

Date: Thursday, 24 September 2020

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: THIS IS A VIRTUAL MEETING - PLEASE USE THE LINK ON THE AGENDA TO LISTEN TO THE MEETING

Contact: Julie Fildes, Committee Officer  
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## COUNCIL

### TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)

#### **3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th July 2020** (Pages 1 - 16)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020. [To follow]

#### **15 Questions from Members (Pages 17 - 24)**

To receive any questions from Members, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2.

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## Committee and Date

Council

24<sup>th</sup> September 2020

## **COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2020**

#### **Virtual Meeting**

**10.00 am - 3.55 pm**

**Responsible Officer:** Julie Fildes

Email: [julie.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:julie.fildes@shropshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01743 257723

#### **Present**

Councillors Ann Hartley and Peter Nutting (Leader)

Councillors Vince Hunt (Speaker), Steve Charmley (Deputy Leader), Peter Adams, Roy Aldcroft, Nicholas Bardsley, Joyce Barrow, Thomas Biggins, Ed Bird, Andy Boddington, Gwendoline Burgess, Gwilym Butler, Karen Calder, Dean Carroll, Lee Chapman, Ted Clarke, Gerald Dakin, Steve Davenport, Julian Dean, Pauline Dee, David Evans, Roger Evans, Hannah Fraser, Rob Gittins, Kate Halliday, Simon Harris, Nigel Hartin, Nick Hignett, Ruth Houghton, Richard Huffer, Roger Hughes, Ioan Jones, Simon Jones, Mark Jones, Christian Lea, Robert Macey, Jane MacKenzie, Chris Mellings, Paul Milner, David Minnery, Dan Morris, Pamela Moseley, Alan Mosley, Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock, Kevin Pardy, William Parr, Vivienne Parry, Tony Parsons, Malcolm Pate, Alexander Phillips, Lezley Picton, Ed Potter, John Price, Keith Roberts, Madge Shington, Robert Tindall, Dave Tremellen, Kevin Turley, David Turner, David Vasmer, Claire Wild, Brian Williams, Michael Wood, Tina Woodward and Paul Wynn

#### **113 Apologies for Absence**

The Acting Interim Chief Executive reported that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors T Huffer, Kidd, Morris, Mullock and Winwood.

#### **114 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.

Councillor N Hartin declared that he was a Member of SpARC Leisure and would not take part in the debate of Agenda Item 12.

Councillor H Houghton declared an interest in Agenda Items 12 and 14.

#### **115 Minutes of the meetings held on 27th February and 6th May 2020**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

## 116 Announcements

### Chairman's Engagements

The Chairman referred Members to the list of official engagements carried out by himself and the Chairman since the meeting of the Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020, which had been circulated by email prior to the meeting.

## 117 Public Questions (Pages 87 - 92)

### Public Questions

The Speaker advised that six public questions had been received from Mr Parton, Mr Femor, Mr Streetly, Mr Tate, Mr Holmes-Brown on behalf of Shropshire Ethnic Minority Alliance and Ms Dolphin. All questions were read aloud on the questioners' behalf by the Director of Legal and Democratic Services and received answers from the respective Portfolio Holders. Mr Femor, Mr Tate and Mr Streetly were advised that written answers would be provided.

It was noted that a copy of the questions and answers would be included with the formal record of the meeting.

### Petitions

The Speaker advised that a petition bearing more than 1,000 signatures to remove the Clive of India Statue from Shrewsbury Town Centre had been received from Mr Jake Thomson requesting a debate. Mr Thomson did not provide a written submission

Members debated the petition and made the following points:

- The Black Lives Matter debate welcomed;
- It was important to understand other's experiences and injustices;
- Clive was now recognised a corrupt mercenary;
- A better explanation of the history of Clive was required; and
- It was not possible to rewrite history but it was important to be able to understand it.

The Portfolio Holder for Assets, Economic Growth and Regeneration responded by thanking the petitioner for the work he had undertaken in presenting the petition. He continued that it was a divisive debate but all agreed that there was no place for racism. To remove the statue was not as simple as it would seem. It was classified as a grade 2 listed building and its removal or destruction would require approval from Historic England. He acknowledged that the colonial past of Britain was a reality and should not be forgotten but used to inform the future. Museum staff had been requested to provide a better interpretation of the statue and locate this appropriately.

### **RESOLVED:**

That no action be taken.

## 118 Financial Outturn 2019/20

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Support, Councillor Minnery and seconded by the Leader, Councillor Nutting, that the report of the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance on the Financial Outturn 2019/20, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

Responding to concerns raised by Members on higher than expected expenditure, reduced revenue and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Leader responded that the Council held excellent financial reserves, but the revenue account had been affected. He continued that discussions were in progress with both the Local Government Association and the County Council Network to address the underfunding of rural Councils and the Government's Fairer Funding review was expected to address the situation.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Support added that the shortfall was being monitored and contingency arrangements were in place.

### RESOLVED

- i) That it be noted that the outturn for the revenue budget for 2019/20 is a controllable overspend of £1.692m. This represents 0.3% of the original gross budget of £568.489m.
- ii) That it be noted that had £0.460m of the Council's General Fund not been applied in response to the Storm Dennis emergency event, and had £0.387m Coronavirus funding not been applied to revenue at year end, the controllable outturn position would have been an overspend of £2.539m.
- iii) That it be noted that the level of the General Fund balance after adjusting for the outturn overspend and insurance position stands at £13.510m, which is significantly below the recommended level.
- iv) That it be noted that the outturn for the Housing Revenue Account for 2019/20 is an underspend of £4.106m and the level of the Housing Revenue Account reserve stands at £10.140m (2018/19 £9.813m).
- v) That it be noted that the increase in the level of Earmarked Reserves and Provisions (excluding delegated school balances) of £1.931 in 2019/20 and the reasons for this.
- vi) That it be noted that the level of school balances stand at £1.891m (2018/19 £4.178m).
- vii) That the net budget variations of £9.710m to the 2019/20 capital programme, detailed in Appendix 5 / Table 11 and the re-profiled 2019/20 capital budget of £70.982m be approved.
- viii) That the re-profiled capital budgets of £127.309m for 2020/21, including slippage of £11.773m from 2019/20, £89.835m for 2021/22 and £103.110m for 2022/23 as detailed in Appendix 5 / Table 15 be approved.
- ix) That the outturn expenditure set out in Appendix 5 of £59.209m, representing 83% of the revised capital budget for 2019/20 be accepted.

- x) That retaining a balance of capital receipts set aside of £19.619m as at 31st March 2020 to generate a one-off Minimum Revenue Provision saving of £0.693m in 2020/21 be approved.

#### 119 **Community Infrastructure Levy - Spending Update**

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place Planning and Regeneration, Councillor Butler and seconded by the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport, Councillor Davenport that the report of the Director of Place on the Community Infrastructure Levy – Spending Update, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

##### **RESOLVED:**

That £8,142,487 of CIL local funds be allocated to the two projects outlined within Section 6 of the report.

#### 120 **Sustainable Temporary Housing Solutions in Shropshire**

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Strategic Planning, Councillor Macey and seconded by Councillor M Jones, that the report of the Director of Adult Services on the Sustainable Temporary Housing Solutions in Shropshire, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

Councillor Macey thanked and acknowledged the contribution of hotels and bed and breakfast establishments in Shropshire working with the Council to provide accommodation to those in need from the onset of the lockdown. The work of the Housing Team and volunteers was also noted.

##### **RESOLVED:**

- i) that the outline financial case set out in this report be approved, together with the delivery of the outcomes set out in section 4 of this report and at Appendix 1 to acquire suitable properties for homeless temporary accommodation.
- ii) That subject to a final business case and financial appraisals being approved in accordance with Recommendation iii:
  - a. That the acquisition of freehold interest of open market property in support of recommendation 2.1 up to maximum price of £1.5 million plus stamp duty, VAT and any other disbursements and associated costs be approved.
  - b. that capital investment estimated to be £1.5m of S106 contributions is made to allow the freehold acquisition, adaptation and fit out of appropriate properties in Shropshire be approved.

- c. that long-term leases with private landlords can be entered on open market property in support of recommendation 2.1 utilising existing revenue budgets be approved.
  - d. That delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Asset Manager, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Assets, Economic Growth and Regeneration, with the authority to agree and complete appropriate freehold acquisitions or long-term leases in accordance with recommendation 2.1, 2.2A and 2.2C.
  - e. Delegate to the Strategic Asset Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Assets, Economic Growth and Regeneration, the authority to enter into leases/contracts with partners/providers to manage facilities on the Council's behalf if deemed relevant and necessary.
- iii) That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance (s151 officer) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Support to approve a final business case and financial appraisals setting out the financial arrangements to support the acquisition of appropriate properties and to approve the appropriate source of the funding based on existing and future S106 contributions for any purchase.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.30am and reconvened at 11.40am

## 121 Shrewsbury Civic Centre Project

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Assets, Economic Growth and Regeneration, Councillor Charmley and seconded by the Leader, Councillor Nutting, that the report of the Director of Place on the Shrewsbury Civic Centre Project, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

Councillor Charmley gave an overview of the report which proposed that further work on the Shirehall building redevelopment be ceased. He explained that since Council had resolved to redevelop the Shirehall in December 2018 circumstances had markedly changed with the declaration of the climate change emergency, floods and the covid-19 pandemic. It was now recognised that it would not be possible to transform the inefficiencies of the building into one that would meet the future needs of the organisation.

Councillor Andy Boddington tabled an amendment which was duly seconded by Councillor Viv Parry. He proposed that recommendations A B C remain as set out in the report with the addition of:

- D. Delegates to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Assets, Economic Growth and Regeneration work on a potential disposal strategy for Shirehall.
- E. This venture is renamed Shropshire Civic Centre Project to reflect its importance to the entire county.

- F. A report covering the work in B C D will be provided to the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee prior to consideration by Council.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost with the majority voting against it.

A debate was held with the following points considered:

- The carbon inefficiency and running costs of Shirehall;
- The impact of staff home working on both the environment and the health and safety of employees;
- The impact of the closure of the Shirehall site on the surrounding economy and the future use of the site; and
- Potential loss of solar panels and mobile phone mast on Shirehall roof.

In response to the debate the Portfolio Holder for Assets, Economic Growth and Regeneration reiterated that a new site for the Civic Hub had not yet been identified. He continued that more flexible working would be introduced for the benefit of the staff and would not be imposed when it was unsuitable.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) Work be ceased on the project which involves the full refurbishment of the Shirehall building.
- ii) Delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Assets, Economic Growth and Regeneration, to provide a full evaluation of potential civic centre locations in Shrewsbury town centre along with outline costs and benefits.
- iii) Delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Assets, Economic Growth and Regeneration, to work on a potential disposal strategy for the Shirehall.
- iv) A report covering the work in ii and iii be provided to Performance Management Scrutiny Committee prior to consideration by Council.

**122 Virtual Planning Committee Process**

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place Planning and Regeneration, Councillor Butler and seconded by Councillor Motley, that the report of the Planning Service Manager on the Virtual Planning Committee Process, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

Councillor Roger Evans proposed the recommendation set out in the report be replaced with following the amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Vasmer.

That Members recognise urgent decisions were made to create a process to allow Planning Committees to meet and make decisions during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, Members request that Officers review this process and take note of how other councils have enabled the public to participate. A report of this review to be

taken to a meeting of Group Leaders and a decision made there on the virtual planning committee procedures to be applied for the duration as set out in the regulations made under the Coronavirus Act 2020 or as amended.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost with the majority voting against it.

The request for a recorded vote was not supported.

**RESOLVED:**

That it be agreed that the virtual planning committee procedures to be applied as necessary in the view of the Director of Place and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the planning committees for the duration set out in the regulations made under Coronavirus Act 2020 or as amended.

**123 Local Government Ombudsman Report - Finding of Fault with Injustice**

It was proposed by the Leader, Councillor Nutting, and seconded by Councillor Gittings that the report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services on the Local Government Ombudsman Report – Finding of Fault with Injustice, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

The Leader observed that lessons would be learnt from this decision and it was important that the rights of local communities were given sufficient weight when making planning decisions.

**RESOLVED:**

That the content of the LGSCO report attached at Appendix 1 and the actions taken to date, together with those proposed, in order to comply with the LGSCO's recommendations be noted.

**124 Portfolio Holder Report - Lezley Picton: Culture, Leisure, Waste and Communications**

It was proposed by Councillor Picton, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure, Waste and Communications that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, and the recommendations therein be received and agreed.

Councillor Picton presented and amplified her report and responded to questions, concerns and comments.

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report be noted and approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.11pm and reconvened at 1.21pm

**125 Portfolio Holder Annual Report - Councillor Steve Davenport for Highways and Transport**

It was proposed by Councillor Davenport, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, and the recommendations therein be received and agreed.

Councillor Davenport presented and amplified his report and responded to questions, concerns and comments.

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report be noted and approved.

**126 Report of the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care/Public Health and Climate Change**

It was proposed by Councillor Carroll, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care/ Public Health and Climate Change that the report, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, and the recommendations therein be received and agreed.

Councillor Carroll presented and amplified his report and responded to questions, concerns and comments.

**RESOLVED:**

That the contents of the report be noted and approved.

**127 Annual Report 2019/20 Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

It was proposed by Councillor Calder that the annual report of the Annual Report of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes be received and agreed.

Councillor Calder presented the report and outlined the work undertaken by the Committee. She thanked all Members and Officers involved in the work of the Committee for their hard work and commitment.

**RESOLVED:**

That that Annual Report of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted and approved.

**128 Motions**

- 1. The following motion was received from Councillor Julian Dean and supported by Councillors Hannah Fraser, Pauline Dee and David Vasmer**

## **Pension Fund Fossil Fuel Disinvestment motion**

Council notes:

Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils have both declared climate emergencies and pledged to be net zero by 2030.

Shropshire County Pension Fund (SCPF) currently has around £294 million invested in fossil fuel companies including Shell and BP and through asset manager BlackRock.

These investments are incompatible with the climate emergency declaration and the councils' commitment to reach net zero within the next ten years.

Fossil fuel investments are increasingly financially risky as a result of both the Covid19 pandemic and the global transition to a more sustainable economic and environmental model. They are now being regularly out-performed by renewables.

Former Bank of England Governor Mark Carney warned in December 2019 that fossil fuel investments risk becoming "stranded assets" (i.e., worthless) as investors exit the sector. "A question for every company, every financial institution, every asset manager, pension fund or insurer – what's your plan?"

The 'engagement' approach does not mitigate the financial risks the sector faces. There is also no evidence of any multinational corporation changing its core business model in response to investor pressure.

Council believes it is time for Shropshire's flagship pension fund to commit to divestment from fossil fuels over a three-year timeframe.

This would;

Allow for the development of 'impact investment' directed towards internationally recognised sustainable development goals and/or investment in a local sustainable economy.

Provide for a more sustainable future of all pension fund stakeholders.

Provide leadership in the face of the climate emergency.

This Council resolves:

To instruct the Acting Chief Executive to write to the Pension Fund Committee asking the Committee to follow best practice by;

1. Adding a statement to their strategy that climate change constitutes financial risks to the fund.
2. Setting a 3-year timescale for the reinvestment of funds currently invested in fossil fuel dependant assets.
3. Developing an investment strategy consistent with sustainable development goals and developing a local sustainable economy.

Finally, we recognise that fossil fuel investments constitute part of the councils 'carbon footprint' and so resolve that this element should be reported on within our greenhouse gas reporting for Scope 3.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Notice of Motion be supported.

**2. The following motion was received from Councillor David Vasmer and is supported by the Liberal Democrat Group**

This Council notes that:

- As COVID-19 restrictions ease, the Government is encouraging people to walk and cycle, where possible, instead of taking public transport or returning to their cars.
- The Government has stated that it aims to have all school children returning to school in September 2020.
- The Government has specifically stated that it wishes more children to walk and cycle to school.
- To enable this the Government has announced a £250 million 'Emergency Active Travel Fund' for temporary infrastructure to enable safe walking and cycling – of which, Shropshire has been allocated an indicative funding allocation of £432,000. 20% of this money was available in 'tranche one' (June 2020), the remaining 80% is available in 'tranche two' (Summer 2020).
- The Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps, issued new Statutory Guidance on 9 May to all Highways Authorities, requiring them to deliver 'transformative change' within an urgent timeframe.
- Measures listed under the Statutory Guidance include (but are not limited to) 'pop-up' cycle facilities, widening footways, 'school streets' schemes, and reducing speed limits.
- The guidance further states that 'measures should be taken as swiftly as possible, and in any event within weeks, given the urgent need to change travel habits before the restart takes full effect.'
- The Department for Transport wrote to councils in the week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 about their award from 'tranche 1'. This letter stated that they had "been asked to convey from ministers that they would like to see proposals of an even higher level for tranche two".
- Speaking in front of the Transport Select Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020, the Secretary of State stated "We want to make sure that we reprioritise the way that local authorities think about road space so that they think about putting walking and cycling as the first two of those—possibly e-scooters as well since they are coming along—and driving as the next thing, rather than how we just construct it around the car and the other things will have to fit in around vehicles."
- 'School Streets' restrict motor traffic at the school gates for a short period of time, generally at drop-off and pick-up times.

- 'School Streets' improve road safety for pupils, encouraging active travel to school (and a modal shift out of cars). They also enable social distancing outside schools, and additionally improve the air quality and environment at the school gates.
- Prior to COVID-19, 'school streets' schemes have already been successfully introduced or were being trialled at multiple local authorities across the UK\*.
- Since then, planning and implementation of 'school streets' has accelerated, with many more councils introducing these schemes before schools reopened in June.
- Multiple NGOs are calling for the introduction of 'school streets' to manage social distancing at the school gate.
- Councils are introducing the measures under their own considerable statutory powers, making experimental traffic orders where necessary.
- Shropshire Council has already made a number of road alterations to assist with active travel and social distancing associated to town centres, but none specifically targeted at schools. It has also taken the first step to improve safety outside schools by adopting a 20mph blanket policy for all schools in December 2019
- As promoted by the Secretary of State, this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take the next step and positively impact travel choices, including the associated benefits on health, air quality and road safety.
- Research from Sustrans following trials of School Streets says that 90% of parents and residents surveyed say they would support regular traffic-free streets outside schools.

\* Including but not limited to: Birmingham City Council, Bristol City Council, Cardiff Council, The City of Edinburgh Council, Glasgow City Council, Greater Manchester, Leeds City Council, Sheffield City Council, Southampton City Council, City of York Council, and many London Boroughs.

This Council agrees to follow Government guidance and work collaboratively with councillors, schools, and local partners to:

- a) swiftly identify those schools in the county that could put a 'school streets' scheme in place
- b) have 'school streets' in place at these schools by the first day of the new school term in September – taking advantage of experimental traffic orders and new statutory guidance over fast-tracked Traffic Regulation Orders
- c) introduce measures to promote walking and cycling in those schools that are not suitable for a 'school streets' scheme

**RESOLVED:**

That the Notice of Motion be supported.

**3. The following motion was received from Councillor David Vasmer and is supported by the Liberal Democrat Group**

This Council notes that:

Due to the COVID-19 virus it is noted that there are a reduced number of meetings being held. This has led to long delays in publishing the minutes of meetings that have been held.

We note that Parish and Town Councils are expected to publish minutes of their meetings within 4 weeks of the them being held. This to be in draft form if a meeting has not been held to formally ratify them. This is good practise and enables both the public and members to be better informed on matters that are discussed and agreed.

It is therefore proposed that:

- This council meeting requests officers to put in place a policy similar to our local councils and publish minutes of all public meetings within 4 weeks of their being held. This to be in draft form if no formal meeting has taken place. This will enable all members and the public to be aware of what was discussed and agreed at our council meetings.
- This revised policy to be effective from the date of this council meeting.

Note. For information please see two extracts from the

**“Transparency code for smaller authorities”** published by the **Department for Communities and Local Government**

#### **P4 Policy context.**

1, This Code is issued to meet the Government’s desire to place more power into citizens’ hands to increase democratic accountability. Transparency gives local people the tools and information they need to hold local public bodies to account.

#### **P9 Minutes, agendas and papers of formal meetings.**

29. Smaller authorities should publish the draft minutes from all formal meetings (i.e. full council or board, committee and sub-committee meetings) not later than one month after the meeting has taken place. These minutes should be signed either at the meeting they were taken or at the next meeting.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Notice of Motion be not supported.

#### **4. The following motion has been received from Councillor Nat Green and is supported by the Liberal Democrat Group**

As a result of recent demonstrations, a spotlight has fallen upon various monuments to individuals who, upon examination, had controversial aspects to their lives that some argue are offensive to contemporary eyes, and that their behaviour should not be worthy of such public commemoration. In Shrewsbury, this takes the form of the statue of Robert Clive that stands in The Square. It is clear that passions have run high on both sides of the argument and, noting the trying times that we find ourselves in, this motion is intended to take a measured, democratic

approach to a fraught issue. In light of this, as member for the Division in which this statue stands, I propose the following:

That first, a history board should be placed adjacent to the statue giving a balanced narrative of Clive and his history.

Then second, after an information campaign in the media and perhaps through public meetings, a referendum of the people of Shropshire is held on whether Clive should stay, or go; with options as to his replacement should his removal be required. After all, it is their town and their Square.

By taking this course of action, Shropshire Council will have shown itself mindful both of contemporary sensibilities, but not have been seen to have discarded the past on a whim.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Notice of Motion be not supported.

#### **129 Questions from Members**

The Speaker advised that six questions had been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 15. A copy of the report containing the detailed questions and formal response is attached to the signed minutes.

Received from Councillor Pardy and answered by the Leader in relation to the provision of Member Training.

Received from Councillor Parry and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport, in relation to the cutting of grass verges. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Parry asked about the future involvement of the Council in improving the verges. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that this was already in place.

Received from Councillor Boddington and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place Planning and Regulation Services, in relation to Planning Committees. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Boddington asked if the decisions made at agenda planning meetings for the Planning Committees could be made available to Members. The Portfolio Holder for Communities Place Planning and Regulation Services responded that he would provide a written response.

Received from Councillor Vasmer and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place Planning and Regulation Services, in relation to planning enforcement. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Vasmer asked if the increasing number of unresolved planning enforcements had an identified cause. The Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place Planning and Regulation Services responded that the increase in cases was a result of increased development by none professionals.

Received from Councillor T Huffer and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, in relation to support for young people during and after lockdown.

Received from Councillor Tremellen and answered by the Leader, in relation to about future working practices of the Council.

### 130 **Appointments to Committees**

It was proposed by the Speaker, Councillor V Hunt, and seconded by the Chairman, Councillor A Hartley, that the changes to committee memberships be considered and agreed.

#### **RESOLVED:**

##### Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Ruth Houghton and Cllr Viv Parry to replace Cllr David Vasmer as substitute members of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

##### Performance Management Scrutiny Committee

Cllr David Vasmer to become a substitute member of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee.

##### Place Overview Committee

Cllr Andy Boddington to replace Cllr David Vasmer as a full member of the Place Overview Committee.

Cllr David Vasmer to become a substitute member of the Place Overview Committee.

##### People Overview Committee

Cllr Ruth Houghton to replace Cllr David Vasmer as a full member of the People Overview Committee.

Cllr David Vasmer to replace Cllr Roger Evans as a substitute member of the People Overview Committee.

##### Standards Committee

Cllr David Vasmer to become a substitute member of the Standards Committee.

### 131 **Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Chair's Report of the Meeting held on 24th June 2020**

It was proposed by Councillor Mellings and seconded by Councillor Roberts that the report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, be received and noted.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020 be noted

**132 Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**RESOLVED:**

That in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4[3] of the Council's Access to Information Rules, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item.

**133 Exempt Minutes of 27th February 2020**

**RESOLVED:**

That the exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020 as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....

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## MEMBER QUESTIONS

COUNCIL  
24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020

<b>Question from:</b>	David Vasmer
<b>Subject:</b>	Highway Consultant
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Steve Davenport
<b>Director:</b>	Mark Barrow

**I note the highway consultant hired by Shropshire Council has now left and is working for another authority. The cost of hiring the person was published by the Council. Can you please confirm for how many days he was helping Shropshire Council and what was the gross cost of this employment.**

The highway consultant worked as follows:

2019/20 financial year – approximately 62.5 days at a cost of £62,500 plus VAT

2020/21 financial year – approximately 80 days\* at a cost of £78,000 plus VAT

\*Finalised figures are not yet available as the consultant provided a few additional hours in August for which invoices have yet to be received.

**It is also notes that the consultant has been instrumental in formulating a new Highways Structure, the third in two years. When will elected members be informed of what this new structure looks like and learn who does what job? It would be good to receive this in advance of the media publishing it.**

The new structure is purely a proposal at this stage and will be subject to the normal staff and union consultations before being finalised and recruited to. The structure has been developed to meet the needs identified in a comprehensive consultation which included a panel of councillors, senior managers, staff and other key stakeholders. Members will of course be informed of their key contacts once the restructure is completed.

The service has been currently operating an interim structure due to various personnel changes and as such has been necessarily fluid these last few months however these are now becoming more settled and an interim structure will be shared in the coming days.

<b>Question from:</b>	David Vasmer
<b>Subject:</b>	Highway Consultant
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Steve Davenport
<b>Director:</b>	Mark Barrow

**As a result of the Pandemic the Government requested councils to improve pedestrian safety without undue delay. Councils were encouraged to take rapid action and so dispense with the previous for advertising and carrying out lengthy consultations on changes.**

**Given these new rules, and a council’s ability to implement highways changes, why has the council not implemented the motions, which had cross party support, made at previous meetings? These include putting in place 20mph zones outside schools which was passed at the Council meeting on 19th December 2019, and the School Streets motion passed on 16th July this year. Why have these not been implemented for the start of the school term when all children returned to school?**

A paper is being presented at this Full Council for consideration that specifically addresses the implementation of 20mph outside of all Shropshire Schools and provides a rationale, resource allocation, issues to be addressed and timescale for implementation. The paper has been co-authored with Education colleagues and provides an approach to implementation of 20 mph. Hopefully the paper is self-explanatory.

Within this paper the issue of School Streets has also been addressed as 20 mph may not be applicable to all schools due to factors such as location, geography or the schools immediate neighbourhood, but schools streets may well provide other tools. Hence, a “blended” approach may well provide greater benefits and anticipated outcomes of safer school routes, reducing accidents, improving air quality and assisting Obesity via Active Travel. To assess, plan and implement interventions and liaise with stakeholders (Schools, Police, School Transport) requires the necessary planning and preparation time of which the paper presented at Council aims to address in a planned and considered manner.

It should also be noted that work across the county in dealing with COVID-19 is ongoing and continues to be implemented, utilising the guidance from National Government, and this has necessarily diverted staffing resource to addressing these issues. In towns such as Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Church Stretton , Much Wenlock, Whitchurch for example, road closures have been applied, high streets pedestrianised , one way systems implemented, COVID-19 reminder signs installed, bus routes reorganised, wider footpaths created and this has undoubtedly supported high streets in their economic recovery by encouraging a safer environment by allowing Pavement Permits to businesses to extend their trading space. Evidence via Shropshire Councils Town Centre Recovery Group is key to providing advice, guidance, support and ensuring appropriate funding opportunities are directed as appropriate continues.

Further, the work of the Passenger Transport Group in ensuring school transport is available but also COVID-19 Secure, has been key over the summer. There is further work to be done for social distancing on the approach to schools, and requests are starting to be received , as indeed other social distancing concerns and locations continue to be raised through various channels - this work, and its resource impact will need to be considered and managed, but it does demonstrate the work provided to date in supporting our communities.

<b>Question from:</b>	Heather Kidd
<b>Subject:</b>	Road Safety Issues
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Steve Davenport
<b>Director:</b>	Mark Barrow

**What priority does the Councils highways management give to road safety issues where there have been repeated accidents or a fatality?**

In March 2016, Shropshire Council developed a new standard approach to accident cluster site identification and analysis following a best practice review. Specifically, this approach was developed

to enable Shropshire Council to meet its statutory duty under the Road Traffic Act 1988 to conduct studies into accidents on roads, other than trunk roads, within the local authority area and take appropriate measures to prevent such accidents. This approach also provides a mechanism to recognise those accident cluster sites that are most likely to have a road environment contributory factor, identify any trends in accident cluster sites and to prioritise interventions using an objective and robust methodology. This allows the Council to better prioritise the limited capital budgets it has available to areas where the greatest accident reduction benefits can be achieved.

Accident cluster sites are identified annually using police data on reported road traffic accidents and Shropshire Council's spatial accident data. A detailed process is employed that generates the location of cluster sites and then uses various metrics, including trends in terms of cause, casualty type and severity, and local engineer input to create a ranked list of accident cluster sites on Shropshire's highway network. Initially, a cluster site is where three or more accidents occur within a 50m radius of each other over the past three-year period. Funding is then allocated to investigate, design and implement appropriate traffic engineering measures at the highest priority sites, that reduce the risk of future road traffic accidents taking place. Any schemes entering a design programme must be allocated an appropriate capital budget; this is typically from the Integrated Transport Block capital grant.

#### **How are these prioritised against routine works?**

Shropshire Council receives separate capital funding allocations for highway maintenance work and local transport measures from the Department for Transport annually. The allocations are based on needs assessments and to a large extent this helps inform the balance between investment between maintenance and highway improvements. Part of the allocation is the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) capital grant which provides funding support for transport capital improvement schemes costing less than £5m. The grant is intended to fund projects that aim to address improvements in a range of areas such as road safety, congestion, active travel, air quality, public transport and accessibility. This grant is 100% externally funded and is not augmented by Shropshire Council and demand upon this budget is always greater than the available financial resource.

At times there are subsequent opportunities to fund additional safety measures through development funding and bids to government for thematic initiatives which enable the authority to undertake more work than its annual capital allocations may allow. It should be noted however, that routine and reactive maintenance work and other highways and transport initiatives such as active travel etc. are undertaken to proactively maintain the highway and movement around it in a safe condition so as to prevent opportunities for accidents and as such are considered to be safety measures in their own right rather than distinct to road safety budgets. Accident risk assessment is an intrinsic part of decision making across many activities undertaken within highways. For example, engineers will consider accident history when selecting the type of aggregate used when surfacing a road.

Shropshire Council also has regular liaison with West Mercia Police and the Safer Roads Partnership where accident sites are discussed and any sites requiring more urgent intervention are identified.

**What would the average time for delivery of such schemes be from when agreed (on site) to completion? Please include those which simply need changes to white lining and improved signage and NOT those requiring complex road layout changes and significant capital funding.**

The identification and treatment of accident cluster sites typically sits within a three-year rolling programme. Site identification and prioritisation, design programme development and preliminary

design work takes place in Year 1, ongoing design and works programme development takes place in Year 2 and construction is programmed for a future year. The delivery of a scheme on site can be influenced by site specific characteristics (i.e. distance from local power supplies, condition of the road upon which lining is to be laid, whether the sign is in stock or not etc.) and the magnitude of the scheme. Opportunities to deliver minor works sooner or to integrate schemes with other planned work are always explored. Where minor capital works are identified that require minimal or no design work, work can be delivered on site in Year 2 of the above cycle or earlier if programming and funding allow.

Outcomes of liaison with West Mercia Police, as outlined above, may prompt the need for more urgent reactive work that would be revenue funded.

<b>Question from:</b>	Roger Evans
<b>Subject:</b>	Contract with Highway Contractor
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Steve Davenport
<b>Director:</b>	Mark Barrow

**As a result of the input from the consultant and others it is understood a new contract has been negotiated and agreed with the Highway Contractor working for Shropshire Council. It is further understood a new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) have been included in this new contract. Can it be confirmed that the new contract and way of working will reduce the cost of highway work commissioned by this council. In answer to this can examples be given on how this will be achieved.**

The new arrangements are not a new contract but a variation to the existing contract to provide some clarifications on areas of contention, embed formal governance arrangements and introduce a new suite of Key Performance Indicators. Whilst agreed in principle the new variations are still being finalised and therefore have not yet come into effect.

The contract variations in themselves will not reduce the cost of highway work commissioned through the contract, which within many areas of highway maintenance already provides demonstrably good value for money. The parties within the Highway Alliance however, are actively working together to develop complementary staffing structures and identify opportunities for reducing costs through new ways of working from beginning to end of current processes and introduction of innovation all of which will improve the value for money that we derive from our budgets.

**Can members be informed, since no information has at present been supplied to elected members, details what these new KPI's are, including what do they measure and how they differ to previous ones.**

Whilst broadly agreed, as the contract variations are still in discussion KPI's have not yet been finalised and therefore unable to be circulated. Once complete however, these will be made available and performance against them reported annually.

**Can members be informed how these new KPIs were arrived at. Do they follow national or the best industry standard targets.**

The KPI's reflect national good practice, drawn from known benchmarking information, and also reflect the priorities of the council as laid out within the original tender bid.

<b>Question from:</b>	Pam Moseley
<b>Subject:</b>	Condition of Cycle/Pedestrian Paths
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Steve Davenport
<b>Director:</b>	Mark Barrow

**Initiatives to increase cycling and walking by the population are being promoted at both national and local level, to meet aspirations to reduce vehicle usage, reduce associated emissions, and address obesity in adults and children. These are welcomed.**

**However, the condition of the cycle paths and combined cycle/pedestrian paths In Shrewsbury, mostly installed some years ago, are in a poor, and in some places, unsafe condition. Some of the surfaces are degraded, the road markings worn away, the adjacent vegetation overgrown, and the width of the paths greatly reduced by encroaching grass, weeds, and fallen plant debris which has accumulated over a very long time. This is likely to be also the case in other locations in the County.**

**The effect of this is to make the paths less safe due to being slippery when wet, and also being too narrow to accommodate cyclists, and in some cases, pedestrians, especially when travelling in opposite directions. As such they are perceived as less attractive to users, and this mitigates against them being used by cyclists and walkers.**

**Can the portfolio holder please explain how the cycle and joint cycle/pedestrian paths have been allowed to get into this condition, and explain how the situation can be remedied with, I hope, a regular maintenance schedule put in place to keep them in a good and safe condition.**

Funding for highway maintenance has reduced significantly for highway authorities across the country over several decades, particularly in revenue budgets which are used for cyclical and reactive maintenance to prevent issues such as the overgrowth, localised flooding, white line refreshing etc. to which you refer. This has understandably seen a deterioration in the condition of the nation's roads, footways and cycle paths and as such the situation within Shropshire is not unique but reflected across the country. Notwithstanding this however, Government have recognised this problem and have increased capital budgets in recent years and allocated significant one off investment to support highway authorities in stemming this decline. Further funding is needed however and officers are engaged with colleagues across the country in lobbying for more funding to better reflect these local needs.

Funding is not the panacea in its own right however and officers are beginning to undertake a review of our highway maintenance strategies to ensure that resources are better allocated to support contemporary priorities and reflective on national best practice and are working closely with our supply chain to continue to identify opportunities to derive better value for money from the budgets we do have available to ensure that we can increase the amount of activity that we are able to undertake.

<b>Question from:</b>	Ruth Houghton
<b>Subject:</b>	COVID Impact on Local Economy
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Steve Charmley
<b>Director:</b>	Mark Barrow

**Covid 19 has had a wide impact on our local economy in Shropshire with many businesses adversely impacted. The financial support through business grants issued by the Council, whilst some took some time to come through, were welcomed and very valuable to eligible businesses. Support from the Marches LEP has also been essential for many businesses too. Unfortunately many successful , but home based businesses, received little, if anything, in grant support.**

**Going forward, post pandemic, how will this Council ensure that economic development is a priority for the whole County and how will new higher paid and higher skilled jobs be attracted to all areas of Shropshire.**

Shropshire Council were initially awarded c£91 million from government to support local businesses through the COVID-19 crisis, split across two funds, the first supporting small businesses with rateable values under £15,000, who would receive a grant of £10,000 and the second supporting businesses within the retail hospitality and leisure sector. Occupiers from the retail, hospitality and leisure sector would receive a £10,000 grant if their rateable value was under £15,000, or a £25,000 grant if their rateable value was between £15,000-£51,000.

In total, 6,906 grants were distributed to the value of £81.6m, reaching 92.5% of eligible businesses. This splits out between the two grant funds as follows;

#### Small Business Grant

- Supported a total of 5,200 businesses, each receiving a grant of £10,000.
- Total value of £52m paid out to businesses.
- 90.66% of businesses that we believe are eligible have received support.

#### Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant

- Supported a total of 1,706 businesses, each receiving of either £10,000 or £25,000 (dependant on rateable value).
- Total value of £29.6m paid out to businesses.
- 98.61% of businesses that we believe are eligible have received support.

In addition, government awarded a 5% uplift on the original awarded grant funds that could be granted to occupiers based on local demand, totalling approx. £4.5m. Government had outlined that charities, market traders, B&B's (paying council tax rather than business rates) and occupiers of shared offices/workspace, would be eligible through the Extension Grant, whilst businesses in the wider retail, hospitality and leisure sector (including supply chain and businesses not open to the public), care and business enabling businesses would be considered subject to meeting eligibility criteria.

This fund also benefited from funding awarded through the Marches LEP to top-up the fund by a further £570,000, along with supporting a broader market towns recovery programme to the value of £187,000. The outcomes through these funds can be confirmed as follows;

#### COVID-19 Extension Grant (government funding)

- Supported a total of 768 businesses, with a total of £4.1825m committed to date, which is broken down as follows;
- B&B – 86 businesses supported to the value of £215k
- Charities – 30 businesses supported to the value of £150k
- Shared Offices – 209 businesses supported to the value of £522.5k
- Shared Workspace – 94 businesses supported to the value of £940k

- Market Traders – 64 businesses supported to the value of £160k
- Care – 38 businesses supported to the value of £380k
- Retail Hospitality and Leisure – 259 businesses supported to the value of £1.815m
- Working on a small number of outstanding applications to ensure all remaining funding is allocated. This will be completed before the deadline outlined by government of 30<sup>th</sup> September.

**COVID-19 Extension Grant (MLEP funding)**

- Supported a total of 93 businesses, with £570,000 of MLEP funds allocated as business grants.
- These were split across Retail, Hospitality and Leisure and Business Enabling sectors.
- 9 Business Enabling and 12 Retail, Hospitality and Leisure businesses supported with £10,000 grants (based on employee numbers).
- Total value of these grants was £210,000.
- 72 Business Enabling businesses supported with £5,000 grants (based on employee numbers).
- Total value of these grants was £360,000.
- We are currently tracking job safeguarding figures of 354, with some final due diligence required before final figures are confirmed.

**Shropshire Market Towns Fund (MLEP funding)**

- £137,000 allocated against 7 key market towns, ranging from £5,000-£50,000 in value, with those impacted by flooding earlier in the year seeing greater pots of funding.
- A further £50,000 was allocated as part of a competitive process with ten successful bids splitting this pot of funding.
- Outputs will be monitored based on the delivery of projects over the next three months.

Unfortunately, not all businesses were able to access grant funding and where this was the case, these businesses were signposted to other support mechanisms available such as the Self Employed Income Support Scheme, Furlough schemes and soft loan funds launched by government.

We continue to support our market towns and we are working on a programme to support more employment land to be ready for investment to help support our towns and communities.

Through the Council’s Economic Task Force, we are also working closely with partners including DWP, the LEP, employment and Skills providers to support businesses and communities in these challenging times. We are also continuing to work across our business networks to support businesses to grow and encourage new businesses to invest in Shropshire.

\*PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE FIGURES ARE CORRECT AS OF 15/09/2020 AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE BEFORE 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, WHICH IS THE FINAL DATE GRANT PAYMENTS CAN BE MADE.

<b>Question from:</b>	Ruth Houghton
<b>Subject:</b>	COVID Impact on Local Economy
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Lezley Picton
<b>Director:</b>	Mark Barrow

**As lockdown has eased and we have started to welcome visitors back to Shropshire, this has been particularly welcome in the South West of the County for our local visitor economy. However we are sadly experiencing many breaches of the countryside code including camp fires on historic monuments such as Mitchells Fold, excessive litter with overflowing litter bins, wild camping and camper vans parked overnight at local beauty spots. How will the Council work with partners and**

**stakeholders such as the NFU, The National Trust , English Heritage and others to address this growing problem and what is this Council doing to ensure that the range of holiday accommodation available for visitors seeking a Staycation in the county is varied and of good quality as well as compliant with Covid 19 safety measures.**

Council owned visitor attractions are being managed with an enhanced regime of management, stewarding and cleaning, to ensure that visitor safety is paramount.

A new media campaign is being planned, working with partners to help encourage responsible use of the countryside by visitors and to adhere to the Countryside Code. Our Visitor Economy Officer is reviewing a range of on-line communication to monitor the promotion of visitor activity in Shropshire and to build in messaging around this. Laminated posters highlighting the Countryside Code have been made available.

Council officers are working with Telford and Wrekin Council, Visitor Shropshire and Discover Shropshire and Telford to make sure that current Government Guidance is being highlighted to businesses through relevant e-newsletters, social media and websites.