



Public Document Pack

Melksham Town Council

Town Hall, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 6ES
Tel: (01225) 704187

Town Clerk and RFO Linda Roberts BA(Hons) PGCAP, FHEA,
FLSCC

To: Councillor P Aves (Town Mayor)
Councillor G Mitcham (Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillor S Brown
Councillor V Fiorelli
Councillor J Hubbard
Councillor K Iles
Councillor H Illman
Councillor C Jeffries
Councillor M Pain
Councillor M Sankey
Councillor T Watts
Councillor T Welch
Councillor A Westbrook
Councillor R Wiltshire

22 February 2021

Dear Councillors

In accordance with the Local Government Act (LGA) 1972, Sch 12, paras 10 (2)(b) you are invited to attend the **Full Council** meeting of the Melksham Town Council. The meeting will be held at the Melksham Town Hall on **Monday 1st March 2021** commencing at **7.00 pm**. A period of public participation will take place in accordance with Standing Order 3(F) prior to the formal opening of the meeting. The Press and Public are welcome to attend this meeting.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L A Roberts BA(Hons), PGCAP, FHEA, FSLCC
Town Clerk and RFO

**Full Council
Melksham Town Council**

**Monday 1 March 2021
At 7.00 pm at the Melksham Town Hall**

Public Participation – To receive questions from members of the public.

In the exercise of Council functions. Members are reminded that the Council has a general duty to consider Crime & Disorder, Health & Safety, Human Rights and the need to conserve biodiversity. The Council also has a duty to tackle discrimination, provide equality of opportunity for all and foster good relations in the course of developing policies and delivery services under the public sector Equality Duty and Equality 2010.

AGENDA

Virtual Meeting Access

Zoom Meeting Joining Instructions:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81883494340?pwd=dmhadGE4MXhZOTRrY1J5aGlYkNEQT09>

Meeting ID: 818 8349 4340

Passcode: 943562

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence

2. Declarations of Interest

To receive any Declarations of Interest in respect of items on this agenda as required by the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council.

Members are reminded that, in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, they are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest or other registrable interests which have not already been declared in the Council's Register of Interests. Members may however, also decide, in the interests of clarity and transparency, to declare at this point in the meeting, any such disclosable pecuniary interests which they have already declared on the Register, as well as any other registrable or other interests.

3. Police Inspector Gill Hughes Welcome and Introductions

4. Minutes (Pages 1 - 12)

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the previous Full Town Council meetings held on 13 January 2021 and 25 January 2021

5. Financial Risk Assessment and Reserves Policy (Pages 13 - 20)

Members are asked to approve and adopt the Financial Risk Assessment and Reserves Policy carried forward from the Full Council Meeting held on 25 January 2021.

6. Neighbourhood Plan

To consider and approve the proportion of funding that Melksham Without Parish Council (MWPC) and Melksham Town Council (MTC) contribute towards the costs for the review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

It has been suggested by MWPC that they fund 30% and that MTC fund 70% of the costs. This suggestion is based on the populations of both councils.

7. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Terms of Reference

Members are requested to approve the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Terms of Reference. **To Follow**

8. Melksham Town Council's Response to the Local Plan Review

To agree the proposed response to the Local Plan Review as discussed with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Members are reminded that the Town Clerk suggested the response is made in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Melksham Without Parish Council at the council meeting on 21 December 2020.

The response has been aided by the consultants assisting the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

The proposed response will follow, after the Steering Group Meeting scheduled for Wednesday 24 February 2021. **To Follow**

9. Conclusion of Audit - Year Ended 31 March 2020 (Pages 21 - 28)

Members are requested to resolve to accept the final External Auditor Report and Certificate for the 2019/2020 financial year and approve for publication.

10. Internal Audit Report - Circulated with Agenda (Pages 29 - 42)

Members are requested to approve the Internal Audit report and to note the actions

taken as a result of the recommendations contained in the interim Internal Audit Report for 2020/2021.

11. Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority Technical Rescue Review (Pages 43 - 94)

To receive the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Authority Technical Rescue Review

12. Motion - Proposed one off donation of £100 to the Food Bank

To consider the motion proposed by Councillor Fiorelli that Melksham Town Council make a one off donation of £100 to the Melksham Food Bank for the specific purchase of Easter eggs for children in need. Members will need to decide which budget this is to be made from.

13. Allotment Agreement from 1 March 2022 (Pages 95 - 100)

To adopt the amendment to the Allotment Agreement for the year commencing 1 March 2022.

14. Working From Home Allowance (Pages 101 - 102)

To receive the report prepared by the Assistant to the Town Clerk regarding the Working from Home Allowance and approve the recommendations contained therein.

15. Carry Forward of Staff Unused Annual leave to 2021/2022 (Pages 103 - 104)

To note the effect of the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020, and approve the proposal to allow staff to carry forward unused annual leave to 2021/2022.

16. Age Friendly Melksham - Community Response

To consider a request from Age Friendly Melksham who have asked the Town Council to consider replacing the 13 hours per week once the Assembly Hall Apprentice has left the employment of the Town Council.

17. Spiritualist' Garden Acquisition Update (Pages 105 - 106)

To receive the Spiritualist Garden Acquisition update report.

18. CCTV Working Group

To note the report and decide to approve the recommendations of the CCTV Working Group regarding developing Stage 2 of the project. (To Follow)

19. Canal Working Group (Pages 107 - 108)

To receive a report from the Economic Development Manager.

20. CATG (Pages 109 - 112)

Report of the Economic Development Manager attached. Members to decide whether to put forward the schemes contained in the report.

21. 2021 - 2022 Meetings Calendar (Pages 113 - 114)

To approve the calendar of meetings for 2021/2022.

22. Wiltshire Area Localism and Planning Alliance (WALPA) (Pages 115 - 124)

Members to consider and resolve whether to support the aims and objectives of WALPA to get changes made to the national Planning Policy Framework. Report from the Economic Development Manager attached.

23. Date and Time of Next Meeting

22 March 2021 at 7.00 pm via Zoom.

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Melksham Town Council

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Wednesday 13th January 2021

PRESENT: Councillor P Aves (Town Mayor)
Councillor G Mitcham (Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillor S Brown
Councillor V Fiorelli
Councillor J Hubbard
Councillor C Jeffries
Councillor M Sankey
Councillor T Welch
Councillor A Westbrook
Councillor R Wiltshire

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

OFFICERS:	Linda Roberts	Town Clerk
	Christine Hunter	Committee Clerk
	Miriam Zaccarelli	Community Development Officer

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: 1 member of the public and 1 member of the press were present.

1/21 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Iles, Illman and Watts

2/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3/21 Minutes

The minutes of the Full Council Meetings held on 16 November 2020 and 21 December 2020 will be reviewed at the next Full Council Meeting to be held on 18 January 2021.

4/21 Assembly Hall in Tier 5 Lockdown

It was Proposed by Councillor Aves, seconded by Councillor Westbrook and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED: that in view of the confidential nature of the information to be discussed, concerning the budget for 2021/2022, that the press and public be instructed to withdraw

Councillors reviewed the in depth report and budget prepared by the Town Clerk and the Locum Assistant.

Following discussion it was proposed by Councillor Westbrook and Councillor Hubbard seconded and:

RESOLVED: to hold an additional Council Meeting on 25 January 2021 to further review and approve the budget for 2021-2022.

It was Proposed by Councillor Westbrook and seconded by Councillor Hubbard and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED: to instruct the Town Clerk to produces 3 further budget calculations.

5/21 Age Friendly Melksham - Community Response

It was Proposed Councillor Westbrook, seconded Councillor Welch and

RESOLVED: that Council would re-deploy two members of staff to cover the 26 hours per week requested by Melksham Community Response.

6/21 Date and Time of Next meeting

18 January 2021 at 7.00 pm.

Meeting Closed at: 9.30 pm

Signed:

Dated:

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Melksham Town Council

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Monday 25th January 2021

PRESENT: Councillor P Aves (Town Mayor)
Councillor G Mitcham (Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillor S Brown
Councillor V Fiorelli
Councillor J Hubbard
Councillor K Iles
Councillor C Jeffries
Councillor M Pain
Councillor M Sankey
Councillor T Watts
Councillor T Welch
Councillor A Westbrook
Councillor R Wiltshire

**ALSO IN
ATTENDANCE** Councillor P Alford

OFFICERS:	Jeff Mills	Locum Admin Assistant
	David McKnight	Economic Development Manager
	Patsy Clover	Assistant to the Town Clerk
	Hugh Davies	Amenities Manager
	Christine Hunter	Committee Clerk

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Six members of the public and one member of the press were present.

27/21 Zoom Virtual Meeting Access

28/21 Public Participation

Councillor Fiorelli asked questions received from members of the public.

- 1) Union Street – a resident asked about the bollards on the Chicken Hut forecourt. Approximately a year ago Council agreed to provide bollards to stop parking in that area. The resident asked when this would be actioned?

- 2) A resident asked about the SIDS devices particularly relating to the Manor School area. The SIDS were installed and then disappeared. What has happened to the SIDS?

Response from Locum Assistant - the Council has had operational issues with the SIDS devices and are currently in negotiations with the supplier to resolve the situation.

- 3) A resident near to Shurnhold Fields read a published article relating to Shurnhold Fields, regarding the Town Council's equal 50/50 split for admin support with Melksham Without Parish Council. Clarification is required why the Town Council were not upholding their end of the agreement. Is this the case and, if not, will the Town Council be seeking an apology from the chair of Melksham Without Parish Council for comments in the Melksham News?

Response from Assistant Town Clerk – The Town Council had a shortage of staff last year being understaffed and two members of staff suspended. The admin team did not have the admin capacity. Since the start of 2021 the Council has been doing more than their share of admin work for Shurnhold Fields and will seek to maintain at least 50%.

- 4) King George V Park – a bench in the park only has one plank on it. The resident wanted to know if the Town Council would be replacing this shortly or is the bench going to be removed? Councillor Fiorelli to forward photos to the Assistant Town Clerk.

Response from Assistant Town Clerk - once photos had been received the Amenities Manager will organise either a repair or replacement.

A member of the public thanked the Clerk for providing costs regarding Locum workers covering suspended staff. The expenditure was £26,067 including VAT on locum costs. Questions were:

- a) How much would Council have saved if the two members of staff had not been suspended?
- b) This amount does not include additional H.R. advice costs. Could the Council provide the people of Melksham details of this cost?

It is noted that the Locum Assistant is still providing services to the Council. Could the Mayor advise:

- 1) how long will this be for?
- 2) what the projected cost is and tell the people of Melksham why his work cannot be undertaken by current staff?
- 3) Are all admin staff currently employed? There must be administrative capacity available for example within the Assembly Hall team as the hall has been closed for most of the year.

Response: Councillor Westbrook referred to an email dated 19 September 2020, when the Locum Assistant left the employment of Melksham Town Council for at least 10 days. At this time protracted discussions took place between the Town Clerk and the Economic Development Manager to ascertain whether he could return because of the amazing work done. At that time Council had suspended staff, had put 3,000 hours into Covid community response, were falling behind on many projects and nearly lost the ability to pull the East of Melksham Community Centre back. Three members of staff had not been appointed for over a year, and there were two members of staff short. The Locum Assistant staying was not because of suspension sit was because there were a myriad of reasons why the Town Clerk decided that extra support was needed. The work carried out by the Locum Assistant was very technical and specialist work. On 19 September 2020 it was always his intention to leave and he was persuaded to stay by the Clerk and the Economic Development Officer in order to support all the projects needing to be done in Melksham. The Locum Assistant has done a remarkable job and we are still well within the staffing budget. There was a cut-off date for the suspensions from 19 September 2020. Councillor Westbrook stated Council knew staff were exhausted in July there were lots of factors as to why a Locum Assistant was needed since September. Councillor Westbrook asked the member of public to take this on board.

Councillor Fiorelli responded to the question regarding additional HR costs, confirming the Council have spent approximately £12,000 this year on HR costs which is comparable to last year, and considerably less than employing a H.R. business partner at approximately £50,000 per year.

Councillor Hubbard made a correction to the 3,000 hours Councillor Westbrook reported being carried out by council staff. The majority of the work was carried out in their own time as volunteers. This needs to be recognised and Council needs to be grateful to them.

Councillor Fiorelli stated with regard to the issues last year the staff are trying very desperately to come together, move forward and to heal. It is almost like an open wound at the moment and if we keep on picking at this wound it will never heal. It is really important that our staff are given the opportunity to allow themselves as a group to move forward. Councillor Fiorelli asked what Council needs to do to give the message to the public to allow the staff to heal and not consistently bring up the same issue.

Councillor Aves confirmed the questions will formally be answered in full.

29/21 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Illman.

30/21 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

31/21 Budget Update from Wiltshire Council

Councillor Alford provided an update on Wiltshire Council's 2021-2022 budget which proposes a 2% increase on a band D property and a 3% increase on the Social Care levy.

32/21 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2021 having previously been circulated, were agreed as a correct record, subject to councillor Hubbard's request to include the friendly amendment with the original resolution under agenda item 18/21. It was agreed that the minutes would be signed by the Town Mayor, Councillor Aves at a later date.

33/21 Budget Proposal

Councillors Reviewed the budget proposal for 2021-2022.

The following options to reduce budget expenditure further and so reduce the precept increase were proposed:

- The sports roadshow – remove at a saving of £3,000
- Market Place toilets – reduce expenditure by £3,000 to £17,000
- Arts Project – reduce expenditure by £2,000 to £1,000
- Equipment – reduce expenditure by £3,200 to £21,000
- Use of the £21,000 projected budget surplus for the current financial year to offset the proposed expenditure on equipment for the Amenities Team

A staffing review of the Assembly Hall Team and the Amenities Team was proposed by Councillor Hubbard and the viability of some staff roles within the council questioned. The possibility of redundancies through staffing rationalisation was also raised. However, Councillor Welch was anxious to emphasise that staff were the Council's most important resource.

Concerns over the viability of the Assembly Hall as a venue in the long-term were also raised in view of the impact of Covid 19 and the subsidies being provided by the Council already.

Councillor Hubbard highlighted the dangers of using the major projects reserve, general reserve and the precept support fund to prop up the budget for the coming year.

Councillor Wiltshire expressed his preference for a budget with zero increase to the precept. It was pointed out that the percentage increases being proposed resulted in very small annual monetary increases.

The creation of a separate Business Review Working Group to review all staffing costs through a series of exercises, with an aim of making a saving of £100,000 in 2021-2022, was considered.

It was proposed by Councillor Aves and seconded by Councillor Pain to accept the current 2021-2022 budget proposal. However, Councillor Hubbard proposed an amendment to Councillor Aves proposal.

It was proposed by Councillor Hubbard, seconded by Councillor Wiltshire, with a request for the vote to be recorded, that Melksham Town Council amalgamate the Facilities and Amenities Teams and look to find a rationalisation saving of £100,000 on the 2021-2022 budget. The vote was as follows:

Councillor	For	Against	Abstain
Pat Aves		X	
Sue Brown	X		
Vanessa Fiorelli		X	
Jon Hubbard	X		
Kathy Iles		X	
Clive Jeffries		X	
Geoff Mitcham		X	
Martin Pain		X	
Mike Sankey	X		
Tony Watts		X	
Terri Welch		X	
Adrienne Westbrook		X	
Richard Wiltshire	X		
TOTALS	4	9	

The Assistant to the Town Clerk confirmed the motion had fallen.

The proposed amendments to the budget totaled £32,200 reducing the budget expenditure to £1,043,750, resulting in a Band D precept increase of 2.26%.

34/21 2021-2022 Budget

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor Pain with a request for a recorded.

RESOLVED to use the combined total of Solar Farm monies and CIL funding (£57,000) to contribute towards the cost of the new play area in KGV and to delay the planned improvements to Primrose/Dorset and Riverside play areas.

Councillor	For	Against	Abstain
Pat Aves	X		
Sue Brown		X	
Vanessa Fiorelli	X		
Jon Hubbard		X	
Kathy Iles	X		
Clive Jeffries	X		
Geoff Mitcham	X		
Martin Pain	X		
Mike Sankey		X	
Tony Watts	X		
Terri Welch	X		
Adrienne Westbrook	X		
Richard Wiltshire		X	
TOTALS	9	4	

RESOLVED to approve the use of the General Reserve up to £38,000 to support the budget.

Councillor	For	Against	Abstain
Pat Aves	X		
Sue Brown		X	
Vanessa Fiorelli	X		
Jon Hubbard	X		
Kathy Iles	X		
Clive Jeffries	X		
Geoff Mitcham	X		
Martin Pain	X		
Mike Sankey		X	
Tony Watts	X		
Terri Welch	X		
Adrienne Westbrook	X		
Richard Wiltshire		X	
TOTALS	10	3	

RESOLVED to approve the use of the major projects reserve up to £42,000 to support the budget

Councillor	For	Against	Abstain
Pat Aves	X		
Sue Brown		X	
Vanessa Fiorelli	X		
Jon Hubbard		X	
Kathy Iles	X		
Clive Jeffries	X		

Geoff Mitcham	X		
Martin Pain	X		
Mike Sankey		X	
Tony Watts	X		
Terri Welch	X		
Adrienne Westbrook	X		
Richard Wiltshire		X	
TOTALS	9	4	

RESOLVED to approve the budget for 2021/2022 and resolve to set a precept of £918,750

Councillor	For	Against	Abstain
Pat Aves	X		
Sue Brown		X	
Vanessa Fiorelli	X		
Jon Hubbard		X	
Kathy Iles	X		
Clive Jeffries	X		
Geoff Mitcham	X		
Martin Pain	X		
Mike Sankey		X	
Tony Watts	X		
Terri Welch	X		
Adrienne Westbrook	X		
Richard Wiltshire		X	
TOTALS	4	9	

35/21 Financial Risk Assessment and Reserves Policy

Councillor Pain requested an amendment be made to the Financial Risk Assessment.

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor Aves and

RESOLVED that consideration of the Financial Risk Assessment and Reserves Policy should be deferred until the return of the RFO in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the legal implications for the Council.

36/21 Payments

It was proposed by Councillor Aves, seconded by Councillor Welch and

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to approve the payments schedule.

37/21 Accounts

Council noted the Accounts as at December 2020.

38/21 Detailed Income & Expenditure Report as at 31 December 2020

Councillors noted the detailed income and Expenditure report as at 31 December 2021.

39/21 Monthly Financial Statements

40/21 Asset Management Committee Minutes

The minutes of the Asset Management Committee held on 14 December 2020 were noted.

41/21 Shurnhold Fields Working Party

42/21 Shurnhold Fields Working Party Notes

The notes of the Shurnhold Fields Working Party meeting held on 14 January 2021 were received.

43/21 Shurnhold Fields Working Party Terms of reference

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor Aves and

RESOLVED to approve the items to be included in the Shurnhold Fields Working Party Terms of Reference.

44/21 Shurnhold Fields Working Party Recommendations

The Assistant to the Town Clerk confirmed that the original spreadsheet was distributed to Councillors before the revised quote for the access works, which reduced the expenditure to approximately £4,500 to be split equally between Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council.

However, using approximately £21,000 from the Open Space Maintenance Fund and the consequences for additional expenditure needed to be considered. The Assistant to the Town Clerk stated that the revised spreadsheet would be distributed, once the precise works to be carried out had been established and accurate costs obtained.

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor Hubbard and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to defer consideration of this agenda item until receipt of up to date, accurate information from the Shurnhold Fields Working Party.

45/21 Confidential Session

It was proposed by Councillor Aves, seconded by Councillor Fiorelli and

RESOLVED that in view of the confidential nature of the information to be discussed, and the implications thereof, that the press and public be instructed to withdraw.

46/21 Job Retention Scheme

Councillors discussed the Job Retention Scheme and reviewed the advice given by the Council's advisers.

It was proposed by Councillor Westbrook, seconded by Councillor Pain, incorporating a 'friendly amendment' by Councillor Hubbard's and:

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED the Job Retention Scheme should be utilised for some of the Assembly Hall Team.

47/21 Neighbourhood Plan Draft Minutes

The draft minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meetings held on the following dates were received:

- 25 August 2020
- 23 September 2020
- 21 October 2020
- 25 November 2020

48/21 Neighbourhood Plan Recommendations

The recommendations and resolutions from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meetings held on 25 August 2020, 23 September 2020, 21 October 2020 and 25 November 2020 were received and noted.

49/21 Date and Time of Next Meeting

1 March 2021 at 7.00 pm via Zoom.

Meeting Closed at: 10.02 pm

Signed:

Dated:

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Agenda Item 5

Financial Risk Assessment Master
Financial Risk Assessment January 2021

Risk Identification	Risk	Risk Monitoring and Mitigation	Measurement L/M/H
<u>Accounting System:</u> Rialtas Omega Accounting/Bookings Software.	Run data check routine daily - any discrepancy indicates data corruption.	Report to software provider for correction. Covered by software maintenance agreement.	L
<u>Income</u>			
Precept. Set annually via Town Council Budget.	Represents 90% of the Councils income. Collected on behalf of the Council by Wiltshire Council via the Council Tax and paid in two equal instalments in April and September.	See Appendix 2 for Reserves Policy. Report to the Town Clerk and Chair of the Council if not received by 30 th April and 30 th September each year, contact Wiltshire Council for current situation. Maintain General Fund at 3 months operating costs as a minimum. (See budget process).	Normally Low Risk. However shortage of funds in Principal Authorities due to current Pandemic could increase to Medium Risk.
Commercial Property Lettings	Non- payment of rent by tenants. Premises kept in poor repair by the tenant.	All commercial property rentals secured by formal repairing leases with regular rent reviews. Arrange regular landlord inspection to ensure in good internal repair. Rental invoices raised on monthly/quarterly cycle as defined in lease. If not paid within 30 days standard debt collection routines as defined in accounting procedures come into force.	L/M
Facility Lettings	Non-payment of fees by hirers. Damage to premises by hirers.	Casual Hirers-No credit given - payment in advance. Booking secured by deposit. Regular Hirers with approved credit, if not paid within 30 days standard debt collection routines as defined in accounting procedures come into force. No further hiring allowed until debt cleared in full. For large parties etc. damage deposit taken and not refunded until facility inspected after the event.	L/M
Allotments- Managed on the Rialtas Allotments Computer Package.	Allotment agreement not signed. Non Payment of fees by holder. Non cultivation of allotment.	Allotment Invoices raised April annually, if not paid within 30 days standard debt collection routines as defined in accounting procedures come into force. Allotments inspected regularly and tenant warned if not cultivated to acceptable standard.	L

Risk Identification	Risk	Risk Monitoring and Mitigation	Measurement L/M/H
Income (Cont'd)			
Events/Market Income	Non payment of stall rental at events	All rentals payable in advance of event	L
	Protection of Cash taken at Bars	Minimum of two bar operatives. Supervisor must record the amount of the float and sign. All cash MUST be recorded through till at the point of sale. At the end of the event tills are cashed up and physical cash checked against till roll any overs or unders must be noted at the event. Supervisor must note and sign discrepancy report. Float must be returned separately to safe and signed back in.	H
Deposit of funds with financial institutions.	Financial Institution bankrupt. Misappropriation of funds.	Deposits controlled by Finance and Admin Officer and RFO. All deposits reported to and authorised by the Finance and Admin Committee. All Financial Institutions should be checked with either Moody's or Fitch and have the top credit rating available. No Investment is to be for more than 12 months. Investment in Stocks, Shares or similar is not allowed	L

Risk Identification	Risk	Risk Monitoring and Mitigation	Measurement L/M/H
Expenditure			
Budget setting/Monitoring	<p>Failure to project expenditure accurately.</p> <p>Setting Business Income at an unattainable level.</p> <p>Failure to include projects in the budget.</p> <p>Failure to include capital expenditure.</p> <p>Inclusion of non-budgeted expenditure during the year.</p> <p>Failure to identify and report overspends in a timely manner.</p> <p>Failure to identify shortfall in income and report in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Budgets prepared by RFO RFO in conjunction with senior managers. Initial approval by Finance and Admin Committee authorised by relevant committee and passed by full council.</p> <p>Maintain an Earmarked Reserve to support the Precept.</p> <p>Maintain General Fund at between 40 and 50% of Precept.</p> <p>Produce monthly Budget Monitoring Reports distributed to Finance Working Group. All budget discrepancies investigated by RFO and reported to Finance and Admin Committee.</p> <p>Each spending committee presented with Budget Monitoring Report on a 3 monthly basis with discrepancy report. All budget overspends approved by the relevant committee by resolution.</p> <p>Ascertain reason for shortfall in income and whether it can be recovered in the financial year. If not take appropriate steps to support the General Fund by cutting expenditure or allocating shortfall from Earmarked Reserves</p>	L/M

Expenditure	<p>Expenditure in breach of Financial Regulations.</p> <p>Expenditure exceeds officer authority.</p> <p>Payment to incorrect supplier</p> <p>Payment to non-genuine supplier-hacked supplier account.</p> <p>Expenditure not correctly authorised.</p> <p>Expenditure not allocated to correct Budget.</p> <p>Not genuine council expenditure.</p>	<p>All managers have copy of Financial Regulations and understand contents.</p> <p>All Expenditure must be the subject of a purchase order.</p> <p>All purchase orders must be authorised by relevant manager.</p> <p>All purchase orders must be allocated to the relevant budget heading</p> <p>All approved suppliers to be recorded in the accounts system Purchase Ledger section.</p>	L
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Risk Identification	Risk	Risk Monitoring and Mitigation	Measurement L/M/H
Expenditure – Continued.	Change of supplier banking information from fraudulent emails-supplier account hacked. Inclusion of ghost suppliers as bonafide suppliers. Change of supplier details on cheque after signature.	<div>All approved suppliers to be paid within 30 days on periodic payment runs.</div> <div>All supplier payments to be approved by at least 2 Councillors.</div> <div>All supplier payments to be in line with the payment procedure protocol.</div> <div>All payments by Direct Debit to follow the above procedures.</div> <div>All payment listings to be presented to periodic meetings of Full Council for consideration.</div> <div>Any changes to supplier banking information must be confirmed by a telephone call to the number stated on the supplier invoice.</div> <div>All supplier accounts more than 60 days old to be reported to Finance and Admin Committee.</div>	L
Use of Council Debit or Credit Card	Misuse of Cards. Use by non-authorized staff.	<div>Cards to be kept in safe by Finance and Admin Officer</div> <div>Only senior managers permitted to use cards.</div> <div>Debit/Credit cards to be signed for by the user.</div> <div>After use card must be returned to the Finance and Admin Officer with details of expenditure and backup documentation.</div> <div>Card expenditure to be included in authorisation documentation approved by councillors signing off the payment run.</div>	L
Non-budgeted Expenditure	Impact on General Fund balances.	<div>Approved by relevant committee by resolution.</div> <div>Source of funding:</div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) From General Fund Balance. b) From Earmarked Reserve. c) By transfer from alternative Budget Code with predicted underspend. </div>	L/M

Risk Identification	Risk	Risk Monitoring and Mitigation	Measurement L/M/H
Payroll	Inclusion of ghost employees on payroll. Falsification of time sheet records. Incorrect calculation of employee pay. Payment of incorrect salary rates. Use of incorrect PAYE/Ni data. Unauthorised changes in employee details. Incorrect or fraudulent expenses claims. Breach of confidentiality of employee details (GDPR).	Have Internal Audit conduct a periodic check of payroll function to verify correctness of payments and employees being paid still work for the Council	L/M
		Create a tracking log and record changes to employee details when made.	
		All time sheets to be authorised by senior managers and counter signed by the Town Clerk	
		All automatic, cost of living scale point changes in pay scale to be authorised by senior managers e and counter signed by the Town Clerk.	
		All changes to salaries to be approved by HR Sub Committee and signed by the Chair.	
		All employee records to be kept under lock and key when not in use.	
Insurance	Danger of under Insurance. Danger of over insurance. All Council Assets not included in insurance Schedule. Insurance premiums too high.	Ensure Insurance Values Included in Asset Register. Periodical review Plant and Equipment to ensure replacement values are realistically reflected in the Insurance Value. Every five years revalue buildings at insurance value and check against insurance policy. Ensure Consequential Loss Insurance adequately covers all Council Liquid Assets. Insurance re-quoted every 3 years.	L

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Melksham Town Council

Reserves Policy January 2021

Introduction

Local Authorities are empowered to hold reserves through section 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Reserves are an essential part of good financial management, they assist the Council to manage unpredictable financial pressures and plan for future spending commitments.

Legislation states the Council must set a balanced budget, in setting the balanced budget the Council should consider the following:

- What level of expenditure is required to deliver the desired level of services;
- What income the Council can generate through fees and charges to support the expenditure;
- The amount of reserves available to support the Council's expenditure;
- The level of reserves required to fund the Council's capital projects contained within the five-year financial plan;
- The level of Precept the Council is prepared to charge local residents.

Reserves-Definition

This Council's reserves fall into three main categories:

1. The General Reserve;
2. Earmarked Reserves to fund future revenue costs;
3. Major Projects Reserve

1 The General Reserve:

The level of this reserve is designed to reflect the general cash flow and day to day risks surrounding the delivery of the Council's services. There is no specific guidance on the minimum level of the general reserve, the Council should determine what is a prudent level of reserve based on its own circumstances, risks and uncertainties.

2 Earmarked Reserves:

These are sums set aside for service departments to meet future expenditure not contained within the annual revenue budget. They are created by carrying approved unspent budgets or over recovery on income into earmarked reserves, also if expenditure on certain items is delayed then these may be earmarked for completion in the following year.

3 Major Projects Reserve:

This is created from sums raised via the Precept and other receipts with restrictions on use (CIL, Solar Farm Receipts and other receipts of a capital nature), this reserve is designed to finance capital projects and other projects for the benefit of the community.

Reserves Policy

General Reserve

As stated above there is no hard and fast rule governing the level of general reserve, using a ratio of Precept to income generated from activities, in this Council 60% Precept 40% other income, the cash flow risk is considered to be medium, based on this income mix the level of General Reserve should be between four and six months operating costs (excluding capital projects). If the General Reserve drops below four months operating costs it should be topped up by either contribution from the Precept or by virement of sufficient funds from the Earmarked or Major Projects Reserves to restore the General Reserve to an acceptable level. If the General Reserve exceeds six months operating costs, surplus funds should be carried into the Major Projects Fund or a new Earmarked Reserve created to support future years Precept.

Earmarked Reserves

Earmarked Reserves are created by carrying surpluses into the following financial year, these may be either underspends on expenditure or over recovery on income budgets. They may also be created to smooth irregular revenue expenditure by making an annual allowance in the budget (for example an Election Reserve). The practice of rolling over budgets due to over budgeting is not allowed, accounting for such surpluses will take place each year end, when the overall financial position of the Council can be established and the treatment of the surplus/deficit is decided by the full Council.

Earmarked Reserves are controlled by the committee responsible for the delivery of the relevant services and are set up and spent by resolution of that committee. The committee in conjunction with the head of service should define:

- The reason for/purpose of the reserve;
- How and when the reserve can be used;
- Procedures for the reserve's management and control;
- Timescale for review of the reserve to ensure its continuing relevance and adequacy.

Major Projects Reserve

The Major Projects Reserves is funded partially by an amount determined each year (subject to any constraints or no requirement) to be included in the annual budget calculation and claimed via the Precept, it may also be funded via special receipts whose use is restricted to projects specifically for the benefit of the community.

The Major Projects Reserve is controlled by the Council in conjunction with the Town Clerk and is set up and spent by resolution of the Council. Capital Projects are defined in the strategic plan (nb strategic plan to be completed). Projects should be reviewed annually and progress reported to the Council, if for any reason the project is abandoned then the funds can be re-allocated to a new project or returned to the General Reserve to support the Precept.

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

We acknowledge as the members of:

Melksham Town Council
ENTER NAME OF AUTHORITY

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020, that:

	Agreed		
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3. We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

20/08/2020

and recorded as minute reference:

57/20.2

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chairman

FOR SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Clerk

Stephen P. Mullan RED

Other information required by the Transparency Codes (not part of Annual Governance Statement)
Authority web address

www.melkshamtown.co.uk

AUTHORITY WEBSITE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2019/20 for

Melksham Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2019 £	31 March 2020 £	
1. Balances brought forward	929,063	1,147,312	<i>Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.</i> Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	763,750	844,910	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	338,253	377,354	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	399,267	465,177	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	484,487	863,812	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	1,147,312	1,040,588	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	1,160,980	1,011,595	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	5,385,233	5,692,083	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
11. (For Local Councils Only) Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	Yes	No	The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee for and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.
		✓	N.B. The figures in the accounting statements above do not include any Trust transactions.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2020 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

Stephen P. Mutton

Date

29/07/2020

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

20/08/2020

as recorded in minute reference:

57/20.3

Signed by Chairman of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

Signature Required

Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate 2019/20

In respect of **Melksham Town Council WI0161**

1 Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2020; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

Our responsibility is to review Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with guidance issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (see note below). Our work **does not** constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would do.

2 External auditor report 2019/20

Except for the matters reported below, on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

The smaller authority has submitted its AGAR and supporting documentation prior to 30 November 2020; however, we have not been able to complete our review work in time to enable the smaller authority to publish the required documentation in line with statutory requirements. Once we have completed our review a final report will be provided with the certificate of completion detailing any qualifications and 'other' matters.

An invoice for the standard annual review fee (and chaser letter charges where they apply) has been issued with this interim certificate; however, this interim invoice does not fall due for payment until we certify completion and issue our final report and certificate. Should we receive challenge correspondence before we have certified completion, any additional fees arising from additional work required as a result of that correspondence will be invoiced with the certificate of completion; where no additional fees apply a zero invoice will be issued on completion. Both the interim and final invoices do not fall due for payment until we issue our final invoice with the certificate of completion.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

Please see above.

3 External auditor certificate 2019/20

We do not certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2020

We do not certify completion because:

We have received the AGAR and supporting documentation but we have not been able to complete our review work prior to 30 November 2020.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature

PKF Littlejohn LLP

Date

29/11/2020

* Note: the NAO issued guidance applicable to external auditors' work on limited assurance reviews for 2019/20 in Auditor Guidance Note AGN/02. The AGN is available from the NAO website (www.nao.org.uk)

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Melksham Town Council

Notice of conclusion of audit Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2020

Sections 20(2) and 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014

Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234)

Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/404)

	Notes
1. The audit of accounts for Melksham Town Council for the year ended 31 March 2020 has been completed and the accounts have been published.	This notice and Sections 1, 2 & 3 of the AGAR must be published by 30 November. This must include publication on the smaller authority's website. The smaller authority must decide how long to publish the Notice for; the AGAR and external auditor report must be publicly available for 5 years.
2. The Annual Governance & Accountability Return is available for inspection by any local government elector of the area of Melksham Town Council on application to:	
(a) <u>PATSY CLOVER - ASSISTANT TO THE TOWN CLERK</u> <u>TOWN HALL MARKET PLACE</u> <u>MELKSHAM SN12 6ES</u>	(a) Insert the name, position and address of the person to whom local government electors should apply to inspect the AGAR
(b) <u>BY EMAIL REQUEST TO</u> <u>PATSY.CLOVER@MELKSHAM-TC.GOV.UK</u>	(b) Insert the hours during which inspection rights may be exercised
3. Copies will be provided to any person on payment of <u>£10</u> (c) for each copy of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return.	(c) Insert a reasonable sum for copying costs
Announcement made by: (d) <u>PATSY CLOVER</u> <u>ASSISTANT TO THE TOWN CLERK</u>	(d) Insert the name and position of person placing the notice
Date of announcement: (e) <u>2 FEBRUARY 2021</u>	(e) Insert the date of placing of the notice

Final External Auditor Report and Certificate 2019/20 in respect of Melksham Town Council WI0161

Respective responsibilities of the body and the auditor

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with Proper Practices which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2020; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

Our responsibility is to review Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with guidance issued by the National Audit Office (NAO) on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (see note below). Our work **does not** constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would do.

External auditor report 2019/20

On 29 November 2020, we issued a report detailing the results of our limited assurance review of Sections 1 and 2 of this authority's Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2020. We explained that we were unable to certify completion of the review at that time. We are now in a position to certify completion of the review.

The external auditor report given in Section 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return requires amendments as follows:

Except for the matters reported below, on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Section 1, Assertion 5 has been incorrectly completed. Information received from the internal auditor in the Annual Internal Audit Report indicates that the risk assessment was not approved by the smaller authority during the year under review and so this Assertion should have been answered "No". The smaller authority has confirmed that the risk assessment has taken place since the year end.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

We note that the smaller authority did not comply with Regulation 15 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 as amended by SI 2020/404 the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 as it failed to make proper provision during the year 2020/21 for the exercise of public rights, since the period for the exercise of public rights did not start on or before 1 September 2020. As a result, the smaller authority must answer 'No' to Assertion 4 of the Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21 and ensure that it makes proper provision for the exercise of public rights during 2021/22.

External auditor certificate 2019/20

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2020.

PKF Littlejohn LLP

PKF Littlejohn LLP
22/01/2021

Tel: +44 (0)20 7516 2200 • www.pkf-l.com

PKF Littlejohn LLP • 15 Westferry Circus • Canary Wharf • London E14 4HD

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Melksham Town Council

Internal Audit Report: Interim 2020-21

Stuart J Pollard

*Director
Auditing Solutions Ltd*

Background

Statute requires all town and parish councils to arrange for an independent annual internal audit examination of their accounting records and systems of internal control and for the conclusions to be reported in the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

This report sets out the work undertaken in relation to the 2020-21 financial year, during our interim review of the Council's records for the year, which was again undertaken remotely due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation and restrictions in early February 2021. We wish to thank the Town Clerk and her staff for assisting the process, providing all requested documentation in hard copy and electronic format to facilitate commencement of our review for the year.

Internal Audit Approach

In undertaking our review, we have again had regard to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential mis-recording or misrepresentation in the year-end Statement of Accounts / AGAR. Our programme of cover is designed to afford assurance that the Council's financial systems remain robust and operate in a manner to ensure effective probity of transactions and to afford a reasonable probability of identifying any material errors or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework. The programme is also designed to facilitate our completion of the 'Internal Audit Report' in the Council's AGAR, which requires independent assurance over a series of internal control objectives.

We hope to be able to conduct the final review on site in the spring / summer and will liaise with the Clerk and Finance Officer to determine the approach to be taken nearer that time, which will obviously be dependent on the prevalent Covid situation and be timed to follow closedown of the year's Omega Accounts.

Overall Conclusions

We are pleased to advise that, based on the work undertaken to date, officers continue to maintain adequate and effective internal control arrangements with a few issues identified requiring attention. Details of those issues are set out in the following detailed report with any resultant recommendations further summarised in the appended Action Plan: we ask that the report be presented to members and a formal response be provided in advance of our final visit / review to those recommendations indicating the actions taken and / or in hand at that time.

Detailed Report

Maintenance of Accounting Records & Bank Reconciliations

Officers maintain the Council's accounting records using the RBS Omega software with two separate bank accounts in place at Lloyds relating to the Assembly Hall and two at the Co-op for the main Council's transactions, with detail of the latter two recorded in a single cashbook with a "sweep" arrangement in place to retain a £5,000 balance in the Current Account. Further funds are held in a Lloyds Periodic short-term deposit with a further small sum held in the CCLA Deposit Fund.

Our objective here is to ensure that the accounting records are being maintained accurately and currently and that no anomalous entries appear in cashbooks or financial ledgers. We have consequently: -

- Verified the accuracy of the opening Omega Trial Balance by reference to the certified AGAR and last year's closing Omega Trial Balance detail;
- Ensured that the financial ledger remains "in balance" at 31st December 2020;
- Verified detail in each of the Council's three main cashbook accounts for three months of the year (April, August & December 2020) by reference to the underlying bank statements in the four bank accounts in everyday use; and
- Checked and agreed detail on the same three cashbook accounts' bank reconciliations as at 30th April, 31st August and December 2020.

Conclusions and recommendations

Whilst we are pleased to record that no significant issues arise in this area, we have seen no indication from the documents provided for our examination that bank reconciliations have been subjected to periodic scrutiny and formal sign-off by a nominated councillor, as required by the Council's Financial Regulations (Para 2.2) adopted in April 2019 in line with the NALC model document. We note that, following receipt of our 2019-20 report pointing out this requirement that the Council has agreed to implement such a review: we also appreciate that, given the ongoing Covid situation, it has probably not been possible to implement this check to date. However, several of our clients have made appropriate arrangements to address this requirement providing the nominated councillor with electronic copies of the bank reconciliations and bank statements for their review and sign-off, requesting them to scan and return the documents to the office for retention and subsequent audit examination. To ensure that this requirement is not overlooked going forward, we reiterate the recommendation.

We also note the existence of two cheques issued in July 2020 that remain uncleared through the Council's bank accounts as at 31st December. As indicated in last year's report, where cheques remain uncleared for 3 or more months, the payee should be contacted to establish whether they have received, misplaced or otherwise overlooked banking of the cheque and / or require a replacement.

R1. The Council should implement the agreed independent review and sign-off of bank reconciliations by a nominated councillor in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations (Para 2.2 refers).

- R2. Where cheques remain uncleared through the Council's bank account for a significant period appropriate follow up action should be taken to determine whether a replacement is required, or the payee no longer requires the cheque.*

Review of Corporate Governance & Regulatory Framework

Our objective here is to ensure that the Council has a robust regulatory framework in place, that as far as we are reasonably able to ascertain as we do not attend meetings Council and Committee meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders (SOs) and that no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been or are being considered for implementation.

We note that the Council's SOs and Financial Regulations (FRs) have both been subjected to relatively recent review and re-adoption and have reviewed their content: whilst we note that they are in line with the latest NALC model documents including appropriate reference to the requirements of the 2015 Public Contracts Regulations with the limit for formal tender action set at £25,000, the SOs appear to imply (Para 20.a.v) that formal tender action may be waived for tenders below £50,000, whilst the FRs refer to a uniform tender limit of £25,000 (Paras. 11.1.b & h). A consistent value for tender action should be identified in both documents.

We have reviewed the minutes of the full Council and standing committees, excluding those relating to planning issues, for the financial year to date to ensure that as far as we may reasonably be expected to ascertain, the Council has neither considered nor is considering taking any action that may result in ultra vires expenditure being incurred.

Conclusions and recommendation

We are pleased to record that no significant issues arise in this area at the present time, although we suggest that, when next reviewed, either the SOs and /or FRs be amended to reflect the same tender limit: we shall continue to review the Council's approach to governance at future visits, also continuing our review of minutes.

- R3. The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations should record a consistent value for formal tender action.*

Review of Expenditure & VAT

Our aim here is to ensure that: -

- Council resources are released in accordance with the approved procedures and budgets;
- Payments are appropriately supported, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where no other form of invoice is available;
- All discounts due on goods and services supplied are identified and appropriate action taken to secure the discount;
- An official order has been raised on each occasion when one would be expected;
- The correct expense codes have been applied to invoices when processed; and
- VAT has been appropriately identified and coded to the control account for periodic recovery.

We are pleased to note that, following our previous recommendation, the use of separate certification slips has ceased with an appropriately designed rubber certification stamp acquired and now in use

on purchase invoices. Whilst councillors attend the offices to sign cheques and initial the Omega generated schedules of payments, which also identify the cheque reference number, we have seen no indication that they are initialling the certification stamp on the individual invoices. We do not wish to imply that any improper action by the Finance Officer, but suggest that to further reduce risk, including the potential for duplicated payments arising, members should, when signing cheques, or authorising the release of payments online, also initial or sign-off the hard copy invoices.

To ensure compliance with the above criteria, we have selected a sample of payments in the year to 31st December 2020 for examination. Our test sample includes 54 individual payments and totals £333,400 equating to 66% by value of non-pay related payments in the year to that date. In examining the selected sample, we were initially unable to trace invoices supporting 11 of our selection, 8 of which related to grants paid out. We understand that the grants, whilst now paid online, were accompanied with a request for a response confirming receipt of the grant which have duly been received and are held on the Council offices: we will examine these at our final review, assuming we are able to attend the offices at that time.

Obviously, our task in reviewing the documents has again proved more difficult than would normally be the case were we able to visit the Council and we wish to thank the Finance Officer for her assistance in attempting to track down the “missing” documentation: she is continuing to acquire the relevant confirmatory evidence supporting these few payments and we will, on receipt of the relevant documents update this report accordingly.

In checking the above sample of invoices, we noted that the cost of “locum” staff provision totalling approximately £18,000 to date has been coded to nominal account code 4000 in the Omega accounts, which is automatically linked as a “Staff cost” at Section 1, Box 4 of the AGAR. As the locum costs are invoiced and not paid through the payroll, they should be coded to a separate / new nominal account code and be regarded as Agency staff linked to Box 6 of the AGAR.

We also noted a minor error on the September 2020 payment to Water2Business, which is paid monthly by direct debit of £19.00, with VAT recorded as recoverable for that month’s payment: water rates are a non-vatable supply and no VAT has been identified on the other monthly payments.

We had hoped to review the procedures in place for seeking tenders / quotations for work on behalf of the Council at this review, but due to the ongoing “lockdown” we have not been able to examine this aspect at this time, but will do so as soon as we are able to schedule our final review visit for the year, which we would hope to be able to undertake on site in the summer.

We note that VAT reclaims are prepared and submitted to HMRC for repayment at the end of each quarter and have checked and agreed detail of the final 2019-20 quarter reclaim, together with the first two reclaims for 2020-21 ensuring appropriate recovery of the amounts by reference to the control account.

Conclusions and recommendations

Whilst pleased to note the acquisition of a rubber certification stamp and as set out in our 2019-20 report, we urge that members also evidence their review of the invoices when signing cheques, etc on the actual invoices as well as the accompanying Omega generated schedule of payments by initialling the certification stamp now being placed on each invoice and reiterate last year’s recommendation accordingly.

The identified miscodings, as detailed above, will need to be amended prior to closing down the year’s accounts.

We shall extend our test sample of purchase invoices at our final review, also examining the last two quarters VAT reclaims and agreeing detail to the Omega control account.

R4. Members should evidence their examination of invoices, duly initialling the authorisation boxes on the rubber certification stamp now affixed to invoices.

R5. The identified miscodings / analysis of staff costs should be corrected prior to the financial year-end.

Assessment and Management of Risk

Our aim here is to ensure that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and health / safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks in order to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition.

We note that a Risk Management Register has been developed and will be presented to the March 2021 Council meeting for formal approval and adoption and will review the document and ensure its formal adoption at our final visit.

We have examined the Council's 2020-21 insurance policy with WPS and consider that appropriate cover is in place with Public and Employer's Liability in place at £15 million and £10 million respectively, together with Fidelity Guarantee cover at £1 million and Business Interruption – Loss of Revenue cover also in place at £337,414, which adequately covers the Assembly Hall and Town Hall hire income.

We also note that annual inspections of play areas are undertaken by a RoSPA accredited company, supplemented by regular "in-house" inspections with any remedial works required undertaken either by the Council's own maintenance staff or an appointed specialist contractor.

Conclusions

We are pleased to record that no issues arise in this area currently warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Budgetary Control and Reserves

Our objective here is to ensure that the Council has a robust procedure in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and level of precept to be drawn down from Wiltshire Council: also, that an effective reporting and monitoring process is in place. We also aim to ensure that the Council retains appropriate funds in general and earmarked reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans, whilst retaining appropriate sums to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise.

We note that, following due and significant deliberation / debate, the Council agreed its budgetary and precept requirements for 2021-22 setting the latter at £918,750 at the 25th January 2021 full Council meeting.

We are pleased to note that members continue to be provided with routine budget reports throughout the year based on the accounting software with questions raised periodically and investigated accordingly. We have reviewed the latest Omega budget report (as at 31st December 2020) seeking

and obtaining appropriate explanations for the few significant variances arising by reference to the detailed transaction reports in the Omega nominal account codes. Consequently, no further issues arise other than the aforementioned need to remove the cost of locum staff from the exiting nominal account code to ensure their exclusion from reporting as a Box 4 expense in the AGAR at Section 2.

Conclusions

No issues arise in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation currently. We will undertake further work at our final review, examining the final budget outturn for the year, and assessing the ongoing appropriateness of the level of retained reserves to fund planned revenue spending and development aspirations.

Review of Income

Our objective in this area is to ensure that the Council identifies and recovers all income to which it is entitled and has appropriate arrangements in place to ensure its prompt recovery.

Our work in this area has, of necessity due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, been significantly restricted, as the Council's various premises are currently closed with a consequent reduction in the level of income received. Notwithstanding that, we have examined the recovery of income from the various allotment sites for 2020-21 by reference to the spreadsheet registers of tenants and fees payable being maintained by officers. The tenancy year runs from 1st March annually with tenants generally being invoiced in February and the majority paying their rents prior to 31st March annually. In total, rental income per the register of tenants records total income due of £4,600, of which (for 2020-21) over £4,000 was received prior to 31st March 2020, the balance being received and accounted for in the current financial year.

Due to the detail of income received being recorded in the Omega accounts in blocks rather than identifying which tenants' income is being brought to account and the absence of detail on the spreadsheet record of detail of the date of payment, we have only been able to establish in broad terms that all income due has in fact been recovered. We note that the Council has acquired the Rialtas Allotment package, but has not, as yet, due to the Covid situation, been able to implement it for the 2021-22 allotment rental year. Consequently, we suggest that to ensure that an appropriate audit trail is in existence, detail of the date of receipt and banking of tenancy fees be recorded on the allotment register.

The Council does not use the Rialtas Omega Sales Ledger currently and, consequently, we have not been able to assess the extent of any outstanding debt at the present time, other than noting the existence of an Assembly Hall debt of £6,228.01, which has remained unchanged since the close of 2019-20 (Code 102 refers). We will, consequently, examine any relevant documentation maintained in respect of that one outstanding debt and any others existing at the current financial year-end at our final review ensuring that appropriate follow up procedures are in place to pursue any such long-standing debts.

The Council should / may wish to consider acquiring and using the Omega Sales Ledger to help manage debt collection, given the volume of allotment tenants and, under normal circumstances, income arising from hire of the Council's various facilities (room hire and property leases).

Finally, in this area, we have examined the nominal income transactions for the year to date recorded in the Omega accounts with no obvious mis-postings or areas of uncollected debt apparent: we do, however, understand that income in respect of certain leased premises was waived for part of the year due to the Covid situation.

Conclusions and recommendations

Whilst we are pleased to record that no significant issues of concern arise in this area currently, we suggest that, until such time as the Rialtas Allotment package is implemented, the existing allotment spreadsheet register be expanded to include detail of the dates when the Council receives tenants' rents together with the amounts received.

- R6. *The existing allotment register detail should be expanded to include detail of the date of receipt of tenants' fees and the amount received to provide a comprehensive and clear audit trail.*
- R7. *Consideration should be given to acquiring the Rialtas Sales Ledger addition to the existing Omega accounts package to assist in the raising of invoices and management of debt.*

Petty Cash Account

We are required, as part of the AGAR internal audit certification process to assess the Council's approach to and control of the management of petty cash account transactions. The Council operates a small petty cash account with periodic round sum (generally £200) top-ups as and when required (3 to date in 2020-21). Additionally, a bar "change float" is held at the Assembly Rooms.

Conclusions

Due to our not being able to visit the Council, we have not undertaken any work in this area currently and intend to review the controls in place, also examining a sample of the year's transactions at our final review.

Review of Staff Salaries

In examining the Council's payroll function, we aim to confirm that extant legislation is being appropriately observed as regards adherence to the Employee Rights Act 1998 and the requirements of HMRC legislation as regards the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions and the implementation of the nationally agreed pay award payable from 1st April 2020 with staff also assimilated to the revised pay spinal points. The pay award was implemented with the October salary payment together with arrears due backdated to 1st April 2020. We note that preparation of the monthly payroll is outsourced to Wiltshire Council. To meet the above objective, we have:

- Examined payslips for all staff in September and October 2020 agreeing the gross salaries payable to the "Establishment record" provided for our use taking account of implementation of the pay award in the October salary payments;
- Checked the calculations of arrears paid to staff with the October salaries;
- Ensured that tax and NI deductions, together with pension contributions, have been calculated applying the appropriate tax code and NI Table, also ensuring that the relevant deductions / contributions have been paid over to HMRC and the Pension Fund Administrators accurately, and
- Ensured the accurate payment to staff of their net salaries for October 2020.

Conclusions and recommendation

We are pleased to report that no major issues have arisen from our work in this area. However, in examining the calculation of the arrears paid in October we noted that appropriate adjustment had

been made for all staff basic pay. However, where certain staff work overtime (4 in all per the September and October payslips), the October payslips only reflect adjustment for overtime hours paid in their September salaries based on the revised hourly pay rates. Whilst it may be that no overtime hours were worked between April and August inclusive due to the Covid situation, we suggest that the position be checked and, if appropriate, the next month's salary payment be adjusted to include the uplifted hourly rate for any overtime worked and paid between April and August.

R8. Staff salaries paid between April and August should be checked to establish whether any staff worked overtime in those five months: if so, their next monthly pay should be adjusted to include the pay award arrears in respect of that overtime.

Investments and Loans

We aim here to ensure that the Council is maximising its interest earning potential through the "investment / deposit" of surplus funds in appropriate interest bearing accounts/deposits. Despite the level of retained funds at the prior year-end (> £1 million), the Council only received £512 that year and has, to date in 2020-21 received no interest on the amounts deposited. Whilst we acknowledge the impact of the Covid situation on interest rates generally, the Council should seek to ensure that interest earning opportunities are maximised in accordance with its adopted Investment Policy, which appears to have been last reviewed in May 2018.

In examining the Investment Policy content at last year's final review, we noted that it refers to legislation and associated guidance as "*optional for parish councils where investments are not expected to exceed £500,000 and no action is required below £10,000*" (Para 1.3 refers). Legislation changed in April 2018 and now requires all councils with funds in excess of £100,000 to adopt a formal Investment Policy / Strategy. Whilst the Council's funds exceed the former £500,000 threshold, the Policy / Strategy needs update to reflect the above legislative change.

Whilst we appreciate that, in the present circumstances, the opportunities for gaining a reasonable rate of return on funds held in bank accounts are very limited, councils have a duty to endeavour to maximise their interest earning opportunities, whilst ensuring public funds are appropriately safeguarded. With over almost £500,000 held currently in the combined two Co-op accounts and almost £650,000 in the two Assembly Hall accounts, should either fail, the Council would, at best, only be able to recover a maximum of £85,000 through the Governments Compensation Scheme from each bank.

The Council has no loans repayable to external bodies at the present time.

Conclusions and recommendations

Whilst no significant control issues arise in this area, we remain concerned that the Council does not appear to be seeking to maximise its interest earning potential and, with the majority of funds effectively held in two banks, it also remains at a high degree of risk of loss should either bank "fail", however unlikely that may be.

R9. The extant Investment Policy should be amended to reflect current legislative requirements and be subjected to regular, ideally annual, review and formal re-adoption.

- R10. Consideration should be given to the diversification of funds into further banking institutions to ensure the funds are fully and effectively protected against potential loss in the event that either bank should “fail”.*
- R11. The Council should review available investment opportunities to ensure that interest earning potential is maximised whilst continuing to ensure that funds are adequately protected.*

Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
Review of Accounting Records and Bank Reconciliations		
R1	The Council should implement the agreed independent review and sign-off of bank reconciliations by a nominated councillor in accordance with the adopted Financial Regulations (Para 2.2 refers).	
R2	Where cheques remain uncleared through the Council's bank account for a significant period appropriate follow up action should be taken to determine whether a replacement is required, or the payee no longer requires the cheque.	
Review of Corporate Governance		
R3	The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations should record a consistent value for formal tender action.	
Review of Expenditure & VAT		
R4	Members should evidence their examination of invoices, duly initialling the authorisation boxes on the rubber certification stamp now affixed to invoices.	
R5	The identified miscodings / analysis of staff costs should be corrected prior to the financial year-end.	
Review of Income		
R6	The existing allotment register detail should be expanded to include detail of the date of receipt of tenants' fees and the amount received to provide a comprehensive and clear audit trail.	
R7	Consideration should be given to acquiring the Rialtas Sales Ledger addition to the existing Omega accounts package to assist in the raising of invoices and management of debt.	
Review of Staff Salaries		
R8	Staff salaries paid between April and August should be checked to establish whether any staff worked overtime in those five months: if so, their next monthly pay should be adjusted to include the pay award arrears in respect of that overtime.	
Investments and Loans		
R9	The extant Investment Policy should be amended to reflect current legislative requirements and be subjected to regular, ideally annual, review and formal re-adoption.	
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Rec. No.	Recommendation	Response
Investments and Loans (Continued)		
R10	Consideration should be given to the diversification of funds into further banking institutions to ensure the funds are fully and effectively protected against potential loss in the event that either bank should “fail”.	
R11	The Council should review available investment opportunities to ensure that interest earning potential is maximised whilst continuing to ensure that funds are adequately protected.	

Internal Audit Report – Interim 2020/2021 – Recommendations and Actions Taken

1. R1 – The Council should implement the agreed independent review and sign-off of bank reconciliations by a nominated councillor in accordance with the adopted financial regulations.

Councillors Brown and Watts were tasked with doing this. Reminder email sent to them 17 February with the Finance Officer/ Assistant to the Town Clerk to email bank reconciliations to them.

2. R2 – Where cheques remain uncleared through the Council's bank account for a significant period, appropriate follow-up action should be taken to determine whether a replacement is required, or the payee no longer requires the cheque.

Email to the Finance Officer 22 February asking her to investigate the two cheques issued in July 2020, referred to in the report.

3. R3 - The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations should record a consistent value for tender action.

It appears that the Standing Orders are out of kilter. The Assistant to the Town Clerk is to amend these to show £25,000, prior to their next review.

4. R4 – Members should evidence their examination of invoices, duly initialling the authorisation boxes on the rubber certification stamp now affixed to invoices.

Email to the Councillors responsible for this 22 February, copying in the Finance Officer, asking them to do this.

5. R5 – The identified miscodings/ analysis of staff costs should be corrected prior to the financial year end.

Email to the Finance Officer 22 February asking her to make these amendments.

6. R6 – the existing allotment register detail should be expanded to detail of the date of receipt of tenants' fees and the amount received to provide a comprehensive and clear audit trail.

Email 22 February to the Finance Officer asking her to amend the register to include this information and to Town Hall staff asking them to record this information when fees are received.

7. R7 – Consideration should be given to acquiring the Rialtas Sales Ledger addition to the existing Omega accounts package to assist in the raising of invoices and management of debt.

The purchase of the Rialtas Sales Ledger addition has been agreed by the Town Clerk as has the incorporation of a purchase order system to allow committed expenditure to be shown on budget reports.

8. R8 – Staff salaries paid between April and August should be checked to establish whether any staff worked overtime in those five months; if so, their next monthly pay should be adjusted to include the pay award arrears in respect of that overtime.

The Locum Administrator has confirmed that no overtime was worked by staff between April and August.

9. R9 – The extant Investment policy should be amended to reflect current legislative requirements and be subjected to regular, ideally annual, review and formal readoption.

The Town Clerk has prepared a new investment policy which has been submitted for approval by Council.

10. R10 – Consideration should be given to the diversification of funds into further banking institutions to ensure the funds are fully and effectively protected against potential loss in the event that either bank should 'fail'.

This has been covered in the new investment policy prepared by the Town Clerk.

11. R11 – The Council should review available investment opportunities to ensure that interest earning potential is maximised whilst continuing to ensure that funds are adequately protected.

This has been covered in the new investment policy prepared by the Town Clerk.



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Item 21/07

MEETING	Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
DATE OF MEETING	11 February 2021
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Technical rescue review
STATUS OF REPORT	For open publication
PURPOSE OF REPORT	For approval
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>This paper provides an overview of the current technical rescue provision within the Service and outlines two options to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these specialist functions.</p> <p>Currently five stations provide technical rescue capabilities that include large animal rescue, working at height, bariatric support to the Ambulance Service, water rescue, technical search and confined space rescues. As it currently stands these stations have different combinations of technical rescue capabilities, which means that the provision across the wider Service is not aligned. This can result in an over mobilisation of firefighters and appliances to incidents, at additional cost, and can result in problems with wider crewing. In some cases, it also means that station availability is sometimes adversely impacted, particularly in the north of the Service.</p> <p>Within the water rescue element of the technical rescue, all 50 stations provide a level of capability whereby all firefighters are trained to work safely near water and perform rescues where the casualty can be reached using flotation and throw line equipment. This is known as Level 1 capability.</p> <p>In addition to this, currently crews from Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Christchurch, Malmesbury, Salisbury and Sturminster Newton have the capability to perform</p>

	<p>rescues of a higher specialism, usually where people are trapped in vehicles and homes in flood water. This is known as Level 2 capability.</p> <p>Crews at Chippenham, Poole, Stratton, Trowbridge and Weymouth have Level 3 capability, where firefighters may affect rescues from fast flowing water, through either performing a swim type rescue or with inflatable non-powered boats off rope cableways. This capability also provides a safe system of work for all other crews operating at the lower levels.</p> <p>Members are asked to consider two options to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Service's technical rescue capabilities, including water safety.</p> <p>The first option comprises of three teams that will be crewed by wholetime firefighters at Poole, Stratton and Weymouth. These stations have the capability to provide all technical rescue specialisms, including water rescue, in a consistent and more resilient way. This option includes maintaining a Level 2 water rescue capability at Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Chippenham, Christchurch, Malmesbury, Salisbury, Sturminster Newton and Trowbridge to allow for rescues where people are trapped in vehicles and homes in flood water. Should spate flooding conditions occur then teams from across the Service would be mobilised and local or national mutual aid arrangements initiated, as necessary. This option requires a one-off expenditure of £33,841 for training courses and £36,278 for equipment alignment, however, it provides ongoing annual savings of £29,834. In addition, capital programme costs have been reduced by £257,805.</p> <p>The second option comprises of three teams that are crewed by wholetime firefighters at Poole, Stratton and Weymouth. These stations have the capability to provide all of the technical rescue specialisms, including water rescue, in a consistent and more resilient way. This option includes maintaining a Level 2 water rescue capability at Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Christchurch, Malmesbury, Salisbury and Sturminster Newton to allow for rescues where people are trapped in vehicles and homes in flood water. This option would see Chippenham and Trowbridge retain Level 3 water rescue capability. This option has the same one-off costs as Option 1, but additional ongoing annual costs of £33,517.</p>
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	<p>The capital programme would need to be increased by £120,000 to allow for the replacement of the current vehicles at Chippenham and Trowbridge, which will increase future capital financing costs.</p> <p>Officers will present both options at the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting to build upon the Members' seminars which have already been held in November 2020, December 2020, and January 2021.</p>
RISK ASSESSMENT	Known risks have been identified within the body of the report, with potential mitigations as required.
COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	<p>An impact assessment has been completed which shows that the disposition of technical rescue stations in Option 1 allow at least one technical rescue resource to reach all 50 station areas within 60 minutes and meets the Service's risk profile, therefore improving the provision currently provided.</p> <p>Option 2 has additional positive community impacts, provided that an increase in revenue and capital financial provision can be allocated by Members within their Medium-Term Finance Plan.</p>
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	<p>Option 1:</p> <p>This option would require one-off expenditure of £70,119 for training courses and equipment with ongoing annual costs of £139,550. This provides an ongoing annual saving of £29,834, compared to current costs. This option avoids the need to spend £257,805 to replace the technical rescue vehicles at the current stations.</p> <p>Option 2:</p> <p>This option would require the same one-off expenditure for training courses and equipment as Option 1 with ongoing annual costs of £173,067. This is an ongoing annual increase of £33,517 above the costs of Option 1. In addition, £120,000 would need to be added to the capital programme for vehicle replacements required in 2025-2026, reducing the capital saving from £257,805 to £137,805.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>Members are asked to consider and approve one of the following options:</p> <p>Option 1:</p> <p>Establish three consistent technical rescue teams, aligned to the Service risk profile, that are crewed by wholetime firefighters at Poole, Stratton and Weymouth.</p> <p><i>Note: This option includes maintaining Level 2 water rescue capability at Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Chippenham, Christchurch, Malmesbury, Salisbury, Sturminster Newton and Trowbridge, to allow for rescues where people are trapped in vehicles and homes in flood water.</i></p> <p>or</p> <p>Option 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Establish three consistent technical rescue teams, aligned to the Service risk profile, that are crewed by wholetime firefighters at Poole, Stratton and Weymouth; and, b) Retain a Level 3 water rescue capability at Chippenham and Trowbridge. <p><i>Note: This option includes maintaining Level 2 water rescue capability at Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Christchurch, Malmesbury, Salisbury and Sturminster Newton to allow for rescues where people are trapped in vehicles and homes in flood water.</i></p> <p>Following a comprehensive review, the officer recommendation is Option 1.</p>
BACKGROUND PAPERS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UK FRS National Operational Guidance- Water Rescue and Flooding (21 September 2020) 2. UK FRS National Operational Guidance- Operations: Hazard- Bodies of Water (8 May 2019) 3. Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA): Flood rescue Concept of Operations (November 2019) 4. UK FRS National Operational Guidance- Incidents Involving Animals (29 March 2018) 5. National Fire Chiefs Council Operations Coordination Committee: Safe Working at Height- Team Typing (6 September 2017)

APPENDICES	<p>Appendix A - Costings, Benefits and Risks of combinations of Technical Rescue Stations.</p> <p>Appendix B - Flood Maps for Water First Responder and Water Technician stations from the Environment Agency.</p> <p>Appendix C - Details the type of flood warning and the location for which it was issued, between 2006 and 2017.</p> <p>Appendix D - Summary of the communication and engagement carried out during this technical rescue review.</p>
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	<p>Name: James Mahoney, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Community Safety)</p> <p>Email: james.mahoney@dwfire.org.uk</p> <p>Tel no: 01722 691387</p>

1. Background

- 1.1 Technical rescue is an enhanced rescue capability undertaken by a limited number of stations. Technical rescue comprises of an enhanced capability in the following areas:
- Animal rescue
 - Working at height
 - Bariatric support to the Ambulance Service
 - Water rescue
 - Technical search
 - Confined space rescue
- 1.2 Technical rescue is not a statutory requirement for the Fire and Rescue Authority, and several fire and rescue services no longer have or offer this capability but instead rely on mutual aid arrangements.
- 1.3 The Service has maintained a technical rescue capability to ensure provision is made for a safe system of work for activities that are statutory. Technical rescue also enhances the Service's ability to respond to other eventualities under section 11 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and supports our requirements outlined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. When planning for response to water rescues and flooding the Service follows the guidance provided within UK FRS National Operational Guidance, which refers to best practice detailed within the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs' Flood Rescue Concept of Operations. Guidance related to working near water or unstable surfaces is not limited to water related incidents and is included in National Operational Guidance issued by the National Fire Chiefs Council.

2. Current position

- 2.1 Currently the Service has a technical rescue capability located at five stations, which are: Chippenham, Poole, Stratton, Trowbridge and Weymouth. These are illustrated in Figure 1.

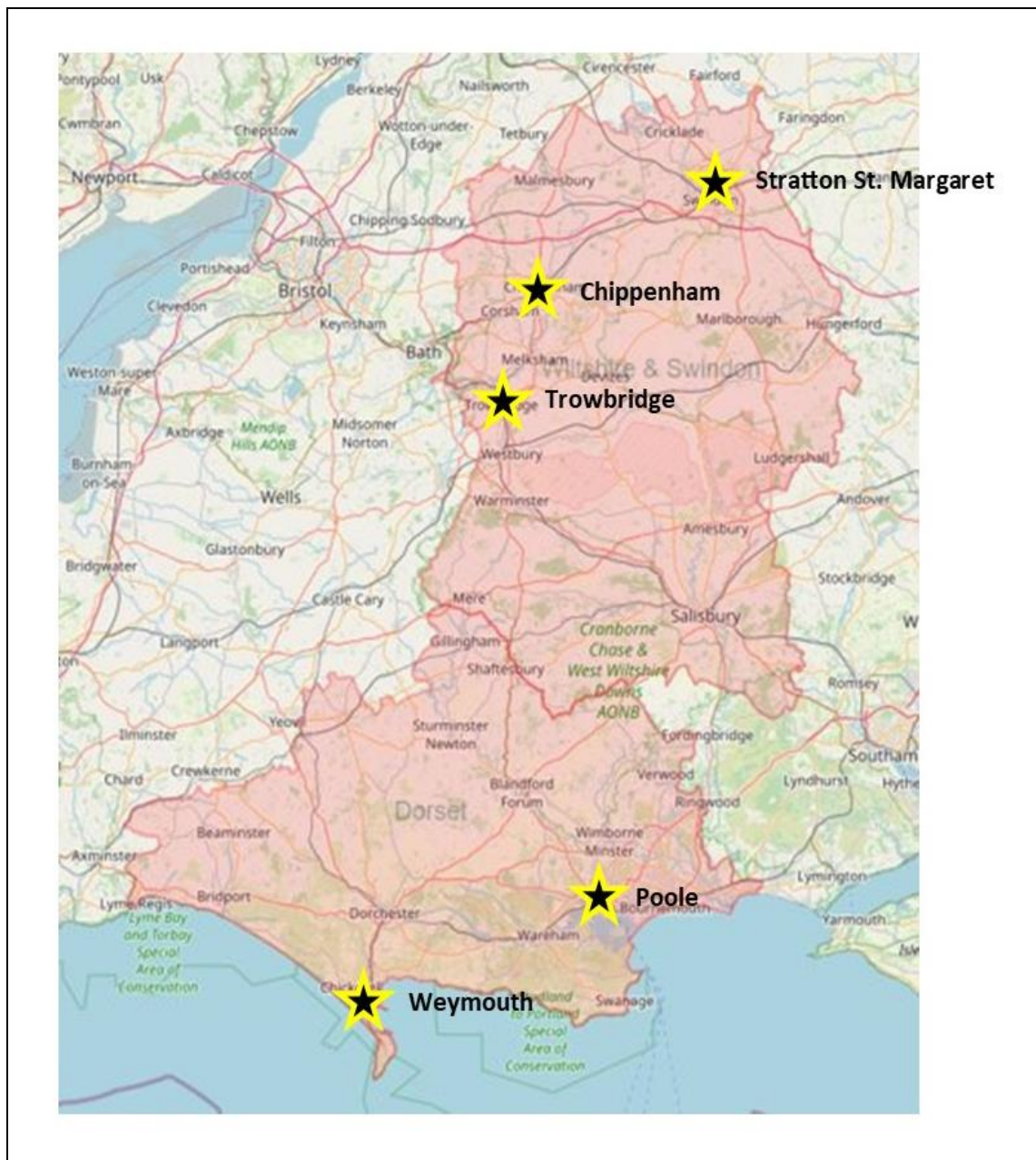


Figure 1 - Locations of current Service technical rescue capabilities.

- 2.2 The capabilities and locations of technical rescue derives from the two legacy fire and rescue services and as a result the stations deliver different levels of these capabilities. It should be noted that the rationale for the locations of these specialist services is against risk but also for practical purpose, such as, balancing the range of operational competencies for firefighters or the suitability of operational duty systems to help maintain availability.

2.3 The current technical rescue provision across the Service can be seen in Table 1.

Station	Current technical rescue Specialism	Crewing System	Number of trained staff
Chippenham	Rope, Water, Boat, Technical Confined Space	Day crewed	14
Poole	Animal, Rope, Water, Bariatric, Technical Confined Space	Two Wholetime Watches	48
Stratton	Animal, Water	Wholetime	28
Trowbridge	Rope, Water, Bariatric, Technical Confined Space, Technical Search	Day crewed	14
Weymouth	Rope, Water, Technical Search, Technical Confined Space	Wholetime	28

Table 1 - Current technical rescue provision and arrangements.

2.4 As previously stated, the current provision of technical rescue is not consistent across the Service with resultant levels of inefficiencies and potential cost avoidance. This is due to:

- i. *Operational capabilities:* Not all technical rescue stations have the full range of capabilities, therefore, some incidents require the mobilisation of more than one technical rescue station to resolve the incident. For example, if the technical rescue team at Stratton fire station is mobilised to a large animal rescue incident that requires the use of ropes, an additional team will need to be mobilised to provide the capability. This means that two stations are now engaged in an incident which may have a consequential impact on appliance availability and attendance to other emergency incidents. In some cases, it may also incur additional costs due to operational backfill arrangements.
- ii. *Equipment and vehicles:* The differences in the equipment carried by different technical rescue teams can lead to more than one technical rescue team being mobilised to an incident to provide all the equipment required to resolve the incident. Different technical rescue vehicle solutions across the Service result in inconsistencies from a fleet perspective, and this incurs additional maintenance costs. Some of the current technical rescue vehicles in the north of the Service area are already at their maximum weight capacity and unable to stow all the required equipment. This has resulted in equipment allocated to one station being kept at another. This occurs at Chippenham and Trowbridge fire stations.
- iii. *Duty systems:* Two of the stations delivering a technical rescue capability operate on a day crew duty system. These are Trowbridge and Chippenham. Technical rescue requires a minimum of five crew members and the day crew

duty system means there are occasions when the technical rescue capability is unavailable due to insufficient crews being on duty. Whilst this may affect the availability of technical rescue deployment from these stations, it does not impact on the availability of a fire appliance that require a crew of four to be deployed. In these instances, it is necessary to mobilise both of the day crewed technical rescue stations to an incident to form a full team.

- 2.5 Under delegation, the Chief Fire Officer, through his senior officers, commissioned a comprehensive review of the Service's technical rescue provision with the aim of realigning existing assets to the most efficient and effective way, addressing community risk and operational demand. No prescribed options were given to the officers conducting this review, although a parameter was set that it should operate within the current cost envelope, due to the medium-term financial cost pressures facing the Authority.
- 2.6 A significant number of variations and combinations of stations were considered by specialist officers throughout this review (see appendix A). After a significant level of discussions and a high-level option appraisal, an initial scoping report proposed a three-station solution as the best way forward. Importantly, due to the increased complexities of the new aerial ladder platform appliances, it concluded that technical rescue capabilities could not be located at the same station due to the requirement for staff to maintain too many operational competencies within the rostered time they have available.
- 2.7 Senior officers subsequently requested a more detailed feasibility study to also consider the disposition of resources between Weymouth fire station and Salisbury fire station. They asked that staff and their representative bodies be fully engaged to avoid any preconceived perceptions and to secure frontline views to ensure they were fully considered. Numerous visits to affected stations were held and representative bodies were systematically engaged.

3. Technical rescue risk profile

- 3.1 To support the wider review of technical rescue, incident data, that has been gathered in a consistent way across the Service since 1 April 2016 has been used. For the water rescue element of this review, and to put some further contextual information with regards to the spate flooding conditions, the review has also analysed:
- fire and rescue water rescue activity experienced in 2013-14 when significant spate conditions last occurred
 - strategic flood risk assessments for each unitary authority within the Service area
 - flood warning information from the Environment Agency between 2006 and 2017.

- 3.2 Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2020, 630 technical rescue incidents which involved large animal rescue, working at height, bariatric support to South West Ambulance Service NHS Trust (SWAST), water rescue, technical search and confined space rescues occurred within Service.
- 3.3 Of the 630 incidents where technical rescue assets were mobilised, only 335 (53%) required a technical rescue capability to resolve the incident. The number of which, split by capability type, can be seen below in Figure 2.

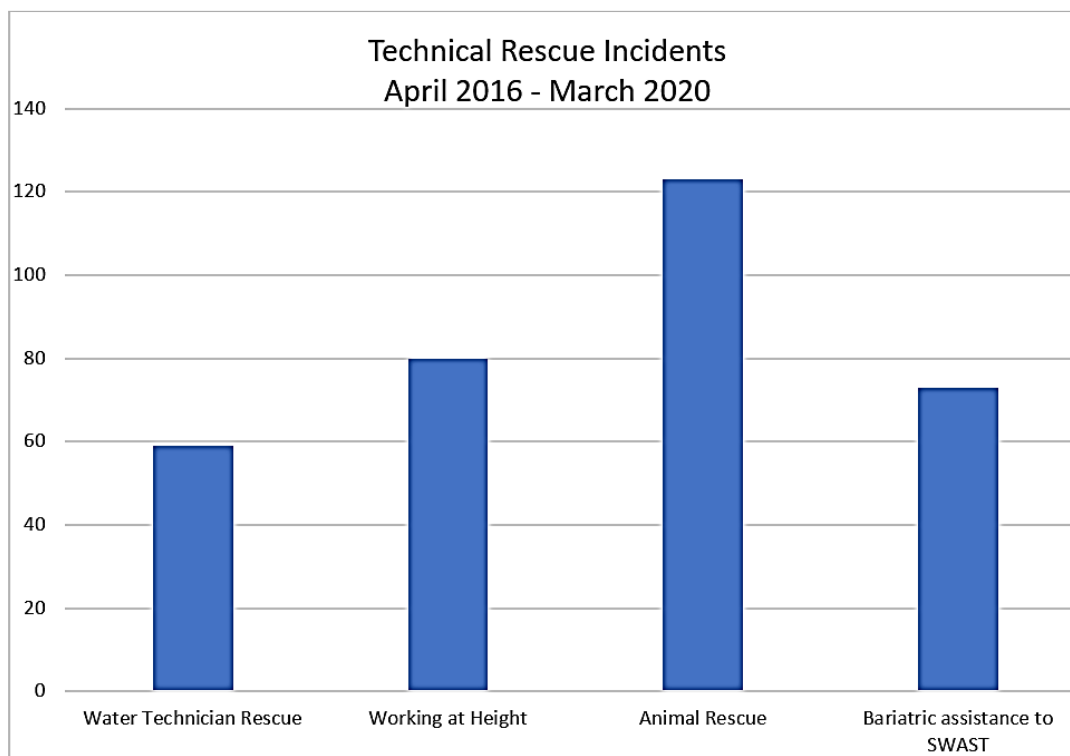


Figure 2 - Number of technical rescue incidents by capability type from April 2016 to March 2020.

- 3.4 The following sections provide an overview of the risk and demand profiles in order of greatest to least incident demand.

3.5 Animal rescues

- 3.5.1. As stated earlier in the report, fire and rescue authorities have no statutory duty to respond to animal rescues. However, the Authority has chosen within its policies to provide a response using powers under section 11 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 - Power to respond to other eventualities, (2) the event or situation is one that causes or is likely to cause (b) harm to the environment (including the life and health of plants and animals).
- 3.5.2. There are two levels of animal rescue response within the Service that are aligned to standards set in the National Operational Guidance - Incidents Involving Animals. All operational crews across the Service are trained in line with these standards and will often be mobilised following the request from the RSPCA to provide the assistance to rescue trapped *smaller* animals in distress. Technical rescue teams

at Poole and Stratton have enhanced training and equipment to carry out more specialist or complex rescues involving *larger* distressed animals (e.g. deer, horses, sheep) and provide a safe system of work to all other crews undertaking animal rescues.

- 3.5.3. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2020, the Service attended 169 animal rescue incidents. Of these incidents 123 required a technical rescue team intervention from one of the Service's two technical rescue teams with a large animal rescue capability, located at Poole and Stratton fire stations (see Figure 3).

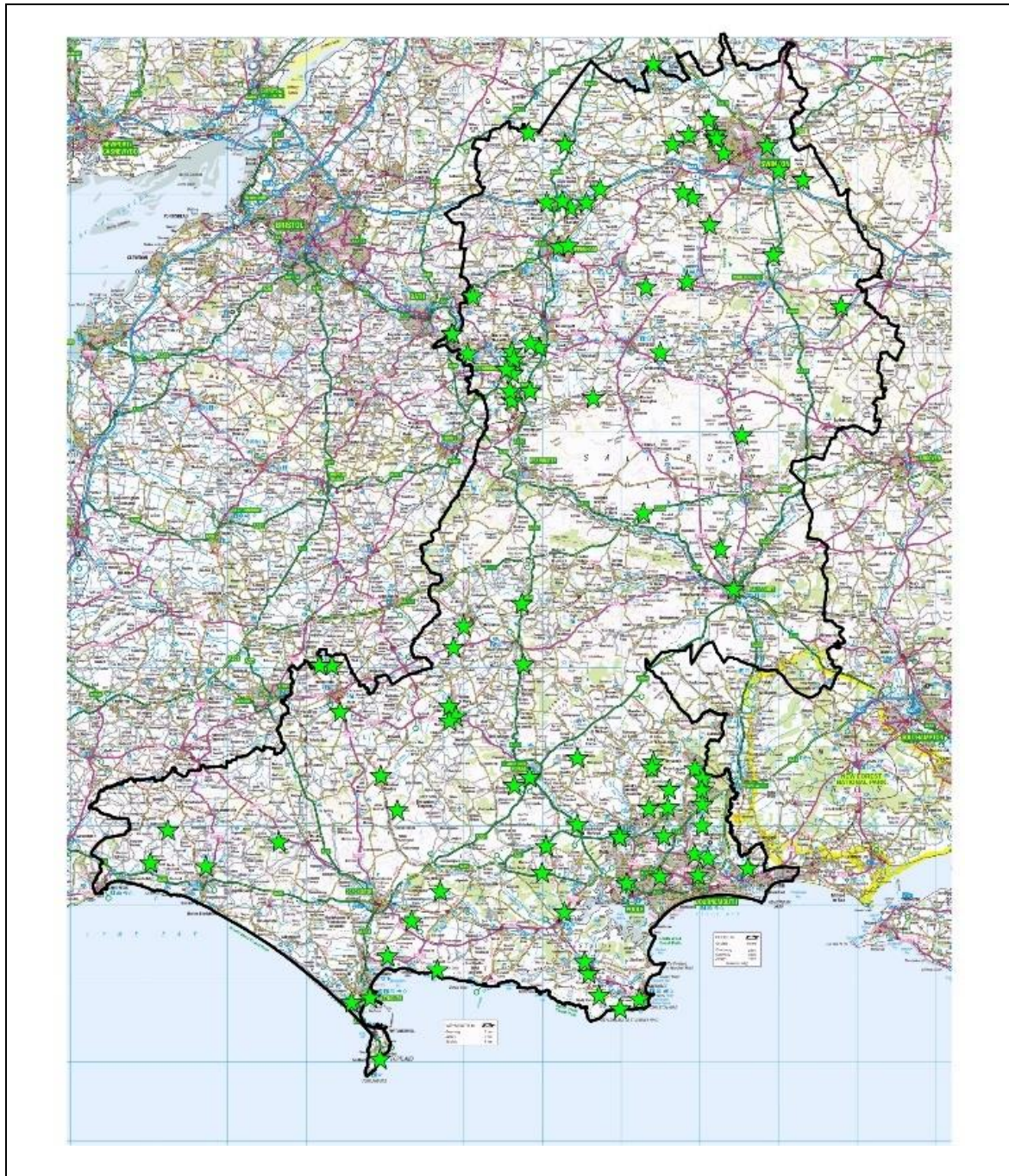


Figure 3 - Large Animal rescue incidents attended by the Service.

3.5.4. Large animal rescue incidents constitute the highest area of demand for the Service's technical rescue teams. As a predominantly rural Service animal rescue incidents occur throughout the Service area. The current disposition of technical rescue teams with an animal rescue capability enables a response to 46 of the Service's 50 fire stations within a 60-minute timeframe.

3.6 Working at height

3.6.1. There are three levels of working at height capabilities within the Service, aligned to the National Fire Chiefs Council 'Safe working at height/Rope Rescue' team guidance:

- *Level 1 (Safe Working at Height)*: This capability allows all operational crews to perform rescues using standard fire service ladders and aerial ladder platforms. Level 1 teams can also use a single rope to secure a casualty whilst awaiting rescue from a twin line rope team. This capability is available at all fire stations
- *Level 2 Rope Rescue*: This capability enables rescues to be performed using twin line ropes so a casualty can be lowered to a point of safety. All 12 fire stations with a wholetime firefighter complement are trained and equipped to work at this more complex level
- *Level 3 Rope Rescue*: This capability enables complex technical rope rescues to be undertaken. Casualties can be rescued from above or below ground or by lowering, or raising, to a point of safety. This capability provides a safe system of work for all other crews operating at the lower levels (for rescuing the rescuers). Technical rescue crews at Chippenham, Poole, Trowbridge and Weymouth are equipped and trained to work at Level 3 rope rescue.

3.6.1.1. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2020 technical rescue crews attended 121 rope incidents in total, 80 of which required a Level 3 rope rescue intervention as shown in Figure 4.

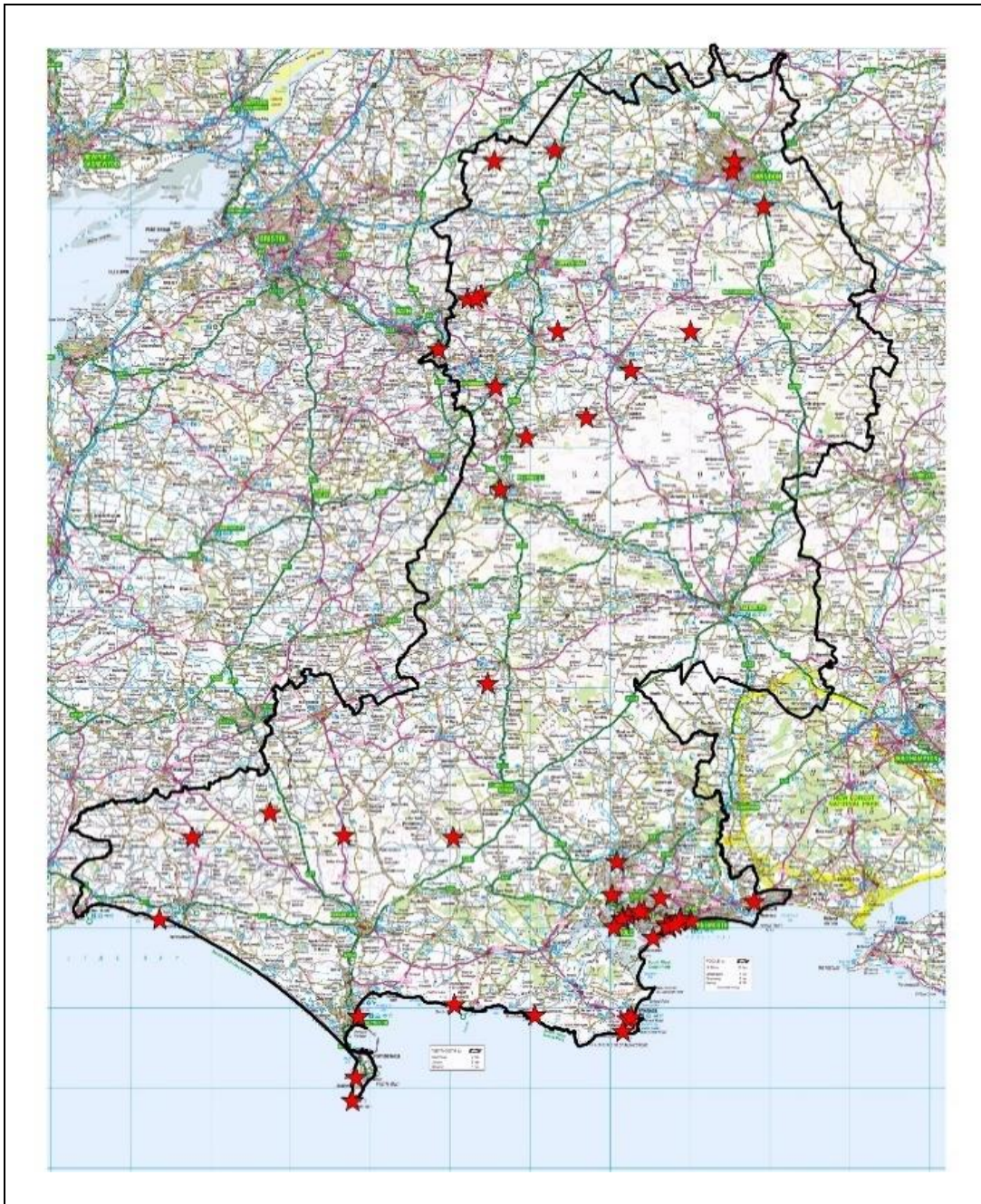


Figure 4 - Level 3 rope incidents attended by the Service.

- 3.6.2. It is clear that incidents occur across the Service area, but with a higher concentration of incidents in the conurbations of Swindon, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and along the coast. The incidents in urbanised areas of the Service are predominantly due to higher buildings and structures and the increased populations in those areas.
- 3.6.3. In terms of coastal rescues, the two search and rescue co-ordinating authorities within the UK are the Police and HM Coastguard. To avoid duplication in effort between HM Coastguard and the Police it has been agreed that a coastal incident which develops on the seaward side of the coastline, below the mean high water spring tide mark, but including sea cliffs, shoreline, and other littoral areas, will be co-ordinated by HM Coastguard, and those above the mean high water spring tide mark by the Police.

3.6.4. The Service has discretionary powers to respond where there is risk of illness, death or injury to persons or harm to the environment. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2020, the Service's technical rescue resources have assisted search and rescue efforts, by either the Police or HM Coastguard, on 62 occasions, predominantly with the provision of Level 3 rope rescue teams.

3.7 **Bariatric support to the Ambulance Service**

3.7.1. The Service's strategic assessment of risk, presented to Members last year, highlights that the number of morbidly obese patients has almost doubled in the last ten years. This indicates a likely increase in the number of incidents the Service will be required to attend, in the case of a life-threatening emergency, or requested to attend to assist the Ambulance Service in getting patients to hospital.

3.7.2. There are two levels of bariatric support response within the Service. Prior to mobilisation, all incidents of this type are assessed by the duty Tactical Advisor:

- *Non-complex response:* All 50 fire stations are equipped and trained to provide general assistance to ambulance crews at non-complex bariatric incidents
- *Complex support:* For more complex bariatric incidents often, involving complex ropes, shoring of ceilings and building structures, a specialist technical rescue response with enhanced training and equipment is needed. This capability is currently available from Poole and Trowbridge fire stations.

3.7.3. Although there is not a statutory duty within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to support the Ambulance Service with moving bariatric casualties, it should be acknowledged the Service may be called to incidents within their statutory duties involving bariatric casualties, such as, road traffic incident or fires within buildings.

3.7.4. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2020 the Service provided a specialist technical rescue response to 73 bariatric incidents (shown in Figure 5). It should be noted that the number of bariatric incidents responded to by the Service has increased each year, with 47 bariatric incidents during 2019-20, supporting the findings of the strategic assessment of risk.

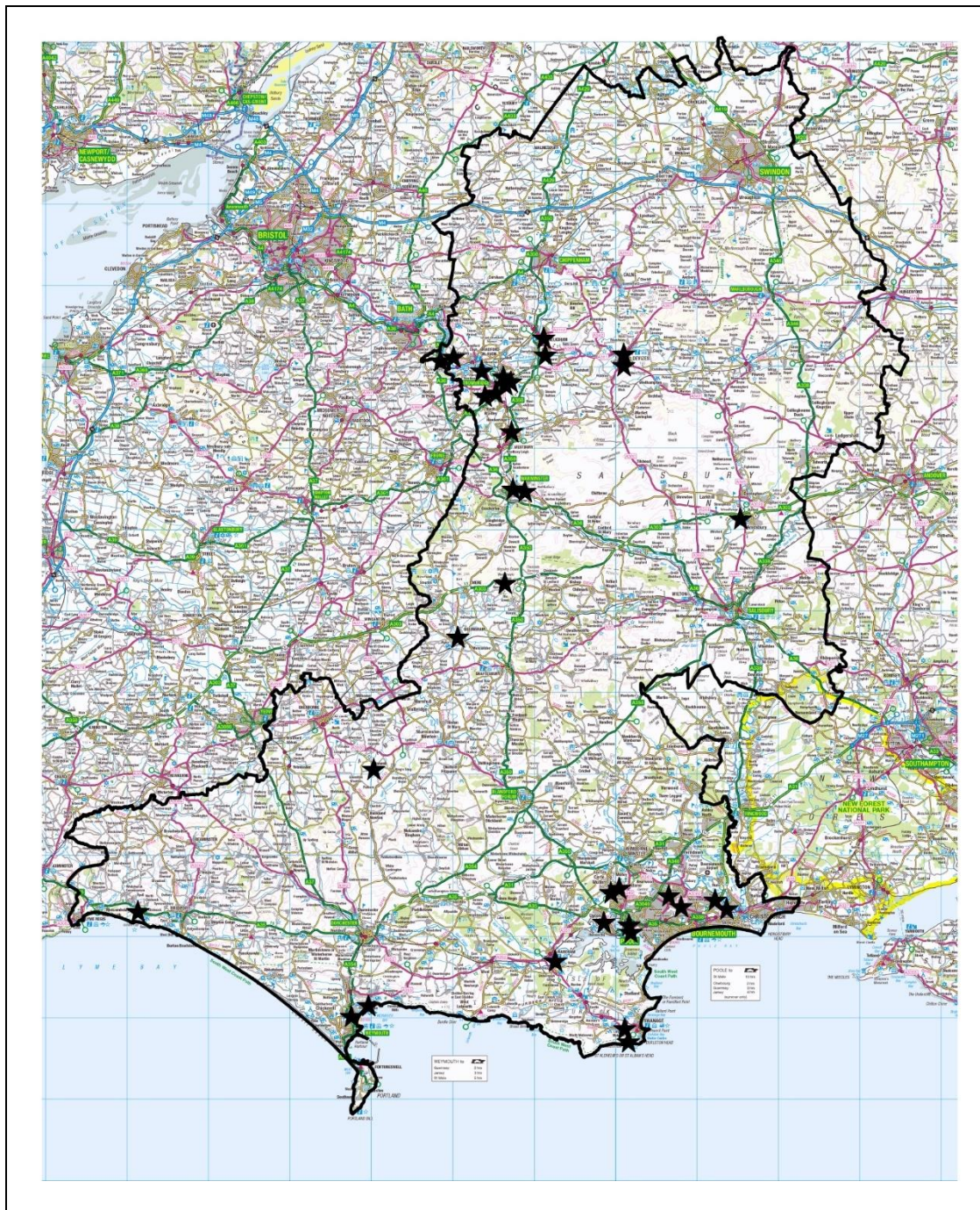


Figure 5 - Location of bariatric rescues or support by the Service.

3.8 Water rescue

3.8.1. There are three levels of water rescue response within the Service aligned to the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs concept of operations.

- *Level 1 (Water Awareness Teams)*: This capability allows all our frontline firefighters the ability to work safely near water and perform rescues where the casualty can be reached using flotation and throw line equipment
- *Level 2 (Water First Responder)*: This capability allows crews from Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Christchurch, Malmesbury, Salisbury and Sturminster Newton to enter water in a non-buoyant capacity, to perform rescues (usually where people are trapped in vehicles and homes in flood water)
- *Level 3 (Water Technician Teams)*: This capability allows crews from Chippenham, Poole, Stratton, Trowbridge and Weymouth to enter Class 2 water (fast flowing), through either performing a swim type rescue or with inflatable non-powered boats off rope cableways, which all Level 3 water technician teams are equipped with. The Service also have a rigid inflatable boat based at Chippenham fire station. Level 3 water technician teams provide a safe system of work for all other crews operating at the lower levels (for rescuing the rescuers).

3.8.2. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2020 technical rescue teams attended 105 water incidents. 59 of these incidents required a Level 3 intervention (shown in Figure 6). In addition to this, there were four incidents which Chippenham's powered boat attended, none of which were life critical.¹

¹ Two of these incidents were for body retrieval from water and two were related to animal rescues.

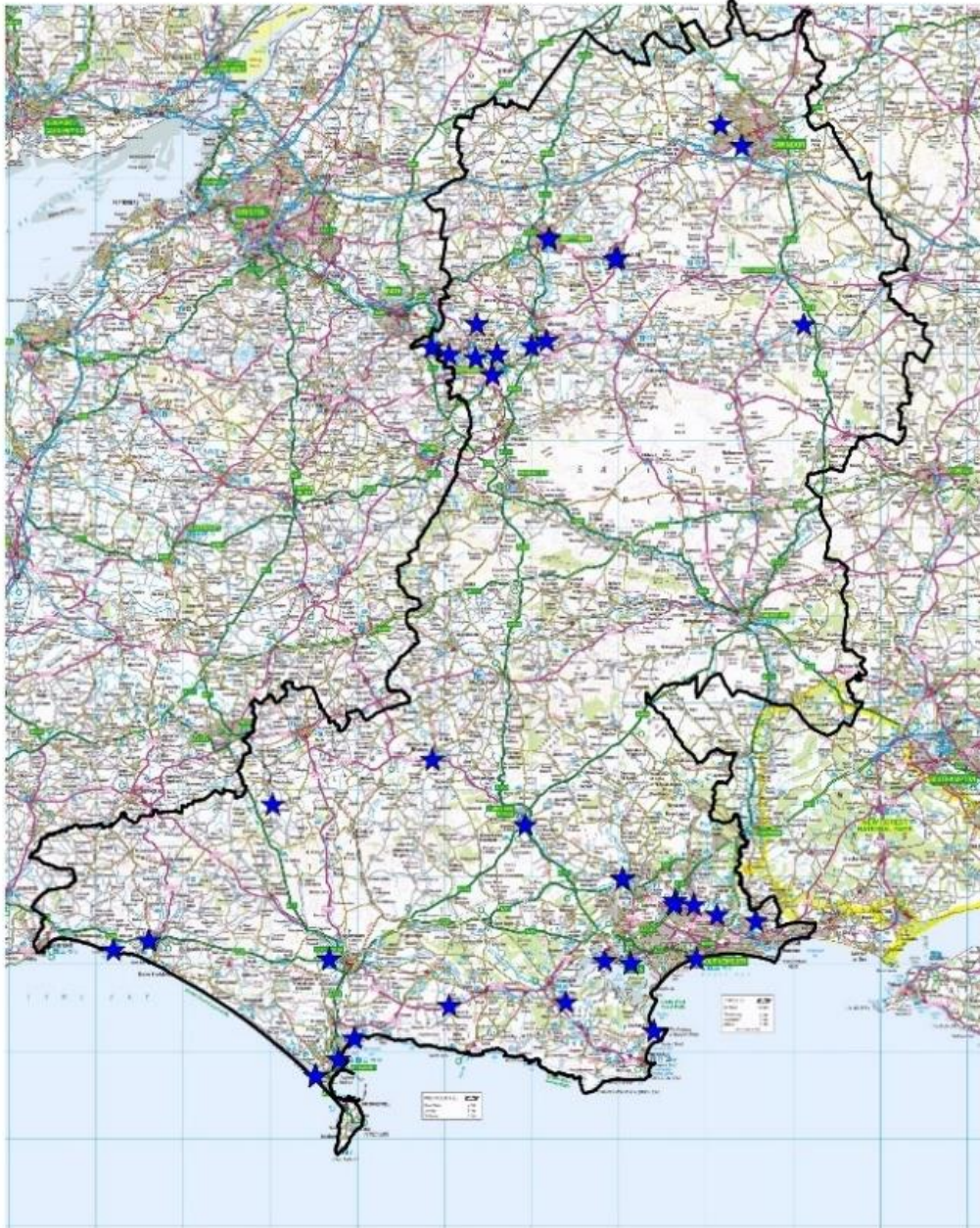


Figure 6 - Level 3 water incidents attended by the Service.

3.8.3. A breakdown of the 59 Level 3 water incidents, attended by the Service, can be seen in Table 2. Of the 59 incidents 14 were classified as life critical and these were located across the Service in Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Calne, Chippenham, Christchurch, Pewsey, Poole, Trowbridge, Weymouth and Wimborne.

	Chippenham	Poole	Stratton	Trowbridge	Weymouth	Total
Rescue- non-life critical	0	8	1	2	4	15
Life critical	4	5	1	2	2	14
Assist other agency missing person search	1	5	0	2	1	9
Assist other agency (general)	2	2	0	2	0	6
Assist other agency body retrieval	0	1	0	5	0	6
Animal rescue from water	2	0	1	0	0	3
False alarm	0	0	0	1	2	3
Stood by due to location	0	1	0	1	0	2
False alarm malicious	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	10	22	3	15	9	59

Table 2 - Breakdown of the Level 3 Water incidents attended by technical rescue stations.

3.9 Water rescue risk

3.9.1. The main types of flooding risk within the Service are fluvial, pluvial and coastal:

- *Fluvial*: Where rivers become overwhelmed and expand from their riverbanks onto surrounding areas. This can be due to rainfall and run-off from higher ground
- *Pluvial*: Caused by extreme rainfall or run-off from higher ground. It can cause two types of event, surface water flooding where drainage systems become overwhelmed and flash flooding causing a large moving body of water to flow through particular areas. Flash flooding is becoming more prevalent as areas are becoming increasingly urbanised and due to the impacts of climate change
- *Coastal*: Flooding caused by changes to the tide level when impacted by a storm surge.

3.9.2. Fluvial and pluvial flooding is found in the north of the Service and fluvial, pluvial, and coastal being found in the south.

3.9.3. To further support an understanding of our future potential risk, appendix B shows the Environment Agency's flood risk mapping around the areas where (Level 2) water first responder and (Level 3) water technician stations are located.

- 3.9.4. Table 3 shows the number of postcodes at risk of flooding near to the current technical rescue stations with (Level 3) water technician teams that have been identified by the Environment Agency. This data shows that the areas with the greatest number of at-risk postcodes are Weymouth, Poole and Stratton, with a significantly lower number in Chippenham and Trowbridge.

	High ²	Medium	Low	Very Low	Total	Total properties in postcode area
Weymouth	87	28	95	2	212	32,042
Poole	39	27	51	0	117	119,039
Stratton	27	41	80	9	157	100,722
Chippenham	15	39	26	0	80	25,263
Trowbridge	4	0	26	0	30	20,059
Total	174	172	377	11	734	319,134

Table 3 - Number of at-risk postcodes near to the current technical rescue stations with (Level 3) water technician teams.

- 3.9.5. Table 4 shows the number of postcodes at risk of flooding near to the current (Level 2) water first responder stations. Several of these areas have similar or higher risk than Chippenham or Trowbridge, which are currently technical rescue stations with (Level 3) water technician teams.

	High	Medium	Low	Very Low	Total	Total Properties in postcode area
Bridport	19	8	49	17	93	10,130
Christchurch	12	40	103	0	155	23,537
Bradford on Avon	9	1	9	0	19	5,867
Malmesbury	8	4	13	0	25	5,722
Salisbury	2	37	99	0	138	22,009
Sturminster Newton	1	1	1	0	3	5,179
Total	51	91	274	17	433	72,444

Table 4 - Number of at-risk postcodes near to the current (Level 2) Water First Responder stations.

- 3.9.6. In 2019, permanently situated lockable flood gates were installed at either end of the B3106 between Holt and Staverton (near Trowbridge). Unlike portable road closure signage these gates make it more difficult for drivers of vehicles to bypass the road closure signs, preventing their vehicles from becoming trapped in flood water. This should reduce the need for Service interventions in these types of incidents.

² (Per year the risk of flooding is: High- greater than 1 in 30 (3.3%), Medium- between 1 in 30 (3.3%) and 1 in 100 (1%), Low- between 1 in 100 (1%) and 1 in 1000 (0.12%), Very Low- less than 1 in 1000 (0.1%).)

- 3.9.7. There is one main canal system within the Service area, the Kennet and Avon Canal, which runs across mid Wiltshire and consists of several locks along the length of the canal. Additionally, there is a section of the Wiltshire and Berkshire Canal in the north of the Service.
- 3.9.8. Water rescue incidents in canals can generally be categorised as either:
- *Immediate rescue*: This is carried out by the initial responding crew, primarily a Level 1 or Level 2 crew. A Level 3 crew is mobilised as part of the response plan to provide an additional safe system of work
 - *Body retrieval*: Sadly, this is the most common way the Service gets deployed to incident in canals. Body retrieval is the responsibility of the Police. Firefighting crews support the Police, when requested, with the provision of a Level 3 water technician team. Due to the nature of these incidents an emergency response is not required.
- 3.9.9. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2020 11 incidents occurred within the area of the Kennet and Avon Canal and one incident occurred in the canal in Swindon. The incidents were predominantly to assist the Police with body retrievals and were resolved by either a safe working near water (Level 1) or water first responder team (Level 2), prior to the arrival of the water technician (Level 3) team.
- 3.9.10. The Police have the responsibilities for body retrievals, however, given the Service's water rescue capabilities there are occasions when the Police request our assistance to support this function.
- 3.9.11. Sadly, the majority of incidents involving canals often result in a body retrieval, regardless of the proximity of the water rescue teams. On those occasions where it is possible to execute a rescue, working near water (Level 1) or water first responder (Level 2) teams are suitably trained and equipped to carry out the rescue. A water technician (Level 3) team is mobilised to provide a safe system of work in support of those teams, if required.
- 3.9.12. To mitigate the risk presented by canals the Service proactively promotes water safety and prevention activities in areas surrounding the canal networks together with published water safety advice on our website.
- 3.10 **Spate conditions**
- 3.10.1. During periods of severe weather the Service can experience higher than normal levels of activity. These periods are known as *spate conditions*.
- 3.10.2. Spate conditions are often described as 'rising tide' events due to the pre-warning given through both the Meteorological Office forecasting and the Environment Agency flood warning service. This enables the Service to work in

conjunction with Local Resilience Forums to strategically deploy (Level 2) water first responder and (Level 3) water technician teams to the areas of the Service deemed to be at the greatest risk.

- 3.10.3. When forecasting these events, the Meteorological Office will issue a flood warning or flood alert aligned to the severity of the risk.³ To further support the Service's understanding of the historic flood risk appendix C details the type of flood warning and the location for which it was issued between 2006 and 2017. A summary of the number and type of flood warnings/alerts over this period can be seen in Table 5.
- 3.10.4. The last spate conditions within the Service area occurred between 21 December 2013 and 17 February 2014 where there were 107 water/flooding related incidents in Dorset. Three of which required (Level 3) water technician teams to resolve. Within the same period there were 193 incidents in Wiltshire, none of which required a (Level 3) water technician team to resolve.

County	Severe Flood Warning	Flood Warning	Flood Alert	Total
Dorset	20	514	1946	2480
Wiltshire	0	228	857	1085

Table 5 - Number and type of Environment Agency flood warning/alerts issued between 2006 and 2017.

3.11 Technical search

- 3.11.1. The main type of risk requiring the attendance of a technical search team in the Service is presented from people who are trapped.
- 3.11.2. Areas of the Jurassic Coast in Dorset are susceptible to cliff face collapse, this can lead to people becoming trapped underneath debris. People can also become trapped under collapsed structures or in subsurface collapses.
- 3.11.3. The Service currently provides an initial technical search capability at Trowbridge and Weymouth, utilising equipment such as a snake eye camera and sound monitoring apparatus, to undertake lower risk activities such as small animal rescues.
- 3.11.4. Technical search is a complex discipline and as such additional support is provided to all fire and rescue services through national resilience arrangements. This enables any service to access specialist urban search and rescue teams, hosted by strategically located fire and rescue services across England, including neighbouring services.

³ (Met office flood warnings have four classifications; Severe Flood Warning – danger to life, Flood warning – flooding is expected immediate action required and Flood alert – flooding is possible be prepared).

- 3.11.5. During the period being reviewed the majority of technical search incidents in the Service have involved the use of a snake eye camera to locate animals trapped in building voids or in underground areas.

3.12 **Technical confined space**

- 3.12.1. All firefighting crews are equipped and trained to carry out rescues in confined spaces, with the use of breathing apparatus. Often access into these areas does not require the use of rope access equipment, however, on occasion this is required.
- 3.12.2. Level 3 rope rescue teams are equipped and trained to enable rescues to be carried out in confined spaces where rope access equipment is required. This capability enables those teams to work without the need for full breathing apparatus, instead using ventilation and gas monitoring techniques, which allows access that otherwise could not be achieved by a standard firefighting crew.
- 3.12.3. Any work activity, including fire and rescue service incidents, undertaken in confined spaces are bound by the Confined Space Regulations 1997. The Service's technical confined space teams ensure the Service has a means of providing a safe system of work required by these regulations.
- 3.12.4. Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2020 there were seven incidents where a technical confined space team was required as part of the response plan. If required, additional support is available through the national resilience arrangements.
- 3.12.5. The Service's technical confined space capability is currently provided by technical rescue crews at Chippenham, Poole, Trowbridge and Weymouth fire stations.
- 3.12.6. Each confined space team is currently made up of eight Level 3 rope trained personnel, including one team supervisor (i.e. two Level 3 rope rescue teams). The Service's current operational risk assessment requires that a team of eight qualified personnel make up one technical confined space rescue team.
- 3.12.7. In the event of a technical confined space rescue in the north of the Service area, three stations are mobilised to achieve the required safe system of work. This is due to the aggregate crewing arrangements at Chippenham and Trowbridge, as stated earlier in the report.
- 3.12.8. Following the alignment of Level 2 rope teams across the Service in 2018, the technical rescue steering group is currently reviewing the risk assessment to confirm if a safe system of work could be achieved utilising greater support from a Level 2 rope team.

4. Proposed technical rescue solution

- 4.1 The review team, along with senior officers, visited each of the current technical rescue stations to discuss the technical rescue review. During these visits, a presentation was given. During the meetings any questions, comments, ideas, and risks were captured by the review team. Following these meetings an electronic form was also sent out to capture any further feedback. This feedback was incorporated into the review.
- 4.2 Representative bodies were engaged through a structured meeting process and invited to feedback on the proposal. The Fire Brigades Union have engaged fully in the discussion and acknowledge the proposal is a viable option.
- 4.3 A summary of the communication and engagement carried out during this technical rescue review can be seen in appendix D.
- 4.4 The review, conducted by specialist officers, proposed a three-team solution crewed by wholtime firefighters at Poole, Stratton and Weymouth. These stations will have the capability to provide all technical rescue specialisms, including water rescue, in a consistent and more resilient way. This option includes maintaining a water rescue capability at Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Chippenham, Christchurch, Malmesbury, Salisbury, Sturminster Newton and Trowbridge to allow for rescues where people are trapped in vehicles and homes in flood water. Should spate flooding conditions occur then teams across the Service would be mobilised and local or national mutual aid arrangements initiated, as necessary.
- 4.5 The provision of three strategically located technical rescue stations, with a full range of capabilities, will have the following operational advantages:
- **Greater resilience** as crews at each technical rescue station will be able to provide crewing resilience at all other stations, all on the same duty system
 - **Improved strategic cover** ensuring all 50 station areas can be reached within 60 minutes and align to Service demand and community risk profile
 - **Interchangeability of vehicles and equipment.** Aligning vehicles to the same technical rescue vehicle solution will allow interchangeability between technical rescue stations and other Service vehicles (e.g. operational support unit), if required
 - **An increase in operational teams to meet the risk profile of the Service.** A comparison of the number of trained staff/teams currently and with the recommended option for a three-station solution (Poole, Stratton, and Weymouth), can be seen in Table 6.

	Number of Trained Staff			Number of Teams*		
	Current	Proposed	Difference	Current	Proposed	Difference
Large Animal	76	104	+28	2	3	+1
Level 3 Rope	104	104	0	3	3	0
Water Technician	132	104	-28	4	3	-1
Water First Responder	66	122	+56	5	8	+3
Bariatric Technical	62	104	+42	2	3	+1
Confined Space Technical	104	104	0	3	3	0
Technical Search	42	62	+20	2	2	0
Rope L2	216	216	0	8	9	+1

Table 6 - Number of staff/teams trained in differing technical rescue specialisations.

*Number of teams assumes Chippenham and Trowbridge are co-mobilised as one team due to their current aggregate crewing arrangement.

- 4.6 Chippenham and Trowbridge technical rescue crews operate on a day crew duty system. Technical rescue requires a minimum of five crew. The day crewed duty system means there are occasions when the technical rescue capability is unavailable due to insufficient crews being on duty. Whilst this impacts on the availability of technical rescue teams, this does not impact on the availability of a fire appliance which requires a crew of four.
- 4.7 In these instances, it is necessary to mobilise both stations to an incident to form a full technical rescue team. These additional mobilisations incur additional costs, increase the level of risk due to more vehicles responding on blue lights and deplete cover for other emergencies whilst backfill arrangements are coordinated.
- 4.8 Chippenham and Trowbridge should therefore be regarded as a single team and the current number of teams for Level 3 rope and (Level 3) water technician teams should be considered to be one lower.
- 4.9 As can be seen from Table 6, the proposal to have three technical rescue stations would increase:
- the overall number of large animal and bariatric rescue teams
 - the number of crews trained and equipped to resolve these incident types, which represent the area of highest and fastest growing demand.

4.10 Under the proposal:

- the number of Level 3 rope teams will remain the same at three
- the number of trained and equipped staff across the Service will also remain the same, although the disposition of these teams will change
- there will be an additional Level 2 rope team.

4.11 The community risk profile and historic incident demand supports increasing the number of (Level 2) water first responder crews, who are equipped and trained to deal with the majority of foreseeable water rescue incidents.

4.12 To ensure the Service maintains a (Level 3) water technician capability to meet demand and provide a safe system of work for all other crews, the proposal will retain three strategically located teams at the three full technical rescue stations.

4.13 As previously outlined in the report the use of a powered boat is infrequent and largely to support body retrieval rather than rescues. The overwhelming majority of requirements are met by the non-powered boat capability used by Level 3 water technician teams. Additional support is available to the Service through national resilience arrangements and the voluntary sector. This enables any Service to access specialist boat rescue teams hosted by strategically located fire and rescue services across England, including neighbouring services. The Service has a memorandum of understanding with Wessex Flood Rescue Unit, who can provide a crewed powered boat trained to at least the same standard as the Service's Level 3 operatives. This is a 24-hour response, 365 days a year, and covers the whole Service area.

4.14 The proposed location of water rescue assets is shown in Figure 7.



Figure 7 - Proposed locations of water rescue assets.

4.15 Vehicle costs and potential cost avoidance arising from the proposal

- 4.15.1. The capital programme for 2021-22 had included £433,000 to purchase two replacement technical rescue vehicles and £82,610 for two 4x4 support vehicles, a total of £515,610. The current vehicles used in the north of the Service are no longer suitable for stations providing full technical rescue capabilities as they are unable to carry all the technical rescue equipment, due to insufficient load capacity.
- 4.15.2. The provision of three technical rescue stations requires the purchase of only one of each type of these vehicles. This represents a cost avoidance of £257,805 helping to further reduce borrowing and associated capital financing costs, helping to mitigate risks outlined in the Medium-Term Finance Plan.

4.16 Technical rescue training and equipment costs

- 4.16.1. The current cost of technical rescue training and equipment is £85,297 per year. The annual cost of having three technical rescue stations at Poole, Stratton and Weymouth, all carrying out aligned specialisms, is £72,696, providing an annual saving of £12,601.
- 4.16.2. To affect this change there are one-off alignment costs required. These are £33,841 for training and £36,278 for equipment, to enable the proposed three stations to deliver all technical rescue specialisms.

4.17 Special rescue allowance payments

- 4.17.1. Currently staff providing Level 3 rope capability and Level 3 water technician capability receive Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) payments. The current payments are £801 for supervisors and £585 for operators and total costs are £84,087. By having three specialist teams these costs reduce to £66,354, leading to an annual revenue saving of £17,233. No pay protection costs arise from this proposal as these allowances are only payable whilst undertaking these specialisms.

4.18 Option 1 ongoing cost summary

- 4.18.1. The ongoing revenue costs of Option 1 compared to current costs are as follows:

	Current	Option 1	Difference
Training & equipment	£85,297	£72,696	£12,601
SRA payments	£84,087	£66,854	£17,233
	£169,384	£139,550	£29,834

4.19 Disposition of technical rescue stations

- 4.19.1. The provision of three strategically located technical rescue stations will provide greater resilience across the Service area, ensuring all 50 station areas can be reached within 60 minutes. It also aligns the operational capabilities to the demand and risk profile.
- 4.19.2. In addition, in the north of the Service area it will improve operational availability of fire appliances due to reducing the over mobilisation of stations required for the different capabilities, equipment and vehicles located at different stations.
- 4.19.3. Reductions in the over mobilisation of stations, due to different specialists being vested on different stations, will also see a reduction in costs to the Service. Currently every additional technical rescue resource mobilised incurs a cost of £368 per hour for the additional technical rescue asset and often a cost of £160 per hour for an on-call crew to provide cover for other emergencies whilst the technical rescue asset is attending the incident.

Option 1	<p>Establish three consistent technical rescue teams, aligned to the Service risk profile, that are crewed by wholetime firefighters at Poole, Stratton and Weymouth.</p> <p><i>Note: This option includes maintaining Level 2 water rescue capability at Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Chippenham, Christchurch, Malmesbury, Salisbury, Sturminster Newton and Trowbridge to allow for rescues where people are trapped in vehicles and homes in flood water.</i></p>
Benefits and opportunities	<p><i>Operational</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent delivery model across the Service • Optimises the availability of technical rescue assets and capabilities • Aligns the most appropriate resources to risk • Improves operational resilience • Provides cover across the whole Service area within the 60-minute standard • Additional flood water rescue, large animal, technical search, and bariatric rescue teams • Reduces co-mobilisation of technical rescue teams as each team have all skills and equipment available • Retains a sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) • Capacity created at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision enabling crews to undertake other activities (e.g. Prevention). <p><i>Financial</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce one off alignment costs • Reduced training and salary training costs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced equipment costs • Reduced fleet costs • Reduced borrowing and capital financing costs.
Risks and implementations issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of external training providers for rope Level 3 courses, leading to extended timescales for full implementation • Time to consolidate skills requiring the need to potentially maintain the capability at Chippenham or Trowbridge to support Stratton • Lead time of new vehicles could lead to short term stowage issues for technical rescue equipment • Lead time of new equipment • Short term costs associated with implementation of changes • Short term cost maintaining existing provision until newly formed teams are trained • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities.

5. Alternative proposal

- 5.1 In addition to having Poole, Stratton and Weymouth carrying out all technical rescue capabilities, there is an alternative option of maintaining Chippenham and Trowbridge as Level 3 water technician teams only.
- 5.2 This option would be an enhanced water rescue capability for the Service but incur additional annual revenue costs for SRA payments, annual training, equipment, and vehicle maintenance of £33,517 compared to Option 1.
- 5.3 There would also be additional capital costs for vehicle replacements when the current two vehicles become end of life in 2025. To replace these vehicles with a like for like replacement in 2025 would cost approximately £120,000 for which no provision is currently made within the Medium-Term Finance Plan. This reduces the capital saving from £257,805 to £137,805.

5.4 Option 2 ongoing cost summary

- 5.4.1. The ongoing revenue costs of Option 2 compared to Option 1 are as follows:

	Option 1	Option 2	Difference
Training & equipment	£72,696	£95,812	£23,116
SRA payments	£66,854	£77,255	£10,401
	£139,550	£173,067	£33,517

5.4

Option 2	<p>a) Establish three consistent technical rescue teams aligned to the Service risk profile that are crewed by wholetime firefighters at Poole, Stratton and Weymouth; and,</p> <p>b) Retain a Level 3 water rescue capability at Chippenham and Trowbridge.</p> <p><i>This option includes maintaining Level 2 water rescue capability at Bradford on Avon, Bridport, Christchurch, Malmesbury, Salisbury and Sturminster Newton to allow for rescues where people are trapped in vehicles and homes in flood water.</i></p>
Benefits and opportunities	<p><i>Operational</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent delivery model across the Service for technical rescue, with an enhanced capability at Chippenham and Trowbridge • Optimises the availability of technical rescue assets and capabilities, although Chippenham and Trowbridge will have a different vehicle and equipment solution to allow Level 3 water rescue capability • Provides cover across the whole Service area within the 60-minute standard • Additional flood water rescue, large animal rescue, technical search and bariatric rescue teams • Retains a sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) • Capacity created at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision enabling crews to undertake other activities (e.g. prevention).
Risks and implementations issues	<p><i>Financial (when compared to option 1)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased one off alignment costs • Increased training and salary training costs • Increased equipment costs • Increased fleet costs • Increased capital borrowing • Increased costs resulting from mobilising Chippenham and Trowbridge as a single water rescue team • Savings would potentially need to be found elsewhere given the Authority's forecasted budget deficits, dependent upon future financial settlements and council tax flexibilities.

6 Summary

- 6.1 This review of technical rescue capability has focused on developing a more consistent capability in the following areas: animal rescue, working at height, bariatric support to the Ambulance Service, water rescue, technical search and confined space rescue. There is no statutory requirement to provide these services and many fire and rescue authorities rely entirely on mutual aid. However, to provide safe systems of work for stations and to support community and partnership requests it is believed that these services should continue to be provided.
- 6.2 Under delegated arrangements and after considerable data analysis, engagement with staff and their representative bodies, the result has concluded from a professional perspective that a three-station enhanced technical rescue capability should be established at Poole, Stratton and Weymouth. At an increased cost, an alternative option is also proposed that retains a (Level 3) water technician capability at Chippenham and Trowbridge fire stations.
- 6.3 Members are asked to consider and decide the best way forward at the public meeting as outlined in the recommendations presented in this report. Following a comprehensive review, the officer recommendation is Option 1.

Appendices

Appendix A

Costings, benefits, and risks of combinations of technical rescue stations

Stations	Number of stations reached in 60 minutes	Alignment Costs (training)	Alignment Costs (vehicles)	Alignment Costs (equipment)	Annual Costs	Total Trained Staff	Number of Supervisors	Number of Operators
Current Provision	Animal: 46 Rope: 50 Water: 50 Bariatric: 48	£0	£1,002,740	£0	£169,383	Animal: 76 Rope: 104 Water: 132 Bariatric: 62	Animal: 20 Rope: 28 Water: 36	Animal: 56 Rope: 76 Water: 96
Poole, Salisbury, Stratton	48	£80,788	£246,305	£36,278	£139,549	104	28	76
Chippenham, Poole, Stratton	48	£29,309	£246,305	£36,278	£120,901	90	24	66
Chippenham, Stratton, Weymouth	45	£38,478	£246,305	£36,278	£93,242	70	20	50
Poole, Trowbridge Stratton	48	£28,203	£246,305	£36,278	£120,901	90	24	66
Trowbridge, Stratton, Weymouth	49	£37,478	£246,305	£36,278	£93,242	70	20	50
Salisbury, Stratton, Weymouth	50	£90,063	£246,305	£36,278	£110,158	84	24	60
Poole, Stratton, Weymouth	50	£33,841	£246,305	£36,278	£139,549	104	28	76

Stations	Number of stations reached in 60 minutes	Alignment Costs (training)	Alignment Costs (vehicles)	Alignment Costs (equipment)	Annual Costs	Total Trained Staff	Number of Supervisors	Number of Operators
Poole, Stratton, Weymouth (Chippenham and Trowbridge water rescue only)	50	£33,841	£366,305	£36,278	£173,067	Animal Large: 104 Rope L3: 104 Water Tech: 132 Bariatric: 104	Animal Large: 28 Rope L3: 28 Water Tech: 36	Animal Large: 76 Rope L3: 76 Water Tech: 96

	Benefits	Risks
Poole, Salisbury, Stratton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced training costs Reduced equipment costs Reduced fleet costs Reduced additional responsibility allowance costs Consistent delivery model across the Service Reduced co-mobilisation of rescue teams from separate stations to form a single team Sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) Creates capacity for prevention activities at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short term costs associated with implementation of changes Short term costs associated with maintaining the existing provision until newly formed teams are trained Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities Disengagement of staff from station where provision is removed Two station areas not within 60 minutes attendance time of a technical rescue station Too many competencies with aerial ladder platform and technical rescue based at the same station.
Chippenham, Poole, Stratton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced training costs Reduced equipment costs Reduced fleet costs Reduced additional responsibility allowance costs Consistent delivery model across the Service Reduced co-mobilisation of rescue teams from separate stations to form a single team Sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) Creates capacity for prevention activities at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased likelihood of an unavailable crew. Chippenham's duty system makes it more difficult to maintain five trained technical rescue staff overnight, with an historic reliance on Trowbridge to support them Reduced training for Level 2 stations. Chippenham's duty system impacts on the time available to provide training support to on-call water first responder stations and Level 2 rope teams Two station areas not within 60 minutes attendance time of a technical rescue station Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities.

	Benefits	Risks
Chippenham, Stratton, Weymouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced training costs • Reduced equipment costs • Reduced fleet costs • Reduced additional responsibility allowance costs • Consistent delivery model across the Service • Reduced co-mobilisation of rescue teams from separate stations to form a single team • Sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) • Creates capacity for prevention activities at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision • Lower short-term costs associated with maintaining the existing provision as each station only needs to be trained in one additional skill set • Lower one-off alignments costs, • Capacity created at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased likelihood of an unavailable crew. Chippenham's duty system makes it more difficult to maintain five trained technical rescue staff overnight, with an historic reliance on Trowbridge to support them • Reduced training for Level 2 stations. Chippenham's duty system impacts on the time available to provide training support to on-call water first responder stations and Level 2 rope teams • Five station areas not within 60 minutes attendance time of a technical rescue station • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities.
Poole, Trowbridge, Stratton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced training costs • Reduced equipment costs • Reduced fleet costs • Reduced additional responsibility allowance costs • Consistent delivery model across the Service • Reduced co-mobilisation of rescue teams from separate stations to form a single team • Sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) • Creates capacity for prevention activities at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision • Lower short-term costs associated with maintaining the existing provision as each station only needs to be trained in one additional skill set • Lower one-off alignments costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased likelihood of an unavailable crew. Trowbridge's duty system makes it more difficult to maintain five trained technical rescue staff overnight, with an historic reliance on Chippenham to support them • Reduced training for Level 2 stations. Trowbridge's duty system impacts on the time available to provide training support to on-call water first responder stations and Level 2 rope teams • Two station areas not within 60 minutes attendance time of a technical rescue station • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities.

	Benefits	Risks
Trowbridge, Stratton, Weymouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced training costs • Reduced equipment costs • Reduced fleet costs • Reduced additional responsibility allowance costs • Consistent delivery model across the Service • Reduced co-mobilisation of rescue teams from separate stations to form a single team • Sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) • Creates capacity for prevention activities at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision • Lower short-term costs associated with maintaining the existing provision as each station only needs to be trained in one additional skill set • Lower one-off alignments costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased likelihood of an unavailable crew. Trowbridge's duty system makes it more difficult to maintain five trained technical rescue staff overnight, with an historic reliance on Chippenham to support them • Reduced training for Level 2 stations. Trowbridge's duty system impacts on the time available to provide training support to on-call water first responder stations and Level 2 rope teams • One station area not within 60 minutes attendance time of a technical rescue station • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities.
Salisbury, Stratton, Weymouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced training costs • Reduced equipment costs • Reduced fleet costs • Reduced additional responsibility allowance costs • Consistent delivery model across the Service • Reduced co-mobilisation of rescue teams from separate stations to form a single team • Sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) • Creates capacity for prevention activities at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision • All station areas within 60 minutes response time for a technical rescue station. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term costs associated with implementation of changes • Short term costs associated with maintaining the existing provision until newly formed teams are trained • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities • Disengagement of staff from station where provision is removed • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities • Too many competencies with aerial ladder platform and technical rescue based at the same station.

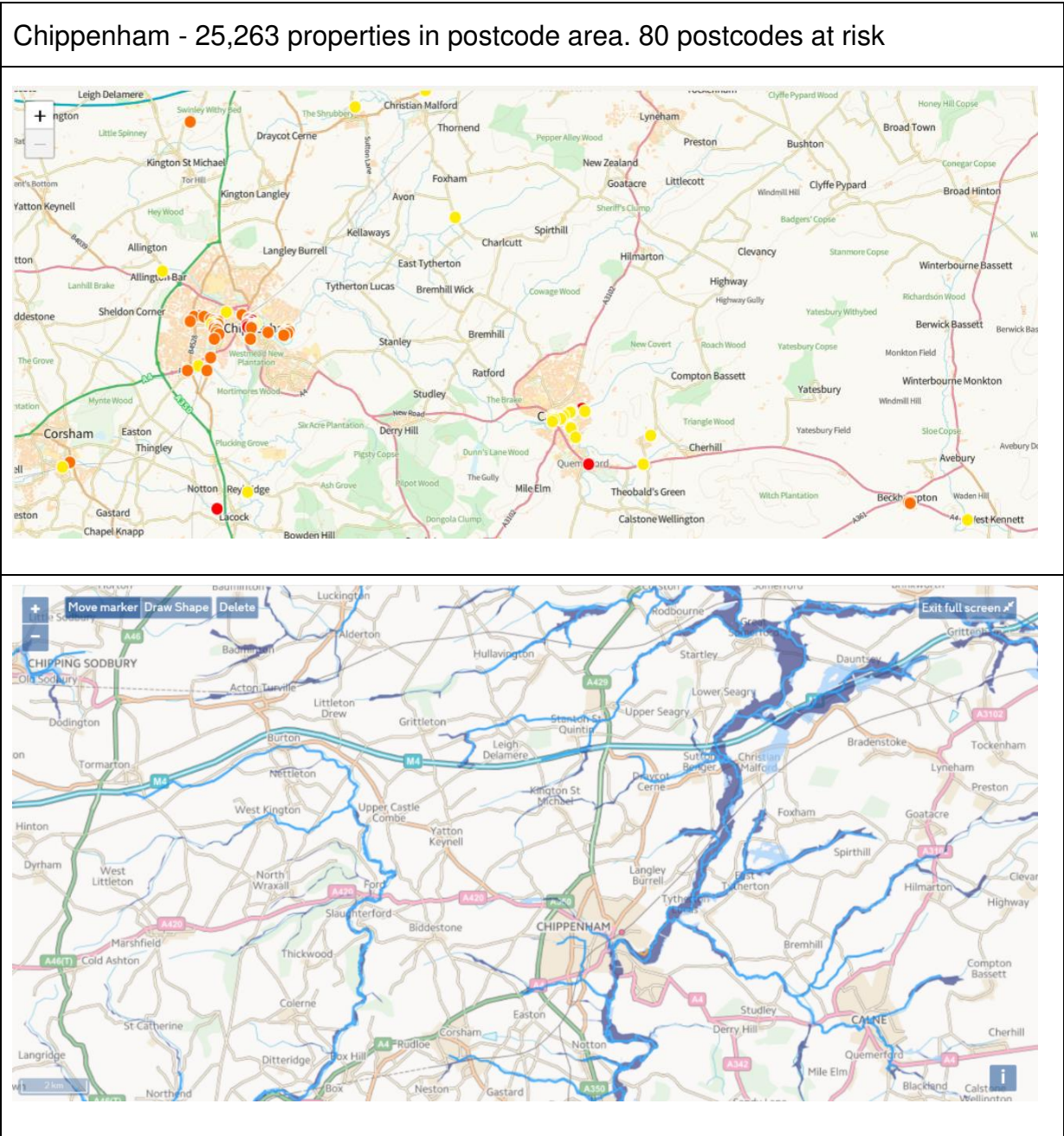
	Benefits	Risks
Poole, Salisbury, Stratton, Weymouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent delivery model across the Service • Reduced co-mobilisation of rescue teams from separate stations to form a single team • Sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) • Creates capacity for prevention activities at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision • All station areas within 60 minutes response time for a technical rescue station. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased short term costs associated with implementation of changes • Short term costs associated with maintaining the existing provision until newly formed teams are trained • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities • Disengagement of staff from station where provision is removed • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities • Too many competencies with aerial ladder platform and technical rescue based at the same station.
Poole, Stratton, Weymouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced training costs • Reduced equipment costs • Reduced fleet costs • Reduced additional responsibility allowance costs • Consistent delivery model across the Service • Reduced co-mobilisation of rescue teams from separate stations to form a single team • Sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) • Creates capacity for prevention activities at stations that no longer provide a technical rescue provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term costs associated with implementation of changes • Short term costs associated with maintaining the existing provision until newly formed teams are trained • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities • Disengagement of staff from station where provision is removed • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities • Too many competencies with aerial ladder platform and technical rescue based at the same station • Two station areas not within 60 minutes attendance time of a technical rescue station.

	Benefits	Risks
Poole, Stratton, Weymouth Water rescue only at Chippenham and Trowbridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient number of trained staff for resilience purposes (training and crewing shortfall) • All station areas within 60 minutes response time for a technical rescue station • Additional water technician teams at Chippenham and Trowbridge, additional flood water rescue, large animal, technical search and bariatric rescue teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased short term costs associated with implementation of changes • Increased annual training cost • Increased equipment costs • Increased fleet costs to supply two additional vehicles to keep Chippenham and Trowbridge as Level 3 water technicians when current vehicles become end-of life • Additional vehicle and equipment maintenance costs, not within existing cost envelope • Inconsistent appliances, equipment and training as different vehicle solution would be used at Chippenham and Trowbridge • Increased costs associated with co-mobilisation of Chippenham and Trowbridge • Teams not matched to risk profile, • Increased demand on stations affecting prevention activities, • Disengagement of staff from station where provision is removed • Too many competencies with aerial ladder platform and technical rescue based at the same station.

Appendix B

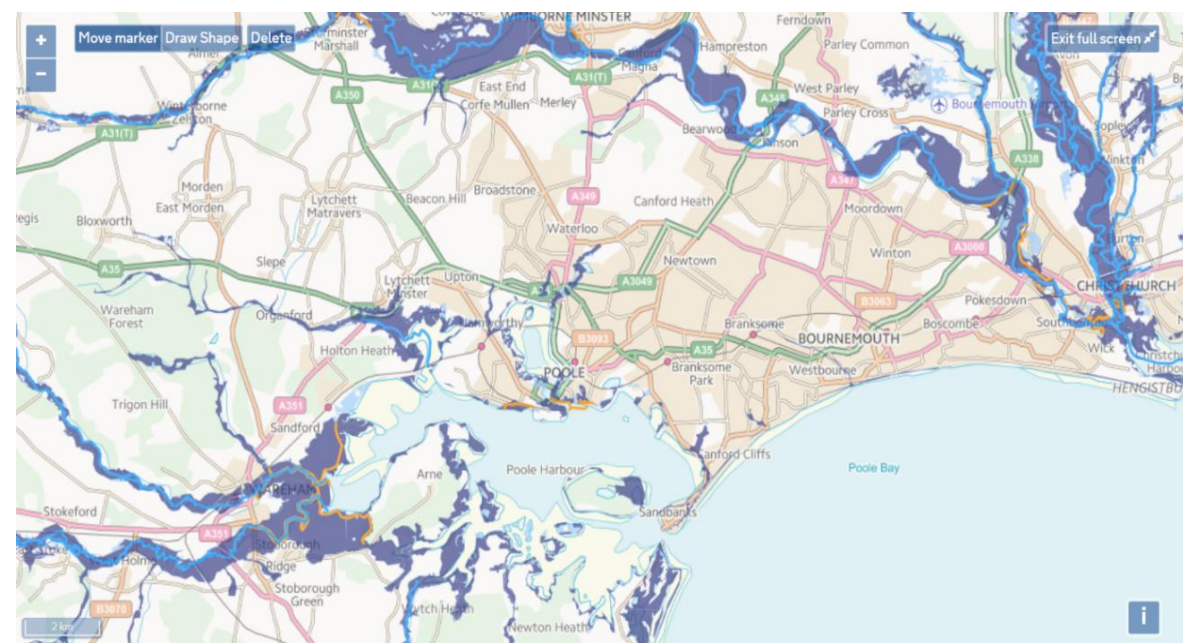
Flood maps for current water first responder and water technician stations from the Environment Agency

Current (Level 3) water technician stations

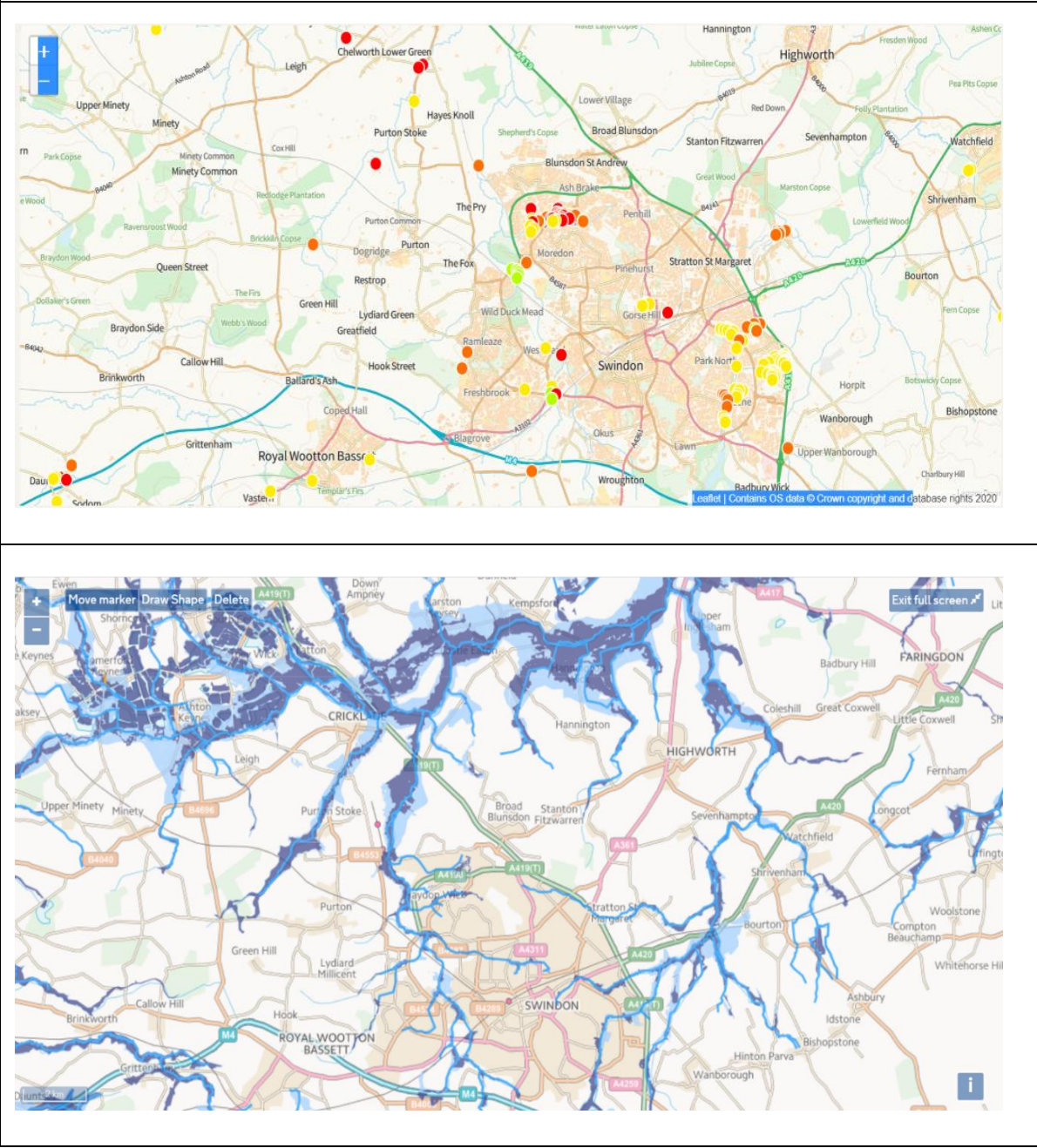


High	Each year, there is a chance of flooding of greater than 1 in 30 (3.3%).
Medium	Each year, there is a chance of flooding of between 1 in 30 (3.3%) and 1 in 100 (1%).
Low	Each year, there is a chance of flooding of between 1 in 100 (1%) and 1 in 1000 (0.1%).
Very Low	Each year, there is a chance of flooding of less than 1 in 1000 (0.1%).
None	This value is added by GetTheData to indicate a postcode which is not in a flood risk area.

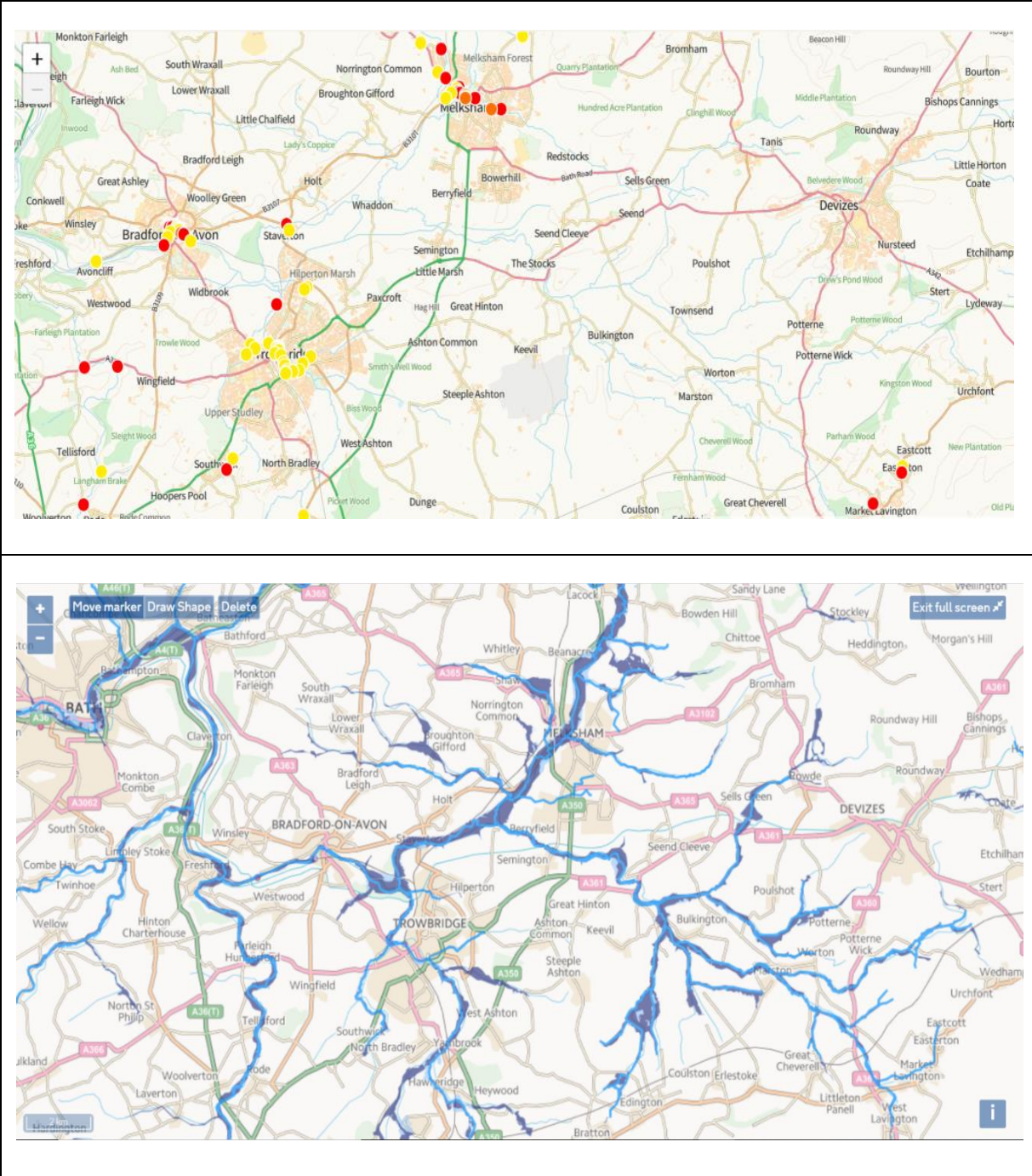
The map displays the coastal region of Dorset, England, from Lytchett Matravers in the west to Christchurch in the east. Yellow dots, representing Common Noddies, are concentrated in the Poole area and along the coast towards Christchurch. Red dots, representing Red-throated Loons, are scattered along the coast, with notable clusters near Poole and Bournemouth. The map includes a scale bar in the top left corner and a legend indicating the species represented by the colored dots.



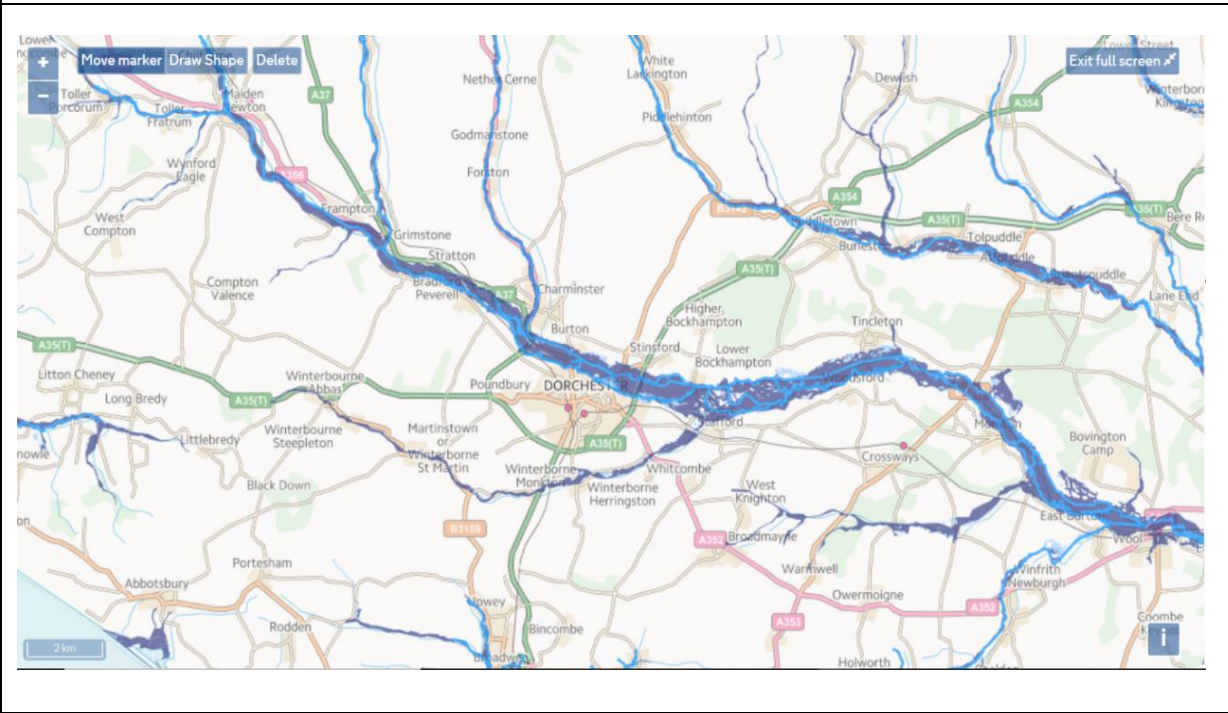
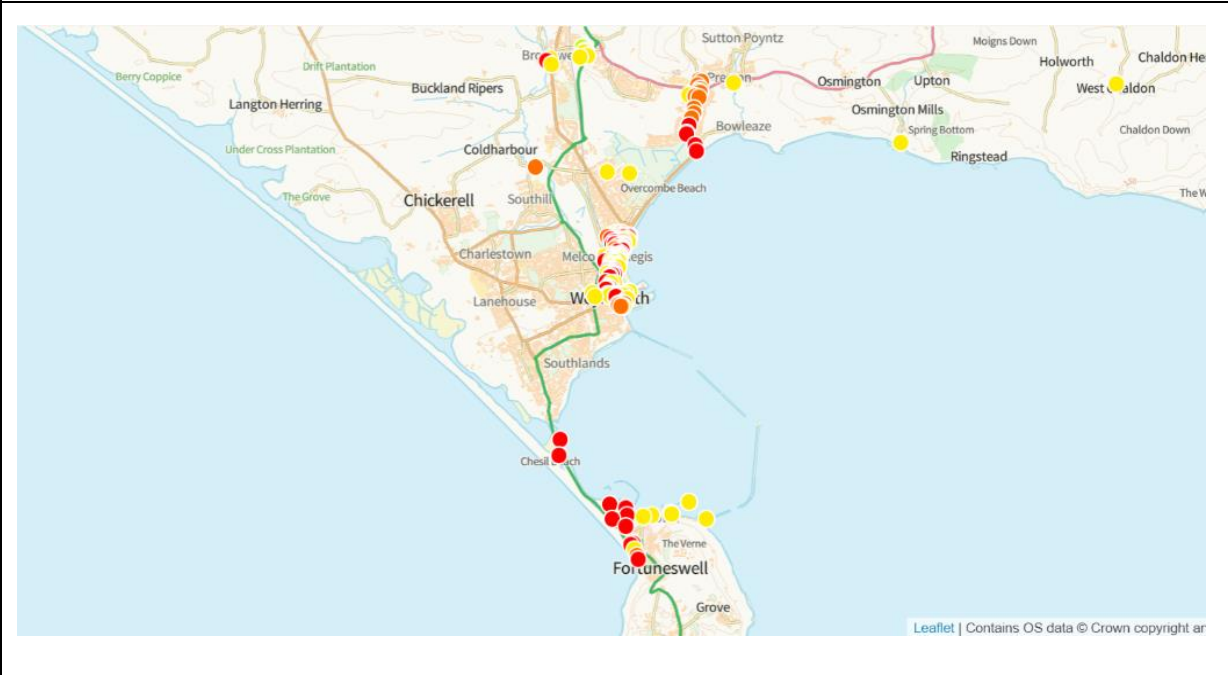
Stratton - 100,722 properties in postcode area. 157 postcodes at risk



Trowbridge - 20,059 properties in postcode area. 30 postcodes at risk

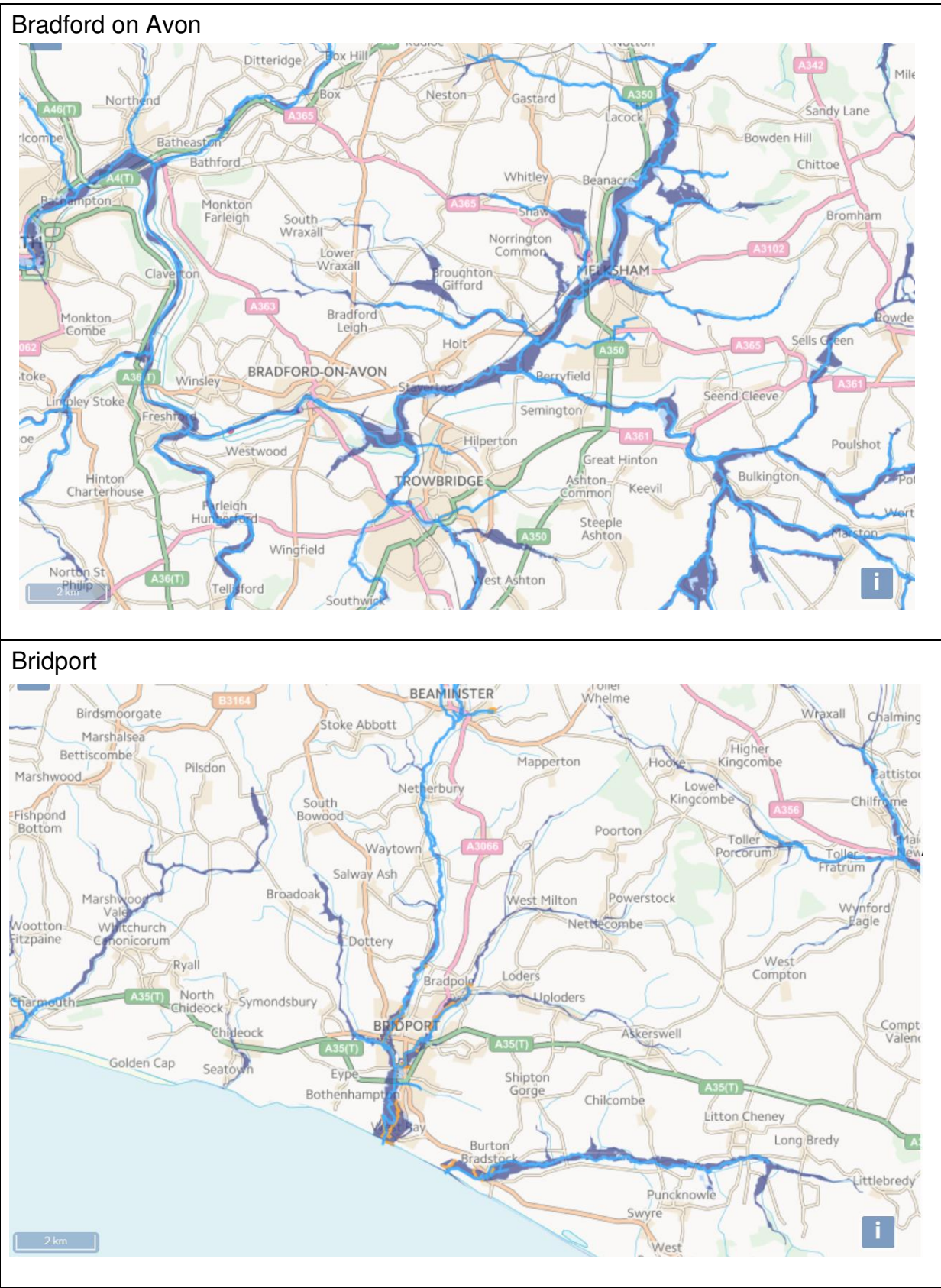


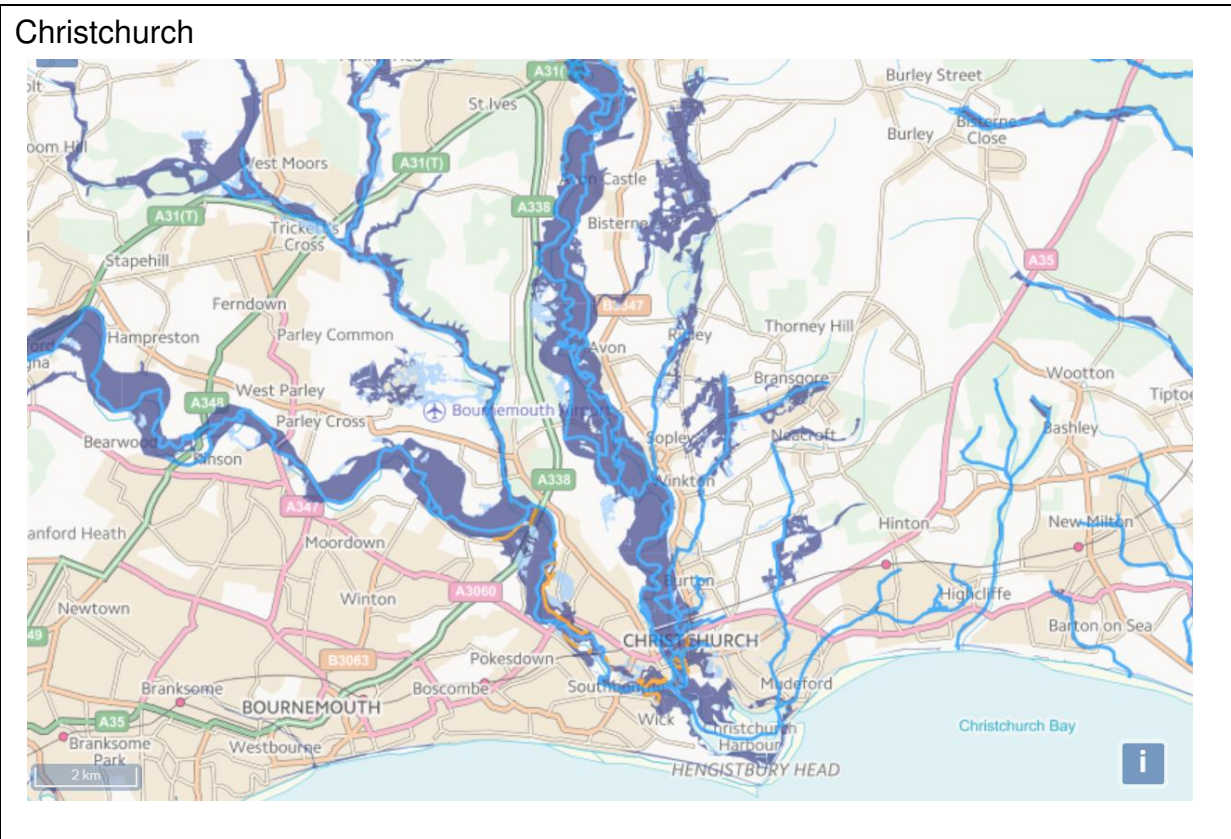
Weymouth - 32,042 properties in postcode area. 212 postcodes at risk

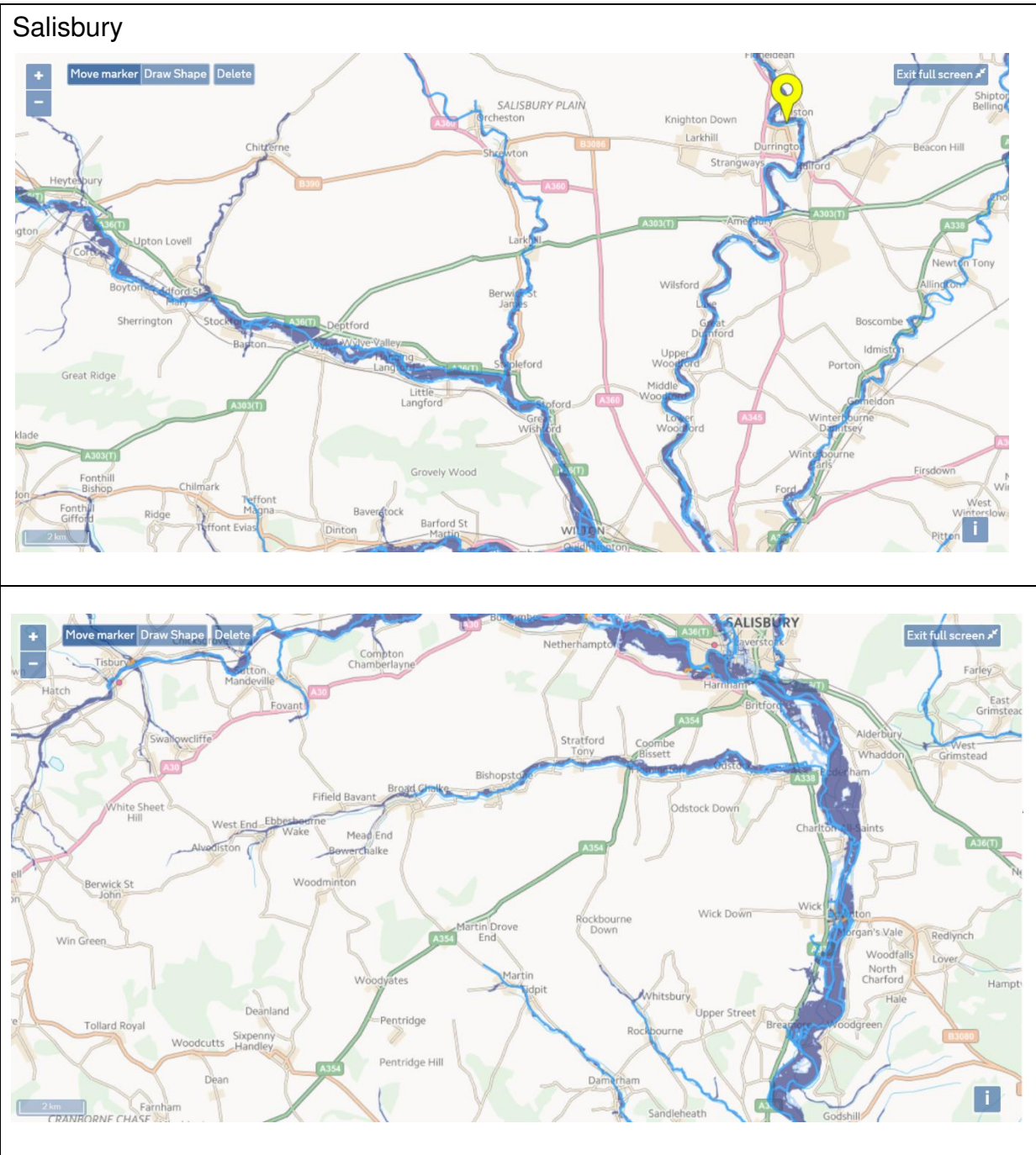


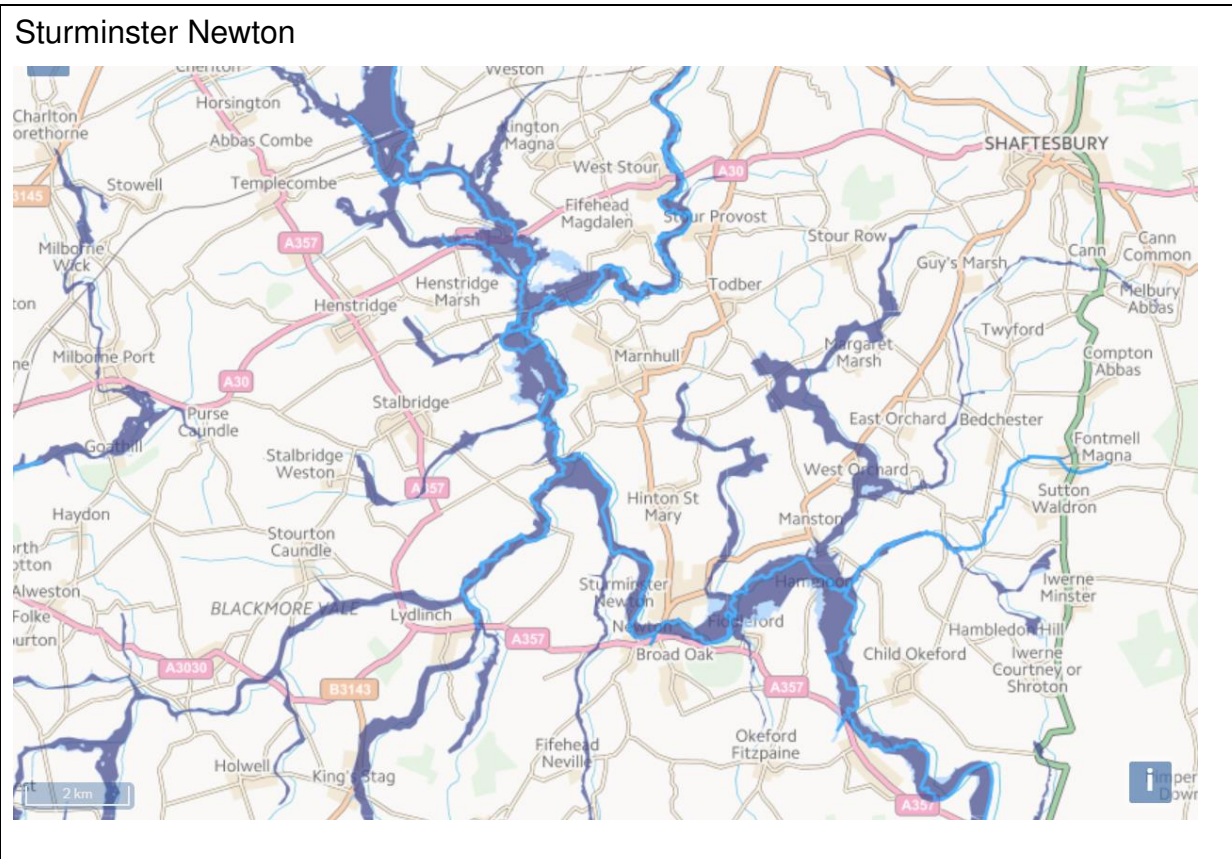


Water first responder (Level 2) teams



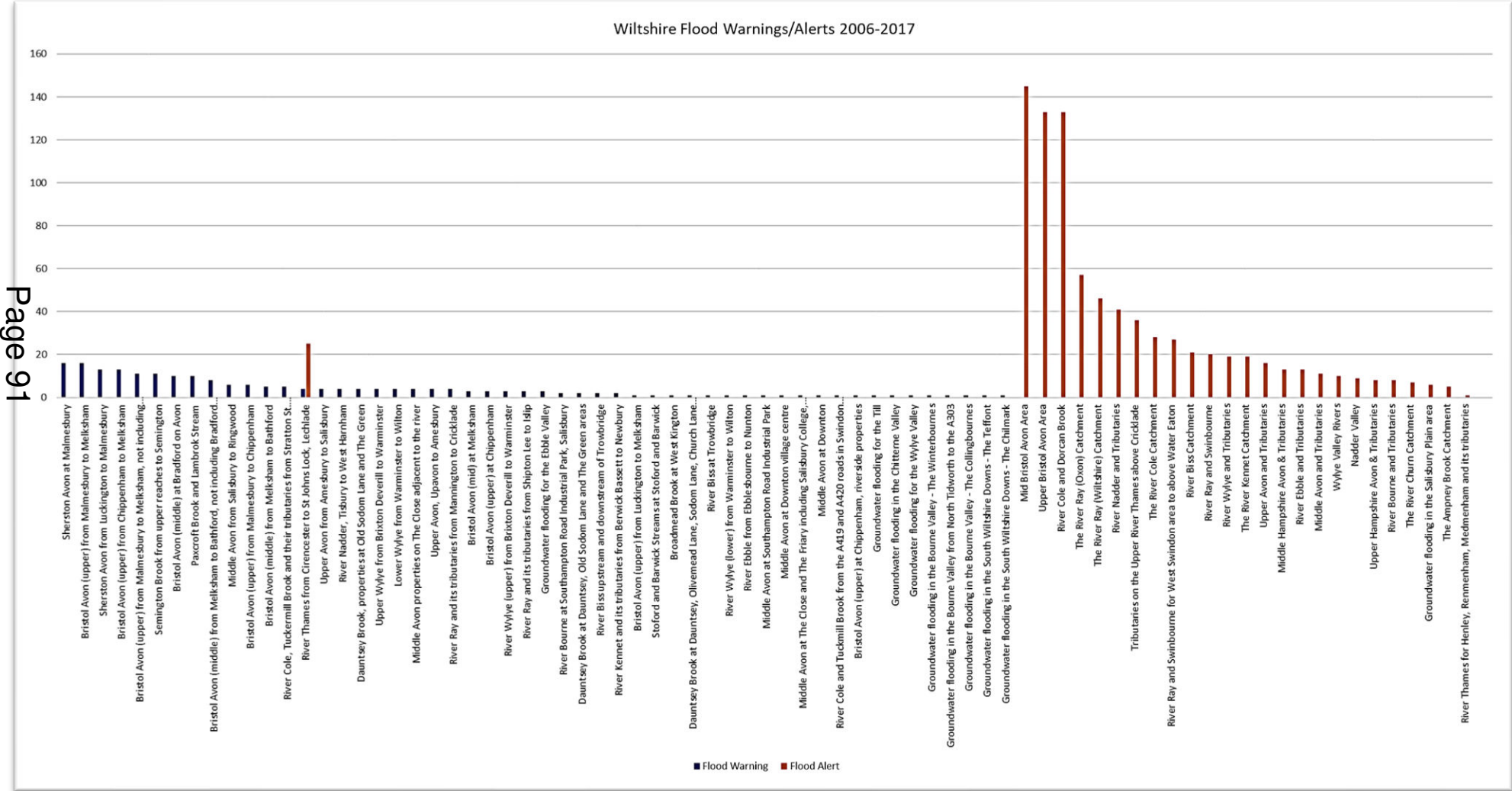


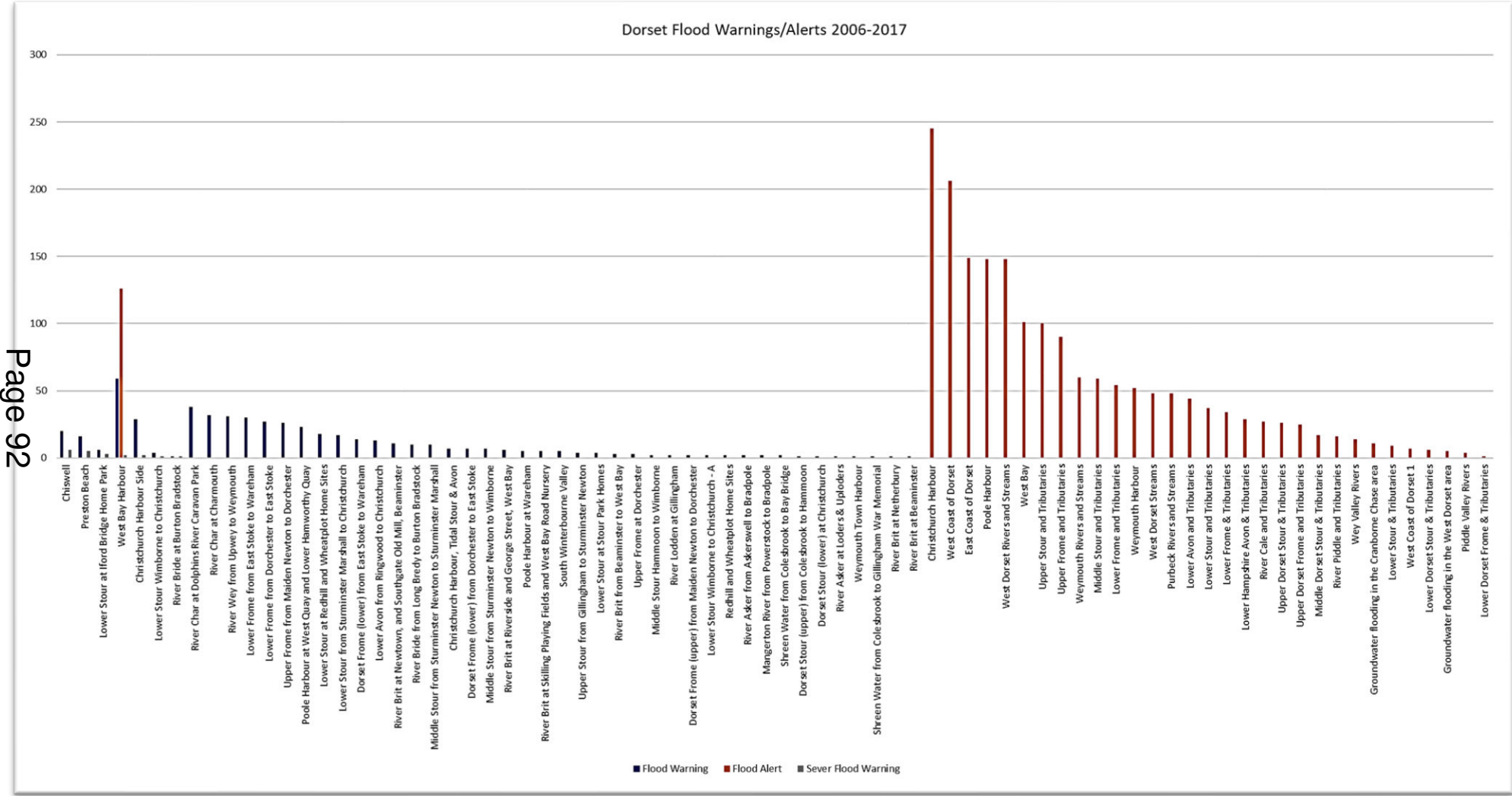




Appendix C

Details of the type of flood warning and the location for which it was issued between 2006 and 2017





Appendix D**Summary of the communication and engagement carried out during this technical rescue review**

Stakeholders	Date	Communication or engagement
Fire and Rescue Services Association (FRSA) liaison meeting	10/09/2019	Review update
Joint Working Group involving Fire Brigades Union (FBU) representatives	16/09/2019	Review update
Station Manager and Group Manager review update	20/09/2019 04/10/2019 07/10/2019	Review update
Station Manager, Group Managers and Area Managers for technical rescue stations	04/11/2019	Briefing
FRSA liaison meeting	18/12/2019	Review update
Technical rescue stations (Chippenham, Poole, Salisbury, Stratton, Trowbridge and Weymouth)	12/2019 - 01/2020	Station based meetings with all watches/groups. Feedback forms left with watches for individual feedback/comments
Joint Working Group involving FBU representatives	11/12/2019	Review update
Managers Consultation Days	07/01/2020 09/01/2020 16/01/2020 17/01/2020 23/01/2020	Briefings
All staff	13/01/2020	Weekly update
FRSA liaison meeting	03/03/2020	Review update
All staff	09/03/2020	Weekly update
FRSA liaison meeting	10/06/2020	Review update
All staff	15/06/2020	Detailed information available on dedicated SharePoint site
Joint Working Group involving FBU representatives	20/08/2020	Review update

Joint Working Group involving FBU representatives	03/09/2020	Review update
Station Managers, Group Managers and Area Managers for technical rescue stations	09/09/2020	Briefing
FRSA liaison meeting	30/09/2020	Review update
Technical Rescue Steering Group	29/10/2020	Review update
FRSA liaison meeting	11/12/2020	Review update
Member seminar for Chairs of Local Performance & Scrutiny Committees and Chair/Vice Chair of Fire and Rescue Authority and Finance & Audit committee	12/11/2020	Members seminar
Joint Working Group involving FBU representatives	13/11/2020	Review update
Fire and Rescue Authority seminar	10/12/2020	Review update
Joint Working Group involving FBU representatives	08/12/2020	Review update
Fire and Rescue Authority seminar	13/01/2021	Review update
Joint Working Group involving FBU representatives	20/01/2021	Review update
FRSA liaison meeting	28/01/2021	Review update
All staff	2019/2020/2021	Question time sessions

Council are requested to adopt the amended Allotment Agreement for the year commencing 1 March 2022 as recommended by the Environment and Climate Working Group. The amended Agreement will prohibit allotment holders from using all pesticides, including insecticides, pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides.

It is proposed that the ban will be enforced once three months of the new tenancy year have elapsed.

The Environment and Climate Working Group determined that the definition of this group of chemicals is to be decided. It is recommended that the Asset Management Committee be tasked with the creation of an Aide Memoire to guide Tenants regarding this.

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ALLOTMENT RULES – 1st March 2022

Made by Melksham Town Council in accordance with the Allotment Acts of 1908 - 1950

Throughout these rules the expression “the Council” means Melksham Town Council

1. Any person who, at the time of application to the Council for an allotment garden, is a resident of Melksham Town shall be eligible to become a tenant of an allotment subject to the statutory provision that one person shall not hold allotments acquired under the above mentioned Acts exceeding ½ acre. If a tenant moves out of the area during their tenancy period then their right to an allotment within the Melksham Town area will cease on the next renewal date.
2. The tenant of an allotment garden shall comply with the following conditions:-
 - a) The Tenant must use the plot as an allotment garden only and for no other purpose. The Tenant must cultivate the allotment garden wholly or mainly for the production of vegetable, fruit and flower crops for domestic consumption by themselves or their family.
 - b) The Tenant must keep the allotment clean, free from weeds and otherwise maintain it in a good state of cultivation and fertility and good condition and must keep any pathway included in or abutting on the allotment (or, in the case of any pathway abutting on the allotment and any other allotment garden or allotment gardens, the half width of it) reasonably free from weeds.
 - c) If any Tenant has not adhered to the cultivation rules, a first warning letter will be sent outlining the issue(s) and giving the Tenant 4 weeks to rectify it/them. If no significant improvement has been made a Notice to Quit will be issued to the Tenant, giving them a further 4 weeks to rectify the issue(s) specified. Then if no significant improvement is seen to have taken place the Tenant will be sent a third and final letter informing them that their tenancy has ended. The Council has also the right to seek compensation for the clearing of any plot left in an untidy condition.
 - d) New Tenants will have an initial 3-month grace period without inspection, after which they are expected to have at least 25% of their plot cultivated. Plots should be 50% cultivated after 6 months, and 75% cultivated after 12 months. If this is not achieved a tenancy may be terminated and the plot re-let. The only exception is for Tenants taking up their tenancy between December and February – this period will be discounted.
 - e) The Tenant must not cause or permit any nuisance or annoyance to the occupier of any other allotment garden or obstruct or encroach on any path or roadway set out by the Council for the use of the occupiers of the allotment gardens.
 - f) The Tenant must at all times during the tenancy observe and comply fully with all enactments, statutory instruments, local, parochial or other bylaws, orders or regulations affecting the Allotment.
 - g) The Tenant shall not under-let, assign or part with the possession of the allotment garden or any part of it, without the written consent of the Council.
 - h) The Tenant must not cut or prune any timber or other trees, or take, sell or carry away any mineral, gravel, sand, earth or clay without the written consent of the Council.

- i) The Tenant shall not connect a hosepipe to any water tap on the allotment gardens provided by the Council.
 - j) The Tenant shall not erect any building on the allotment without the written consent of the Council.
 - k) The Tenant shall not use barbed wire for a fence adjoining any path set out by the Council for the use of the occupiers of the allotment gardens.
 - l) The Tenant must not plant any trees or fruit bushes or any crops requiring more than twelve months to mature, without the written consent of the Council.
 - m) The Tenant must not deposit, or allow other persons to deposit, on the allotment any refuse or any decaying matter, except manure and compost in such quantities as may be reasonably required for use in cultivation or place any matter in the hedges or ditches in the allotment field of which the allotment forms part or on adjoining land. The Tenant must remove all waste generated from the allotment from the site.
 - n) No bonfires are permitted between 1st April and 30th September.
 - o) The Tenant shall not bring any dog into the allotment field of which the allotment forms part, or cause one to be brought in, unless the dog is held on a leash. The Town Council reserves the right to refuse admittance to any dog causing a nuisance.
 - p) No livestock of any kind, except as specifically allowed by statute, shall be kept on the allotment garden.
 - q) **With effect from 1 March 2022, allotment tenants are banned from using all pesticides, including insecticides, pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides. Detailed guidance will be made available.** All reasonable care must be taken to ensure that adjoining hedges, trees and crops are not adversely affected when addressing weed issues, and should any damage occur this must be made good or replanted as necessary.
 - r) The Council shall accept no liability in respect of any claim whatsoever arising from personal injury to the Tenant or any third party and the Tenant agrees to indemnify the Council in respect of any such claim made against it. The Council shall accept no liability to the Tenant in respect of any damage to the allotment or theft of any item or structure placed on the allotment.
 - s) The Tenant shall observe and perform any other specific conditions which the Council consider necessary to preserve the allotment garden from deterioration and of which notice to the applicants for the allotment garden is given in accordance with these rules.
3. The rent of an allotment garden shall be determined by the Council and be subject to periodic review. The rent shall, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Town Clerk, be paid yearly on 1st March in advance for the period 1st March to the last day of February. If a tenancy is commenced in the last quarter of the tenancy year, then a pro-rata payment will be due. The Tenancy will be terminated by the Council, giving one month's notice, if the rent is in arrears for 40 days or more, whether legally demanded or not.
4. Any member or officer of Melksham Town Council shall be entitled, at any time when directed by the Council, to enter and inspect an allotment garden. The Tenant agrees that the Council shall have the right to refuse admittance to the allotment to any person, other than the Tenant or a member of his family, unless accompanied by the Tenant or a member of their family.

5. Any notice required to be given by the Council to the Tenant may be signed on behalf of the Council by the Town Clerk and may be served on the Tenant either personally or by leaving it at their last known address or by letter sent by recorded delivery service addressed to them there or by fixing the same in some conspicuous manner on the Allotment. Any notice required to be given by the Tenant to the Council shall be sufficiently given if signed by the Tenant and sent in a pre-paid post letter to the Town Clerk. The Tenant agrees to inform the Council immediately of any change of his address.
6. The tenancy will end on the death of the tenant. The Tenant's surviving family may continue with the tenancy, with the consent of the Council and on the signing of a new allotment agreement.
7. The Tenant agrees that any case of dispute between himself and any other occupier of an allotment garden in the allotment field shall be referred to the Council whose decision shall be final.
8. This agreement replaces all previous allotment agreements, if any exist, between the Council and the Tenant, and if not returned signed within 30 days of receipt, serves as 12 months' notice of termination in accordance with the Allotments Act.

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MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1 MARCH 2021

Report: WORKING FROM HOME ALLOWANCE

1. Background

- 1.1 From 6 April 2020, employers have been able to pay employees up to £6 a week tax-free to cover additional costs if they have had to work from home.
- 1.2 Employees who have not received the working from home expenses payment direct from their employer can apply to receive the tax relief from H M Revenue and Customs (HMRC).
- 1.3 Employees can claim tax relief based on the rate at which they pay tax. For example, if an employed worker pays the 20% basic rate of tax and claims tax relief on £6 a week, they would receive £1.20 a week in tax relief (20% of £6 a week) towards the cost of their household bills.
- 1.4 Higher rate taxpayers would therefore receive £2.40 a week (40% of £6 a week).
- 1.5 Over the course of the year, this could mean employees can reduce the tax they pay by £62.40 or £124.80 respectively, if a claim is made to HMRC.
- 1.6 Alternatively, if the allowance is paid by their employer, employees would receive £312.00 over the course of a year.

2. Options

- 2.1 Melksham Town Council has two options:
- 2.2 Firstly, pay the working from home allowance in full as a one-off lumpsum payment of £312.00 in the 2020/2021 tax year and on a monthly basis, thereafter.
- 2.3 Secondly, to make Town Council employees aware of the scheme, advising them to make a claim online to obtain the tax relief to which they are entitled.

3. Budget

- 3.1 Melksham Town Council has 21 employees in total: four in the Assembly Hall, eight in the Amenities Team and nine in the Town Hall. The Amenities Team are not required to work from home. One member of the Town Hall team is employed through an agency.
- 3.2 The payment of the allowance by the Council under option one would cost a maximum of £3,744 per annum for the 12 employees who are required to work from home.
- 3.3 However, one member of the Assembly Hall team is leaving the employment of the Town Council on 8 March 2021.
- 3.4 Additionally, employees who are furloughed will not be entitled to the allowance.
- 3.5 The allowance will no longer be payable if and when employees are able to resume working from the 'office' rather than from home.
- 3.6 Option two will have no budgetary implications for the Council.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 That this report is noted and that a decision be made:
- 4.2 Either, to pay the Working From Home allowance retrospectively for the current tax year and also for future tax years.
- 4.3 Or, advising employees to make a claim for tax relief themselves through the HM Revenue and Customs website.

5.0 Contact

Patsy Clover

Assistant to the Town Clerk

patsy.clover@melksham-tc.gov.uk

MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1 MARCH 2021

Report: CARRY FORWARD OF UNUSED ANNUAL LEAVE FROM 2020/21 TO 2021/22 AND THE TAKING OF LEAVE IN FUTURE YEARS

1. Background

- 1.1 Melksham Town Council's Employee Handbook currently states the following regarding annual leave:

'Our Holiday Year

All employees are encouraged to take their full holiday entitlement during the holiday year which runs from 01 April to 31 March. However, it is your responsibility to schedule your holiday so that it can be taken at an appropriate time.

Employees will not usually be permitted to carry over holiday entitlement into the following holiday year.

In certain circumstances, at the Council's discretion and subject to certain rules, the carrying over of a proportion of annual leave may be allowed.'

- 1.2 The Working Time Regulations (1998) stipulate that an employee's leave entitlement under regulation 13 (four weeks annual leave in each leave year) cannot generally be carried between leave years, with exceptions due to sickness or maternity leave.
- 1.3 They also stipulate that an employee's leave entitlement under regulation 13A (1.6 weeks annual leave in each leave year from 1 April 2009) can be carried forward one leave year but no further through agreement between workers and their employers.
- 1.4 The Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 amends the Working Time Regulations 1998 to create a further exemption relating specifically to COVID-19. Where it is not reasonably practicable for a worker to take some, or all, of the holiday to which they are entitled due to the coronavirus, they have a right to carry the 4 weeks under regulation 13 into the next 2 leave years. This will not apply to the 1.6 weeks under regulation 13A leave, but this can be carried forward one year by agreement between workers and employers.

1.5 The impact of various lockdowns and workload pressures during the current leave year have resulted in a backlog of leave to be taken in the final quarter of the leave year.

1.6 In addition, the ability for certain employees to take leave has been affected by staffing issues.

2. Actions

2.1 To note the effect of the Working Time (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

3. Proposals/ Recommendations

3.1 To avoid a backlog of leave, it is proposed that the following addition be made to the Employee Handbook:

Employees are requested to take a minimum of their pro-rated leave each quarter.

3.2 To allow members of staff unable to take their annual leave during the current leave year because of staffing issues to carry forward the unused balance to be used over the next two leave years.

4. Contact

Patsy Clover - Assistant to the Town Clerk

patsy.clover@melksham-tc.gov.uk



MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1 MARCH 2021

Report: UPDATE - Proposed Acquisition of The Spiritualists' Church, Friends' Garden - off King Street, Melksham

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the meeting of this Full Council on 16 November, it was resolved to work with the Trustees to gather the evidence to demonstrate 20 years unhindered access to The Spiritualists' Church, Friends' Garden in line with our Solicitor's recommendation in the matter, to enable the Town Council to register a right of access to the garden.
- 1.2 It was recommended by our solicitor that the Trustees should be asked to provide the relevant evidence from several people as to the use of the right of way on a regular basis, without consent or interruption by the owners of the right of way for at least 20 years. This should be undertaken before any transfer to the Council is completed and details of the response provided to our solicitor.

2 PROGRESS

- 2.1 Progressing this work has proved problematic.
- 2.2 Until very recently, no response to enquiries of the Trustees regarding the necessary evidence of the use of the right of way over the last 20 years has been forthcoming.
- 2.3 Local enquiries regarding the use of the right of way, set in motion by the Economic Development Manager, have not yet produced the necessary evidence of the use of the right of way over the last 20 years.
- 2.4 The Trustees responsible for The Spiritualists' Church, Friends' Garden have now been in touch, acknowledged the delay in responding to enquiries and have committed to assisting in any way they can in getting this sorted out to enable the transference of the property into the Town Council's hands.
- 2.5 The Trustees are taking advice from their own solicitors and are hoping they can provide the certain information this Council is looking for [as advised by our solicitor].

3 RESOURCES AND BUDGET

- 3.1 There are no budget implications currently although there will be legal and conveyancing costs in due course, assuming the establishment of the right of way and subsequent acquisition of The Spiritualists' Church, Friends' Garden is successful.

4 RISK

- 4.1 The greatest risk is that the right of way across the track from King Street is not proven in which case the acquisition of The Spiritualists' Church, Friends' Garden, should it go ahead, would be without any right of way access and would therefore be a significant risk.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 That this Council should await the response from the Trustees.
- 5.2 This is considered the appropriate action to take as it closely follows the advice from our solicitor in this respect.
- 5.3 That the Economic Development Manager brings regular update reports to this Council regarding progress in this matter.

6 CONTACT

David McKnight

Economic Development Manager

david.mcknight@melksham-tc.gov.uk

07759 284 266



MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1 MARCH 2021

Report: CANAL WORKING GROUP UPDATE

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At the meeting of Full Council on 28 September 2021, it was resolved to support a motion by Councillor Wiltshire and establish a Canal Working Group.
- 1.2 The following members from Melksham Town Council expressed a wish to be involved:
 - Cllr Wiltshire
 - Cllr Brown
 - Cllr Fiorelli
 - Cllr Mitcham

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 An early issue requiring consideration by the Working Group will be to consider implications of the many conditions thought likely to accompany a successful planning approval for the Melksham Link.
- 2.2 Councillor Wiltshire, who proposed the motion to establish the Working Group, suggests that there is no need for the working group to meet until the planning application for the Melksham Link is approved.
- 2.3 In the interim, officers are approaching other interested parties to raising awareness of the Working Group, inviting them to appoint their representatives (one or two) to join the group when it first meets.

3 RESOURCES AND BUDGET

- 3.1 None, currently, over and above officer time.

4 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 To note this update report.
- 4.2 To defer the first meeting of the Working Group, as requested, until planning approval for the Melksham Link is granted.

5 CONTACT

David McKnight
Economic Development Manager

david.mcknight@melksham-tc.gov.uk

07759 284 266

Full Council 1 March 2021

CATG Projects

The three options to be considered for funding are as follows:

1. Dropped Kerbs on Old Broughton Road

This item had an initial estimated cost of £1500 for two dropped kerbs. This estimate did not allow for traffic calming and the advice from the council's contractor is that there would be a requirement for a lane closure and therefore the costs would considerably rise. It is now estimated that the project cost would be:

With High Friction Surfacing - £7,200

Without High Friction Surfacing - £5,500

The Town Council will need to decide if they still consider this to be a worthwhile project and would reap enough benefit for the cost, and if so, what level of funding support they were willing to contribute. It would usually need to be at least 1/3 of the total cost for the CATG to consider it.

2. Improvement to footway link between Maple Close and Sandridge Road

The estimated cost for undertaking this work to provide a full width barrier across the existing footway and to create a new footway diversion would be £6,000. The Town Council will need to decide if they still consider this to be a worthwhile project and would reap enough benefit for the cost, and if so, what level of funding support they were willing to contribute. It would usually need to be at least 1/3 of the total cost for the CATG to consider it.

There are a number of underground services in the locality and a CAT inspection would be required to develop a design. This would cost £450. As this cost is below the £500 threshold figure we have for splitting the cost, if the Town Council have given a clear commitment to contribute towards the cost of the substantive project, this should be funded direct from the CATG.

3. Bollards outside Chicken Hut

The estimated cost for implementing bollards to work alongside the, now filled, flower containers would be £2,000. The Town Council will need to decide if they still consider this to be a worthwhile project and would reap enough benefit for the cost, and if so, what level of funding support they were willing to contribute. It would usually need to be at least 1/3 of the total cost for the CATG to consider it.

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MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1 March 2021

Report: PROPOSED CATG PROJECTS FOR MELKSHAM

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The next CATG meeting is on 4 March 2021.
- 1.2 The meeting will consider 3 potential projects in Melksham.
- 1.3 If the Town Council can confirm its position on these matters at the Full Council meeting on 1 March, subject to CATG agreement at its meeting on Thursday 4 March, we could request these projects are prioritised and work commenced, rather than waiting for the next CATG meeting, date to be confirmed, but likely June 2021.

2 PROJECT PROPOSALS

2.1 **Improvement to footway link between Maple Close and Sandridge Road**

The estimated cost for undertaking this work to provide a full width barrier across the existing footway and to create a new footway diversion would be **£6,000**. Councillors will need to decide if they still consider this to be a worthwhile project and would reap enough benefit for the cost, and if so what level of funding support Melksham Town Council is willing to contribute.

There are a number of underground services in the locality and a inspection would be required to develop a design. This would cost **£450**. As this cost is below the £500 threshold figure we have with CATG for splitting the cost, it is suggested that, if the Town Council gives a clear commitment to contribute towards the cost of the substantive project, we should ask that the inspection and design element is funded direct from CATG.

2.2 **Dropped Kerbs on Old Broughton Road**

This item had an initial estimated cost of £1500 for two dropped kerbs. This estimate did not allow for traffic calming and the advice from Wiltshire Council's contractor is that there would be a requirement for a lane closure and therefore the costs would considerably rise. It is now estimated that the project cost would be:

With High Friction Surfacing - **£7,200**

Without High Friction Surfacing - **£5,500**

Councillors need to decide if they still consider this to be a worthwhile project and

would reap enough benefit for the cost, and if so, what level of funding support The Town Council is willing to contribute.

2.3 Bollards outside Chicken Hut

The estimated cost for implementing bollards to work alongside the, now filled, flower containers would be £2,000. Councillors need to decide if this is still considered to be a worthwhile project which would reap enough benefit for the cost, and if so, what level of funding support The Council is willing to contribute.

2.4 In each case above, Melksham Town Council would usually need to contribute at least 1/3 of the total cost of the project for CATG to consider it.

3 RESOURCES AND BUDGET

3.1 There are very limited monies remaining in this Council's CATG budget for 2020/21 which could be used to co-fund some of these projects.

3.2 The remaining available budget in 2020/21 is £115.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 This Council's CATG budget, through which contributions to Community Area Transport projects are made, has insufficient funds remaining to be able to support any of the above projects this financial year given the guidance in section 2.4.

4.2 That Councillors indicate their preferred options for each of the above projects (in section 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3) this financial year – to fund some or all activity from reserves; to defer some or all of the projects until 2021/22 financial year; to cancel some or all of the projects on the basis that the costs exceed the projected benefits.

4.3 For any of the projects the Council wishes to see go ahead, either in 2020/21 or 2021/22, to indicate what level of funding support the Council wishes to contribute.

5 CONTACT

David McKnight

Economic Development Manager

david.mcknight@melksham-tc.gov.uk

07759 284 266



MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2021/2022

	2021								2022				
	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
Annual Town Meeting	24												23
Asset Management	5*		12		20		29			7		11	
Community Development	20			23			22			21			19
Economic Dev & Planning	4, 25	15	6, 27	17	7, 28	19	9, 30	21	11	1, 22	15	5, 26	17
Finance & Admin	*4**		5		6		8		10		7		3*
HR	12	16		18		20		15		16		20	
KGV		16**		18**		20**		15**		16**		20**	
Neighbourhood Plan	26	30	28	25	29	27	24	22	26	23	30	27	25
Chairs Committee			9		10		5		7		11		6
Town Council	17 Annual Meeting		19		20		15		17***		21		16 Annual

* Meeting falls on Tues/ Weds (following Monday Public Holiday)
 ** Meeting will begin at 7.15 or on the Rising of Previous HR Sub Committee Meeting
 *** Budget to be approved

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MELKSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL MEETING

1 MARCH 2021

Report: WILTSHIRE AREA LOCAL PLANNING ALLIANCE [WALPA]

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A number of Wiltshire local Councils ('The Councils') have been meeting since July 2020 and have created an informal alliance on local related planning matters called the Wiltshire Area Localism and Planning Group (WALPA). Together the signatories are the first level of local government for over 200,000 residents in Wiltshire.
- 1.2 We only became aware of this group during week commencing 8 February 2021.
- 1.3 A part of the planning problems currently being experienced in Wiltshire has been caused by changes in national planning rules (The National Planning Policy Framework) introduced in 2019, which have reduced the influence of Neighbourhood Plans in the planning process in favour of developers. The Town and Parish councils are asking Wiltshire MPs and Wiltshire Council to join a joint approach to get these changes to be reversed.
- 1.4 The specific changes being sought by the Town and Parish Councils are:
 - 1.4.1 The dropping of the NPPF Section 14 requirement that, to be taken into consideration, Neighbourhood Plans must be less than 2 years old,
 - 1.4.2 Removing the changes to the definition of planning areas that in Wiltshire's case has made the whole unitary authority the planning area in place of the more meaningful North, South, East and West subdivisions, and
 - 1.4.3 Reversing the changes to the methodology for the calculation of land supply for housing which have so tipped the control of the calculation into the hands of developers.
- 1.5 As a local example of the implications of the changes in national planning rules (The National Planning Policy Framework) introduced in 2019:
 - 1.5.1 Plans have been submitted for 50 houses off Semington Road in Melksham that are contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan. There are additional undecided applications around Melksham that ignore the Neighbourhood Plan. In January 2021 approval was given at another site on Semington Road for 155 houses contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan because Wiltshire Council does not have a 5-year supply of land for housing.

2 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group agreed to support a press release on this subject, issued on 15 February 2021. See Appendix 1.

- 2.2 Melksham Town Council has been asked if this council will also support the aims and objectives of WALPA – detailed in the Appendices.
- 2.3 The signatories for WALPA’s objectives and communications are listed in the press release, notes to editors, in Appendix 1.
- 2.4 Should this council be mindful to support the aims and objectives of WALPA, it is requested that a suitably amended letter of the type included in Appendix 2, is sent by us to the listed influencers and that participation in meetings is available if requested.

3 RESOURCES AND BUDGET

- 3.1 No resource or budget implications apart from officer time.

4 RISK

- 4.1 There is a reputational risk to this council if those who receive our communications on this subject, disagree with our view. This of course is a much wider risk across many subject areas, and not restricted to the matter under consideration.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 That Councillors consider this matter and decide whether this Council should support the aims and objectives of WALPA by participating in group communications, meetings and activities.

6 CONTACT

David McKnight

Economic Development Manager

david.mcknight@melksham-tc.gov.uk

07759 284 266

WILTSHIRE AREA LOCAL PLANNING ALLIANCE [WALPA]

APPENDIX 1

Press Release 15 February 2021

PRESS RELEASE TO:

Andover Advertiser/Bath Chronicle/BBC Wiltshire/Gazette & Herald/Wiltshire Times/Marlborough News Online/Melksham Independent News/Salisbury Journal/Wilts & Glos Standard/Swindon Advertiser/New Valley News/Western Gazette/White Horse News/Somerset Live/The Guardian/The Independent

Urgent Action Needed to Protect our Neighbourhood Plans

Embargoed until 12:00noon 15th February 2021

What was the point of communities working hard to produce Neighbourhood Plans only to find that after 2 short years the locally agreed policies can be over-turned by aggressive developers?

Over 30 town and parish councils across Wiltshire have appealed for help from Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire's five MPs to protect the future of Neighbourhood Planning in Wiltshire.

Wiltshire's town and parish councils are suffering because of significant loopholes in planning legislation means our carefully drafted Neighbourhood Plans can be overruled, unless Wiltshire Council is able consistently to maintain 5-years' worth of available housing land. At the moment, Wiltshire does not have that critical 5-year supply which means that developers are challenging Neighbourhood Plans as soon as they are 2 years old.

Speaking on behalf of more than 30 town and parish councils, Mayor of Malmesbury Campbell Ritchie said, "There is agreement between ourselves, the leadership of Wiltshire Council, and most of our local MPs that urgent changes are needed to protect Neighbourhood Plans in Wiltshire. Wiltshire Council's planning policies are being smashed by developers seeking to take advantage of this unfortunate situation. The huge effort going into creating the next stage of the Wiltshire Local Plan for housing and development is also being undermined."

"We are calling now for a joint effort to achieve the changes we all want. We have requested an urgent meeting with the leaders of Wiltshire Council and our MPs to develop a shared and public plan to protect Neighbourhood Planning in Wiltshire. We are looking forward to being able to report a positive outcome."

Ends

1. Town and Parish Councils:

Ashton Keynes
Bradford on Avon
Bremhill
Brokenborough
Calne
Calne Without Parish
Chippenham
Chirton & Conock

Corsham
Cricklade
Crudwell
Devizes
Downton
Great Somerford
Hilperton/Staverton
Holt
Idmiston
Malmesbury
North Bradley
Oaksey
Pewsey
Potterne
Purton
Sherston
Southwick Parish Council
St Paul Malmesbury Without
Sutton Benger
Tisbury
Trowbridge
Westbury
Warminster
Wootton Rivers
and Melksham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

2. Questions and more information:

Please contact the Clerk of the Town or Parish Council most relevant to your outlet. For the purposes of this Press Release, Campbell Ritchie, Mayor of Malmesbury, is also a spokesperson and contact for questions and more information: campbellrmte@gmail.com. T: 07802638424.

Attached:

1. Letter dated 15th February 2021 to Wiltshire MPs and the leadership of Wiltshire Council signed by over 30 Wiltshire Town and Parish Councils.
2. Original joint letters dated 13th August 2020.
3. Notes for editors.

Notes to Editors on Press Release Dated 15th February 2021:

‘Urgent Action Needed to Protect our Neighbourhood Plans’

1. The letters of the 13th August attached.
2. Public comments by the leaders of Wiltshire Council and MPs following our letters of 13th August 2020:

2.1 Leader of Wiltshire Council:

Responding in Cabinet in August 2020 the Leader of Wiltshire Council, Cllr. Philip Whitehead, advised that across the country there is outstanding permission for around 1 million new homes. He said “I think we’ve got a problem with developers not building out the planning permissions they’ve got.

2.2 James Gray

Wiltshire Conservative MP James Gray sums up the situation as stated in the press in August 2020.

“There is a fundamental flaw in the method of calculating the five-year housing land supply figures. Land on which planning permission has been granted, but on which developers have not yet started building does not count. Developers are thereby incentivised to delay the start of building until the very last minute since by doing so they stand a better chance of getting permission on land which would otherwise not be available to them. That drives a coach and horses through the Neighbourhood Planning process.” Reference: Gazette and Herald.

As recently as 28th January 2021 James Gray wrote a widely reported column on related planning matters - <https://www.jamesgray.org/index.php/weekly-column/282-stop-the-developers> - which concluded: ‘So now is the time for action. Take up cudgels on behalf of our countryside, our quiet market towns and villages and stop the onward march of philistine developers. Letters, petitions, protests, judicial reviews. Let’s go for it. Let’s keep North Wiltshire how we like it - green and pleasant.’

2.3 Danny Kruger MP

7th November 2020

Dear Mr Ritchie,

Thank you for your email about the planning process. I share your concerns and I am in discussion with my fellow Wiltshire MPs about how we can best support our towns, like Malmesbury, to protect their Neighbourhood Plans. I look forward to working with you and other Town and Parish councils on this vital agenda.

Best wishes,

Danny

Danny Kruger MP

3. A selection of proposed developments across Wiltshire that would undermine Neighbourhood Plans if approved but which developers are stating should proceed because of Wiltshire’s continuing failure to maintain a 5 years supply of land for housing.

Note: Wiltshire Council has recently approved developments contrary to Neighbourhood Plans for this reason in Calne, Malmesbury and Melksham. The developments highlighted below have not yet been decided.

3.1 Malmesbury:

One of two sites on Park Road, Malmesbury, where plans have been submitted for a total of 70 houses above those specified in the Malmesbury Neighbourhood Plan. (Pictured Mayor of Malmesbury Campbell Ritchie). Consultation has also started on proposals for a further 70 houses at a site at Filands, Malmesbury that is allocated for education use. Just last May Wiltshire Council approved plans for 71 houses at an adjacent site in contradiction to the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.2 Devizes:

Coate Road, Devizes. Consultation started on plans for 255 houses in Dec 2020.

3.3 Downton:

A site at Downton where preliminary consultations are underway for a housing development that is contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.4 Pewsey

Plans have been submitted for 50 houses in the red lined area contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.5 Calne

An application has been received for 32 houses in the red lined area at Chilvester Hill, Calne, that is contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan. An developer appeal against a recent decision to reject a proposed development of retirement flats in the town centre that would be contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan is using the lack of a five year land supply as a major reason to overturn this community supported outcome.

3.6 Melksham

Plans have been submitted for 50 houses off Semington Road in Melksham that are contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan – the red area on the photo. There are additional undecided applications around Melksham that ignore the Neighbourhood Plan. In January 2021 approval was given at another site on Semington Road for 155 houses contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan because Wiltshire Council does not have a 5 year supply of land for housing

4. National Planning Rules

A part of the current problem has been caused by changes in national planning rules (The National Planning Policy Framework) introduced in 2019, which have reduced the influence of Neighbourhood Plans in the planning process in favour of developers. The Town and Parish councils are asking Wiltshire MPs and Wiltshire Council to join a joint approach to get these changes to be reversed.

The specific changes being sought by the Town and Parish Councils are:

- a. The dropping of the NPPF Section 14 requirement that, to be taken into consideration, Neighbourhood Plans must be less than 2 years old,
- b. Removing the changes to the definition of planning areas that in Wiltshire's case has made the whole unitary authority the planning area in place of the more meaningful North, South, East and West sub divisions, and
- c. Reversing the changes to the methodology for the calculation of land supply for housing which have so tipped the control of the calculation into the hands of developers.

5. Town and Parish Councils signing the joint letter: As listed with the letter.

The Councils have been meeting together over video conference since July 2020 and have created an informal alliance on this and related matters called the Wiltshire Area Localism and Planning Group (WALPA). Together the signatories are the first level of local government for over 200,000 residents in Wiltshire.

6: Questions and more information: Please contact the Clerk of the Town or Parish Council most relevant to your outlet. For the purposes of this Press Release, Campbell Ritchie, Mayor of Malmesbury, is also a spokesperson and contact for questions: campbellrmtc@gmail.com. T: 07802638424.

END

WILTSHIRE AREA LOCAL PLANNING ALLIANCE [WALPA]

APPENDIX 2

Direct Letter to Support Co-signed Communications

Malmesbury Town Council
(ENGLAND'S OLDEST BOROUGH - CHARTER GRANTED 880)
THE TOWN HALL
MALMESBURY
WILTSHIRE
SN16 9BZ

Telephone: (01666) 822143

Facsimile: (01666) 826166

E-mail: administration@malmesbury.gov.uk

15th February 2021

Direct Letter to;

James Gray, MP Conservative North
Cllr Philip Whitehead, Lead of Wiltshire Council
Cllr Gavin Grant, Wiltshire Council

Dear

The Future of Neighbourhood Planning in Wiltshire

I am writing on behalf of Malmesbury Town Council with a copy of the letter to you dated 15th February 2021 we have co-signed with over 30 other parish and town councils in Wiltshire.

The matter raised is of very serious concern to our council and our residents. We ask you to respond positively to the request to meet with us so we can discuss and agree a common approach that can best protect the future of Neighbourhood Planning in Wiltshire.

Please also reply directly to us on this matter.

Yours sincerely
Malmesbury Town Council
Enc.

Malmesbury Town Council
(ENGLAND'S OLDEST BOROUGH - CHARTER GRANTED 880)
THE TOWN HALL
MALMESBURY
WILTSHIRE
SN16 9BZ

Telephone: (01666) 822143
Facsimile: (01666) 826166

E-mail: administration@malmesbury.gov.uk
15th February 2021

Letter to Leader and Chief Executive of Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire MP's

Wiltshire Council:

Cllr Philip Whitehead – Leader Wiltshire Council
Terence Herbert – Chief Executive, Wiltshire Council

MPs:

Michelle Donelan – Conservative – Chippenham
John Glen – Conservative – Salisbury
James Gray – Conservative – North Wiltshire
Danny Kruger – Conservative – Devizes
Andrew Murrison – Conservative – South West Wiltshire

Dear Colleague

The Future of Neighbourhood Planning in Wiltshire

On the 13th August 2020 over 30 Parish and Town Councils in Wiltshire representing half of the population of Wiltshire wrote to you asking for your urgent support to protect the future of Neighbourhood Planning in Wiltshire. I have attached a copy of our letters.

We have received words of support and agreement from the leadership of Wiltshire Council and our representatives in Parliament but there has not yet been progress by us together in Wiltshire or by government (on the essential amendments to the current NPPF) that will enable Wiltshire's democratically made Neighbourhood Plans to continue to flourish and function.

The current situation is as follows:

1. Wiltshire Council has confirmed (Dec 2020) that it has not achieved a 5 year land supply for housing for planning decision making purposes for a second year running. Made Neighbourhood Plans in Wiltshire that are more than two years old continue to be exposed to unplanned housing developments.
2. The current review period for a made Neighbourhood Plan is a minimum of 15.5 months and requires a huge voluntary effort. The two year rule means that Neighbourhood Plans intended to be valid for 10 years or more have to be in continuous review to stay valid. We all agree this is not sustainable.

3. Wiltshire Council is in the middle of consultation on the Wiltshire Local Plan. We all agree that the aim of this Plan - to create a framework for coherent future development based on Housing Market Areas through to 2035 - is being undermined by the continuing absence of a 5 year land supply for housing.

4. We believe you can do so much more to facilitate a shared action plan to tackle the issues preventing Wiltshire having a 5year land supply for housing. The statement by the Leader of Wiltshire Council in August 2020 that “I think we’ve got a problem with developers not building out the planning permissions they’ve got.” must be followed up. In particular we would like the opportunity to propose a number of practical steps that will enable us together to more quickly achieve the aim¹ that ‘The views of the local community, particularly those of Town and Parish councils will be important in considering potential benefits and impacts of proposals when planning applications are determined.’

We would re-iterate that there appears to be a broad consensus between the Parish and Town Councils, Wiltshire Council officers, the leadership of Wiltshire Council and our Wiltshire MPs on the results we want to see to protect the Future of Neighbourhood Planning. But we have to take steps together to deliver these results.

We would like to invite you to a meeting on the morning of Friday 26th February – perhaps for convenience to coincide with the regular MPs meeting with the leadership of Wiltshire Council - where we can discuss and agree a common approach that can best protect the future of Neighbourhood Planning in Wiltshire.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely
Campbell Ritchie
Mayor, Malmesbury Town Council

For and on behalf of the undersigned Wiltshire Town and Parish Councils:

Ashton Keynes
Bradford on Avon
Bremhill
Brokenborough
Calne
Calne Without Parish
Chippenham
Chirton & Conock
Corsham
Cricklade
Crudwell
Devizes
Downton
Great Somerford Incorporating Startley
Hilperton
Holt
Idmiston

¹ as written in Wiltshire Council Briefing Note 20-37 on the measures being adopted in view of the shortfall in the 5 year supply of land for housing

Malmesbury
North Bradley
Oaksey
Pewsey
Potterne
Purton
Sherston
Southwick Parish Council
St Paul Malmesbury Without
Staverton
Sutton Benger
Tisbury
Trowbridge
Westbury
Warminster
Wootton Rivers
and Melksham Neighbourhood Plan
Steering Group
Cc Toby Sturgis, Cabinet Member for Spatial Planning, Development Management
and Investment
Cc Wiltshire Councillors
Cc Robert Buckland – Conservative – Swindon South
Cc Justin Tomlinson – Conservative – Swindon North