longer be disposed of to landfill and needed to be sent for incineration from 1 January 2023. Separate containers have been put in place at the HRCs to keep these items separate from other waste, and arrangements have been put in place to achieve segregation of these items from other items picked up as part of the chargeable bulky household waste collection service. New haulage and disposal arrangements have also been put in place so that these items can be managed appropriately.

Cllr Ashley O'Neill – Cabinet Member for Governance, IT, Broadband, Licensing, Staffing, Communities and Area Boards

Community Governance Review Update

Our Electoral Review Committee at Wiltshire Council has been busy undertaking community governance reviews that you as city, town and parishes have been asking us to look at. The committee is the body at Wiltshire that has been given delegated authority by Full Council to undertake reviews and make recommendations on changes to city, town and parish council governance arrangements. This can be anything from a simple change to the number of councillors on a parish council, correcting boundary anomalies, changing warding arrangements – right the way through to significant and complex reorganisation of boundaries in an entire community area.

We have recently undertaken significant reviews in the Calne and Malmesbury areas in the last tranche and are currently working our way through several reviews across the county in this tranche. We are due to conclude the current round of reviews shortly and will be looking to undertake the next set of reviews in the Autumn of this year. Whilst these reviews of governance arrangements often provoke strong feelings amongst those potentially affected, they are a vital process to ensure that the arrangements in Wiltshire are fit for purpose and reflect community identities and ensure convenient and effective local governance.

To find out more about how the review process works or how to submit a request to have element(s) of your governance arrangements reviewed, please contact cgr@wiltshire.gov.uk and a member of our officer team will get back to you.

Broadband Update

Following on from the end of the superfast broadband programme funding last year, we are now working with BDUK (the government executive agency for broadband delivery) on the new Project GIGABIT programme.

We were disappointed that there were properties undelivered by Gigaclear under the superfast programme, especially as we triggered all performance mechanisms available to us. As the public funding available under this scheme ended, these properties must now be built commercially, picked up through Project GIGABIT or delivered through the BDUK voucher scheme.

On a positive note, Gigaclear have committed to delivering part of the planned rollout commercially even though the public funding has ended, and other properties have already been delivered by other providers. Some properties have not been connected as the landowner refused the necessary wayleave permission.

Wiltshire Council has advocated to BDUK that the properties left outstanding by Gigaclear should be supported under Project GIGABIT which is currently going through a procurement exercise right now. It will be for BDUK to determine the scope of the Project GIGABIT roll-out and we would like to see the maximum number of properties connected in Wiltshire.

We know that many of you will be anxious to understand more about Project GIGABIT and especially the timelines for when your communities might get access to full fibre broadband, whether through that programme or through an alternative mechanism.

If you have a query about the upcoming Project GIGABIT or the delivery of full-fibre broadband in your community, please contact broadband@wiltshire.gov.uk.

Cllr Caroline Thomas – Cabinet Member for Transport, Street Scene and Flooding

Our Highway and Transport services underpin our Business Plan priorities (infographic below). The [Business Plan 2017-2027](#) sets out Wiltshire Council's priorities for the next ten years:

- The people of Wiltshire are empowered to live full, healthy and enriched lives.
- Our communities continue to be beautiful and exciting places to live.
- Our local economy thrives and is supported by a skilled workforce.
- We lead the way in how councils and counties mitigate the climate challenges ahead.

The highway and transport network, and related infrastructure, plays an essential role in delivering these priorities. It is important for public safety, community resilience and supporting the local economy. In 2022, we resurfaced 17km of road and 6.2km of footway; retextured 19km of road to improve skid resistance, surface dressed 70km of road, filled 11,361 potholes, completed localised road repairs at 75 sites and carries out 475 bridge inspections.

We completed the award of the new term maintenance contract for Wiltshire, and also the award of our new StreetScene contract.

Our gritter drivers were out regularly over the winter in our 24 gritters, and after a long, dry summer, followed by a wet autumn interspersed with two prolonged periods of cold weather, road conditions in Wiltshire, like the rest of the country, have suffered badly. We have seen an exponential growth in pothole reports – an illustration of this is in December we received 900 reports, whilst during January the number was closer to 4,000 reports. To address this, we significantly increased the resources dealing with potholes by redeploying teams, including our Parish Stewards.

We have worked hard with public transport operators – bus and rail – to ensure connectivity across the county, which has been challenging given changing travel patterns following the Covid-19 pandemic. We have established our Bus Enhanced Partnership Board, supported the national £2 single bus fare scheme, and have also worked with train operators and Network Rail to promote the business case for new railway stations, including Devizes Gateway.

We have been successful in an application for eighteen new cycles to boost our existing small 'Bikeability' fleet held at County Hall. These are used at courses across Wiltshire and include twelve cycles which can be used for the standard Level 1 and 2 courses, plus six smaller cycles which will enable more 'learn to ride' sessions to be offered.

Our Fleet Strategy has ensured delivery of 16 hybrid vans and 5 electric pool cars, with more being delivered shortly. These vehicles make a significant contribution to our climate change objectives and support our wider programme of Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) which is being delivered across the county.

Additional investment:

- We have invested an extra £150,000 each year for the next three years on tackling fly-tipping. This includes investment in digital technology and cameras to improve enforcement, extra officers to increase prosecutions, and a communications campaign to encourage behaviour change.

- We created the new Local Highway and Footway Improvement Groups (LHFIGs) and increased the funding available for community highways projects. The 18 LHFIGs are able to do all of the functions the previous Community Area Transport Groups (CATGs) could, but they can also improve or repair existing infrastructure such as highways and footways. LHFIGs can access £400,000 in total, with the exact allocation for each area based on geographical size and population. There is also a central £250,000 substantive fund that LHFIGs can apply to annually to help fund larger highways projects.
- We have invested an extra £200,000 each year for the next three years into painting give way lines, roundabout markings and stop lines in urban areas and on inter-urban roads. We have also invested a further £333,000 each year into emptying gullies to help prevent flooding.
- We have opened new cycling and walking routes on Hilperton Road, Trowbridge; and at The Centre, Amesbury; Easton Lane between Chippenham and Corsham; Winsley Road; and between Hilperton and Melksham.
- We are progressing major highways projects in the county, including the A350 Melksham bypass, the M4 J17, and the A350 in Chippenham.
- We secured £1.2m of Department for Transport (DfT) funding to launch a flexible, on-demand bus service in the Pewsey Vale area. The new service will launch later this year.

Looking forward to 23/24, we are pleased to note the following additional grant funds:

- £3.6m additional investment for repairing potholes;
- £6.98 Safer Road Fund for A3102;
- Over £1.1m for Active Travel including development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and schemes at Salisbury River Park (footbridge), Hilperton and Amesbury to Larkhill cycleway;
- £93k Environment Agency funding for flood scheme feasibility in Salisbury and Amesbury (confirmation received last week);
- £86k Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) to support two roles to deliver Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCi).

How our metrics deliver our mission

