

CABINET
13TH MARCH 2024
MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Councillor Rachel Connolly

“Bridgnorth Town Centre Parking and Public Realm Works” was included in the Council’s Capital Strategy Programme with £4.5m investment and approved by Council in February 2022 and March and September 2023.

Bridgnorth Town Centre Traffic and Public Realm Works has been removed from Appendix C from the Priority Capital Schemes Schedule for 2023/24 to 2028/29. The scheme no longer exists on either the list of priority schemes, or those in delivery.

The report was voted through by a majority of members, and thus replaces the previous versions of the Capital Strategy programme.

It appears that the Bridgnorth Town Centre Public Realm Works has been deprioritised.

When questioned during these meetings as to the meaning of this omission, members were given verbal assurances that the commitment to investing £4.5m in Bridgnorth remains.

- Could the Portfolio Holder for Finance please confirm in writing, from his verbal assurance, that the Council’s capital strategy programme of February 2024 retains its commitment to the aspirational scheme in Bridgnorth, with an investment of £4.5m?
- Could the Portfolio Holder for Finance please indicate in writing that the £4.5m for Bridgnorth High Street and Public Realm Works agreed at Council in Feb 2022 March 2023 and September 2023 is still available and the project is still designated as a Priority scheme, which was also approved at the above-mentioned Council meetings?
- Could the Portfolio Holder for Finance identify the cost of the work already undertaken by WSP, the Council’s Built Environment Contractor, for the regeneration project?

Councillor Colin Taylor

In the light of all the problems with Potholes across the whole county, I would like to know how many claims have been made against the council for damaged vehicles, ie wrecked tyres, broken springs and suspensions etc. in the last year. If there is an increase in claims year on year what percentage increase has there been year on year. How much in compensation has been paid out to claimants. How many claims are paid out on first claim and how many on appeal.

Councillor Julia Buckley

The Highways “term maintenance” contract with Kier and the WSP contract are two of the largest contracts for works from Shropshire Council. Could the portfolio holder for highways please confirm:

1. The annual value of these contracts?
2. How many sub-contractors are involved with delivery?
3. The names and postcodes of the sub-contractors?
4. What per centage of these contacts are delivered by Shropshire companies?

If the Council insists on out-sourcing service delivery we could take the opportunity to ensure the procurement supports our local businesses

Councillor Andy Boddington

The opposition to the closure of two household recycling centres to save £300K a year has been strong. A petition to save the Craven Arms HRC gained more than 5,000 signatures on the day it was launched. In contrast, the opposition to the proposal to charge for green waste collection has not been as strong.

We are a very large county and increasing the distance people have to drive to the HRC will discourage recycling, encourage fly-tipping and go against the council’s ambitions to become net zero.

Could the cabinet ask officers to look again at this proposal and consider other options to achieve the same saving? These might include:

- 1) Examining increasing the proposed charge for collecting green waste from £52 a year to £60 a year – a measure than could raise £600K a year and cost 15p a week
- 2) Examining whether reducing the hours or the days that some HRCs are open would lead to savings that could help keep all five HRCs open.

Councillor Kate Halliday

On 30th Jan 2024 ITV news reported that flood water samples tested from rivers around the UK have potential to pose a significant risk to human health. Round Our Way, a not-for-profit organisation supporting people impacted by climate change in the UK, sent flood water samples to a laboratory to determine the various levels of contamination following the storm Henk floods. The water samples were found to contain high levels of bacteria and pollution, after recent extreme weather had caused the rivers to flood into surrounding areas. The flood water samples were taken from a child’s playground next to the River Severn (by the weir) in Shrewsbury, a housing estate near the river Mole in Surrey, and the River Ouse’s in York. In all three areas, results showed ammonia levels that were above UK quality thresholds.

In Surrey, York and Shrewsbury, flood water samples showed high levels of E.coli or clostridia, indicating fecal organisms in the flood water.

During times of flooding (when there is an increased sewage discharge into our rivers) does public health analyse whether there is an increase in incidence of vomiting and / or diarrhoea. If not, could this be considered for the previous 3 flood episodes and going forwards as standard?

Councillor David Vasmer

At the Council meeting on February 29th it was reported that the Director of Place had authorised an “exceedance” over budget of £300,000 spending on the North West Relief Road. When I questioned this during the debate on the Road, I was told that the Director of Place had authority to approve spending of up to £500,000. When was this agreed and by whom? Are there any restrictions on how this exceedance is used? Apart from the extra spending on the North West Relief Road, has the Director of Place authorised any other items of spending over budget of up to £500,000?