

CABINET

17 APRIL 2024

Responses to Public Questions

Mrs Anne Povey

The Forestry England site at Haughmond Hill has excellent woodland walking and cycling routes, as well as a welcome café: it is very popular with visitors at all times of year. Recently, a new number plate recognition parking system was installed using payment cards via machine or using an app and visitors can no longer pay to park with cash. As a result, there is a substantial increase in the number of people who park cars immediately outside on the narrow B5062. Upton Magna Business Park is on this road and there is a working quarry next to the forestry site with heavy vehicles often using the same road. Anyone on foot has to walk in the road to pass the parked cars as there is no pavement. It's a busy place and with more cars parked along the roadside, pedestrians in the road, visibility is dramatically reduced, which makes leaving the car park dangerous as drivers have to edge forward into the road to see whether or not it is safe to set off. As a matter of public safety, I ask Shropshire Council to prohibit unsafe parking here by painting double yellow lines either side of and opposite the entrance to the Forest England site.

Response –

PORTFOLIO HOLDER DAN MORRIS

The Traffic Engineering Team have had quite a few reports on Fix My Street about the parking that is now taking place on this section of road at Haughmond Hill. This has been added to our works programme request list for prioritisation, etc subject to availability of funding. This would require consultation for Double Yellow Lines

The Council (Parking Team) will also speak to Forestry England who own the car park to see if they are prepared to contribute funding towards any potential scheme.

Felicity Pennal

I would obviously have liked the council to act on my email of July 2023, via my local councillor, requesting intervention regarding the problem of not being able to park in one's own street when a person becomes elderly and/or becomes chronically unwell.

I am asking the council why, given I have written to councillors, MP's, traffic management, highways, the North Shropshire's highways representative, have I not had any guidance or an answer.

I don't even know if I have approached the right employees or departments

My biggest complaint is that SCC has become so bureaucratic that an individual rate payer, who is really struggling with daily living, has no where to turn to.

The vexation of parking in Georgian narrow streets is across Shropshire. Causing fractional hostility instead of communities coming together. This is made worse by the council only looking to increasing parking fees forcing people to seek free parking elsewhere. Where is the evidence that this issue is even considered?

I request that Shropshire Highways clarify for me what their on-street parking policy is, and how many spaces any one Household is entitled to have.

Response -

PORTFOLIO HOLDER DAN MORRIS

Thank you for your question. I understand the frustrations with parking near to your property when you live in streets where properties do not have their own off-street parking spaces. Unloading shopping and then having to carry it some distance is difficult when a person becomes unwell or chronically ill as you have indicated.

Unfortunately there are no controls over the number of vehicles one household can park on the highway where there are no parking restrictions. However, if you have a blue badge, you are able to apply for a Disabled Persons Parking Place marking outside your property. This will ensure there is a space nearby.

Andrew Burden

Weir Hill - 700 properties (plus 150 with the new estate). 1 bin on the estate and 1 bin on Preston Street. Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes advise that it is not their responsibility to place/manage the bins. The council advises that until the estate is handed over, it is not their responsibility. How do we get more bins on the estate? More bins means less on the floor.

People are leaving their filled dog bags (or just excrement) on pavements. There are piles of bags being left at the entrance. 6 bags thrown in a bush. Bags dotting the length of Weir Hill access road. The country road leading to the river from Preston Street is littered with piles of excrement. More bins will eradicate their excuse that there is nowhere for it to go.

The children's play area has the only bin on it. If enforced, will a fence be placed around the play area? And also to prevent dogs allowed to play/mess in the play area?

How regularly will an officer patrol the estate? If they are not seen visibly or people are not fined it will be no deterrent for residents. Does the PSPO mean that signage is to be placed across the estate to educate?

Can the use of video evidence be provided to the officers? Therefore, by encouraging local residents to record incidences it would ultimately increase awareness the issue is being dealt with and will not be tolerated. And more importantly, acted upon.

Response -

PORTFOLIO HOLDER DAN MORRIS

The issues raised by Mr Burden are fully understood and many of the reasons the Council is proposing to introduce a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to control the nuisance of dog fouling.

Indeed the proposals being made to Cabinet include provisions for a publicity campaign to raise general awareness, signage and the adequate provision of waste bins to encourage responsible dog ownership and for the disposal of dog waste. It is also intended to respond to public complaint on an intelligence lead basis targeting 'hot spot' through public engagement and if necessary enforcement.

The specific issues raised regarding a private estate will need to be considered separately and through the adoption process so that play areas are properly protected and sufficient bins provided, so that residents can enjoy new facilities provided through new development. You will be reassured to know that this information has been feed back to colleagues in planning and will be reflected in our engagement with the developer.

Bill Griffiths, Clerk to Tasley Parish Council

Post-16 transport to education or training is particularly important in rural areas like Shropshire. Many of the schools no longer have sixth form education. Bridgnorth is the third largest town in Shropshire and will have no sixth form provision from September. This is a disgrace in itself. It is therefore absolutely essential that young people are provided with transport to other centres of education and training at affordable cost. The Statutory guidance for Local Authorities issued by The Department for Education under sections 18 and 68(4) of the Education and Skills Act 2008 (ESA 2008) in relation to sections 10, 12 and 68 of that Act states under "Duty on local authorities to promote participation" (39) "Under this RPA-related duty, the participation of young people in education and training should be actively promoted by local authorities (section 10 of ESA 2008). (40.) Specific examples of this are: • When developing transport arrangements and preparing their post-16 transport policy statement, local authorities should, in accordance with their duty under the Education Act 1996, ensure that young people are not prevented from participating because of the cost or availability of transport to their education or training." It appears the Council would be failing in its statutory duty were it to remove Post-16 transport to youth across the County. How do Shropshire Council intend to fulfil their duty to provide post-16 transport to education or training to ensure that young people are able to participate in education or training and achieve their full potential?

Response -

PORTFOLIO HOLDER IAN NELLINS

Local authorities do have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training, but do not have to provide free or subsidised post 16 travel support.

As you may be aware the Councils cabinet resolved at its meeting on Wednesday 19th July 2023 to start a consultation process into its current support of discretionary travel, reporting back at a future cabinet meeting the results of that consultation and presenting any alternative proposals that may have been highlighted as part of the consultation process. A full timetable and details of the consultation process will be made public in due course, and decisions will then be made following careful considerations.

With regard to the Councils statutory responsibilities, the Council applies its statutory obligations to School transport from the Education Act 1996 as amended by section 77 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (in particular sections 508A –E and Schedule 35B). For post 16 students the local authority does not have a legal duty to provide transport, in accordance with section 509AA AND 509AB it has a legal duty to produce an annual policy statement each year detailing the offer and specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport or otherwise that the authority consider it necessary to make for facilitating the attendance of persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

Education establishments themselves do have access to a bursary fund for 16-19 year olds to help meet transport costs for those young people who need this support most, in addition to this most bus companies also provide a level of discount through lower fares or subsidised travel passes for young people.

Therefore, the Councils role by publishing our transport policy statement each year, is to enable young people (and their parents) to take reasonable account of the arrangements available when choosing between different options.

I would also like to reassure the Parish Council and our parents and carers across the County that any recommendations presented to cabinet as a result of the consultation process will of course take account of any current Department for Education guidance or legislation.

Matt Lakin, Albrighton Village Action Group

We, Albrighton Village Action Group (AVAG), oppose overdevelopment on greenbelt outside the draft Shropshire Local Plan.

To date an overwhelming 3,000 residents have signed our petition and there are more than 700 members on our Facebook group. We have achieved coverage on local and national press, TV & radio, and have received over £1,500 in donations.

We warmly welcome the 'Local Plan - Additional Information for examination in public' presented to Cabinet, and are confident that supporters of our campaign will be reassured by the following summary points:

- Housing requirement increased by 500 to total 31,300 dwellings up to 2038 (8.2)
- It is unnecessary to allocate new sites for uplift (7.24)
- 3 existing sites; Tasley, Shrewsbury and Ironbridge Power Station to accommodate sustainably the proposed contribution of 1,500 dwellings for unmet needs in Black Country; none in greenbelt (4.19*)
- No land is proposed to be removed from the greenbelt at Albrighton for the settlement strategy or spacial strategy for Shropshire (6.6*)
- Safeguarded greenbelt land is currently not allocated for development, rather it provides future development opportunities beyond 2038 (5.24*)
- Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted...once allocated for development within a future Local Plan (5.25*)...to meet the needs of Shropshire (5.27*)

*(References from Local Plan – Additional material except *Greenbelt topic paper April 2024)*

Please can Cabinet reassure residents that these commitments will be robustly defended in the case of any speculative proposals which fall outside of the updated draft Local Plan?

Response -

PORTFOLIO HOLDER CHRIS SCHOFIELD

The Council can continue to confirm that in line with national regulations, planning decisions will be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Council can also demonstrate it has a five years housing land supply and therefore the development plan continues to hold full weight in decision making.

Pauline Dee BEM

I am really concerned that Shropshire Council is still going to introduce a parking fee on Sundays and, I presume, Bank holidays. So those of us who attend Church will be penalised. Wem does not have an attraction for Tourists except for the Annual Sweet Pea show and the Carnival. These are the only times that the main car park is full.

In my original email, I asked for the figures as to how much revenue was collected from the car park machines or payment by card and also how much it will cost to hire the Traffic Warden for Sundays and Bank Holidays. I have not received these figures.

More and more people are using the side streets to park which has had an impact on town centre residents who have difficulty parking close to their homes. This will have an effect on their Car Insurance.

Wem should never have been included originally as a town which should pay to park. *Does Shropshire Council not take into consideration the limitations of the town in attracting tourists and its closeness to out of town shops in Shrewsbury and Whitchurch?* I know the Council has considerable Budget problems but to increase car parking charges in this small market town is an abomination and has not been thought through.

Response -

PORTFOLIO HOLDER DAN MORRIS

A town is not just assessed on its tourist events but the facilities, activities and opportunities for everyone throughout the year. The biggest factor in the scoring process is based on size and facilities in the town. Wem is a town with retail, leisure and dining opportunities, which those on the lower band would have to a much lower extent, if at all. It is this score that is most influential. All other scores are more objective and are in relation to your argument mostly at the most beneficial level of possible scores. The review of Wem shows that it still clearly falls within Band 6 according to the current Parking Strategy. Subject to the Cabinet report on 17th April, the Parking Strategy will be comprehensively reviewed. However, it is not possible now to prejudge any changes in general or give any indication regarding the future status of Wem. The effect on church services is regrettable, but not unusual and affects other faiths such as Jewish and Muslim to a greater extent with their services being on Saturday and Friday.

URGENT QUESTION – Rob Davies

Shropshire Schools currently have the opportunity to buy into the Schools Library Service (SLS) to get up to date books, topic materials and new fiction books. They pay £1,300 a year and each half term, every class gets a box related to their topic and another box with new fiction books - and the children get so excited! They may be a digital generation but research shows that real books help children's learning and their educational outcomes. Fair access to books through this scheme, helps even out disadvantage. It also has a particular impact on smaller schools with less budget.

This scheme may now be cut due to the Council's budget deficit.

Teachers say there's no way to provide the mixture of resources without SLS. Over generations a rich collection of books and artefacts has been collected and lent out. Schools 'buying in' means there is money for new books, expert, supportive librarians and advice about books and new authors to encourage reluctant readers. Tens of thousands of pounds of resources belong to the children of Shropshire – past, present and future. Once this collection is closed, no Council will have the money available to put it together again.

Is the Council is planning to cut this service in next 45 days?

Will the portfolio holder commit to a public consultation – as per the constitutional requirement, before any service cuts?

Response -

PORTFOLIO HOLDER KIRSTIE HURST-KNIGHT

As the Cabinet Member for Children and Education, I am combining my response to the public and member questions raised by Mr Rob Davies and Cllr Roger Evans which have been accepted under the “urgency” provisions for member and public questions.

Both questions relate to the proposal to cease the non-mandatory School Library Service (SLS) operated by Shropshire Council from 1st September 2024.

Firstly, whilst I was aware that the Schools Library Service, which is a traded service, was operating at a loss, and we acknowledged that this situation could not continue, I was not made aware until 4th April that a decision by officers to proceed with a service review had been implemented which placed affected staff in a 45-day consultation period.

It is very regrettable that schools were not aware of the service review and no consultation with the schools had taken place.

I would like to reassure my Cabinet colleagues, members, and members of the public, that this is the very beginning of the process, and we will be formally consulting with schools to ascertain if a way to remove the deficit can be found.

We will invite all schools in Shropshire to respond to the consultation to capture ideas, including whether schools would be willing to pay more for the service, as suggested by the Headteacher from Cressage, and/or indeed subscribe to the service at all, given that 35% of Shropshire schools do not currently use the service and make alternative arrangements for this provision.

I would remind everyone that this is a non-mandatory service that the Council provides to support schools and to be very clear it is the school’s responsibility to ensure children and young people have access to books and other suitable education materials necessary to learn the curriculum, with funding provided directly through central Government grants to do this.

Considering the financial challenge we face, we cannot continue to subsidise a traded service, but we will ensure that all possible options to continue the service are explored and we welcome all possible solutions.

We will bring a report to Cabinet detailing the consultation feedback alongside a suggested way forward. To be clear this could still require the cessation of the service if a solution cannot be found.