



Minutes of a meeting of an Extraordinary Full Council meeting held virtually on Zoom on 04 March 2021 at 7pm.

Councillors present:

James Adman	Desna Allen
Richard Bambury	Pete Bishop
Jenny Budgell	Clare Cape
Bill Douglas	Rajvir Gill
Peter Hutton	Teresa Hutton (Chairman)
Ruth Lloyd	Nick Murry
Mary Norton	Ashley O'Neill
Andy Phillips	Nina Phillips
Chris Ruck (Vice)	John Scragg
Sandie Webb	

Officers present: Mark Smith, Chief Executive
Nick Rees, Director of Resources
Matt Kirby, Director of Community Services
Gillian Ballinger, Finance Manager
Heather Rae, Democratic Services Manager
Michael Weeks, Democratic and Civic Officer
Andy Conroy, Planning Officer
Lynsey Nichols, Communications and Customer Services Manager
Paul Harvey, Head of Leisure Services

Public present: There were 22 members of the public present. This meeting was live streamed on YouTube.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were 7 written questions and 3 verbal questions from members of the public, which are appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX A**. The responses to these questions were not part of the meeting but are appended to these minutes at **APPENDIX B**.

75. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Holly Bradfield, David Powell and Michael Merry.

76. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

77. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- i) The Mayor announced that in respect of agenda item 4, each councillor would be given one opportunity to make a comment or ask a question of officers in alphabetical order. Councillors were requested to not respond to comments or questions raised by other councillors.
- ii) The Mayor noted that the internal process followed in respect of agenda item 4 was for Councillors to look at the consultation questionnaire and fill it in and make comments. It was noted that three Councillors filled in the survey and took part in the process but highlighted this did not mean the proposals were therefore endorsed.

78. WILTSHIRE COUNCIL - FUTURE CHIPPENHAM CONSULTATION

The Democratic Services Manager presented the report regarding the Future Chippenham Consultation and draft response letter. It was highlighted that the letter was drafted based on Councillor comments received against the road route options proposed in the Future Chippenham Consultation.

The Chairman invited all Councillors present to share their views. Councillors spoke in support of the draft consultation letter. The Chairman voiced the importance of keeping good communication lines open with Wiltshire Council regarding this important issue for the Town. It was highlighted that Councillors are the voice of residents and should make sure at all stages going forward that the Town Council are informed, to keep residents informed.

A recorded vote was taken on the recommendations in accordance with Standing Order 16.2:

In Favour

Councillor James Adman
Councillor Desna Allen
Councillor Richard Bambury
Councillor Pete Bishop
Councillor Jenny Budgell
Councillor Clare Cape
Councillor Bill Douglas
Councillor Raj Gill
Councillor Teresa Hutton
Councillor Ruth Lloyd
Councillor Nick Murry
Councillor Mary Norton
Councillor Ashley O'Neill
Councillor Andy Phillips
Councillor Nina Phillips
Councillor Chris Ruck
Councillor John Scragg
Councillor Sandie Webb

Abstention

Councillor Peter Hutton

RESOLVED that:

i) Councillors agreed the letter against the proposed road routes (at Appendix A of the report) be the formal Town Council response to the Future Chippenham Consultation.

ii) Councillors delegated to the Chief Executive to submit this letter to the Future Chippenham Team at Wiltshire Council before the deadline on Friday 12 March at 5pm.

79. ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION

Councillors requested a press release on the response agreed for the Future Chippenham Consultation.

80. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next ordinary meeting of Full Council will take place on Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 7pm.

The meeting concluded at 8.15pm

These Minutes are subject to confirmation at the next meeting

Signed on behalf of the Committee as a true record of the meeting

Chairman:

Date:

Public comments and questions

At the invitation of the Chairman residents made the following statements:

Written public questions:

1. “Thank you Chippenham Town Council for rejecting the Local Plan and Road proposals. I am a bit perplexed as to how 8 Councillors can not vote on something so important as the road, how are these Councillors representing the residents of Chippenham? Now we need a public investigation into how Wiltshire Council could have wasted so much time and money with Atkins on the bid, research, videos, glossy brochures and webinars. All to consult on a road that wouldn't be built without the houses. Why were residents only consulted at such a late stage? Together we have the opportunity coming out of lockdown to regenerate Chippenham. Bringing the River area, canal area, countryside, County Farms with a community area added to one of the barns and town centre with all its history together. Not expensive buildings but enjoying what we have and advertising it with cycling and walking routes. Chippenham train station is the busiest in Wiltshire, bringing traffic into the central area with no benefit to Chippenham. Six car parks next to the station prove we need Corsham train station reopened. How can we work together to move forward?”
2. “Building more roads is proven to encourage people to drive more. This will worsen this climate emergency. Instead, when considering infrastructure for new housing, let's be more ambitious, and continue to show other parts of the country the way, by planning new housing in such a way as to make sustainable travel, rather than car travel, the default choice. This means giving people easy access to rail links for long-distance travel, and that local amenities, such as schools, shops, leisure and workplaces are close enough to people's homes that they can walk or cycle to them, rather than being reliant on the car. However, if we continue down a route of regarding roads, such as this Future Chippenham one, as the core transport infrastructure required to enable new housing, we're going to end up with even more car-dependent sprawl, as has been seen in so many other parts of the country. That's a longer-term vision for housing in the town, but in the immediate term, I urge you to strongly oppose this road. Thank you.”
3. “I would like to thank the Town Council for rejecting Wiltshire Council's proposal for road and housing development to the East of Chippenham. Other speakers have called out the failure to align these plans with the carbon reduction measures necessary to combat the Climate Emergency and meet the 2030 carbon neutrality goal. The Council should be setting a good example to its residents in this area and not exchanging short term benefits for a long term carbon debt. I have recently spent considerable time and money changing to low carbon heating and transport. Without leadership from the Council I see little reason why other residents would make similar commitments. There are many other aspects of these plans which are unacceptable:
 - the scale of housing development served by the road is out of proportion with Chippenham's need
 - the loss of biodiversity

- the loss of farmland
- the loss of vital green spaces that are enjoyed by the residents
- the failure to embrace the changes to our working lives introduced by remote working and accelerated by the COVID crisis
- the perpetuation of a dependence on car ownership
- and finally, a failure to grasp the opportunity to create an environment fit for our future and our children's future

If all this weren't bad enough the process adopted by Wiltshire Council arrogantly seeks to override the freedom of residents to express their view on the plan by asking only which of a, b or c is acceptable."

4. "I am heartbroken at the proposed low-speed distributor road and housing development in the Avon and Marden Valley. The area has been a solace both to myself and others, particularly during the pandemic. One of my concerns for the development is the destruction of the wildlife corridor and the damage it will have on local biodiversity, including many rare species that have recently been identified and are regaining a foothold in the area. The suburban expansion would reduce natural flood plains thereby, increasing flooding in other 'at risk' areas and the current flood risk assessment conducted does not account for the expected increasing floodplain levels predicted as a result of faster than expected climate change. Natural flood plains are the best defence against flooding and the development would require a variety of very costly flood mitigation structures in an attempt to mimic what the natural landscape is already doing. The road would increase air pollution and create more congestion as a result of the 7,500+ houses it will be built to serve. In my opinion, it is unsustainable, irresponsible and completely contradicts Wiltshire Council's (and the Town Council's) goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. Last week all the councillors attending the meeting voted in support of the PET committees recommendation to reject the Local Plan proposals report. I was reassuring to see you defend the wishes of your communities. As the road is part of the same scheme I cannot see how the Town Council can do anything but vote as they've done before and I hope your vote today reflects this. Thank you."
5. "Thank you for standing up for Chippenham and for demonstrating political integrity in the face of Wiltshire Council's coercive economic and environmental domination of the town. Future Chippenham is a half-baked catchphrase, designed to gaslight the town—to make us believe that destroying its beautiful countryside is, if not in Chippenham's best interests, worth the sacrifice for future generations at a time of national crisis. This couldn't be further from the truth. Building a road that will circle Chippenham from the A350 Morrison's roundabout to the A350 Lackham roundabout is an unprincipled piece of business by Wiltshire Council. The Council has already created four shadowy private companies directed by former officials and current councillors for the purpose of wheeling and dealing in commerce. It plans to procure a joint venture partner for its commercial schemes whose concealment from public view is excused by the council by reference to confidentiality. Wiltshire Council presents road-building as though it demonstrates its competence in policy making. It presents low-density single-family-home land-use planning as a neutral activity, free from political bias. In fact, it offers advantageous financial arrangements to developers compared to alternatives. It panders to a political constituency wedded to car dependence.
(<https://bit.ly/39mMm5a>) Wiltshire Council's road, its destruction of Chippenham's

countryside, its appeals to higher authority, its invocation of crisis, are all predicated on its ambition to transform the finances of a rural economy into those of an urban one. Wiltshire Council invokes a national housing crisis to justify building this road and urbanising Chippenham. There isn't a housing crisis for the more affluent who typically can service the mortgages for second homes, buy-to-lets, for large dwellings in relatively large grounds, and who already have property. This road is designed to exclude low cost forms of housing tenure—for example, increased provision of housing association/ council housing where housing prices are not driven by market forces, and where cars not essential to move around the community. In other words, it favours a privileged class of citizens over the less privileged. At a time when SARS-Covid and the climate emergency are exposing the vulnerabilities of less privileged members of our society, we should not be encouraging Wiltshire Council to ignore these dangers by pursuing reckless schemes. It is a time to practise ethical governance.”

6. “I would like to voice support for the recommendation that the Council tonight reject the ‘Future Chippenham’ road plan in any form. I believe that this is right response for the residents of Chippenham and in response to the climate and ecological emergencies. I note that the successful HIF bid had initially obtained the backing of Chippenham Town Council, a majority of whose members, now at least, object to any road scheme. This backing overrode the detailed, democratic and evidenced based work of the Neighbourhood Plan team in scoping the scale and type of housing and infrastructure that would be needed for Chippenham to support itself into the future. This is a great shame, eroding trust in council people and process, especially when the majority of councillors do seem committed to listening to and serving local interests. Of course, it is clearly a nonsense, and adds further confusion and deception, that Wiltshire Council are carrying out a road route consultation **now** which is based on a) the future existence of a road and b) that the road is to ‘unlock’ and serve an assumed-necessary development of 7,500 houses, whilst claiming that this very advanced, funded and heavily marketed scheme is not seeking to predetermine the local plan. The road has also repeatedly been referred to as a ‘relief’ road, and a connectivity improving link between the existing A350 at either end of the town, as is indeed still reported on Wiltshire Council’s website. It is now being advertised as a 30mph, resident-friendly distributor road, rendering any public support based on notions that the road will address traffic in the town centre and/or act as an efficient through route, now obsolete. Of course the development, bringing an estimated 10,000 plus more cars to the town, will significantly **increase** levels of congestion on Chippenham’s roads, along with harmful particulate and carbon emissions. So determined are Wiltshire to pursue this destructive plan, that they risk building housing on flood plain bordered sites, selling off and concreting over productive county-owned farmland and building over river valley with all the extra expense and complication entailed. There is no clear sense in any of this and we’ve seen no convincing evidence of the unprecedented, beyond-even-government-target growth levels it’s predicated on. I was impressed that despite Wiltshire Council’s failure to devise and apply a responsible system of carbon budgeting in the development of the local plans that we are now asked to review, knowledgeable members of the public have added helpful figures in this regard to the town council discussions. These calculations have shown clearly how utterly out-of-step the intertwined road and housing plan for Chippenham is with agreed aims to reduce our town and county’s emissions fairly, and with the urgency required to improve our chances of holding warming to a safe level. Thank you.”

7. “I was so pleased to hear the Town Council voicing the concerns of its residents at last week’s full council meeting. It would seem that the HIF bid has been a Trojan horse designed to bring massive and unsustainable housing numbers into the next Local Plan period and beyond. It was misleadingly sold as being a relief road, and still gets disingenuously referred to as such, when in reality it is a low speed distributor road that would create more traffic congestion in and around the town. Looking at the report in the agenda, I am glad to see that our town councillors have seen through the deceitful way in which the road has been brought forward and firmly rejected it, along with Calne Town Council and other surrounding parish councils. One question that remains however, is how we came to be in this situation in the first place. My understanding is that the HIF bid requires local support as one of the key criteria to be able to proceed and that this needed to be demonstrated at the early stage of the application process in 2018. There was no public consultation and nobody seems to have been properly consulted until the current consultation, by which time it seems to have been used as the basis for the Local Plan. In fact there seems to have been a disturbing level of secrecy surrounding the entire bid process. I would therefore like to know:
- At which Council meeting the Town Council gave its support to the HIF bid at that critical early stage in 2018?
 - What justification was given for this and which councillors voted for it (in 2018)?
 - Why the Town Council didn’t discuss this in any Town Council meetings at which the public and press were present (from 2018 until 2021)?

Thank you for your time.”

Verbal public questions:

8. “Thank you, Chairman, for allowing me to speak. I've always made myself quite clear on this topic I represent the division of Lowden and Rowden in Chippenham and I have always said that I would support an Eastern relief road of some kind. I have also said that I would support a Southern extension of this road and I have always said that I wasn't happy with the Northern section that is from the A4 to the A350 this is a much more you ecologically sensitive area. While I say this I just want to say about my credentials, 40 years ago when I lived in South America I was part of a group that campaigned about the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest so I've been very much an ecologically minded person for many years. My sons call me the king of recycling, I'm that person in the queue at the supermarket that berates people for buying plastic bags so I hope nobody will question that side of me. My ward is blighted by traffic the Bath Road the Malmesbury Road the rat running that goes on through Lowden and Sheldon Road, Audley Road for crosstown traffic. A Southern relief road or distributor road or whatever we like to call it will take all the crosstown traffic out of Chippenham allowing the development of the Bath Road site and sadly the old Youth Centre site, without taking the traffic out of the Town Centre which this would. There is so much Crosstown traffic coming from Devizes and Calne and Marlborough that wish to get to the M4 or to Bath so it would work. I know this will open up a large area for development this is land owned mainly by Wiltshire Council so direct Councillor involvement and public involvement would be there, would be able to manage the development of these areas and we mustn't forget this is a Housing Infrastructure Fund bid so the road will open up this land for housing. Chippenham has grown I grew up playing in the fields of Cepen Park, Monkton Park, Pewsham they're all gone and so is my time.”
9. “Last week you already stood up for Chippenham supporting the PET committee’s response to the Local Plan and asserting that Chippenham does not need the volume of homes that Wiltshire Council is proposing and I thank you for that having said that I am incredibly concerned by everything entailed in the Future Chippenham proposal. I assure you as a 23 - year-old it is not what my future Chippenham looks like. There is no justification for the proposed distributor road in this location or any road here in the same way that there is no

justification for the 7500 houses outlined in the HIF bid. I ask the council please do not let the Avon and Marden valleys be destroyed for this, these valleys are important natural floodplains and wildlife corridors. Green spaces are our most important defence against climate change as valuable carbon sinks and a space of solace for many. We must not further destroy them or fragment them building roads and houses in locations that Chippenham does not want or need. We are also removing farmland that will be vital for food security in the future. Building a road of this size which requires further infrastructure like viaducts over the canal involves so much pollution from the construction process. We will lock in these carbon emissions also more carbon emissions by encouraging commuting, worsening congestion and air quality. We have to reach Wiltshire Council's goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 if we are to limit the impact of climate change and this road and the houses would put us much further off course than we already are. Beyond my environmental concerns are my concerns for the degradation of community, the suburban expansion of Chippenham contributes to the loss of our sense of community and the surrounding villages whose unique identities are destroyed by Chippenham's unnecessary growth. For me, the worst part of this situation is that Wiltshire Council secured the £75 billion worth of funding for this development before opening public consultation with residents. I may not understand as much about politics as you but this speaks volumes to me. It shows that in this case Wiltshire Council has put its own agenda before considering residents in Chippenham. I urge the Council to reject all proposed routes for the distributor road and the entire development plan, both road and houses as they bear no correlation to the needs of Chippenham. I urge you to do everything in your power to prevent any further destruction of our countryside and degradation of our community. Residents of Chippenham are depending on you to represent us what does your future Chippenham look like, mine certainly does not look like this. Thank you for listening."

10. "Thank you Chair, I'd just like to say to start with more roads never leads to less traffic. It might be displaced temporarily but the only way to reduce traffic is to have fewer vehicles on the road. I don't think future generations will thank us for building houses if they have no food to eat on a planet that is uninhabitable. Having said that, it was good to see the full council unanimously support the PET Committee resolution about the Local Plan last week. However that calls into question just exactly what we're doing here tonight, it feels a bit like Groundhog Day because I'm here to ask a question that I've asked before which is under what power did the Chief Executive and Council Leader write a letter to Wiltshire Council in November 2018 supporting the HIF bid. I'm asking it again because I've still not received an answer it's a fundamental question because without this alleged local support Wiltshire Council could not have bid for funding. Last time I asked I was referred to the statement on the CTC website it doesn't provide an answer. There is plenty of double speak but no answer so I've read the Standing Orders in fact I've read them and understood them and they by contrast are very clear. The role of the Council Leader is very clear, the role of the Chief Executive is very clear, neither have special executive or delegated powers available that cover this situation and allow the Leader or Chief Executive to act unilaterally. The Code of Conduct is also very clear it requires selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness and honesty. So here's my question again under what power did the Chief Executive and Leader write a letter to Wiltshire Council in November 2018 supporting HIF bid and if they continue to be unable to provide an open, honest and accountable answer then I suggest I should both resign, thank you."

Written responses to public questions asked at Extraordinary Full Council on 04 March 2021:

Response to Question 1:

Thank you for speaking at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 04 March 2021. At this meeting Full Council approved the letter be sent as a response to the Future Chippenham Consultation, the letter can be read in full [HERE](#). This is a Wiltshire Council Consultation therefore your comments have been forwarded to Wiltshire Council for consideration. Councillors view is that we should have greater cooperation with Wiltshire Council moving forward.

Response to Questions 2-6, 8 and 9:

Thank you for speaking at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 04 March 2021. At this meeting Full Council approved the letter be sent as a response to the Future Chippenham Consultation, the letter can be read in full [HERE](#). This is a Wiltshire Council Consultation therefore your comments have been forwarded to Wiltshire Council for consideration.

Response to Question 7:

Thank you for speaking at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 04 March 2021. At this meeting Full Council approved the letter be sent as a response to the Future Chippenham Consultation, the letter can be read in full [HERE](#). The involvement of the Town Council in Wiltshire Council's bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund was outlined and published [HERE](#) on the Town Council website on 25 January 2021. This includes a link to the minutes from the Council meeting on 19 June 2019 [HERE](#), there was no recorded vote requested by Councillors therefore we do not record the way each Councillor voted but that the majority of Councillors were in favour. This matter was deemed confidential at the time by Wiltshire Council and therefore the Town Council held the discussion in confidential session.

Response to Question 10:

Thank you for speaking at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 04 March 2021. At this meeting Full Council approved the letter be sent as a response to the Future Chippenham Consultation, the letter can be read in full [HERE](#). The involvement of the Town Council in Wiltshire Council's bid to the Housing Infrastructure Fund was outline and published [HERE](#) on the Town Council website on 25 January 2021. With regard to the letter written to Wiltshire Council from the Chief Executive and Leader, the matter was deemed confidential at the time by Wiltshire Council and therefore was not shared with a wider audience.