

CABINET 3 JULY 2019
PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Question Submitted by Mr Piggott

I understand that the repair to the lamppost at the end of the Underdale Road has encountered another setback – which has been referred to the Legal Department. This is the second time it has gone to the Legal Department – did they not resolve the issue then. What are the next steps, when will this work be completed, hopefully before the winter and darkness sets in. Surely people's safety is a priority.

Response:

Western Power Distribution (WPD) had been instructed to carry out the street lighting repair but that they left the site following representations by a local resident. WPD have requested further clarification from the Council regarding the status of the lane and rights of entry into the land. This has now been clarified and a further instruction will be issued to WPD to carry out the work shortly.

2. Question Submitted by Mr Kearns

Will the light on the pathway between Underdale Road and Corinthian Drive be fixed before the dark nights are upon us once more?

Response:

Western Power Distribution (WPD) had been instructed to carry out the street lighting repair but that they left the site following representations by a local resident. WPD have requested further clarification from the Council regarding the status of the lane and rights of entry into the land. This has now been clarified and a further instruction will be issued to WPD to carry out the work shortly.

3. Question submitted by Elizabeth Knowles

West Mercia Energy (WME) is part owned by Shropshire Council, and the chairman of WME is Peter Nutting, the leader of Shropshire Council. The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership has estimated that Shropshire could produce up to 20% of the West Midlands renewable energy needs.

Since declaring the Climate Emergency, what action has Shropshire Council taken towards buying and supplying energy from renewable sources, and would Shropshire Council consider pushing for WME to be an investor in renewable energy production?"

Response:

Currently 47% of the electricity consumed by Shropshire Council, as provided by WME, comes from renewable sources compared to the UK average of 29% (based on 2017/18 data). Compared to electricity there is very little generation, and minimal availability, of 'Green Gas'.

WME is governed under a joint agreement between four local authorities; Shropshire Council, The County of Herefordshire District Council, Worcestershire County Council and The Borough of Telford and Wrekin. A Joint Committee operates on behalf of the Member Authorities and an Annual Business Plan is approved by the Joint Committee each February. Any requirement to change the structure of WME, to become an investor in renewable energy production, would require the approval of all four Member Authorities. It is anticipated that any renewable energy project would have financial consequences in terms of investment, management and return. This would need careful consideration and approval by all four Member Authorities to progress.

The premium for green electricity has dropped significantly over recent years and consideration of moving towards 100% green electricity is being discussed.

4. Question Submitted by Peter Phillips

1 What is the status of the disabled parking spaces in Bishops Castle?

On acquiring a blue badge, I found that these spaces were often blocked by non-blue badge holders. But enforcement (by SC) was not possible since, I was told, one or more lacked Traffic Regulation Orders.

I wrote to the Chief Exec in Sept 2017 seeking clarification and rectification. And every month or two subsequently.... his swift response each time says that he will ask the relevant officer to discover the answer I have had nothing other than an acknowledgement.

2 Why has no response/action been forthcoming?

3 There is a well-marked and signed disabled space in the High St. Has it a TRO? If not, why not? Can one be processed asap?

4ditto..... Church St? Has it a TRO? If not, why not? Can one be processed asap?

5 There are unsigned and virtually unmarked spaces in the Station St car park. Have they a TRO? If not, why not? Can one be processed asap? And then can they be signed and marked?

Response:

The new manager of the traffic team has recently met Bishops Castle Town Council to discuss any outstanding issues including these as raised by Mr Phillips and has commissioned a review of the Traffic Regulation Orders in Bishops Castle following discussions with the town clerk. The intention is a review of the whole town will be undertaken and make any required amendments together for clarity and to be cost effective, and also in conjunction with the views and issues raised by the town council.

The lining in the Auction Yard Car Park appears to require re-lining and this can be considered as part of any wider package of works in the town.

5. Question Submitted by Sharuff Morsa

Web page <https://shropshire.gov.uk/sustainability/corporate-climate-change-strategy/> states:

The strategy has three main objectives:

- To mitigate the effects of climate change through carbon reduction of our services
- To adapt services and their delivery to respond to changes in the climate
- To promote sustainable practices via all services

Referring to the first objective: "To mitigate the effects of climate change through carbon reduction of our services" – to which services are they referring and what does this mean in practice, and what progress is being made towards achieving it? Have any indicators been set up to measure the performance of these mitigations?

Response

In answer to your first question we are being very proactive, and the challenge of carbon reduction is one that is being considered and addressed throughout all Council service areas. I would like to refer you to the attached document entitled 'Shropshire Council Towards zero Carbon: Low Carbon Projects', that you will receive by email together with a written copy of this answer following the meeting.

I would just like to pull out a couple of the projects that have already been completed and show the breadth of service areas that are acting to reduce their carbon footprint. The first is Shrewsbury Market Hall which has recently had a 22kw solar array installed on its roof and is in the process of having lights replaced with LEDs to reduce carbon emissions from the building and help to reduce running costs.

The second project I would like to mention is at Greenacres Farm near Baschurch, which is a day service facility which provides training in agriculture and horticulture for adults with learning disabilities. This has had a 50kw solar array installed to offset the power requirements and running costs of the farm. The project work also includes improvements to the insulation properties of the buildings and better irrigation and rain water harvesting capacity.

In answer to your second question, this is a very good point and one that has already been picked up in a wider sense internally. Part of the work of the Climate Change Task & Finish Group referenced in the next question is to establish a baseline of carbon emissions that will help to inform the Climate Action Plan which is intended to go to Full Council in December. This is extremely important as it will enable us to set a realistic target for carbon neutrality for the Council and also important milestone objectives along the way.

6. Question Submitted by Adele Mills

As this question was not answered at the last cabinet meeting, I would like to ask the council how often and to date how many times has the climate change working group met, and on what date will they feed into the revised strategy?

Response

As was reported at the Cabinet meeting on 12th June, the Climate Change Task & Finish Group met for the first time on Monday 1st July and outlined their intended work programme. Whilst I will be there to support and give evidence to the Group whenever requested, it is for them to set their timetable and agendas. The Group will be feeding in to the Corporate Carbon Reduction Strategy which is intended to be completed in September for Cabinet consideration during the autumn. Discussions will also be fed into the Climate Action Plan which is proposed to go to Full Council in December.³

7. Question Submitted by Claire Kirby

Given the climate emergency declaration, what is the council now doing to review its road policy?

Response

Shropshire Council has over 3000 miles of public road, of which there are numerous statutory and regulatory requirements. Currently we recycle tar as much as possible, by either ensuring it is treated and / or encapsulated in the highway network rather than disposing of this potentially harmful substance.

The Council takes care in ensuring that any road scheme is “cored” a sample of the materials underneath the road surface are taken, analysed by a certified laboratory and a treatment decision is made, this then prevents this material being exposed or disposed of unnecessarily.

A part of this wider initiative we are progressing on electric charging points, greener buses, solar power for highway advice and warning signs, current and enhanced LED regalement programme for street lights.

Also, in any new developments careful and exhaustive studies are undertaken and the natural environment / ecology are considered as part of any business case, in respect of mitigation or enhancement.

Additionally, a Local Transport plan is being developed that will consider alternative travel methods, walking cycling etc., this draft strategy will be presented to Cabinet later this year and be considered for public consultation.