Unitary Councillor's Report-October 2026

1. The significance of a byelection on October 15th

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1. The importance of the upcoming byelection

I try not to be drawn into party politics in these monthly reports, but I cannot ignore the fact that all eyes are on the byelection in Salisbury, Milford division, on October 15th, the outcome of which could have significant implications for the administration.

The current Liberal Democrat councillor for the Milford division has stepped down for health reasons, triggering a byelection. While this is only a single seat, the result could have wider implications for the balance of power at Wiltshire Council.

The main contest is considered likely to be between the Lib Dem and the Conservative candidates. If the Lib Dems retain the seat, the current arrangements are likely to continue, with the council remaining under Liberal Democrat leadership but operating without an overall majority. In practice, this often requires support from independent councillors and Labour's sole member to secure council business in the face of opposition from the Conservative and Reform groups.

If the Conservatives or Reform were to gain the seat, there may be increased discussion about whether an alternative administration could be formed. Any change would depend on the arithmetic within the council chamber and the willingness of other groups and independent councillors to support a different leadership arrangement. As a result, there is a great deal at stake politically.

Whatever the outcome, residents in Milford can expect a significant campaign effort from all the main parties in the run-up to polling day, with canvassers and campaign literature likely to feature prominently over the coming weeks.

2. Important news from Area Boards - New Funding Opportunities for Wiltshire Communities

As part of the current administration's drive to give more power to local communities, Wiltshire Council has announced a range of new programmes to be delivered through the Area Board. Together, these initiatives will bring significant investment into local

areas over the next three years, with communities playing a leading role in identifying priorities and delivering projects.

- **Investing in Local Infrastructure** *(£750k over 3 years, CIL funded)*

Communities will also benefit from a new Locally Identified Infrastructure Projects Fund, providing investment for facilities and infrastructure that support growing communities.

Potential projects could include:

- Improvements to community halls
- Sports and recreation facilities
- Flood resilience schemes
- Accessibility improvements
- Green spaces and public realm projects

Town and parish councils will be able to bring forward proposals, helping ensure that investment is directed towards projects that matter most to residents.

- **Supporting Community Wellbeing** *(£11k per AB per year, Crowd Funding scheme))*

A new Community Wellbeing Fund will help local groups deliver projects that improve quality of life for residents. Funding will be available for initiatives that tackle loneliness, support mental wellbeing, strengthen community connections and help people to live independently for longer.

The fund will operate through a crowdfunding model, allowing community groups to raise support locally while receiving matched funding from Wiltshire Council. This approach helps local projects attract additional investment and encourages people to get involved in improving their neighbourhoods.

- Helping Residents Build Financial Resilience *(£1.5 million over 3 years, DWP funded)*

A new Community Resilience Hubs programme will support people facing financial challenges and help prevent problems from reaching crisis point.

Funding can be used to develop local support networks offering:

- Benefits and income advice

- Debt support
- Employment guidance
- Community food initiatives
- Volunteer-led support services
- Outreach services for rural communities

Rather than adopting a single county-wide model, communities will be able to develop solutions that reflect local needs, whether through dedicated hubs, outreach services or partnerships between local organisations.

- Putting Communities at the Heart of Decision-Making

These programmes reflect Wiltshire Council's commitment to working more closely with residents, community groups, town and parish councils, and local charities. By supporting local ideas and investing in community-led solutions, the aim is to build stronger, healthier and more resilient communities across Wiltshire.

Anyone involved in a local community organisation that has an idea that could benefit their community, they should keep an eye on announcements from their Area Board for information on how to get involved and apply for support.

- Celebrating the People Who Make Wiltshire Special

Every day, hundreds of local charities, community groups and volunteers quietly make a difference in our towns and villages, supporting neighbours, bringing people together and helping those who need it most. To recognise these unsung heroes, Wiltshire Council is introducing a new **Wiltshire Voluntary Sector Organisation of the Month** award. From January 2027, each month one community organisation in the county will be recognised for the positive impact it has on local people. Whether it's helping tackle loneliness, supporting young people, organising community activities or providing practical help to residents, the award will celebrate the groups that help make Wiltshire such a caring and connected place to live.

Winning organisations will receive a certificate, local publicity and a £100 award to support their work. The scheme is funded through the Wiltshire Community Lottery, ensuring that lottery proceeds continue to benefit local communities.

Nominations open in November 2026, giving residents the chance to shine a spotlight on organisations that have made a real difference in their community.

As Chair of the Bradford on Avon Area Board. I am happy to be able to announce these new programmes to build on the work that the Area Board does with the current rather limited funding available through the LHFIG and other Area Board funding streams.

It is worth noting that over the last twelve months our Area Board has funded projects in all the parishes of Winsley & Westwood division to the tune of over £20,000, not including LHFIG funding. But the extra funding available from these new initiatives will offer greater opportunities.

For further details, please see the Briefing Notes that have been sent to all Parish Councils.

Officers will also be giving a short presentation to explain further at the next Area Board Meeting on November 11th, at Westwood Social Club. Please join us and help me understand how it will all work in practice 😊

3. Other Council News

- New Local Plan consultation

The council's first stage consultation on a new Wiltshire Local Plan closed on 30 September. The exercise sought views on growth, housing, infrastructure, environmental priorities and how residents want to be engaged in the planning process. The new plan will guide development across Wiltshire to 2045.

- Household Recycling Centre booking system pilot begins

Although launched earlier in September, the biggest service change attracting attention has been the introduction of a **booking system pilot at six recycling centres**: Devizes, Lower Compton, Melksham, Purton, Salisbury and Stanton St Quintin. Residents now book time slots in advance while the council assesses impacts on queues and site operations. It seems to be working well, but it is too early to judge fully

- Best Kept Villages 2026 winners announced

Wiltshire Council celebrated the winners of the 2026 Best Kept Village Awards. **Alderbury & Whaddon**, **Easterton**, and **Rushall** were recognised for their environmental quality, community spirit and volunteer efforts. The awards are run by Wiltshire Best Kept Village Awards 2026 in partnership with CPRE Wiltshire and idverde.

It would be nice to see the name Westwood, Winsley, Wingfield, South Wraxall, Monkton Farleigh or Limpley Stoke next year

Nigel White

04/10/26