



Committee and Date  
Bishop's Castle, Chirbury &  
Worthen and Clun LJC

Item

**5**

Public

**BISHOP'S CASTLE, CHIRBURY & WORTHEN AND CLUN  
LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE**

**NOTE OF DECISIONS AND ACTIONS STEMMING FROM THE MEETING HELD  
ON 14 FEBRUARY 2013  
7.00 PM – 9.55 PM  
AT  
LYDHAM VILLAGE HALL**

**Responsible Officer** Amanda Holyoak

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**Committee Members Present:**

Shropshire Council

Charlotte Barnes Bishop's Castle (Chair)

Nigel Hartin Clun

Heather Kidd Chirbury & Worthen

Town/Parish Councils

Trevor Hughes Bucknell Parish Council

Llewellyn Morgan Llanfair Waterdine Parish Council

Keith Pinches Bishop's Castle Town Council (substitute member)

Beryl Palmer Clun Parish Council (substitute member)

John Croxton Clunbury Parish Council

Sandra Davies Newcastle on Clun Parish Council

Jonathan Roberts Clungunford Parish Council (Vice Chair)

Roger Plowden Lydbury North Parish Council

Brian Ince Worthen with Shelve Parish Council

**Officers Present:**

Mathew Mead, Community Action Officer

**ACTION**

**1. Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Karen Bavastock and James McVicar

**2. Disposable 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

### **3. Note of the Previous Meeting**

The note of the meeting held on 4 October 2012 was confirmed as a correct record.

### **4. Housing Issues**

#### **4.1 Presentation from Council Benefits Service on Changes to the benefits system**

Jessica Taylor, Benefits Team, Shropshire Council gave a presentation on Welfare Reform and changes which would be implemented from April 2013. The key aspects of change included under occupation, a benefit cap, Social Fund Reform, Local Support for Council tax and Universal Credit. A copy of the presentation is available with the agenda papers on the Council's website <http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/committee.nsf>

or available from the Committee Officer, contact details above.

#### **Presentation from Cllr Malcolm Price, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Housing and Planning, Shropshire Council**

- 4.2 Cllr Malcolm Price gave a presentation explaining his responsibilities for Planning and Housing in Shropshire, and talked about Shropshire Council's response to the welfare reforms.

He referred to the changes to Housing Benefit and under occupancy and problems with the number of available properties. The Housing Allocations Policy was being changed in the light of welfare reform but hardly any alternatives were available to people who were deemed to be under occupying their homes.

Although the discretionary housing payment was a means of helping people it could only be for a short duration and for extreme cases.

He encouraged people who might have exception sites, including community led schemes to come forward.

#### **Presentation from Martin Holland, Shropshire Housing Group**

- 4.3 Martin Holland introduced Harriett Edwards the Community Housing Officer for the LJC area. He gave the background to Shropshire Housing Group, and explained that there was a very small amount of grant coming into Shropshire to build new housing stock and there would probably be none beyond 2015

For Parishes in the LJC area, the Home Point register showed that there were 78 registrations with local needs. However, there had only been 14 vacancies in the last six months. In the LJC area there were 35 households deemed to be under occupying by 1 bedroom and 10 households deemed to be under occupying by 2 bedrooms.

Shropshire Housing Group did have its own fund to help with the costs of downsizing. However, the impact of the changes was particularly severe in rural areas as there was not enough accommodation to move people into and a low churn rate.

**Questions from Members of the public and the Committee included the following:**

*Q If people are willing to move because they have extra bedrooms, but are unable to do so because of lack of alternatives, will they still be penalised and need to find more rent?*

A Yes

*Q What if a student lives away from the home for part of the year?*

As long as the main residence is with the parents and there is an intention to return, a room can be kept for students. This also applies to armed forces personnel.

*Q Do the changes apply to those of working age only?*

A Yes, this is the case

*Q If someone is unable to pay the shortfall and is deemed to be under occupying a home, would they be regarded as intentionally homeless, how would the Council deal with this?*

There is already some case law which is supportive of the tenant, and there is likely to be more case law to follow. Shropshire Council has identified just under 2,500 households which might be affected, and all have been written to. The Council is also working with social landlords. From April 2013 there will be £277,000 available to support people who need to top up due to a shortfall.

*Q How long can the Council support people for in this situation?*

Such support will be on a short term basis only, to allow time to find a way to address a problem, eg by moving or taking in a lodger.

*Q Do the changes apply to the private rented sector?*

No

*Q Are many in Shropshire likely to be affected by the Benefits Cap?*

Not many, large families with high entitlements are most likely to be affected.

*Q What will happen to the Crisis Loan?*

This will become social fund.

*Q How many social houses are being lost each year through right to buy?*

Six have been sold in the last four months and it is the best of the stock being sold off. There is a need to sell four houses to build one, and it not usually possible to provide a replacement near the location of the sale.

- 4.2 In terms of housing development, Malcolm Price emphasised that the Council would give a lot of weight to the wishes of communities expressed in Parish Plans.

4.4 **Presentation from Jonathan Brown, Bishop's Castle Community Land Trust**

Jonathan Brown gave a presentation on Bishop's Castle Community Land Trust,. The Trust operated for the benefit of the community to acquire, hold, develop and lease land and property for permanently affordable housing and asset based community development. Any member of the community over 18 could become a shareholder member of the Trust.

Community Land Trusts were able to access sources of grant and loan funding not available to Housing Associations and were able to work in a more creative way.

In Bishop's Castle, the Trust had worked with the Homes and Communities Agency and Shropshire Council on a project to purchase and develop two small low-cost dwellings on a small piece of land in the centre of Bishops Castle, behind the Kings Head public house.

The Trust had identified biggest areas of housing need was young people and people wanting to downsize and those present were encouraged to make contact if they were aware of any landowners who might have land available.

The Committee thanked Malcolm, Jessica, Martin and Jonathan for attending the meeting and providing information and answering questions on the current situation in relation to benefits and on efforts being taken to alleviate housing problems in the county.

## **5. Grant Applications**

**19.30 Worthen Bowls Club** - purchase of new mower.

Recommended grant award £800.

RESOLVED: to agree grant at recommended amount

**19.31 St Mary's Church Bucknell** - Improved facilities for the community. Recommended grant award £2,500

RESOLVED: to agree grant at recommended amount

**19.32 Four and Twenty Arts** - Sticks and Stuff Environment Arts Club. Recommended grant award £708

RESOLVED: to agree grant at recommended amount

**19.33 Bishop's Castle Town Hall** - Young Peoples Film and Drama Group. Recommended grant award £943

RESOLVED: to agree grant at recommended amount

**19.34 Bishop's Castle Walking Festival** - Promotion of 2013 festival. Recommended grant award £750

RESOLVED: to agree grant at recommended amount

**19.35 Lentwardine and Bucknell Community First Responders** - New Vehicle. Recommendation to defer funding decision until 2013/14.

RESOLVED: to defer this funding decision until 2013/14

**19.36 Bishop's Castle Town Twinning 10th Anniversary** Celebration. Recommendation not to approve grant application

RESOLVED: that this application be turned down

**19.37 Norbury School PTA - Long Mynd Batch Burner.**

Recommendation to approve £1000 grant from 2012/13 budget and £1000 from 2013/14 budget

RESOLVED: to agree grant at recommended amount

**19.38 Snailbeach Village Hall - Upgrade of Play equipment.**

Recommended grant award £449.10.

RESOLVED: to agree grant at recommended amount

**19.39 Chirbury Broadplace** - New IT Equipment. Recommended grant award of £1000.

RESOLVED: to agree grant at recommended amount

**19.40 Bishop's Castle Carnival Committee** - History Project.

Recommended grant award of £1500.

RESOLVED: that this application be turned down

**19.41 Bishop's Castle Community Land Trust** - Kings Head Yard enhancement. Recommendation to defer funding decision until 2013/2014.

RESOLVED: to defer funding decision until 2013/2014

**19.42 Leasowes Bank Arts Festival 2013.** Recommended grant award £500.

RESOLVED: to agree grant at recommended amount

**19.43 South Shropshire Community First Responders - First Aid Events Cover.** Recommendation to defer funding decision to 2013/2014.

RESOLVED: to defer funding decision to 2013/14

## **6. Issues Update from Around the LJC Area**

6.1 Attention was drawn to the following:

- poor Ambulance response times in the area.
- HGVs using narrow roads in Lydbury North
- Incorrect installation of new speed limit signage in Bishop's Castle

The Chair said she would approach Council officers regarding the HGVs issue and reported that the speed limit signage would be corrected shortly.

**Charlotte  
Barnes**

## **7. Police Report**

A crime report for Bishop's Castle and surrounding areas was circulated. It drew attention to a number of catalytic converters stolen from vehicles in South Shropshire and North Herefordshire in recent weeks and the need to be aware of these crimes and report suspicious activity.

To reduce risk of theft, police suggestions included: garaging vehicles whenever possible; purchasing a security marking or fixing device; parking in well lit and busy areas; and looking out for people working under cars.

A series of products to protect property including smartwater are available to purchase from Mathew Mead, 07582002010

## **8. Report from Community Action Officer**

Mathew Mead reported on funding available from Shropshire Council to help communities develop or refresh Parish Plans. Further details are available from [www.shropshire.gov.uk/planningpolicy.nsf/](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/planningpolicy.nsf/)

**9. Briefing on Scrutiny at Shropshire Council**

A briefing on Scrutiny at Shropshire Council was circulated. Heather Kidd reported on a recent review which was recommending that a Parliamentary Style Select Committee approach be used more often.

**10. Election Briefing**

A report from Shropshire Association of Local Councils on the forthcoming Parish and Town Council elections was circulated for information.

**11. Future Agenda Items**

A meeting focused on provision of the emergency services was suggested, to involve West Midlands Ambulance Service, West Mercia Police, and the Fire Service. A presentation from First Responders was also requested to explain the funding and relationship with the Ambulance Service.

**12. Date of Next Meetings**

Thursday 10 October 2013 at 7pm  
Thursday 13 February 2014 at 7pm

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 20 June 2013