

COUNCIL MEETING 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question 1 - From Jamie Russell

In August the United Nations IPCC issued a 'code red' for humanity. UN Secretary-General António Guterres said:

'We must act decisively now to keep 1.5°C alive. We are already at 1.2°C and rising. Warming has accelerated in recent decades. Every fraction of a degree counts. Greenhouse-gas concentrations are at record levels. Extreme weather and climate disasters are increasing in frequency and intensity [...] The viability of our societies depends on leaders from government, business and civil society uniting behind policies, actions and investments that will limit temperature rise to 1.5°C.'

Shropshire Council declared a climate emergency over two years ago in July 2019. Despite that declaration, I note that the council is:

- Still committed to building the North West Road, even though it will create 48,000 tonnes of CO2 from its construction for an operational saving of 350t/CO2 pa.
- Still investing its pension fund in climate-wrecking companies including BP & Shell
- Still building houses through its developer Cornovii that are not zero carbon
- Still dithering about whether or not to back the Climate & Ecological Emergency Bill that is currently in the House of Commons.

Many residents in the county feel that Shropshire Council is completely failing in its duty to act on the emergency it declared. What evidence can the council provide that its climate emergency declaration is making any real difference at all?

Response from Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Natural Assets & The Green Economy:

1. We welcome the opportunity to highlight the wide range of carbon reduction projects which the Council is supporting both to reduce its

own carbon footprint and help Shropshire businesses and communities to do the same;

2. In the context of the first part of the Council's adopted Climate Strategy, which concerns '**Powering Down**', the Council has reduced its direct carbon footprint (Scope 1 & 2 emissions) by 70% between 2017 and 2019. Additional measures have been taken since 2019 to reduce the Council's footprint (including its indirect, Scope 3 emissions) further including:
 - Switching all corporate power consumption to identifiable renewable sources;
 - An on-going programme of improvements to its buildings to install additional insulation, together with low carbon heating, lighting and solar power generation, currently valued at around £1.1m (60% grant funding) and saving around 210 tonnes of carbon per year;
 - Delivering the first carbon neutral road surfacing programme by any UK local authority (project shortlisted for the National Highways Awards 2021), saving over 280 tonnes of carbon;
 - Supporting Shropshire residents to make the transition to electric vehicles as one of just four UK areas to trial world-leading 'Agile Streets' on-street smart EV charging and installing an initial 50 new charge points in market towns across Shropshire using around £200,000 of Government grants;
 - Working with local Housing Associations, taking steps to help residents suffering from fuel poverty and helping social housing tenants by installing £5.8m of insulation and heating improvements in Shropshire to date;
 - Supporting wider community efforts to decarbonise as a founder member of Zero Carbon Shropshire and grant funding projects such as county-wide energy mapping;

3. In the context of the second part of the Council's adopted Climate Strategy, which concerns '**Powering Up**,' the Council has adopted an objective of becoming 'energy self-sufficient' by 2030. To help deliver this and to improve access to renewable energy for other public sector organisations and local businesses, Shropshire Council:
 - Has agreed to develop a new 1MW solar farm on the former Maesbury Road landfill site in Oswestry to supply power to local businesses;
 - Is working with local electricity companies to screen its own property portfolio to identify other opportunities to generate power, either for its own use or to supply other public sector organisations and local businesses;
 - Is using £70,000 Government grant funding to work with a range of local project partners, including Zero Carbon Shropshire to develop the potential for local heat networks in north Shrewsbury and Shrewsbury town centre to decarbonise heating in these areas;

4. In the context of the third part of the Council's adopted Climate Strategy, which concerns '**Carbon Capture and Storage**,' the Council is:
 - Seeking opportunities to work with others to capture and store carbon in horticulture and agriculture using carbon credits using a pilot project for Biochar production;
 - Supporting widespread tree planting by making available around 30,000 trees per year free of charge for communities through the annual 'Community Tree Scheme'.
5. A summary of the Council's updated carbon performance data will be published later this year.

Question 2 – from Stephen Mulloy

Question to Cllr Lezley Picton, Leader

Your register of disclosable pecuniary interests declare that you are the Business Manager for CMS JAW Ltd which has a 'related party disclosure' declaring a joint venture, since at least 2009, with an unnamed third party involving £545k in the most recent accounts.

Up until 31st December 2014 the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (FRSSE) required the name of the related party to be disclosed in the accounts, but this was not complied with.

In the interest of openness and transparency, and given your role as leader of Shropshire Council, will you disclose the name of the third party and nature of the joint venture and whether there has been business transacted with that third party within the Shropshire Council local authority area?

Response from the Leader:

I am not required and do not intend to disclose the name of the third party or the details of the joint venture you have asked me about. It has no business dealings in Shropshire or any transactions with Shropshire Council. If that should change at any point in the future then I shall, of course, be prepared to disclose further details."