

CABINET 29 MARCH 2021

MEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Cllr David Turner

Over the past twelve months Local Government at every level has demonstrated remarkable resilience in serving its communities during the global pandemic. An early challenge was overcome in ensuring that elected members could meet in order that decisions could be made. The use of remote technology has meant that the overwhelming majority of elected members at every level have participated in the democratic process from home.

With the rollout of the Covid vaccine there is much optimism that normal meetings will take place in person this year. Nonetheless I believe there is merit in maintaining the facility for remote participation under certain circumstances. For instance, there may be members who are still classed as vulnerable and they may be unwilling or unable to leave their home. And there are significant cost and time saving advantages. For instance, there are meetings, formal or otherwise, that are normally quite brief and could be conducted perfectly satisfactorily online. I have attended remotely a monthly meeting as a Shropshire Councillor over the past year. I have saved twelve hours travelling time for twelve hours of meeting, and if I'd travelled to them and claimed the mileage allowance, the Council would have paid me £216. Multiply such savings over 74 members of this Council alone, and it can be seen there are material advantages to the council taxpayer.

Would the Cabinet consider making representations to Whitehall for optional continuation of remote meetings for all levels of local government where appropriate and necessary?

As you will have picked up from the answer given to the earlier question from a member of the public, this Council, along with many others, did make representations to see if virtual meetings could continue after the emergency legislation comes to an end on 6th May. As you will be aware the Government indicated on Thursday that it was not prepared to make the necessary changes to the primary legislation in light of the progress being made to tackle the virus. In addition to the High Court action brought by the Association of Democratic Services Officers which could conceivably permit remote meetings there are other potential options mentioned by the Government to limit the number of meetings and these will be actively considered. The government has also launched a "call for evidence" on the use of current arrangements and to gather views on the question of whether there should be permanent arrangements before further decisions are made and the Council will be responding to that.

2. Cllr Ed Bird

Shifnal has recently been subject to a substantial amount of housing development. The local plan also outlines further expansion of the town which is already struggling with traffic, schooling and the doctor's surgery. Shifnal is located within the green belt, which should only be used under exceptional circumstances. Could cabinet confirm that any unmet need from the Black Country (some 1500 houses) will not be allocated to Shifnal?"

Response: Portfolio Holder for Housing and Strategic Planning

Draft Policy S15.1 of the draft Local Plan does not propose any Green Belt release in order to support the delivery of the town's proposed housing requirement up to 2038. For clarity, the draft Plan proposes that, once recent completions since 2016 and current commitments are taken into account, an additional 322 dwellings are required to satisfy the local housing requirement in the Plan period to 2038. The draft Plan then proposes a range of housing allocations with which to deliver this requirement, alongside an appropriate windfall allowance.

As part of the legal Duty to Cooperate, the Council have proposed in principle to accept up to 1,500 dwellings to help support the delivery of an element of the Black Country's emerging unmet housing need. This cross boundary unmet need is proposed to be incorporated into the overall housing requirement for the County and it is therefore not proposed that any specific site or settlement is intended to incorporate these needs. It should be noted that this scale of proposed cross boundary residential of 1,500 dwellings has been endorsed by the Association of Black Country Authorities (ABCA) in their recent response to the Regulation 19 consultation. The Council will be continuing Duty to Cooperate discussions through ABCA.

The Council are currently reviewing all responses to the recent Regulation 19 consultation with a view to seeking agreement to submit the Plan for independent examination in July 2021

3. Cllr David Vasmer

People who are suffering from Long Covid tell me that there appears to be no provision for them locally. One GP told a patient that they had no information, nor could they refer them for further consultation. In adult social care what plans are Shropshire making to support people suffering from Long Covid? And is the Council working with the NHS locally to give people suffering from Long Covid the support they need?

A new Post Covid Syndrome (also referred to as 'Long Covid') Clinic for patients across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin was launched on 1st December 2020. The clinic is for anyone experiencing lasting symptoms of Covid some of which can be very debilitating.

People with Long Covid are those with signs and symptoms that develop during or following an infection consistent with covid-19 which continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis. The condition usually presents with clusters of symptoms, often overlapping which may change over time and can affect any system within the body. Many people with Long Covid can also experience generalised pain, fatigue, persisting high temperature and psychiatric problems. Post Covid-19 syndrome may be considered before 12 weeks while the possibility of an alternative underlying disease is being assessed.

The clinic is staffed by a multi-disciplinary team, comprising the following:

- Specialist Respiratory Nurse
- Specialist Respiratory Physiotherapist
- Specialist Neurological Occupational Therapist
- Dietitian
- Sports & Exercise Medicine Consultant
- Input from IAPT team

There is a clear pathway for people referred to and from the clinic to get support with other needs such as eligible social care Referrals to the clinic are currently made exclusively through a GP as there are a number of clinical investigations that are required and a full medical history is necessary.

For context they have received 195 referrals since the clinic started on 1st December 2020 and 71% of these were from Shropshire GP's.

The clinic is currently being run virtually through the 'Attend Anywhere' system. This is a video consultation mechanism where they send an internet link to the patient which they then access via a smartphone, tablet or laptop.

If people don't have internet access they can arrange a phone or face to face consultation.

There are plans to expand the service to allow the provision of some face to face consultations also once restrictions ease and NHS funding streams are confirmed.

Communications and updates have been shared regularly with primary care via the CCG and their regular communication forums. The CCG and their communications team are part of the system group that have been working to set the clinic up.

Publicity on social media, websites and other media will be rolled out further during 2021.

For all referrals there is a single point of contact:
Shropcom.singlepointofreferral@nhs.net

Further information can be obtained by contacting Sam Townsend at Shropshire Community NHS Trust) : sam.townsend2@nhs.net