



Committee and Date

Council

23 February 2017

COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2016 in the Council Chamber,
Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND**

10.00 am - 2.45 pm

Responsible Officer: Jane Palmer
Email: jane.palmer@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 25772012

Present

Councillors Ann Hartley and Malcolm Pate (Leader)
Councillors Brian Williams (Speaker), Steve Charmley (Deputy Leader), Peter Adams, Andrew Bannerman, Nicholas Bardsley, Tim Barker, Thomas Biggins, Vernon Bushell, Gwilym Butler, John Cadwallader, Karen Calder, Lee Chapman, Anne Chebsey, Peter Cherrington, Ted Clarke, Gerald Dakin, Steve Davenport, Andrew Davies, Pauline Dee, David Evans, Roger Evans, John Everall, Hannah Fraser, Nigel Hartin, Richard Huffer, Tracey Huffer, Vince Hunt, John Hurst-Knight, Jean Jones, Simon Jones, Jonny Keeley, Miles Kenny, Duncan Kerr, Heather Kidd, Christian Lea, David Lloyd, Robert Macey, Jane MacKenzie, Chris Mellings, David Minnery, Pamela Moseley, Alan Mosley, Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock, Peter Nutting, Kevin Pardy, William Parr, Vivienne Parry, John Price, Malcolm Price, Keith Roberts, Madge Shineton, Jon Tandy, Robert Tindall, Dave Tremellen, Kevin Turley, David Turner, Arthur Walpole, Stuart West, Claire Wild, Michael Wood, Tina Woodward and Paul Wynn

52 Apologies for Absence

The Chief Executive reported that apologies for absence had been received from Mrs J Barrow, Mr T Bebb, Mr A Boddington, Mr D Carroll, Mr R Hughes, Mr N Laurens, Ms A Liebich and Mr D Roberts.

53 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

54 Minutes

Subject to it being agreed under Minute 47.3 that the cancellation from October 2016 of the 6% Community Pharmacy Funding be accepted and adopted by Council, it was

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2016, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

55 Announcements

Chairman's Engagements

The Chairman referred Members to the list of official engagements carried out by herself and the Speaker since the last meeting of the Council on 22 September 2016, which had been circulated at the meeting.

56 Public Questions

Petitions

The Speaker advised that a petition bearing more than 1,000 signatures on behalf of the 'Stop the Meole Brace Roundabout Works' Campaign Group had been received from Mr and Mrs Stoddart, requesting a debate under the Council's Petition Scheme. Mr Stoddart was given 5 minutes to open the debate and outline his case, which was outlined in the information paper included with the agenda papers for the meeting with the key points highlighted as:

1. The design proposals make the current congestion at the Meole Brace retail roundabout worse and increase the likelihood of an accident. The cut through road from the Roman Road towards the Meole Brace retail park should be removed.
2. The priority route should run from Roman Road towards Hazeldine Way and onwards towards Telford Way [the inner ring road]
3. The status of Meole Brace island as a gateway to Shrewsbury should be retained.
4. The scheme is nothing more than a means to access Central Government funds provided through the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership and should be reconsidered and revised.

A debate ensued and the following members spoke in support of the key points made by the petitioners: Mr J Tandy, Mrs A Chebsey, Mr T Clarke, Mrs H Kidd, Mr M Kenny, Mr R Evans and Mr D Kerr. In formally responding to the petition, the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation, Mr S Jones, commented that the debate had not brought forward any additional views to those raised by the petitioners. He stated that the scheme was intended to encourage people to use the inner ring road and not traverse the town centre. He stressed that the Meole Brace retail park was private property and discussions had been held with the landowners with a view to working together to address the issues but he added, that this was a separate issue to the Strategic Integrated Transport Plan. In the absence of the local Member, Mr N Laurens, the Portfolio Holder commented that two public meetings had been held since January 2016, each property in the Ward had received written information and drawings about the works and two drop in public sessions had been held in Shrewsbury.

It was agreed by the majority to take no further action in respect of the petition and the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation to write to the petitioners in response to the main points raised in the petition.

Public Questions

The Speaker advised that a public question had been received in accordance with the Procedure Rule 15 (a copy of the report containing the question and the formal response was attached to the signed Minutes)

- i) Received from Mr P Gilbert regarding a public consultation on the Shropshire Bus Strategy 2016-21 and the date it would take place.

There was no supplementary question.

57 Retuning Officer's Report

The Chief Executive reported the result of a recent bi-election.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted that on Thursday 15 September 2016 Mr Jonathan Peter Stacey Keeley was elected as Councillor to represent the Bishop's Castle Electoral Division.

58 Portfolio Holder Annual Report for Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services & Environment

It was proposed by Mr M Price, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services and Environment and seconded by Mr T Barker that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes be received.

Mr Price presented and amplified his detailed report on undertaking his responsibilities as Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services and Environment and drew attention to the key areas within the report relating to Strategic planning, strategic housing, regulatory services, housing options services, waste management and planning services. He drew particular attention to the excellent work undertaken by the Housing Options team in drawing in funding for disabled home owners.

He responded to particular questions and comments raised by Members, including M, Mrs P Dee, Mrs H Kidd, Mrs M Shineton, Mr N Hartin, Mr K Turley and A Mosley. In conclusion, he thanked all Members for their support and also thanked all Officers for their hard work and continuing commitment.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report of the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services and Environment be received.

59 Report of the Portfolio Holder for Rural Services and Communities

It was proposed by Mrs C Motley, Portfolio Holder for Rural Services and Communities, and seconded by Mr G Butler that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes be received.

Mrs Motley presented her report on undertaking her responsibilities as Portfolio Holder for Rural Services and Communities. The report detailed all that had been achieved so far and the direction for the future. In amplifying her report Mrs Motley, assisted by the Deputy Portfolio Holder Mr G Butler, responded to the questions, queries and concerns raised by Members, including Mr R Evans, Mr M Kenny, Mr A Bannerman, Dr J Jones and Mrs S Shineton.

In conclusion, she thanked all those who had been, and continued to be, involved in the areas of work covered by the Portfolio and for the support of the Deputy Portfolio Holder, Mr G Butler.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report of the Portfolio Holder for Rural Services and Communities be received.

60 Report of the Portfolio Holder for Business and Economy

It was proposed by Mr S Charmley, Portfolio Holder for Business and Economy, and seconded by Mr S Davenport that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes, be received.

The Speaker introduced the new Head of Economic Development, Gemma Davies, to the Council and wished her well in her new role.

Mr Charmley presented and amplified his report and responded to the question, queries and concerns raised by Members, including Mrs H Kidd, Mr R Evans, Mr A Mosley and Mrs M Shineton. He drew attention to the key headings within the report namely Economic Growth, Marches Local Economic Partnership, Enabling Growth in Shropshire, Shropshire Business Board, Supporting business, 2014-20 EU Programme, key sites and infrastructure, skills, Broadband and the restructure of the Economic Growth team within the Council.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report of the Portfolio Holder for Business and Economy be received.

61 Annual Report of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee

It was proposed by Mr S Davenport, Chair of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee, and seconded by Mr N Barclay, that the Annual Report 2015-16, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes, be received and agreed.

Mr Davenport presented his report and drew attention to the significant number of Task and Finish Groups that had been initiated by the Committee. He also made

particular mention of a newly developed website dedicated to new business in the county entitled, 'Investing in Shropshire'.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the Annual Report 2015-16 of the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee be received.

62 Report of the Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Budget and Business Plan

Mr M Pate presented his report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes, on undertaking his responsibilities as Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Financial Strategy, Budget and Business Plan. Mr Pate amplified the report and responded to questions, queries and concerns raised by Members, including Mr M Kenny and Mr R Evans.

In conclusion, he stressed the fundamental need to attract more business to Shropshire; land was available and business needed to be encouraged to locate in the area.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report of the Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Financial Strategy, Budget and Business Plan be received.

63 Report of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Support

It was proposed by Mr M Wood, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Support, and seconded by Mr T Barker that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes, be received.

Mr Wood presented and amplified his report and responded to the questions, concerns and comments from Members, including Mrs V Parry, Mr N Hartin, Mrs M Shineton and Mr A Mosley.

In conclusion, he expressed his sincere thanks to the work and support of the two Deputy Portfolio Holders, Mr R Tindall and Mr N Laurens and also thanked staff for their continued hard work and dedication.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Support be received.

64 Annual Report of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee

It was proposed by Mrs C Wild, Chair of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee, and seconded by Mr S Davenport that the Annual Report of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee 2015-16, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes, be received.

Mrs Wild presented her report and provided an overview of the work of the Committee during the last twelve months.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the Annual Report 2015-16 of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee be received.

65 Setting the Council Taxbase for 2017/18

Council noted that there was a duty on any Councillor whose Council Tax payments are two months' overdue to make a declaration to that affect and to refrain from voting where specified matters concerning calculation of budget requirements, Council Tax amounts, or precepts are considered. Councillor S Daveport made such a declaration and left the Chamber at this point.

It was proposed by Mr M Pate, and seconded by Mr M Wood, that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

Responding to a question from Mr R Evans, Mr Pate stated that he would inform Mr Evans of the number of properties that had been removed from the Council Tax taxbase list.

RESOLVED:

- i) That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Shropshire Council as its Council Tax taxbase for the year 2017/18, as detailed in Appendix A, totalling 106,565.90 Band D equivalents, be approved.
- ii) That continuation of the Council's current localised Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme in 2017/18 be noted. The scheme is attached at Appendix B.
- iii) That the exclusion of 10,419.63 Band D equivalents from the taxbase as a result of localised Council Tax Support be noted.
- iv) That continuation be noted of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy of 0% in respect of second homes (other than those that retain a 50% discount through regulation as a result of job related protection) and note the inclusion of 669.82 Band D equivalents in the Council Tax taxbase as a result of this discount policy.
- v) That continuation be noted of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy of 50% for up to 12 months in respect of vacant dwellings undergoing major repair, i.e. former Class A exempt properties, and the resulting exclusion of 133.94 Band D equivalents from the Council Tax taxbase.
- vi) That continuation be noted of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy in respect of vacant dwellings, i.e. former Class C exempt properties, of 100% for one month, i.e. effectively reinstating the exemption, and then a 25% discount for the remaining five months and the resulting exclusion of 234.66 and 255.58 Band D equivalents respectively from the Council Tax taxbase.

- vii) That continuation be noted of the "six week rule" in respect of vacant dwellings, i.e. former Class C exempt properties.
- viii) That continuation be noted of the discretionary power to levy a Council Tax premium of 50% in relation to dwellings which have been empty for more than two years and the resulting inclusion of 235.38 Band D equivalents in the Council Tax taxbase.
- ix) That a collection rate for the year 2017/18 of 98.2% be approved.

66 Financial Strategy 2017/18

It was proposed by the Leader, Mr M Pate, and seconded by Mr D Turner, that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

Mr Pate commented that elderly care was not currently fairly funded by Central Government and it was hoped that this was to change in future particularly given that Shropshire had 30% more elderly in the county and a vast rural area in which to provide the necessary support services. He added that the use of one-off reserves to retain services was a short term plan and on receipt of further information from Government a Strategy beyond 2020 would be developed.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the revised projections for expenditure and resources be approved, as set out in Appendices 1 and 2, for the Financial Years 2017/18 and 2018/19
- ii) That the revised savings proposals be approved as set out in Appendices 4 and 5.
- iii) That the revised funding gap be noted and the revised proposals be approved to deliver a balanced budget in 2017/18 and 2018/19 as set out in Appendix 3, including the release of earmarked reserves as set out in Appendix 6.
- iv) That the virement of funding allocations be approved as set out in paragraph 4.4.
- v) That the draft outline Revenue Budget be approved as set out in Appendix 7, and the draft outline Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 8, which together will form the basis for Budget Consultation for 6 weeks from 7 December 2016 to 18 January 2017, which has been amended by one week from the dates previously agreed by Cabinet.

Council adjourned at 12.45pm and reconvened at 1.40pm

67 Treasury Strategy 2016/17 - Mid Year Review

It was proposed by the Leader, Mr M Pate, and seconded by Mr M Wood, that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the position as detailed in the report, be accepted; and
- ii) That it be noted that any capital schemes brought forward that would impact on the current Strategy would need to be approved by Council.

68 LGPS Central - Investment Pooling

It was proposed by the Leader, Mr M Pate and seconded by Mr A Davies, that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

Responding to comments by Mr M Kenny, the Leader Mr M Pate stressed that the duty of the Pension Fund was to maximise the benefits to the fund and its beneficiaries

RESOLVED:

That the following be approved:

- i) To enter into an Inter Authority Agreement with Cheshire West & Chester Council, Derbyshire County Council, Leicestershire County Council, Nottinghamshire County Council, Staffordshire County Council, Wolverhampton City Council and Worcestershire County Council to establish a joint pension fund investment pool, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) Regulations 2016 and pursuant to that Inter Authority Agreement set up; and operate a Joint Committee under s102 of the Local Government Act 1972 to oversee the joint investment arrangements.
- ii) To agree that Cheshire West and Chester shall provide governance and administrative support to the Joint Committee on behalf of the participating Council's, subject to the appropriate cost sharing arrangements in respect of officer time and other expenses.
- iii) To become a joint shareholder of LGPS Central; a private company, limited by shares, held solely by the participating funds named in recommendation 2.1, on a 'one fund, one vote' basis; incorporated for investment management purposes and regulated under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000.

- iv) To authorise the Shropshire Council Member who holds either the position of Chair or Vice Chair of the Shropshire County Pension Fund, to appoint themselves or other Shropshire Council Members of the Pension Committee to undertake the following roles:
 - i) To act as the Council's representative on the Joint Committee;
 - ii) To exercise the Council's voting rights as a shareholder of LGPS Central, to be exercised in consultation with the Head of Finance Governance & Assurance (s151 Officer) where the vote is in respect of a Reserved Matter as set out in Schedule 1 of the Shareholders agreement;
- and each Member so appointed shall have delegated authority to undertake such roles.
- v) To agree that the Shropshire Council Members appointed under recommendations 2.4 above shall be authorised to appoint a substitute, provided that substitute is a Shropshire Council Member of the Pensions Committee, and agree that, wherever possible, the Member (or their substitute) appointed to the Joint Committee shall not be the same Member as currently appointed to the Shareholder Forum, so as to avoid potential conflicts of interest.
- vi) To agree that the signatory on behalf of the Council as Shareholder shall be the Council's Head of Legal & Democratic Services.
- vii) To appoint the Head of Finance Governance & Assurance (s151 Officer) and Scheme Administrator of the Pension Fund or their nominated representative to represent the Council on a Practitioner Advisory Forum, providing joint officer support to the Joint Committee and Shareholder Forum.
- viii) To approve the revised terms of reference for the Shropshire County Pension Fund Committee as set out in Appendix 3 to this report.
- ix) To delegate authority to the Head of Finance Governance & Assurance (s151 Officer) in consultation with the Shropshire Council Chair or Vice Chair of the Pension Committee to negotiate and agree all necessary legal agreements to establish a joint asset pool and investment management company as outlined in this report and to implement the recommendations and to authorise their execution.

69 Changes to Arrangements for Appointment of External Auditors

It was proposed by Mr M Pate, and seconded by Mr T Barker, that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the Council formally opt-in to the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA), Local Government Association National Sector Led Body.

70 Draft Shropshire Council Corporate Plan 2016/17 to 2018/19

It was proposed by the Leader, Mr M Pate and seconded by Mrs C Wild, that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

Mr Pate commented that Members and Officers had been widely consulted on the content of the document and appropriate feedback had been incorporated. In noting comments made by Mr M Kenny, Mr A Bannerman, Mrs H Fraser, Mr P Cherrington and Mr D Kerr, he stated that the document bound together other Strategies held by the Council and was a rolling document, constantly evolving to provide a map of the way forward for the Council.

The Chief Executive added that a Task and Finish Group on performance had held three meetings on the Corporate Plan and its recommendations had been accepted by Cabinet on 30 November 2016. However he urged any Member to come forward with their ideas but to be mindful of the available resources and to have realistic expectations. Mr Pate agreed that the targets were general in nature but 'sensible' specifics may be able to be incorporated.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Corporate Plan 2016/17 to 2018/19, be approved;
- ii) That the Corporate Plan be annually refreshed alongside the Financial Strategy and be subject to a complete review and rewrite every three years simultaneously with the Financial Strategy
- iii) That the Plan, if approved by the Council, is a working document and any necessary additions or amendments prior to annual review will be brought to a future meeting of full Council for approval.

71 West Mercia Youth Justice Plan 2016-17

Mr T Barker left the meeting during consideration of this item.

It was proposed by Mr D Minnery, and seconded by Mrs K Calder, that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed. Members noted the Plan detailing the structure of youth justice services across the West Mercia area and the key actions identified to address risks to service delivery and improvement.

RESOLVED:

That the Youth Justice Plan 2016/17, attached as Appendix A to the report, be approved.

72 Adoption of the Shifnal Neighbourhood Plan

It was proposed by Mr M Price, and seconded by Mr S West, that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Shropshire Council as the Local Planning Authority 'makes' i.e. adopts the Shifnal Neighbourhood Plan and brings it into force as part of the Development Plan for Shropshire.

73 Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2016

It was proposed by Mr M Wood, and seconded by Mr K Roberts, that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed Minutes and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the following changes be approved, which have been agreed with Division Members, in order for them to be implemented on or by 1 January 2017.
- II) That delegated powers be granted to the Returning Officer to find a suitable alternative, in conjunction with local Members, should any polling station not be available for a particular election.

DIVISION	PROPOSED CHANGES
SIA Copthorne Division (Part of)	It is recommended Woodfield County Infants School be replaced by Copthorne Army Reserve Centre.
SPB Porthill Division (Part of)	It is recommended Woodfield County Infants School be replaced by Copthorne Army Reserve Centre.
SOB Monkmoor Division (Part of)	It is recommended Crowmoor Primary School be replaced by Shrewsbury Baptist Church Community Hall.

74 Appointments to Committees

RESOLVED:

That the following changes to Committee memberships be approved and noted as follows:

- Audit Committee

The appointment of Peter Nutting as a Substitute Member to replace Nic Laurens.

- Environment & Services Scrutiny Committee

The appointment of Nick Bardsley as a Substitute Member to replace John Price
The appointment of Roger Evans as a Substitute Member

- Children & Young People's Scrutiny

The appointment of Arthur Walpole as a Full Member.
The appointment of Nic Laurens as a Substitute Member.

- Enterprise & Growth Scrutiny Committee

The appointment of Jonny Keeley as a Full Member
The appointment of Roger Evans as a Substitute Member

- Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

The appointment of Dean Carroll as a Substitute Member to replace David Roberts.

75 Questions from Members

The Speaker advised that six questions had been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 15 (copies of the report containing the detailed questions and their formal responses are attached to the signed Minutes).

- a) Received from Mr D Kerr and answered by Mr M Pate, the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Financial Strategy, Budget and Business Plan about consideration of holding a Referendum on increasing Council Tax above the capping limit.

By way of a supplementary question Mr Kerr requested a written breakdown of the costs of a referendum.

In response, the Leader and Portfolio Holder stated that he would provide Mr Kerr with a written response.

- b) Received from Mr D Kerr and answered by Mr M Price, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing, Regulatory Services and Environment about the time taken to process a change of circumstances in relation to a constituent's benefit.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Kerr asked the cause of the problem and what changes were being made as a result of this.

In response, the Portfolio Holder stated that he would provide Mr Kerr with a written response.

- c) Received from Mr M Kenny and answered by Mr S Jones, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation about issues surrounding the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road including the funding bid and grant obtained under the Department of Transport's Local Majors Fund [LMF]; those to be involved in the associated Outline Business Case and the need for an ecological survey along the entire route of the North West Relief Road.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Kenny asked how the proposals would illustrate benefits that accorded with the Council's Corporate Plan.

In response, the Portfolio Holder stated that he would provide Mr Kenny with a written response.

- d) Received from M Kenny and answered by Mr M Price, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing, Regulatory Services and the Environment about the supply of affordable homes not keeping pace with the demand from those eligible for social housing.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Kenny asked for further clarification on the plans to answer the current problems caused by the fall in the number of affordable homes for rent.

In response, the Portfolio Holder stated new Policies would be emerging in January 2017 to deal with the issues, the Local Plan would be used to greater advantage and challenges would continue to be made to Government on the level of housing benefit. He considered that properties were available but the biggest issue was whether people could afford to be in them.

- e) Received from Mr T Barker and answered by Mr L Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Adult Services about the cost and delivery performance of the Council's Adult Services as shown in the National Performance and Cost Tables as compared against other authorities.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Barker conveyed his congratulation to the Portfolio Holder and queried to what the Council's success could be attributed.

In response, the Portfolio Holder paid tribute to the wealth of committed, hardworking staff including a management team striving for the best, an informative peer review, social workers, care workers, volunteers and carers and all staff involved in this service.

- f) Received from Mr D Turner and answered by Mr M Pate, the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Financial Strategy, Budget and Business Plan about the steps taken to give the Authority a clear forward direction.

By way of a supplementary question, Mr Turner queried whether there were any other achievements and ambitions to be made known at this time.

In response, the Leader and Portfolio Holder emphasised the efforts made by the Administration to try to mitigate the Council's financial position and move the authority forward. He stressed that the primary aim was to continue to deliver excellent services to the people of Shropshire.

76 Motions

- a) The following Motion was proposed by Mrs T Huffer and seconded by Mr L Chapman

'Sustainability and Transformation Plan'

On 28 November, the STP for Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin was published. The plan lacks financial detail and fails to adequately consider the deficit in social care funding. Rural services do not feature strongly enough in the plan and any review of community bed capacity must take account of the needs of all our communities across Shropshire, and the importance of these beds in keeping people out of the acute hospital environment.

This Council requests that the Leader writes to Simon Wright, the area lead for the STP, and Shropshire MPs, calling for all services, including maternity services, in our rural communities to be given the priority they deserve in the STP."

After debate and on being put to the vote, the motion was carried with the majority voting in favour.

- b) The following Motion was proposed by Mrs H Fraser and seconded by Mr R Evans

"This Council notes with concern that the government's proposals for an Apprenticeship Levy will result in Local Authority maintained schools contributing 0.5% of their budget to the scheme. This authority considers that public funding for education should not be diverted to supporting the Apprenticeship Levy, and that schools should be exempt from the scheme, particularly as children in Local Authority Schools will be disadvantaged compared with children in Academies or Free Schools.

This Council resolves to write to the relevant Government Minister and our Shropshire MPs to express our concern regarding the proposals, and make the case for schools to be exempt from the Apprenticeship Levy."

After debate and on being put to the vote the Motion was not supported with the majority voting against.

- c) Proposed by Mr R Evans/ the Liberal Democrat Group, seconded by Mr M Price

'This Council notes that the recent Financial Report which was considered and agreed by Cabinet on 9th November proposed some funding be diverted into recycling empty homes. This was to help regenerate Shropshire's communities. The amount allocated however is just £250,000 for this year with a similar amount for next year. This is not enough.

Council is disappointed to see just this relatively small amount being allocated. When the present Empty Homes Strategy 2014–17 was first proposed in 2014 the Liberal Democrat Group called it in for examination by a Scrutiny Committee. This cross party group of backbench councillors looked at what was proposed and made five recommendations. The fifth recommendation was

"That the Task & Finish Group considers that both additional funding and staff resource in the Empty Homes Team would be of significant benefit to both the Council and Shropshire communities. It is therefore recommended that a business case be produced, to be considered by Cabinet on an agreed date, detailing the level of additional funding required to deliver a more widespread and comprehensive approach to Empty Homes work. This should include the additional staffing resource required to carry out the tasks identified in the report's findings, and budget required to be able to effectively utilise enforcement powers, including works in default. It should highlight the positive benefits these measures could have for the Council and Shropshire Communities."

The report including the above statement was presented to and adopted by the Cabinet on 29 July 2015.

It is understood a business case was produced but never published, was kept secret. Resources were in fact reduced and proposals were made to redeploy staff.

A number of our neighbouring local authorities took a different attitude and have so gained both extra cash off the Government by drastically reducing the number of long term empty homes in their areas and of course increasing the number of home available for residents to live in.

Two examples are

- Cheshire East Unitary Authority has reduced the number of long term empty homes since they were formed in 2009 by just over 50%. In October 2009 they had 3,200 long term vacant dwellings. In October 2015 the total had reduced to 1540.
- Herefordshire has also reduced theirs by over 50%. Reducing the number of long term empty homes over a similar period from 845 to 419.

Shropshire by comparison in October 2009 had 1,940 long term empty homes and 1,526 in October 2015. A reduction of just over 20%, equal to just 69 homes per year being made available for families to live in. The staff we have working in this area work hard but lack resources to enable them to do their work as they would wish, as we would wish and importantly as those in housing need want them to.

It is further noted that;

- For 2016/17 this council is receiving £9.2m from our Government in New Homes Bonus. This includes the contribution council receives from Government due to the 35 vacant homes returned to occupation between October 2014 and October 2015.
- The Shropshire Council web page covering this area was last updated in May 2016 with the message
"This strategy is currently under review. An updated version will be made available on this page as soon as possible."

Council asks Cabinet to agree “that Public Protection be allowed to use the existing allocated funding for both capital and revenue purposes to achieve the best outcome of reducing the number of empty properties and maximising income from new homes bonus. In any event the performance of the empty property section be reviewed by scrutiny after 12 months”.

After debate, and on being put to the vote the motion was agreed with the majority voting in favour.

Signed

(Chairman)

Date:

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