

## Place Overview Committee

28 April 2022

### Public Questions and Responses

**From: Karen Pearce**

#### **Background**

Shropshire Council has a statutory duty under section 94 and 95 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) and the Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007 to set up and maintain a Local Access Forum.

The function of a Local Access Forum (LAF) is to advise decision making authorities about making improvements to public access for outdoor recreation and sustainable travel. They also respond to consultations and draft policy and can set their own priorities allowing for local issues.

Although set up and maintained by local Authorities, Local Access Forums are intended to be independent groups. There is much information of the required role of councils on the Government Website:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-access-forums-role-of-the-local-authority>

No one can deny that access to the great outdoors has become far more important post Covid and benefits not just local people but also our visitors. In addition, pressures on the outdoors are ever increasing due to housing developments and proposals such as new roads.

#### **Question/s**

An LAF should be considering and contributing to issues that affect public access. This can be seen happening elsewhere across the country when you look at minutes of other LAFs. So why is it not happening in Shropshire?

What has happened to Shropshire's Local Access Forum and when will Shropshire Council be meeting its Statutory obligations to ensure that Shropshire has a truly independent Local Access Forum?

Please would the committee scrutinize what has happened and take action so that Shropshire Council properly meets its obligations.

#### **Response:**

The Shropshire Great Outdoors Strategy Board fulfils the statutory obligation of the Local Access Forum. In the attached constitution you will see that;

*"The Shropshire's Great Outdoors Strategy Board acts as the Local Access Forum for Shropshire but broadens the role to cover a wider remit in response to current priorities in Shropshire."*

*The current Local Access Forums (England) Regulations 2007 were published by the Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and came into force on the 19 March 2007. In addition, Local Access Forums are required (by section 94 of the CROW Act) to “have regard” to guidance given from time to time by the Secretary of State when carrying out their functions. The constitution for the Shropshire’s Great Outdoors Strategy Board will incorporate the regulations as part of this constitution.”*

This was authorised by Natural England in 2017.

The membership of the Board is from a wide variety of backgrounds and represents:

- Users of local rights of way or open access land (e.g. walkers, horse riders, cyclists, wheelchair users and motorised users)
- Owners and occupiers of access land or land over which local rights of way subsist
- Any other interests relevant to the area which could include; nature or land conservation, heritage, health and well-being, tourism and the outdoor economy, local community or minority interests

More details about the Board can be found here:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=727>

The Board last met in February 2021. The June 2021 meeting was cancelled due to Covid pressures. We are updating the website to reflect this. A date for the next meeting is being arranged.

We are currently reviewing the membership of the Board.



SGO Strategy Board  
Constitution 2017- Fin