

PUBLIC QUESTIONS
COUNCIL 24 SEPTEMBER 2026

Question from Mike Streetly

Meole Brace Park and Ride

Between 2013 and 2022 the usage of the Meole Brace Park and Ride Scheme was regularly around a third of the total usage of Shrewsbury's Park and Ride sites. Shropshire Council has quoted the recent usage at Meole Brace of 135,000 (30% of the total for the three sites) as grounds for closure. Yet, pre-COVID the site was being used by almost twice as many people (260,000 average 2013-18). Could the council please provide the usage figures for the three sites for the period 2022 to date and outline what the council has done and spent to advertise these essential services over the last 5 years?

Response from Cllr Rob Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Transport & Regeneration

Thank you for your question.

The passenger usage figures requested are detailed and cover multiple years across all three Park & Ride sites. To ensure that the information provided is accurate and complete, I have asked officers within the Passenger Transport Team to provide the figures directly to you following this meeting.

In relation to your question regarding what the Council has done to promote and advertise the Park & Ride services, the Council has actively sought to encourage greater use of the Park & Ride network over recent years.

This has included:

- Investment in a refreshed Park & Ride brand and vehicle livery to improve visibility and awareness of the service.
- The introduction of enhanced service frequencies in June 2025, increasing all three Park & Ride services from every 20 minutes to every 12 minutes using Government Bus Service Improvement Plan funding.
- Promotional fare offers, including a time-limited reduction in the return fare to £1.00 to encourage new and returning passengers.
- Press releases, media campaigns and social media activity promoting the service and service improvements.
- Advertising through local publications and magazine supplements where appropriate.
- Distribution of promotional material and posters through businesses and community locations.
- Partnership working with Shrewsbury BID and the wider Shrewsbury Moves programme to promote sustainable travel options and encourage greater use of public transport.
- Ongoing promotion through the Council's website, travel information channels and public transport communications.

The enhancement from a 20 minute frequency to a 12 minute frequency achieved its intended objective of increasing public transport use. Comparing the three months immediately before and after the introduction of the enhanced timetable, average monthly passenger journeys across the Shrewsbury Park & Ride network increased from approximately 34,500 journeys per month to approximately 38,000 journeys per month, whilst average monthly on-board revenue increased from approximately £28,000 per month to approximately £37,000 per month.

Despite these initiatives and the increase in patronage, the Council's Local Bus Retendering Programme 2026 concluded that it was no longer affordable to continue funding three separate Park & Ride services in Shrewsbury whilst also protecting essential rural and inter-urban bus services elsewhere in the county. The decision was therefore taken in the context of balancing limited resources across the wider supported bus network.

Question from Andrew Sceats

Closing Cornovii Developments Limited and Cornovii Investments (Shropshire) Limited at a minimum estimated ratepayers' loss of £4 million, follows major financial losses associated with the aborted North West Relief Road, the purchase of the Shrewsbury Shopping Centres and the abandoned Sundorne swimming pool project. These, together with the Shrewsbury railway station gyratory debacle and other numerous lesser capital projects have helped erode public confidence in the council and its councillors.

Most decisions were the responsibility of the previous Conservative administration, although some had support from other established political parties.

Unfortunately, many statements about Cornovii have been made by officers.

Examples of these being the comments made by the current interim s151 officer at two recent meetings;

- that Cornovii 'bought' Council- owned sites. In fact, some purchases were made with the issue of worthless Cornovii shares in real terms
- at its formation in 2019, following legal advice provided by a leading international law firm it would seem that the Council had disregarded some information provided. My assertion was not refuted as being incorrect, but its importance was minimised by the officer in question.

Will Council now instigate, without delay, a Public Enquiry into the 2 Cornovii companies rather than having one 'in house' at a later date when memories fade, and documents either become or unavailable or lost, with the aims of;

- learning fully What, When & Why things have happened and Who took responsibility
- improving matters in the future
- restoring public faith in the Council?

Response from Cllr James Owen, Portfolio Holder for Housing

The officer to whom you refer wished to apologise if he misled you in any way. However, in reaching the decision for a structured closure of the company, all relevant factors have been considered. It should be noted that as part of these considerations any historic errors or omissions in the costing of company activities will have been taken into account. Clearly, he cannot be accountable for failures of the past of both decision taking and financial arrangements put in place.

There are clearly lessons to be learnt, not only from the CDL situation but a number of other projects and initiatives undertaken during the previous administration and we are keen to ensure that these mistakes are not made again. However, it is the priority of this administration to look forward and to manage the unprecedented financial emergency that we are still facing as a consequence of some of these decisions. There is no intention to instigate any public enquiry at this time due to our officer capacity, as it would detract officers' time from concentrating on the immediate issues that confront us. However, as an administration we once again state our support for a comprehensive review once the process to close CDL has been completed.

Question from Christopher James

I have asked a number of questions regarding the costs associated with the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road and the Shrewsbury Railway Station Gyratory. My most recent two questions, submitted in the first week of July, have yet to elicit a reply. However, based on other responses to date, there is strong evidence to support the view that neither the Council nor WSP are complying with the terms of their contract. The Council's latest response to my questions clearly indicates that there is an alarming lack of change control and, consequently, raises questions about the Council possibly overpaying for third party services. In view of the communication from Central Government expressing its concerns what measures has the Council taken to

- i) Undertake a review and compliance audit of the WSP contract(s)
- ii) Examine the possibility of recovering overpayments
- iii) Undertake a compliance audit of the the contract with Keir (who were also engaged on the NWRR)
- iv) Improve the Council's in house skills with regard to contract management and administration.

Response from Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways & Waste

The current Council takes its responsibilities for contract management, financial stewardship, and governance extremely seriously. Any concerns raised regarding the delivery of major infrastructure programmes are considered through the Council's established assurance, audit, and management processes.

- i) Review and compliance audit of WSP contract(s)

As has been reported in the past by the External Auditor, governance of the North West Relief Road project under the last administration was not good. A lack of proper oversight and an absence of a robust approved funding plan was identified by the Auditor contributing towards spending of £24.4m on WSP for its work on the North West Relief Road. However, under the current administration governance arrangements, contract management procedures and financial controls have been reviewed.

Going forward, in relation to future WSP commissions, the Council will review contract performance, project expenditure, variation instructions and compliance with contractual requirements as part of its ongoing management and assurance arrangements. Where areas for improvement are identified, appropriate corrective actions will be implemented.

ii) Examination of the possibility of recovering overpayments

The Council has a duty to ensure that all payments made under its contracts are properly authorised, evidenced, and represent value for money. Should any review identify payments that are not supported by contractual entitlement, the Council would consider all appropriate remedies available under the relevant contract, including recovery of any sums that may have been incorrectly paid.

iii) Compliance audit of the Kier contract

The Council now applies the same principles of governance, contract management, and financial oversight across its major contracts. Contract administration arrangements for the Kier contract have been subject to ongoing monitoring and review, including compliance with contractual procedures, commercial controls and payment mechanisms. Any findings arising from those reviews are addressed through the Council's established contract management and audit processes.

iv) Improving the Council's in house skills regarding contract management and administration

The current Council recognises the importance of maintaining strong commercial project management and contract administration capability. As part of its continuous improvement approach, the Council invests in staff training and professional development, reviews governance arrangements, strengthens project assurance processes where appropriate, and seeks to ensure that officers responsible for major contracts have access to the necessary expertise and support, to effectively manage complex programmes and associated risks.

In summary, this Council is committed to robust contract management, transparency, accountability, and securing value for money for residents, while ensuring that major infrastructure projects are delivered in accordance with appropriate contractual, legal and governance requirements.

Question from Claire Rowbotham

Shropshire Council's Built Environment Consultancy Contract with WSP is worth up to £100m, and Cabinet confirmed in February that £24.4m was paid to WSP on the North West Relief Road alone. Please confirm the total paid to WSP UK Ltd and any associated group companies in each of the financial years 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26, and the sum committed, owed or forecast for 2026/27; and confirm the basis on which WSP is remunerated — chargeable hours against a schedule of rates, fixed-price task orders, or another mechanism. Despite these sums, developers creating homes and jobs in Shropshire report that they cannot deal directly with the WSP consultant working on their scheme. Every query is relayed through Council officers, adding a link to the chain that produces delays, repeat questions and avoidable confusion, and consuming scarce officer time. A different consultant is frequently assigned to each application even where several applications form parts of a single overall scheme, so knowledge of the site is lost and the same issues resurface. This is particularly acute for drainage, which is inherently site-wide rather than application-specific. What will the portfolio holder do to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these processes for all stakeholders?

Response from Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways & Waste

Actual payments to WSP, includes both revenue and capital (not adjusted for accruals):

Payments to WSP	Total £
2021/22	10,310,652.22
2022/23	9,678,674.53
2023/24	9,036,117.66
2024/25	9,657,137.36
2025/26	4,571,496.19
2026/27 Forecast	7,646,442.04

Note: The drop off in value from 25/26 is the NWRR project being put on hold.

As part of our Statement of Accounts we have to forecast future contract commitments value, for WSP we have put a future commitment of £5m for 26/27 against Capital (assumed above).

Work is remunerated on a basis of both chargeable hours against a schedule of rates and fixed-price task orders.

The work of WSP is under constant review to ensure that the Council receives best value for money. Recently it was agreed that some of WSP's work on drainage

should be brought in-house so that the Council can, in this instance, provide a more flexible and efficient service.

Question from Ian White

On 22nd August, I was in the park in Shrewsbury and I happened upon a protest. Though not in the military myself, I come from a proud military family, so when I saw the union flags, it warmed my heart, and discovering that ending illegal immigration was the message, I was fully on board.

I will say, I was at first disappointed that our protest was significantly outnumbered by a counter protest. Why oppose such a good message?

However, the penny soon dropped...

The protesters weren't all necessarily opposing specifics of illegal immigration. Some of the protesters made comments which appeared to be outright xenophobic and racist, together with displaying other prejudices - homophobia, misogyny, and transphobia. In my opinion, it was horrible.

A couple of seemingly less offensive members of the protest explained why they were there. This is the reason for my question.

What are consequences for Cllrs who publicly voice opinions and prejudices which might encourage public displays of hate? And what would happen if people from minority groups are harmed as a result?

Response from the Leader, Cllr Heather Kidd

The Council recognises concerns about recent protests, including their impact on safety, community cohesion, and reports of offensive behaviour, and is committed to keeping Shropshire welcoming and inclusive.

However, the right to protest is protected under human rights law (Articles 9, 10, 11), though not absolute, with any restrictions are the responsibility of the police, not the Council. The Council cannot prevent protests.

The police and public sector bodies must balance rights by acting lawfully, proportionately, and without discrimination, protecting peaceful protest while addressing risks.

Criminal behaviour (e.g. hate crime, violence) is a police matter and should be reported via 101 or 999 in emergencies.

The Council will work with police and partners to plan for future events, minimize disruption, and support community safety while remaining politically neutral. There are a number of routes already available for residents and businesses to raise concerns. Multiple channels include directly with the police, council customer services, the Shrewsbury BID and local councillors).

The Council encourages any incidents involving intimidation, harassment, hate crime or other suspected criminal behaviour to be reported directly to the police, as these are matters for law enforcement rather than the local authority. "The Members' Code of Conduct applies to councillors when acting in their official capacity. Anyone who believes a councillor may have breached the Code can submit a complaint to the Monitoring Officer, who will consider it in accordance with the Council's adopted standards arrangements. It would not be appropriate to comment on hypothetical cases or outcomes. We know that Government is considering strengthening the possible sanctions for any breaches of the Code of Conduct, and this clarity is something I think we all would welcome.