

Dear Town and Parish Councils

Please find the update for September which I trust is helpful.

Play Areas

The council is now dealing with over 50 individual requests for transfers of play areas.

The allocated commuted sum budget (£1,000 per play area with no revenue funding) is for 64 play areas, hence if any another council is interested in a transfer please can you contact Adrian with some urgency.

I would like to thank the below councils for completing their successful transfers of play areas in the last twelve months:

- Melksham Without
- Salisbury
- Warminster

I hope we can shortly complete the transfers in progress with:

- Westbury
- Laverstock and Ford
- Malmesbury
- Trowbridge
- Winterslow

I note we have a number of further councils that have registered for a transfer. We have allocated the commuted sum payments to those councils and the council's Legal Team is involved.

This means the number of play facilities remaining with Wiltshire Council is continually reducing. As we are all aware the vast majority of play areas are provided by the local communities and Wiltshire Council is conscious that the bulk of its council tax payers are paying us for facilities which their local community will never use, whilst also paying for their local provision to the parish/ town council in which they reside.

To ensure the provision is fairly provided across the county Wiltshire Council are currently operating the below procedures:

1. Wherever possible transferring the service to the local community.
2. Where ownership remains with Wiltshire Council if the play area needs safety works we will contact the local town/ parish council to see if they wish to fund the repairs. If funding is not provided Wiltshire Council will make the area safe. This may include locking the play area until funding is provided.
3. Where ownership remains with Wiltshire Council and the local community wishes to provide 'one off' funding for improvements, this can be undertaken by the community with approval from Wiltshire Council. The community will need to use an authorised contractor who can provide a guarantee for the standard of work undertaken. Wiltshire Council will inspect the

completed works and if approved safe the play area will be open to the public. The area will continually be inspected by Wiltshire Council with any subsequent repairs being the responsibility of the local community to fund.

4. Where ownership remains with Wiltshire Council and the local community wish equipment removed to enable a kick about area. This will be permitted providing the local community funds the works. All works will need to be inspected by Wiltshire Council to approve safe for us after the works.

The safety of users is Wiltshire Council's highest priority. If equipment or an area is deemed unsafe we will cordon off the area or close the facility to ensure safety. We will then seek funding to open the facility at the earliest opportunity from the local community in which they reside. The concept is to allow the local community to fund the local provision and harmonise the service as much as possible across the county.

Street Cleansing and Grass Cutting Contract

The councils Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance contracts expire in June 2020. Due to the tendering, awarding and mobilisation timelines the council needs to decide the service levels to be delivered in the next few months.

- Street cleansing services are likely to continue in-line with the Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse. With a requirement to responding to MyWiltshire Reports within stated time lines to address litter and streetscene issues.
- An option for grounds maintenance could be to move away from the current resource and frequency cutting arrangements. The council could move its grass cutting to a measurement provision. The areas would be based upon the council's maps, with the council stipulating the cutting lengths to be achieved. This would mean the contractor carries the risk of delivering the service to meet the lengths.
- We are likely to carry on with hedge and shrub maintenance being an annual provision during the winter based upon priority areas.

The council would be pleased to hear your views on these proposals. Also whether any council would be interested in a Frame Work agreement. Or a simple registration of interest in a Service Delegation removing the provision from the contract (this would obviously be subject to any Community Asset Transfer Policy of Wiltshire Council). Please let Adrian know of any comments you have.

Signing for working on the highway

There have been a number of incidents this month concerning working on the highway and signage. When working on the highway signage is needed to ensure the safety of operatives and users of the highway. Signage can often be a legal requirement. Recently the council has been aware of volunteers working on the high speed roads litter picking. Whilst the council recognises the benefit of voluntary groups, it cannot be at the expense of their safety. If you are working on the

highway and need advice on whether it is safe or legal signage is required, your local highway office will be pleased to give advice.

Also the council has received requests for the Parish Steward to undertake work on dual carriageways and central reservations. Working in these areas will require road closures and we apologise this is outside of the Parish Steward Scheme. But we are pleased to record these works and should a road closure be book in the future this work can be considered at that time with the work undertaken in coordination with the road closure.

Parish Steward Provision

The Parish Steward Schedules will be issued in September.

As requested by the majority of town and parish councils the schedules continue to be based upon the size of the highway asset in a council's area. This will again be reviewed next year at the town and parish council evening meetings.

Weed Control

I thought it would be useful to raise some of the positive local involvement with regard to weed control. As you are aware the Parish Steward Scheme delivers the Weed Control Service for Wiltshire Council, with areas for treatment being identified by the local Council Highway Representative. As the amount of area treated is limited by the resource available a number of towns and parishes have provided supporting work. This has ranged from large scale weed spraying by contractors or in-house services. This has proved very successful and I thought this may be worth considering in your local precept for next year. Another option has been local voluntary groups manually removing weeds. This works extremely well, but due to the requirements for working on the highway can only be undertaken where safe to do so.

Autumn and Winter Weather

Wiltshire Council is ready to respond in an emergency should there be flash flooding, but I am calling on communities and residents to do all they can to be prepared.

The recent flooding in the northwest of England is a timely reminder that emergencies can happen anywhere, at any time, so communities need to be as ready as possible.

We have been working extremely hard with our partners all summer to make sure the county is as prepared as it can be for the winter months.

But we have to be realistic about what we can do, so now is the time for residents to consider the impact of winter weather and for everyone to do their bit to keep gullies and drains clear so that water flows without obstruction.

Consideration should also be given to stocking up on sandbags which are available for personal property protection from local builders' merchants.

Although the council offers help and support to help tackle sudden, extreme weather, the responsibility for protecting private property rests with owners.

Residents can clear gullies blocked with debris but if the problem is more serious or people have other concerns this can be reported to Wiltshire Council:

- Online at <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/mywiltshire-online-reporting> where people will be able to leave their email address and receive updates;
- Using the MyWilts app on a smart phone - again people will receive updates
- By telephone on 0300 456 0105 the customer services team will provide a log number
- During severe weather updates will be available on Twitter @wiltshireroads

Many parishes have already completed their snow and flood plans. As we move into a period of unsettled weather, now is the time to check your plans and refresh contact details.

I would also ask your help in advising residents that:

Be Prepared

It is their responsibility for protecting their home from flooding. Where they can the council, emergency services and Environment Agency will help, however if the flooding is over a large area, they may not be able to respond to every call.

Important documents and items should be stored safely in waterproof containers at the highest point of the property such as upstairs.

These may include items like:

- Passports
- Financial documents
- Insurance details
- Photos

Make a list of important and useful telephone numbers:

- Insurance company
- Water
- Electric
- Gas
- Local council
- Landlord

Appliances

Make sure they know how to turn off their gas, electricity and water supplies, even in the dark.

All electrical appliances should be:

- Unplugged
- Smaller items moved upstairs or to the highest part of the property
- Larger items raised on blocks

Furniture

Plug:

- Sinks
- Baths
- Showers

Weighing the plug down to prevent backflow.

Move as much furniture as they can upstairs those they can't, should be raised off the floor.

Insurance

The average cost of flood damage is £30,000 so you will need to check with their insurance company that the level of their insurance policy covers flooding and add the necessary cover if needed.

- Is my property insured against flood damage?
- Does my cover provide me with temporary accommodation?
- Will any necessary clean up or repairs to my property be taken care of?
- How much compensation will I receive to cover any damages to my property and contents?

Make an emergency flood kit of items:

- Blankets
- Warm/waterproof clothing
- Bottled water
- Food
- Torches
- Radio with spare batteries
- A first aid kit

Prepare food they can store and eat without cooking, store drinking water, keep warm clothing safe and keep a mobile phone fully charged.

Historic and listed buildings

For owners of historic and listed buildings English Heritage have produced an excellent booklet designed to assist those who live in, own or manage historic buildings that together with their historic fixtures and fittings are threatened by periodic flooding. Advice is provided on preventative measures to minimise flood damage as well as on the inspection, conservation and repair of historic buildings after flooding.

[Visit the English Heritage website](#) for more information.

Groundwater flooding

This kind of flooding presents particular issues as traditional methods of flood defence may not be effective as the water can come up through the floor and remain for a long time.

The most effective way to keep groundwater out of their home is to use a drainage pump, to divert water away from their home or business, however in some cases there may be too much water and this would be ineffective.

Where you pump the discharged water makes a difference

Water removed from a structure needs to be discharged in to a location at least several feet from their home. Regardless of whether you have public sewage or a septic tank, never pump the water into the sewage system. An overload on the system could cause the sewage to back up.

Pumping water onto the highway

Great care must be taken when pumping water onto the highway. The discharged water, pipes or operation must not create a safety issue. Pipes must be placed in a manner that they will not cause trip or obstruction hazards. Water wherever possible should be discharged into a working gulley or in a manner that allows the water to easily and quickly disperse.

During freezing conditions pumping should be undertaken in a manner that prevents ice and hazard issues. This could involve using grit bags or regular salting.

If the highway authority believes pumping is causing a safety issue it will instruct the householder to amend their operations or cease if no alternative arrangements are available.

You can find more information on groundwater flooding on the [environment agency](#) website. If you would like more information and advice on groundwater flooding contact:- Floodline on 08459 88 11 88.