

Date: Thursday, 16 July 2026

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ

Contact: Tim Ward, Committee Officer
Tel: 01743 257713
Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

COUNCIL

RESPONSES TO PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

This page is intentionally left blank

PUBLIC QUESTIONS COUNCIL 16 JULY 2026

Question from Graham Betts

On 18 January 2026 I wrote to Heather Kidd as Council Leader, and on 27 September and 9 November 2025, I wrote to David Vasmer as Highways Portfolio Holder. I received no reply from either.

On 11 August 2025 I wrote to Juan Hernandez Alliance Executive Manager Street Scene, asking for my complaint about dangerous drain gulleys fitted by the Council in the middle of Longden Road cycle lanes to be escalated and on 12 August 2025 I wrote to Geoff Brough 'Traffic Engineering' correcting a misunderstanding about money (CIL etc.) available for yellow lines on Red Deer Road junctions in Shrewsbury. I received no reply from either.

On 28 February 2024 I sent a cheque for £500 to Gemma Lawley, Highway Development Officer, for the provision of blue cycle path signs on Red Deer Road in Shrewsbury. This was a personal effort trying to improve safety and the unacceptable level of unlawful cycle path parking not being controlled by the Council. I received no reply. The cheque was cashed in August 2025 and there are still no cycle path signs.

My questions to the Council are: Given the duties laid out in the Nolan Principles and common courtesy costs nothing, is this an acceptable level of response from Shropshire Council as a public local authority, when will I get a reply, and when will the blue signs I have paid for be fitted, and why are they not fitted now?

Response from Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste

Response:

Shropshire Council thanks Mr Betts for raising these matters and recognises the time and effort he has invested in pursuing concerns relating to correspondence, the Longden Road drainage gullies and the Red Deer Road cycle path signage scheme.

Having reviewed the information currently available, it is clear that these matters have received consideration across a number of Council services and have been discussed by officers, senior managers and elected members over an extended period. The Council also recognises the importance of providing clear and timely updates to residents and acknowledges that there were opportunities for communication to be more consistent.

Point 1. On 18 January 2026 I wrote to Heather Kidd as Council Leader, and on 27 September and 9 November 2025, I wrote to David Vasmer as Highways Portfolio Holder. I received no reply from either.

Response:

The Council is aware of concerns regarding correspondence sent to Councillor Heather Kidd, Councillor David Vasmer and various Council officers.

Current records do not yet provide a complete picture of how all correspondence was received, processed or responded to. Further enquiries are therefore being undertaken to establish what communications were received, what actions were taken and whether responses were issued. The Council will provide an update once those enquiries are complete.

It is important to note that the evidence reviewed demonstrates that a number of officers and elected members were aware of the issues raised and that the matters were being discussed internally. The Council's review has identified involvement from officers, together with elected members, in considering the concerns raised and helping to progress discussions within Shropshire Council.

Point 2. On 11 August 2025 I wrote to Mr Hernandez Alliance Executive Manager Street Scene, asking for my complaint about dangerous drain gulleys fitted by the Council in the middle of Longden Road cycle lanes to be escalated and on 12 August 2025 I wrote to Geoff Brough 'Traffic Engineering' correcting a misunderstanding about money (CIL etc.) available for yellow lines on Red Deer Road junctions in Shrewsbury. I received no reply from either.

Response:

The council has reviewed the evidence which shows that concerns relating to the Longden Road drainage gullies were known to officers and were considered through the Council's complaints process, internal reviews and senior officer briefings.

The records demonstrate that officers issued a response to a formal complaint and subsequently continued to engage with the matter through internal discussions and briefings. In particular, a briefing was prepared for officers in September 2025 to ensure the concerns raised were fully understood and considered at the appropriate level.

This demonstrates that officers, within highways and engineering services, were aware of the concerns and were involved in discussions regarding the issues that had been raised.

Whilst the matter received ongoing consideration and was actively discussed internally, it is acknowledged that updates on the progress and outcomes of those discussions were not always communicated as clearly or as regularly as they could have been. The Council continues to review the available information and will share any further findings when they become available.

Point 3. On 28 February 2024 I sent a cheque for £500 to Gemma Lawley, Highway Development Officer, for the provision of blue cycle path signs on Red Deer Road in Shrewsbury. This was a personal effort trying to improve safety and the unacceptable level of unlawful cycle path parking not being controlled by the Council. I received no reply. The cheque was cashed in August 2025 and there are still no cycle path signs.

Response:

The Council acknowledges Mr Betts' concerns regarding the proposed blue cycle path signage scheme on Red Deer Road and the £500 contribution he states was provided towards the project.

The evidence available indicates that the signage proposal was referred to the relevant service area and that officers within Traffic Engineering considered the matter as part of wider discussions regarding traffic management, road safety and cycling infrastructure in the area. Records also indicate that Shropshire Council provided a substantive response regarding several Red Deer Road issues, including cycle path signage and related highway matters.

In relation to the £500 contribution, the Council is currently undertaking further enquiries to verify the relevant financial and administrative records. This includes establishing when the cheque was received, which department processed it, and how any funds have been recorded and whether they have been allocated to a specific scheme.

This work remains ongoing and the Council's review has not yet concluded. It would therefore be inappropriate to reach final conclusions until all relevant records have been examined and verified.

The Council is actively working with the relevant service areas to establish the full position regarding both the contribution and the signage scheme. A further update will be provided as soon as that information becomes available.

Conclusion

In summary, I can confirm that the matters raised by Mr Betts were considered through established Council processes and received attention from officers, senior managers and elected members. The evidence reviewed demonstrates that officers did engage with the issues raised, with a number of individuals taking steps to investigate concerns, provide responses, facilitate internal discussions and progress matters through the appropriate channels.

The Council also recognises that communication with Mr Betts could have been clearer and more regular in some instances. As a result, further work is now being undertaken to clarify outstanding matters, including the handling of, the current status of the Red Deer Road cycle path signage proposal and the position regarding the reported £500 contribution.

These enquiries remain ongoing and the Council will provide further information and updates as soon as the relevant facts have been established and verified.

Question from Kate Fejfer

Monkmoor Road serves as a vital artery for our local community, yet it remains one of the longest residential stretches in Shrewsbury with a significant deficit of safe pedestrian crossing points.

With the increasing volume of traffic and the high density of residents—including schoolchildren attending local primary and secondary schools, elderly citizens accessing local amenities, and families visiting the nearby parks—the current infrastructure is no longer sufficient. Residents frequently find themselves forced to 'dodge' traffic or wait for extended periods to cross a road that should, by design, prioritize the safety of its inhabitants.

The 'Active Travel' strategy promoted by this Council encourages residents to walk rather than drive; however, this is only viable if the environment is safe. A new Zebra Crossing would provide a designated, visible, and secure point for residents to navigate the road, particularly during peak school-run and commuting hours.

Will the Council commit to conducting an urgent pedestrian safety assessment on Monkmoor Road, with a specific view to installing a new Crossing to ensure the safety and well-being of the local community?"

Response from Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste

Question from Jamie Russell

Over the last few months, Shrewsbury has seen a rise in far-right protests which have attracted nationally recognised extremists including Ryan Ferguson, a self-proclaimed neo-Nazi; and Ryan Bridge from Raise the Colours, who is currently charged with injuring a man in a hit and run attack in Birmingham. Other key members of Raise the Colours have been charged with the murder of a pub landlord in Lichfield and making indecent images of children.

The behaviour at these protests in Shrewsbury has been hateful and racist with chants including 'Deport, deport, deport the f***** lot!' and 'F*** Islam' ringing through our town. There have also been reports of aggressive and intimidatory behaviour towards members of the public and the illegal use of pyrotechnics.

These marches are having a chilling impact on local businesses, with many members of our community avoiding the town centre when they occur and public events being cancelled due to safety fears. Shrewsbury's reputation as a welcoming place to visit is at risk of irreparable damage.

Please can Shropshire Council

- 1) Outline how it will respond to future marches, including the one planned for 22 August.
- 2) Hold a community meeting in order for residents and businesses affected to voice their concerns and discuss them with council leaders?

Response from The Leader Cllr Heather Kidd

- The Council recognises concerns about recent protests, including their impact on safety, community cohesion, and reports of offensive behaviour, and is committed to keeping Shropshire welcoming and inclusive.
- However, the right to protest is protected under human rights law (Articles 9, 10, 11), though not absolute, with any restrictions are the responsibility of the police, not the Council. The Council cannot prevent protests.
- The police and public sector bodies must balance rights by acting lawfully, proportionately, and without discrimination, protecting peaceful protest while addressing risks.
- Criminal behaviour (e.g. hate crime, violence) is a police matter and should be reported via 101 or 999 in emergencies.
- The Council will work with police and partners to plan for future events, minimize disruption, and support community safety while remaining politically neutral.

- There are a number of routes already available for residents and businesses to raise concerns. Multiple channels include directly with the police, council customer services, the Shrewsbury BID and local councillors).
- The Council encourages any incidents involving intimidation, harassment, hate crime or other suspected criminal behaviour to be reported directly to the police, as these are matters for law enforcement rather than the local authority.

***Please also see fuller response at the end of this document**

Question from Angela Vnoucek

If I may, I am petitioning Shropshire Council to overturn their decision, announced on 18th June 2026, to close the Meole Brace (MB) Park & Ride Site.

It has become evident that this will create hardship for many residents who depend on this site in order to go about their daily lives, add to the already existing traffic congestion on the A5 and in the centre of town at best, and at worst, will be the most significant driver of making residents abandon the town and go elsewhere.

From talking to said residents and from reviewing comments on social media, which I am sure the council are aware of, there is one question which remains unanswered:

How can the public be certain the decision to close MB P&R is based on factual evidence?

- A. Where is the data to support falling user numbers and can this be made available to the public?
- B. Why was the signage at Darwin's Edge never replaced, which many believe led to a fall in user numbers of the service?
- C. Who are the partners the council has looked into going into collaboration with when the review of services was carried out?
- D. Is there pressure to sell the land to help with the council's financial crisis?

Response from Cllr Rob Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Regeneration

The decision to suspend the Meole Brace Park & Ride service has not been taken lightly. It follows a comprehensive review of supported bus services across Shropshire as part of the 2026 bus retendering programme. The review considered passenger usage, operating costs, connectivity, and the role each service plays within the wider transport network.

The Council is facing significant financial pressures. Rising operator costs combined with reductions in government funding have created a funding gap of approximately £1.25 million within the supported bus network. Continuing all services at their current level was therefore not financially sustainable.

In determining how limited resources should be allocated, the Council has followed the priorities set out in Shropshire's adopted Bus Service Improvement Plan. This places particular emphasis on protecting essential inter-urban bus routes, especially those serving communities where there are few or no alternative transport options.

As part of the review, the Council concluded that it could not continue to fund all three Park & Ride services while also protecting vital bus connections elsewhere in the county. The decision was therefore taken to focus investment on the Oxon and Harlescott sites, enabling the delivery of an enhanced two-site Park & Ride network, including improved facilities, newer vehicles and extended evening services, while reducing overall operating costs.

Over the last year Meole Brace carried approximately 135,000 passenger journeys, compared with approximately 151,000 at Harlescott and 164,000 at Oxon. On that basis Meole Brace remains the least used of the three sites.

Whilst the service remains valued by many users, the Council had to balance local benefits against the need to maintain a sustainable countywide transport network.

The review also recognised that some residents have concerns about signage, development activity around the site and traffic conditions affecting patronage. In relation to the signage, it had been anticipated that replacement signage would be delivered by the developer as part of the wider Darwin's Edge development works and associated changes to the site access arrangements. Unfortunately, this did not materialise and the Council subsequently had to establish responsibility for replacement and whether any associated costs could be recovered before progressing further. Those concerns have been acknowledged and recorded, but the financial challenge remained such that improvements to signage or promotion alone would not have addressed the underlying affordability issue.

In response to the question regarding partnerships, the Council will always consider opportunities for partnerships, but at present there is nothing viable on the table.

To be clear, this decision is about the affordability of the bus service, not about any potential sale of the site. There are currently no plans associated with this decision to dispose of the Meole Brace Park & Ride site or bring it forward for housing development. The review considered only the future operation of the Park & Ride service.

The Council recognises that the suspension of the service will be disappointing for many regular users. However, the decision has been made in the context of ensuring that limited public funding continues to support the greatest number of people across Shropshire, particularly those who rely on essential bus services for access to work, education, healthcare and other key destinations.

The impact of these changes will continue to be monitored

Question from John Palmer

In mid-September 2026 the Government will publish the new National Planning Policy Framework, which will detail the Spatial Development Strategy plan-making framework.

Has Shropshire Council changed any of its thinking on this since its Newsroom story on 27 March 2026? <https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/2026/03/co-ordinated-plan-for-county-growth-and-prosperity-sent-to-government/>

Instead of just joining with Telford and Wrekin Council on a Spatial Development Strategy, is it accelerating consideration of being more closely aligned with the West Midlands Combined Authority, to fully benefit from Andy Burnham's enticing devolution revolution?

Response from Cllr David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

In March, Shropshire Council provided a positive response to the Government's request for areas to set out their long-term aspirations for cross boundary working on new style Spatial Development Strategies. The Council's response, developed in partnership with Telford and Wrekin Council, envisaged a Spatial Development Strategy to be developed across the two Council areas, recognising the shared economic growth opportunities presented by this geography, including its functional relationship with the wider West Midlands region

Shropshire Council is awaiting a formal response from the Government to our positive proposals for cross boundary working, which we anticipate later the summer. When we have this feedback from the Government we will be in a position to progress work on a new SDS.

Question from John Adams

An elderly resident in a retirement development is unable to open her windows, leaving her flat above 28°C for several days and reaching over 32°C in the afternoons. The developer's advice is to leave doors open to internal corridors, but this creates fire and security risks. The upper-floor apartment has south-east and south-west facing sash windows with a fixed bottom sash; the only operable sash must be pulled down using two rings positioned too high for an average-height person, and the force required is beyond what many elderly residents could safely exert.

Two formal complaints have been submitted to the developer, as has one from Helen Morgan MP, without progress. The developer claims planning requirements prevented compliance with higher Building Regulations standards for window usability. These enhanced standards are voluntary unless adopted in the council's Development Plan, allowing developments to be marketed as suitable for older people without meeting essential accessibility criteria.

The development includes rental, shared-ownership, and purchased units. Because the resident owns her flat, Shropshire Council's housing enforcement team will not act, as any enforcement notice would fall on the resident herself, despite the developer retaining ownership and control of the windows.

What steps will Shropshire Council take to ensure residents in mixed-tenure retirement developments have equal access to council support in situations where building features are unsafe or unusable? And will the Council include the higher-level Building Regulations standards within the Development Plan to prevent similar cases in future?

Response from Cllr David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

While the address of this property has not been provided in the question, due to other queries received in the Council it is understood this relates to Joules Court in Market Drayton which is a McCarthy and Stone development of retirement apartments.

Planning permission ref: 19/02964/FUL was approved 16th September 2020 for Development of one block of 53 retirement apartments; formation of parking area(s), estate roads and landscaping scheme; all following the demolition of existing buildings at Land At 36 Stafford Street Market Drayton TF9 1HY now known as Joules Court. McCarthy and Stone were involved at the planning stage and were involved during the build out of this site.

The site is located within a conservation area and the design proposed sash windows. These were conditioned and details approved for wooden sash windows. We are aware that McCarthy and Stone have received some complaints from residents struggling to open the windows. Having discussed this with planning, the Conservation team and the Building Control team this is likely to be an issue related to the quality of installation or the lack of good maintenance rather than the fact that they are sash windows as properly installed sash windows should open easily. Alterations could be made including small handles which may assist with opening and closing but this would need to be considered by the owner.

The site was constructed using an Approved Inspector, NHBC not the Council's Building Control so the Council was not involved in the review of each stage of construction. NHBC is a well-established approved inspector so the Council would expect Building Regulations were adhered to.

We understand that McCarthy and Stone have a Warden who can assist with opening windows but appreciate why that may not be ideal for residents.

With regards to including higher-level building regulations within the development plan the government is clear that policies and regulations that are set elsewhere should not be included in the Council's Local Plan (Development Plan) as this duplicated policy and requirements unnecessarily.

Therefore, this is a civil matter for the residents to address directly with McCarthy and Stone.

*** Full response to question above from Jamie Russell**

Thank you for your question for setting out your concerns regarding recent protests, marches and demonstrations in Shrewsbury.

Shropshire Council recognises that some residents, businesses and community groups have found recent events unsettling and that there are strongly held views about the impact that demonstrations can have on community cohesion, town centre activity and perceptions of safety. We also acknowledge concerns raised about offensive or discriminatory language reportedly used during some events and the effect this can have on individuals and communities.

The Council is committed to promoting community cohesion, supporting peaceful and respectful engagement, and ensuring that Shropshire remains a welcoming place for all who live, work and visit here through working in closely with partners.

What the Council can and cannot do

It is important to distinguish between the responsibilities of the Council and those of the police and the Home Office.

An individual's right to freedom of expression and assembly are protected by Articles 9,10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which is enshrined in UK law. Together, the Articles safeguard the right to peaceful protest. However, these rights are not absolute. The state can implement laws that restrict the right to protest to maintain public order or to protect the rights and freedoms of others. Decisions regarding the policing of marches, protest activity, public order offences, hate incidents and any restrictions placed upon demonstrations are matters for the Police and are exercised using powers available to them under public order legislation.

The Council does not have legal powers to prevent a protest or march from taking place.

The police along with other public bodies, have both positive duties (a duty to do something, in certain circumstances, such as take reasonable steps to protect those who want to exercise their rights peacefully) and negative duties (a duty to refrain from doing something, not prevent, hinder or restrict peaceful assembly) to uphold human rights.

Any interference should only take place:

- in accordance with the law (within the confines of statute or common law)
- in pursuit of a legitimate aim (these aims are summarised in the subsections of each right, including prevention of disorder, protection of public health and prevention of crime)
- as is necessary in a democratic society (any interference must be justified by a pressing social need and must be proportionate to one or more of the legitimate aims as above).

The interference must not be discriminatory regarding specific characteristic(s) in any given protest or group, or between groups.

The police must normally treat all peaceful protest in a similar way (particularly those of legitimate political interest), regardless of the particular views that a group are seeking to express.

Source: National protest operational advice College of Policing and National Police Chiefs' Council August 2023

Where criminal offences are alleged to have taken place, including public order offences, hate crime, intimidation, violence, criminal damage or the unlawful use of pyrotechnics, these matters fall within the remit of the police, who are responsible for investigating incidents and taking appropriate enforcement action. Such matters must be reported to the police by dialling 101 or in an emergency 999.

How the Council will respond to future marches

For previous events and any future demonstration, including the event currently expected on 22 August, the Council will continue to work closely with West Mercia Police and partner agencies through established multi-agency planning arrangements and continue to work

through the Community Safety Partnership to maintain a strategic oversight of community cohesion.

This includes assessing any potential impacts on residents, businesses, public services and scheduled events, supporting traffic management and public safety measures where required, issuing proportionate public information and reassurance messaging.

The Council's approach is to remain politically neutral while supporting the rights of all communities to feel safe and respected. We will continue to work with partners to minimise disruption and reduce the risk of tensions escalating.

How residents and businesses can raise concerns

There are a number of existing mechanisms in place for the police and partners to gain views from the communities. Residents and businesses who have concerns about demonstrations, public order issues or their impact on the town can raise those concerns through a number of channels:

- West Mercia Police should be contacted regarding any criminal behaviour, public order offences, threats, intimidation, hate incidents, anti-social behaviour or concerns about public safety. In an emergency, or where there is an immediate risk to safety, 999 should be called. Non-emergency concerns can be reported to the police via 101 or through West Mercia Police's online reporting mechanisms.
- Shropshire Council welcomes ALL feedback regarding the impact of events on local communities, businesses, highways, public spaces and Council services. Concerns can be raised through the Council's customer service channels or our elected members.
- Businesses can also raise operational concerns through organisations such as Shrewsbury BID, which maintains regular engagement with partner agencies and can help ensure business impacts are understood within wider planning arrangements.
- Local councillors may also represent residents' concerns and raise matters through established Council governance and community engagement processes.

The Council encourages any incidents involving intimidation, harassment, hate crime or other suspected criminal behaviour to be reported directly to the police, as these are matters for law enforcement rather than the local authority.

Conclusion

Shropshire Council will continue to work with West Mercia Police and other partners to support community safety, provide reassurance where appropriate, and help minimise disruption to residents, visitors and businesses. The Council unequivocally condemns racism, hatred, intimidation and violence in all forms. At the same time, any response by public authorities must operate within the law and respect established rights to peaceful protest and freedom of expression. Our role is therefore to work with partners to manage risks, support affected communities and ensure that any criminal behaviour is dealt with by the appropriate enforcement agencies.

MEMBER QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES COUNCIL 16 JULY 2026

Question from Councillor Adam Fefjer

Collaborative Approach to Addressing the Infrastructure Backlog: Clive Road

Residents across the county continue to feel the impact of the long-standing infrastructure backlog, particularly in areas where roads have deteriorated beyond the point where temporary repairs are effective.

One such example in my ward is Clive Road. As both a ward member and a resident, I have raised concerns about the worsening condition of the road surface for many years. Unfortunately, repeated patching has failed to resolve the issue, and the growing number of potholes is now becoming a significant safety concern for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians alike.

I appreciate that the department is having to balance a large number of competing priorities across the county. With that in mind, could the Portfolio Holder provide an update on any current or plans for Clive Road?

Response from Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste

Over last winter the number of outstanding potholes here in Shropshire more than trebled because of some exceptionally challenging weather. In addition, like many rural Councils with large rural networks, we are dealing with a legacy of under investment, and asset deterioration rates have outpaced investment for many years.

However, in Shropshire the new administration is reversing years of under investment by giving Highways the priority it deserves – one demanded by residents. We are investing more in our highways with over 160 schemes of surface dressing and resurfacing this year. A new pothole repair team was created when we took over in May last year and we have set up three more teams to tackle the dramatic increase in potholes created by the cold and wet winter weather. In addition, the Department for Transport has committed extra funding over the coming years, will reverse years of decline in our highways network.

The Council manages investment in roads using a data-led process which draws together intelligence on network condition, customer enquiries and reactive defects recorded on the link of carriageway. This intelligence is analysed to determine a priority programme of maintenance, which is validated by area highways teams.

With regards to Clive Road, this does not currently form part of the prioritised list of sites for Capital investment. However, I will ask the local highways technician re-inspect Clive Road and commission works to ensure that the road is safe for all vehicles

Question from Councillor Andy Boddington

At least eight litter bins in Ludlow have been removed in the last few months, including in St Laurences churchyard, Hucklemarsh Road a footpath to Stanton Road. Why?

Response from Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste

Shropshire Council has not made a decision to remove litter bins from Ludlow as a cost saving measure, nor has there been any reduction in service levels relating to litter bin provision.

Following concerns raised by local residents and Ludlow Town Council, the Council carried out investigations which identified a number of litter bins that were not recorded within its asset management and route mapping systems. In some cases, these bins had been emptied historically but were not included within the current network of locations used by operational crews.

Where bins were found to be missing from Council records, further checks were required to confirm their status and ownership before they could be added to scheduled emptying routes. As part of this process, the Council has also been monitoring these locations to better understand how frequently the bins are used and whether there is an ongoing need for litter bin provision.

Shropshire Council recognises the important role that litter bins play in helping to keep communities clean and reducing issues such as littering and dog fouling. Work is ongoing to ensure that appropriate bin locations are accurately mapped, properly maintained and included within future service arrangements.

The Council is aware of the specific concerns regarding the bins at Hucklemarsh Road, Weyman Road and St Laurence's Churchyard and officers will continue to work closely with Ludlow Town Council to fully investigate these locations and identify a suitable solution to address the issue of the missing bins.

Question from Councillor Greg Ebbs

Can the Portfolio Holder provide an update on the rollout and operational status of ANPR cameras across the council area, including any outcomes achieved to date and the anticipated next steps for the programme?

Response from Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste**Question from Councillor Dawn Husemann**

It has been brought to my attention that it is normally the case with contracts with the big consulting houses such as PwC that certain provisions are built into the contract to protect the consulting body should the contract be cancelled. Apparently these are referred to as "tails in contracts" or "earn out clauses" but may be known by other terms and could be something like the "ex client has to pay the consultant say 5% of

any future savings arising from the consultants work/intellectual property". So will the council please confirm that the £13m paid to PwC is the full extent of our commitment to them or are there any other financial commitments due now or that may become due in the future or are contingent in any way?

Response from Cllr Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

The £13m is the full expenditure including termination payments

Question from Councillor Brendan Mallon

It has come to my attention that extraordinary extensions to consultation periods are being made available by the planning department, sometimes with multiple extensions being granted to stretch the process out well beyond a year.

This is an inordinate amount of time. The government's planning guarantee policy is "that no application should spend more than a year with decision-makers, including any appeal. In practice this means that major planning applications should be decided in no more than 26 weeks and non-major applications within 16 weeks."

It is implausible that individuals or small developers would have such extraordinary latitude. No one should be permitted to game the system, tying up our already overstretched Planning resources and extending uncertainty for residents.

Will the Council take decisive action to end this ongoing mockery of the Planning System and furthermore, provide clear and robust policy for Members, Officers and the public on how far deadlines can legitimately and reasonably be extended and well-defined parameters for extensions, including the maximum number of extensions and a maximum duration, in order to prevent further subversion of our processes?

Response from Cllr David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

The Council's draft Local Plan was officially withdrawn from examination in July last year. The withdrawal of the draft Local Plan, alongside the significant increase in Shropshire's housing need driven by the Government's 'standard methodology', has meant that the Council can not currently demonstrate a 5 year housing supply of deliverable housing sites. This changes the policy position of the Council as it now has to consider what is commonly called the 'tilted balance'. Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states: "*Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development*". In effect the 'tilted balance' means a decision maker should generally apply less weight to locally adopted planning policies where they relate to housing delivery, which includes the consideration of an area's adopted development boundary, as they are considered out-of-date.

This has led to a significant increase in applications submitted as more applicants are submitting speculative planning applications which have had very little if any pre-application advice. This means that a lot of work that is undertaken during pre-app is

now being carried out during the applications process. Prior to the 'tilted balance' the Council was able to take a harder line on not carrying out so much work during the application process and pushing applicants to use Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) or the pre-app process. Now the 'tilted balance' is a consideration it effectively means the application has to be approved unless the criteria in NPPF para 11 part d are met. As part of the consultation process Officers will try and redress issues raised by consultees as well as residents and Town and Parish Councils to try and ensure the best development possible is secured on site.

The increase in applications was being dealt with by the same number of staff initially, but the Planning Department is now working on a recruitment strategy to improve workloads and response times.

Most applications that take more than the statutory timeframes have an Extension of Time (EOT) which is agreed with the applicant/agent. This means they have agreed that the Council can have additional time to determine the application. If an EOT has been given, then the Council is not liable to pay any money back for not determining the application within certain timeframes.

Question from Councillor Donna Edmunds

On Monday 22nd June I submitted a set of written questions to officers on the Dutton Close, Stoke Heath asylum placements — on what officers knew and when, our statutory duties, the likely cost, and what risk assessments have been done — and I have received a substantive answer to none of them. Nor have I had an answer to subsequent questions along similar lines. Meanwhile, the council has written to both the Home Secretary and the Parish Council in regard to the scheme. Can the leader explain why those letters were not shared with myself as the ward member, despite me asking directly about this issue, and say whether she will commit today to full written answers to my questions without further unnecessary delay?

Response from The Leader, Cllr Heather Kidd

Statutory responsibilities for the accommodation of asylum seekers rests with the Home Office alone, and not with the Council and local authorities. The Council has no decision-making powers in relation to the sites, and any assessments and consultations regarding sites, including risk assessments and costs, is also a matter for the Home Office and Serco.

The Council is unable to share publicly details of correspondence, including letters, and meetings with the Home Office and Serco, because this correspondence is based on information provided to the Council confidentially by the Home Office and Serco.

The Council must ensure that as part of our statutory duties to vulnerable people, asylum seekers are offered appropriate protections and response. Risk assessments and costs in relation to these are confidential due to the sensitive

information they contain regarding individuals, and because they are based on information that has been shared in confidence with the Council by the Home Office and Serco and is often subject to change.

The Council would like to assure the Local Member and all residents that we have been resolute in our objections to the inappropriate use of Dutton Close. The Council also understands the frustration caused to residents when we are unable to share information given to us in confidence. We are calling for more openness and transparency by the Home Office in terms of their processes and protocols around their Asylum Dispersal Programme, and meaningful engagement with local authorities about this.

The Council remains committed to working with Local Members and Town and Parish Councils to the greatest extent that we are able to.

As Leader, I would also like to take this moment to speak directly to the residents of Dutton Close, Stoke Heath and surrounds, and to your Parish Council. I know this has been a very challenging time for each and every one of you. The worry, stress and fear caused in your community by the escalation of this situation has no doubt been overwhelming. I also know the restrictions on what we can say publicly is frustrating for you all. What I can seek to assure you of is that advocating for our residents in relation to the inappropriate use of this site has been at the forefront of our response. I hope that confirmation from the Home Office that this site is withdrawn is allowing you some space to start to recover. If there is anything we as a council can do to support this, please do get in touch. My thanks also to your Parish Council for all their advocacy and support to residents, and to our local partners for the collective efforts to both challenge and respond to this situation.

This page is intentionally left blank