

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

AGENDA ITEM 6

QUESTION 1

MR MILES KENNY will ask the following question:

FAIRTRADE is a simple way each one of us can make a difference through everyday choices. It's about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world. Fairtrade aims to enable the poorest farmers and workers to improve their position and have more control over their lives.

FAIRTRADE means:

- A minimum price is paid to Fairtrade producers to cover their costs
- Producers receive an additional Fairtrade premium to invest in their communities, on economic, social or environmental projects
- Workers on farms also get rights including decent wages and being allowed to join a union
- Producers in Fairtrade cooperatives have a democratic say in decisions and this includes women

Fairness to developing world producers reduces poverty, lawlessness and civic instability which have a global impact.

The discerning and even the less discerning consumer asks for Fairtrade produce in preference to mainstream because of the Fairtrade principles, because it tastes better and because it is no more expensive than mainstream. Selling Fairtrade produce in Shropshire shops is good for the Shropshire economy.

In Shropshire the Shropshire Fairtrade Coalition is staging a number of events during Fairtrade Fortnight, February 23rd to March 8th in schools, churches, shops and so on including a stall at Shrewsbury Farmers Market.

What are Shropshire Council doing about Fairtrade during Fairtrade Fortnight this year, February 23rd to March 8th?

MR STEVE CHARMLEY, the Portfolio Holder for Business Growth, ip&e, Culture and Commissioning (North) will reply:

Although Shropshire Council is a supporter of the Shropshire Fairtrade Coalition it is even more important that we do everything we can to support our own local farmers. It is not just about farmers in other parts of the world

but about our own hard-working farmers in Shropshire. And in this regard the Leader and I have been working hard by lobbying for a better deal e.g. for our dairy farmers effected by the suspension of payments by First Milk. The Council still supports Fairtrade and I have just signed to renew our County status as a Fairtrade County for 2015. Shropshire Council will be promoting the fortnight via the intranet and on our web site. The Column Restaurant will have Fair Trade products for sale during the fortnight. Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Oswestry, Whitchurch, Church Stretton and more recently, Clun Valley town and parish councils support Fairtrade and all have now signed up and are members of the Coalition.

QUESTION 2

MR MILES KENNY will ask the following question:

The FAIRTRADE foundation has done much to promote fairness in developing countries which grow produce not otherwise available in the UK such as bananas, tea, coffee and fruit derivatives. One wonders about the fairness to producers in the UK, it is one thing to have on offer imported produce and not even Fairtrade Produce at that, which can easily be grown in season in the UK, but quite another not to offer a fairer deal to local producers.

What is Shropshire Council doing to promote locally grown produce thereby supporting local producers and reducing food miles?

MR STEVE CHARMLEY, the Portfolio Holder for Business Growth, ip&e, Culture and Commissioning (North) will reply:

Shire Services

Shire Services have carried out extensive work to increase its purchasing from local suppliers and of local products that are used in schools and other catering establishments. They use local butchers, fruit and vegetables providers and bakers. All Their meat is from the UK, and primarily from Shropshire, Cheshire and the West Midlands, with a large proportion of it sourced through the Food Hall based in Shrewsbury. All their eggs are free range and sourced in Shropshire, they use Belton Cheese from Whitchurch, and Muller Yoghurts from Market Drayton.

When in season, fruit and vegetables are sourced from Shropshire, Cheshire and the West Midlands.

COGS

COGS is the brand for buy it in Shropshire the procurement initiative started by the Shropshire Business Board and the Economic Development Service of the Council. Although not exclusively focussing on promotion of locally grown produce, the

principles of COGS apply very much to the Food and Drink sector, with local produce at the heart of this.

COGS was created to take local procurement to another level in the county, to encourage the sharing of best practice across the wider county of Shropshire via companies signing up to a local charter, to encourage partnership ownership and to provide business with a central procurement brand they understood. COGS latest 3-year action plan is part of the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy (SEGS) 2012-26. Latest financial data on a national basis placed Shropshire Council 6th top Local Authority for spending with local SMEs. The Council currently spends 62% of all its budgets with companies locally. COGS has changed the Council's procurement policies to increase economic leverage, local purchasing and simplify procurement. To date 92 public sector bodies and major private companies have signed up to the Local Procurement Charter.

Case study

Andrew Francis Butchers

Andrew Francis, Owner

Andrew Francis runs a traditional butchery based in Ludlow, and has used the business he has secured with Shropshire Council as a solid foundation for growing his business.

Why were you able to bid for the contract?

As a small business, we wouldn't have been able to provide meat to all schools in Shropshire. When Shropshire's Shire Services, the in-house catering service for Shropshire Council, split the business into several smaller contracts, it opened up the marketplace to local small and medium sized businesses. We tendered to supply a small area of Shropshire as part of a larger contract for Shropshire Council, and now provide fresh meat and sausages for schools in the south of the county.

What is it like working for Shropshire Council?

It has been an excellent and very straightforward experience, and very rewarding to be able to provide a product that is both healthy and that the county's school kids enjoy. As a customer they are excellent too - payment is always prompt and religiously on time, and as a client they are a pleasure to deal with. I'm glad to have taken the opportunity to work with the public sector, and would recommend it to others.

What is the benefit to your business?

The contract has been fantastic for the business, increasing turnover year-on-year. I have increased my staff from five people to eleven. We have also had

extra business from word-of-mouth recommendations, with parents coming into the shop having seen what they provide for children's school meals.

The quality and value for money that we provide have allowed us to retain and expand the business that we do with the council. In 2010, we were successful in widening our contract to include the supply of free range eggs, we retained the council's business after it was re-tendered in 2011, and Shropshire Council has also recently taken up extension options which will take our supply up to the end of 2015.

QUESTION 3

MR DAVE TREMELLEN will ask the following question:

How many Shropshire schools benefit from a 20mph zone, because having enquired of Shropshire Council's traffic engineering department about addressing the concerns of local residents and parents seeking to introduce a 20 mph speed zone outside Highley Primary School on Redstone Drive, I was told:

"With regards to Redstone Drive, it's the first I've heard of these concerns and it is a cul de sac after all!

"We are not going to be looking at reducing the speed limit to 20 or putting traffic calming in on a no through road where there are no personal injury accidents or big issues. The Parish Council can put this forward for consideration under the Road Safety Policy if they wish but I don't believe that it will get anywhere."

Having enquired further locally, I subsequently learnt that a series of requests for a 20 mph limit outside the school had been made a couple of years ago by a local parent, resident in Redstone Drive, who was at the time both a parish councillor and a governor at the school. She'd received a similarly negative response.

The Department for Transport's current guidance, as set out in DfT Circular 01/2006, encourages and supports Local Authorities to implement 20 mph limits and zones in situations where there is a particular risk to vulnerable road users, singling out schools as being particularly appropriate.

The guidance sets out that the purpose of 20 mph areas is to create conditions in which drivers naturally drive at around 20 mph as a result of traffic calming measures or the general nature of the location. Most of us will be aware that some drivers need reminding that the "general nature of the location" in the immediate vicinity of a school advises that they "naturally drive at around 20mph".

Given that the Local Authority shares with parents a responsibility for the safety of young children of all ages and particularly children of primary school age, as the decision to create a 20 mph safety zone seems to depend on a

history of “incidents” at the location in question (which incidentally could easily qualify as the longest “cul-de-sac” in the county), could the portfolio holder with ultimate responsibility for traffic engineering indicate what the statistical threshold is that Highley Primary School has to cross, sufficient to convince our traffic engineers that it qualifies for a 20 mph zone on Redstone Drive?

MRS CLAIRE WILD, the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport will reply:

Thank you for your enquiry regarding 20mph speed limits in Shropshire.

In Shropshire we currently have an agreed approach for dealing with 20mph speed restrictions which is embedded in our Road Safety Policy. Our approach is based upon supporting the delivery of appropriate and achievable traffic management interventions in locations where the potential benefits are greatest.

The following link will direct you to the details of a decision making session held by the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Highways, where the existing technical approach to 20mph speed restrictions was approved:
<http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/CeListDocuments.aspx?Committeeld=292&MeetingId=2608&DF=20%2f12%2f2013&Ver=2>

Requests for 20mph speed restrictions are typically dealt with as community led concerns and as such must have the support of the Shropshire Council local member, the town or parish council, West Mercia Police and the local Shropshire Council traffic engineer if they are to be recommended for inclusion in future programmes of work. The Policy document can be found using the following link: <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/highways-and-traffic/road-safety-in-shropshire/shropshire-council-road-safety-policy/>

The Road Safety Policy puts an emphasis on determining the appropriate type of intervention on a site by site basis. A 20mph speed restriction is one of a range of traffic management options available, depending upon local circumstances. There are a number of factors that we need to consider in relation to 20mph speed restriction requests such as whether a 20mph speed limit is the most suitable measure to address a defined problem, whether it will have a measurable and positive speed reducing effect and whether there are any alternatives that could better address a community’s concerns. Each application for consideration of a 20mph restriction is looked at on an individual basis.

The current agreed approach follows the Department for Transport guidance and states that speed limits should encourage self-compliance, which in some cases will necessitate costly physical traffic calming measures and ongoing maintenance costs. Furthermore, West Mercia Police do not currently enforce 20mph speed limits; therefore general compliance needs to be achievable without reliance on enforcement.

In summary, in Shropshire 20mph speed restrictions are typically only considered outside schools or where there are high numbers of vulnerable road users; on urban residential streets in specific cases (where wide community support can be demonstrated, where there is evidence that streets are being used by people on foot and on bicycles and where the characteristics of the street are suitable) and, on town centre streets or pedestrian dominated areas.

There are 21 schools within Shropshire that benefit from being within a 20mph limit or zone:

- 5 schools are situated on A or B routes, including Marches School, Oswestry which is one of the largest secondary schools in the County;
- There are 5 locations where 2 schools are within the same 20mph speed restriction (benefitting 10 schools in total);
- 6 schools are on through routes that will typically attract higher volumes of traffic, and
- Only 4 of the 21 schools are within village locations and these are also all on through routes or routes used as rat runs.

With respect to Highley Primary School, the key concern raised to us with the strong support of the Parish Council has been in relation to the crossing point on the B4555 Bridgnorth Road, adjacent to Redstone Drive. We are currently looking at ways in which can improve the crossing point to enhance the perception of safety for the pedestrians that use the facility.

Whilst the absence of a history of relevant personal injury accidents does not at all preclude the consideration of a 20mph restriction, it is merely one of the parameters for weighing up the benefits of a particular scheme and its relevance to another similar request in another part of the County. This is also applicable to Redstone Drive being a “no through road” and as such will not carry as much traffic, the majority of which is directly related to local residents and people with children attending the school.

If the Parish Council feel that this is one of their highest five road safety priorities within Highley then the best course of action is to put this forward under their February, May or September submissions to be formally recorded and investigated through the Road Safety Policy process.

We would also recommend that the School undertakes a review of its School Travel Plan to ensure that there is demonstrable support from the School Community moving forward.

QUESTION 4

MR ROGER EVANS will ask the following question:

Has Shropshire Council ever used an on line bidding system to find care homes for the elderly and if so, for how many individuals has this been carried out. Have any had to be repeated and if so why?

MR LEE CHAPMAN, the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services and Commissioning (South) will reply:

Shropshire Council has not used this type of procurement for care home procurement.

QUESTION 5

MR ROGER EVANS will ask the following question:

During the year Shropshire Council receives many grants from other sources.

Can Council please be informed how much in monetary value it has received in grants from Government so far for this current financial year.

Please itemise each grant that has been given **including** how much was received in Council Tax Freeze Grant for 2014/15 and how much was received as part of the The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2885) and The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2886).

MR MIKE OWEN, the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Finance and Support will reply:

The 2014/15 gross budget is part funded by specific grants from government and a number of other grants and contributions from other bodies. The budget for specific grants in 2014/15 is £247.469m. The Fees and Charges report on Council's agenda lists specific grants (Appendix 2). Shropshire Council's 2014/15 Council Tax Freeze Grant is £1,307,360.

There is no grant received as part of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012. The 2010 Spending Review announced the localisation of council tax support and The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit from 31 March 2013 and required Local Government to create localised Council Tax Support schemes with effect from 1 April 2013 which accommodated a reduction in funding of 10%. A grant is not received as part of the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012. The amount received within an authority's central government allocation for Council Tax Support funding is not separately identifiable.

QUESTION 6

MR TED CLARKE will ask the following question:

Will the appropriate proportion of our overall collection fund surplus also be distributed to all those precept charging Parish and Town Councils in whose name it was collected, in line with the distribution of collection fund surplus to our precept charging Police and Fire authorities ?

MR KEITH BARROW, the Leader of the Council will reply:

The Local Authorities (Funds) (England) Regulations 1992 specifies that any surplus / deficit in a billing Authority's Council Tax Collection Fund be distributed to the billing Authority and its relevant major precepting authorities only. There is no requirement to distribute any surplus / deficit to local precepting authorities, i.e. town and parish councils.

The town and parish council's receive the total precept requested and have certainty over the amount to be received in any year. The major precepting authorities share the risk of any deficit and therefore also the benefit of any surplus.

QUESTION 7

MR ANDY BODDINGTON will ask the following question:

Ludlow Museum Resource Centre is set to lose its three full time staff. The geological, archaeological, historical and cultural collections held in the MRC are of county, national and international importance.

What are Shropshire Council's policies, over the next decade, for ensuring?

- i. Sufficient curatorial staff are available to maintain access the collections.
- ii. The collections are continued to be conserved in keeping with national standards.
- iii. The cadre of volunteers that currently support the centre is maintained and strengthened.
- iv. Public and scholarly access to the collections is continued.

MR STEVE CHARMLEY, the Portfolio Holder for Business Growth, ip&e, Culture and Commissioning (North) will reply:

- i. *Sufficient curatorial staff are available to maintain access the collections:*
Ludlow Museum Resource Centre proposed new model maintains an appropriately qualified curatorial provision at the Resource Centre who will continue to care for the collections and support the work of the volunteers and Friends. Other curatorial staff will be working in Ludlow on a regular basis and we anticipate there will be no significant change to the access to the collections.
- ii. *The collections are continued to be conserved in keeping with national standards:*
The Museum Service priority is to maintain museum accreditation.

iii. *The cadre of volunteers that currently support the centre is maintained and strengthened:*

The current HLF funded volunteer project ends in March so we will be unable to maintain the volunteering opportunities at their current level. We will commit to offering a minimum of 2-3 day per week volunteering and are keen to work with partner organisations to consider ways of extending this. We have also launched our Virtual Volunteering Project so there is the option to work on the collections remotely or from your local library.

iv. *Public and scholarly access to the collections is continued:*

The current system of booking by appointment to access the research material and collections will continue but the days available to be booked will be between 1-3 days per week dependent on staffing. We will publish the available days well in advance and will be flexible for researchers who are travelling distances to meet their needs.
