

COVID-19 Update – Wednesday 10 June 2020

Please find below the latest update on COVID-19 and other council matters:

Proposed changes to senior leadership structure

Yesterday, cabinet members approved steps to make a proposed change to the tier one senior leadership structure of the council to support the COVID-19 recovery plan and delivery of ongoing savings.

The proposed change will see a reduction from two Chief Executive Officers to one Chief Executive.

The current structure is relatively new, and the Chief Executive Officers have been working well together since their appointment in January. They have also worked jointly in our response to COVID-19, which has been focused on supporting those who have been in need and vulnerable during this emergency as well as supporting businesses with the aim of minimising the impact of this pandemic on Wiltshire's economy. Our response has been good and the strong leadership provided by the two Chief Executive Officers throughout this has been exemplary.

However, in my discussions with the Chief Executive Officers they have outlined that despite the success of our response to COVID-19, it has highlighted some duplication of work as they have sought to make joint decisions on areas of work, and in their collaboration with partners. In addition the response has had a significant impact on the council's financial position and this, together with the impact on our communities and our economy, will present challenges that require us to evolve and change to meet them.

The pandemic, and the council's finances mean that our existing strategies and priorities will need to be refocused to reflect the radically changed context we will be working in as a result and the Chief Executive Officers and I agree that recovery from this pandemic will be the council's overriding priority. The Chief Executive Officers suggested that the current tier one structure and roles need to change to a single Chief Executive to align with the changing priority and work with myself and cabinet as the council focuses on its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and I agreed.

At cabinet yesterday, I outlined my [proposal](#) to reduce the number of Chief Executive Officers from two to one, creating a single Chief Executive to work with myself and cabinet on strategic planning, leading the COVID-19 recovery plan and delivering our financial savings. Under this proposal the Chief Executive will also be designated the statutory roles of Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), Returning Officer (RO) and Head of Paid Service. They will continue to be supported by the statutory Directors (Monitoring Officer & Section 151) and the Director of HR&OD to ensure that appropriate independent advice and challenge relating to finance, legal and workforce matters is available.

The final structure will be confirmed after 16 June 2020, following a period of formal consultation with the Chief Executive Officers.

Read the full report at: <https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=13068>

Business update

The council has now launched its local Discretionary Grant scheme after receiving over £5.1 million of additional Government funding to support small businesses.

This new fund is aimed at small and micro businesses that can demonstrate they have suffered a significant fall in income due to COVID-19, have ongoing fixed property-related costs and occupy property or shared office space with a rateable value below £51,000.

A one-off grant worth £5,000 will be awarded to eligible businesses to help them cope with the challenges presented by COVID-19. Eligible businesses include:

- small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces such as mills, units in industrial parks, science parks and incubators which do not have their own business rates assessment
- regular market traders with fixed building costs such as rent, who do not have their own business rates assessment
- Bed and breakfasts which pay Council Tax instead of business rates
- Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief who would otherwise have received Small Business Rates Relief

Applications for the local Discretionary Grant scheme must be submitted by 5pm on Monday 22 June 2020 via the online application form. Applications will then be reviewed and assessed with grants being paid from 22 June onwards.

Full guidance for applications, FAQs and the online application form are available at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/business-advice-support-covid19-grants>

Household recycling centres – online booking system

Online bookings have now opened for trips to household recycling centres (HRCs), so people can now to book a visit to any of Wiltshire's 10 HRCs, up to three days in advance.

As of Monday 8 June, people can only visit a HRC with a pre-booked slot; anyone who turns up without a booking will not be allowed to access the site.

There are around 10,000 available booking slots across the 10 sites each week, and new slots are added every 15 minutes over the working day, so people should have plenty of opportunities to visit any site of their choosing.

To find out more about the new booking system, please [read our FAQs](#), or [make a booking online](#).

Highways update

Wiltshire Council has submitted five road reallocation projects to the Department of Transport (DfT) to make significant changes to road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians.

The five projects have to meet strict criteria to secure funding, and add up to £227,000 worth of investment, which accounts for the first allocation of funding from DfT.

Further projects around the county will fall into the next round of funding, of around £900,000, provided they meet the criteria for the next phase.

The funding is designed to help authorities use temporary interventions to create an environment that is safe for both walking and cycling, allowing people to get around while maintaining social distance and avoiding overcrowding on public transport.

The five schemes (available [here](#)) were shortlisted based on the busiest bus routes in the county, with those routes that could not accommodate a cycleway without significant costs or land acquisition being discounted. Click here for further information on the five schemes.

If approved by DfT, work will start on these schemes quickly, as they have to be completed within eight weeks to help embed walking and cycling as long-term commuting habits, and in turn reap the associated health, air quality and congestion benefits.

Using separate funding, the council is also progressing a social distancing scheme in Malmesbury town centre that will benefit both cyclists and pedestrians. As part of this trial, a one-way footway system for pedestrians will be installed on both sides of High Street. Work should begin on this project in the next week or so.

Major resurfacing works to begin in Devizes next week

Resurfacing work on the A342 Nursted Road and Southbroom roundabout in central Devizes will begin on Monday 15 June until Thursday 9 July, with the teams working through the night to minimise disruption.

The work, which will be completed by Tarmac in four planned phases, will see the existing carriageway repaired and then resurfaced and new road markings added.

The teams will not be working over the weekends and apart from the temporary closures mentioned, the roads will remain open to traffic outside of the working hours.

For further information about the planned phases of work please [click here](#).

Installation of Roundabout on A360

The installation of a new, four-exit roundabout at the New Cut junction of the A360 Devizes road, The Avenue and Camp Hill on the outskirts of Salisbury has now been completed.

The work, which has been completed by Persimmon Homes as part of its St Peter's Place development, was secured by the council through the planning process to improve safety at the junction and reduce delays during peak travel times.

This new roundabout is positive news for motorists on the A360. The improvements will help to make this notorious junction safer and also improve traffic flow in the area, reducing both congestion and journey times.

The temporary speed limit at this junction is likely to remain in place for a short time while the council conducts a safety audit, highway inspections, remedial and landscaping works, but the roundabout is now fully open to traffic.

Registration service update

The council's registration service is working hard to allow people to attend appointments to register births, and notices of marriage and civil partnerships soon.

The Government recently announced that birth registrations, and notices of marriage and civil partnerships could resume in England from 1 June, so long as public health guidance is implemented to ensure it is safe for residents to visit the relevant buildings.

The registration service is in the process of putting the appropriate arrangements in place to allow people to make face-to-face appointments as soon as possible in a socially distanced, safe way.

In line with General Register Office guidance the council is having to restrict face-to-face registration appointments to people that are required to be there only. If this is difficult for anyone they are advised to contact the council in advance to discuss arrangements for their appointment.

The date of the return of the face-to-face service, and the final arrangements, will be confirmed shortly.

Young Work Wiltshire

Young Work Wiltshire has been launched to support 16 and 17 year olds who are not in education, employment or training and can help young people access opportunities to build successful working lives.

Young Work Wiltshire can provide one-to-one support which may be face to face, by phone or online. It includes helping a young person understand the provision available, accessing job clubs, support with applications, CV and interview skills and transitioning to a new opportunity.

A new section on the [Work Wiltshire website](#) dedicated for our NEET young people offers a vacancy service, monthly e-newsletter, job/apprenticeship opportunity listings and the ability register for support.

For more information or to refer to the service, contact Work Wiltshire on workwilts@wiltshire.gov.uk or phone 01225 716890.

Carers Week, 8-14 June

Monday marked the start of Carers Week, **a national campaign to support the estimated 6.5 million people in the UK who are carers – many thousands of which live in Wiltshire.**

The theme for this year is 'Making Carers Visible' and [Carers Support Wiltshire](#), along with other Wiltshire-based organisations are encouraging everyone to celebrate and **recognise** the invaluable contribution carers make to our families and communities.

With more people than ever taking on caring responsibilities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, Carers Support Wiltshire are keen to shine a light on the efforts of carers in the county and provide the support they need.

The organisation has put together some helpful [coronavirus FAQs for carers](#). They have also set up a telephone helpline (**0800 181 4118**) and virtual carer cafes to help carers during Covid-19.

During Carers Week, Carer Support Wiltshire is running a series of virtual events across its website and social media platforms. To find out more about more about how you can get involved, please visit: www.carersupportwiltshire.co.uk/carers-week-2020/

Special schools update

A £33m investment in special schools in north Wiltshire has just taken a major step forward as the contractor for the work has been announced.

Contractors Willmott Dixon will oversee the work to build the school and provide up to 400 places for SEND pupils aged from early years to post-16 on the Rowdeford site by September 2023.

The project is part of a wider plan to bring Larkrise, St Nicholas and Rowdeford schools together. They will amalgamate as one maintained school over three sites under one single leadership team from 1 September this year.

Main construction works are expected to start in Summer 2021 and be complete for Sept 2023. In the next two weeks Wiltshire Council hopes to enter into formal contract with Willmott Dixon and they will be working with them particularly during the construction phase to maximise employment and training opportunities within Wiltshire as well as to ensure the use as much as possible of local supply chains to support the local economy.

The council will also continue to work closely with the school community across all three sites and involve the children in the design as the project moves forward.

For further information and to view the project timeline please [click here](#).

Regards,

Cllr Philip Whitehead