



Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Friday, 15 November 2019

**Committee:
Communities Overview Committee**

Date: Monday, 25 November 2019

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

You are requested to attend the above meeting.
The Agenda is attached

Claire Porter
Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

Members of Communities Overview Committee

Cecilia Motley (Chairman)	Roger Hughes
Nick Hignett (Vice Chairman)	Vivienne Parry
Clare Aspinall	Keith Roberts
Ted Clarke	Leslie Winwood
Nigel Hartin	Tina Woodward

Your Committee Officer is:

Julie Fildes Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 257723

Email: Julie.Fildes@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Apologies for absence and substitutions

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members are reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2019 (Pages 1 - 6)

To consider the Minutes of the Communities Overview Committee meeting held on 16th September 2019.

4 Public Question Time

To receive any public questions or petitions from the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. The deadline for this meeting is 2.00pm, Thursday, 21st November 2019.

5 Member Question Time

To receive any questions of which members of the Council have given notice. Deadline for notification for this meeting is 5.30pm, Wednesday, 20th November 2019.

6 Food Poverty (Pages 7 - 18)

To understand the dimensions of food poverty, including the cost of food and access to fresh food, and to scrutinise how the Council works with partners to tackle food poverty. [Report attached]

Contact: Chris Westwood tel 01743 254208

7 Working with Shropshire Communities

To agree a terms of refence for a review of how Shropshire Council engages with town and parish councils in Shropshire. [Report to follow]

Contact: Danial Webb tel 01743 258509

8 Future Work Programme (Pages 19 - 28)

To consider the future work programme of the Committee [Report attached]

Contact: Danial Webb tel 01743 258509

9 Date/Time of next meeting

The Committee is next scheduled to meet on Monday 27th January 2020 at 2.00pm.

This page is intentionally left blank



Communities
Overview Committee

16 September 2019

2.00 pm

Item

Public

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2019 2.00 - 3.55 PM

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes

Email: Julie.Fildes@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257723

Present

Councillor Cecilia Motley (Leader)

Councillors Nick Hignett (Vice Chairman), Ted Clarke, Vivienne Parry, Tina Woodward and Roy Aldcroft (Substitute) (substitute for Leslie Winwood)

9 Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillors Keith Roberts and Leslie Winwood.

Councillor Roy Aldcroft substituted for Councillor Winwood.

10 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were declared.

11 Minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2019

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2019 were confirmed as a correct record.

12 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

13 Member Question Time

A Member Question was received from Councillor Andy Boddington in relation to Long Term Empty Properties (copy attached to the signed Minutes). It was agreed to take this question when Empty Homes was discussed (Item 15 on the Agenda)

14 Public Rights of Way

The Chairman welcomed Richard Knight, Countryside Maintenance Manager, Shona Butter, Rights of Way Mapping and Enforcement Manager, Peter Carr, P3 Volunteer and Pete Banford, South Shropshire Lead Programme Manager, Outdoor Partnerships to the meeting. She reminded the Committee that it previously considered this item at its meeting in March 2019 when the Rights of Way Mapping and Enforcement Manager and the Interim Head of Culture and Leisure had given an overview of how the service managed and maintained the Public Rights of Way network whilst highlighting the pressures and challenges for the service.

The Committee received a presentation (copy of slides attached to the signed Minutes) which covered the following areas:

- What are we responsible for?
- The existing network
- Bridges and surfaces on PROW (Public Rights of Way)
- Contracting examples
- Staffing Pressures
- Parish Paths Partnership

Members heard that Shropshire had a very large network of public rights of way with over 5,600km, making it the third largest in the Country. However, funds were short and it was a struggle to maintain this network. It was therefore hoped to produce a paper to go to Full Council seeking assistance.

Looking at their responsibility for bridges and surfaces, the Countryside Maintenance Manager highlighted a number of examples of different types of bridges that required work including cast iron, listed bridges, railway bridges, stone arches etc, along with a number of structures that required inspection by an engineer. The Countryside Maintenance Manager then gave some examples of surface repairs including along Byways Open to All traffic and bridle paths. Responsibility for the maintenance of some of these bridges and surfaces was shared with the landowner. It was confirmed that there were approximately 50 large structures on the network that required inspection with upwards of £1¹/₂m urgent work required. A capital bid was being made in order to deal with the top 30 of these.

In response to a query, the Countryside Maintenance Manager explained the difficulties in attempting to close Byways Open to All traffic to vehicles as there was a legal right for vehicular access but obviously not to deliberately cause damage. It is in the remit of the police to enforce illegal vehicular usage on closed Byways (but there are not the resources to do so). There was a legal duty on the team to maintain all rights of way.

The Committee were informed that the Outdoor Partnerships team were always looking for commercial opportunities and had an income target of £85,000. Examples were given of how income was generated, for example grounds maintenance for schools and Parish Council's etc.

In response to a query officers explained that there were 10 members of staff in the team, 2.5 of which worked full time on contracting whilst the rest dealt with the statutory rights of way work.

The Rights of Way Mapping and Enforcement Manager informed the Committee of the current staffing pressures within the mapping and enforcement team with two of their most experienced officers due to retire, which left herself, one Planning officer and one officer on maternity leave. It was confirmed that the staffing model was being looked at to ensure that the Council's statutory duty was met whilst adding value and generating income.

Turning to the Parish Paths Partnership (P3), the Rights of Way Mapping and Enforcement Manager reported that the number of volunteer hours had increased by 24% over the last four years. She gave some examples of the work undertaken by these volunteers including replacing stiles with gates, step work, plank bridges, clearance work etc.

Peter Carr, an active P3 volunteer informed the meeting about his group which was struggling as there were only two active volunteers. They were however trying to drum up more volunteers and hoped to utilise Shropshire Young Ramblers albeit only at weekends. He explained how groups could determine their own priorities, they knew the paths and routes people used, so could work out what improvements were required. They would then talk to Richard's team to agree work around the urban fringe.

He then gave some examples of the work undertaken by the Group. Mr Carr explained the multiple benefits of the groups including helping the Council to meet its statutory requirements, physical exercise, socialisation, opening up paths to the public, satisfaction of seeing people using the paths. It also had huge health and wellbeing benefits. In response to a query, it was confirmed that more staff would be required should the P3 scheme be expanded.

The Committee thanked the officers for attending the meeting and for their presentation. The team were urged to get a paper together for Cabinet bringing in all the points so that Cabinet recognised where the pressure points were. The team was extremely stretched and cabinet needed to think proactively in terms of funding streams in order to better support and link in with health and wellbeing agenda.

15 Empty Homes

The Committee received the report of Karen Collier, Regulatory Services Operations Manager – copy attached to the signed Minutes – which provided an overview of the Empty Homes work carried out by Regulatory Services including the legal powers available and a summary of the previous Scrutiny review of the function.

In response to the Member Question raised by Councillor Boddington, the Regulatory Services Operations Manager explained that the discrepancy between the Council's and the Government's long term empty property statistics was due to the Government's figures including properties which have been classed as "exempt" and the Council's figures did not include them. Exempt properties do not pay council tax

because the property is empty for a specific reason such as probate, the owner is in hospital or residential care.

The Regulatory Services Operations Manager informed the Committee that there were approximately 1800 empty properties within Shropshire, each with their own history and reasons for becoming empty eg financial/sentimental reasons. There were two aspects to empty properties; firstly, that they attract anti-social behaviour and secondly, they become a wasted resource.

She informed the Committee that empty properties were dealt with based on risk using a wide range of legal powers and she gave examples of some of the common problems associated with empty properties and the powers available to deal with them, for example:

- Unauthorised access (discretionary power)
- Nuisance to neighbouring property (statutory duty to investigate)
- Rats/mice, rubbish/overgrown garden (statutory)
- Anti-Social Behaviour (discretionary powers)

Other Council Services also had powers including Council Tax (who can charge 100% premium); Building Control can act if it is a dangerous structure; Planning can act if the amenity of an area is affected; and finally, conservation have powers to preserve listed buildings.

She confirmed that they do try to trace owners to encourage them to take action to bring the property back into use by providing advice and information in the first instance before escalating to enforcement action, however, it was not illegal to have an empty property. In certain high risk cases, the Council has the option to carry out works in default to remedy risks in accordance with legal powers and look to recover the costs, sometimes via a charge on the property.

The Regulatory Services Operations Manager then went on to highlight the escalated enforcement action that Shropshire Council could take whereby the most problematic properties could be returned back into use, and these included enforced sales, Compulsory Purchase Orders and Empty Dwelling Management Orders (see paragraphs 7.0, 8.0 and 9.0 of the report).

Turning to future challenges, the Regulatory Services Operations Manager drew Members' attention to the recommendations set out in the report and explained how the existing empty homes capital budget could be used to fund a fixed-term full-time officer as part of their approach to use all options and powers available to them to return empty properties into use.

In response to a query, the Regulatory Services Operations Manager explained why the process appeared so slow and the difficulties encountered with owners of properties if they could indeed be found.

In response to a further query, the Regulatory Services Operations Manager informed the Committee that they did share information with Council Tax on long-term empty properties, however she was not aware whether Council Tax was always collected in full for these properties.

The Regulatory Services Operations Manager answered further queries from the Committee in relation to why a Band 11 Officer was being sought for the post, how they were notified of empty properties and how section 215 (Town and Country Planning Act 1990) notices were applied.

The Regulatory Service Operations Manager explained that a Band 11 Officer was required due to the level of the post and the knowledge, experience and qualifications needed to enable the job to be undertaken.

Members expressed their support and thanked the Regulatory Services Operations Manager for her hard work.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Regulatory Services' approach to use all powers available to address problems associated with empty properties and return them to use, in accordance with Shropshire Council's Better Regulation and Enforcement Policy be noted.
- B. That the Regulatory Services' proposal to appoint a full-time officer on a temporary two-year fixed contract funded through the existing empty homes capital budget as part of their approach to utilise all powers available to return empty properties to use be supported.
- C. That the Regulatory Services private rented sector housing work including empty homes be reflected in the Council's Housing Strategy and infrastructure required to support this to be raised through Place Plans.

16 Work Programme

The Committee received the report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer - copy attached to the signed Minutes – which set out Overview and Scrutiny's proposed future work programme for the year ahead.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer provided an update on existing work programme topics, as follows:

- Community Transport to be considered at the November meeting including feedback from the Task and Finish Group.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that a Work Programme Planning Session was being held in order to take stock and strategically ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committees covered the important and identified priorities. Following on from this, he would write the priorities up into a single report and once this had been to Scrutiny Chairs, individual work programmes would be developed for each Scrutiny Committee.

In relation to a suggested topic, the Overview and Scrutiny Officer reminded the Committee that it had considered Welfare Reform through a Task and Finish Group, they could however ask the Director of Human Resources for an update on the strategy that was recommended by the Committee.

Other topics suggested included Rural Exception Sites and Fuel Poverty. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer reported that these issues had been considered by other Scrutiny Committees. The Committee felt that Housing matters would sit more comfortably within this Committee and it was agreed for the Chairman to discuss this with the Chairman of the People Overview Committee.

17 Date/Time of next meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held at 2pm on Monday 25 November 2019.

Signed (Chairman)

Date:



FOOD POVERTY IN SHROPSHIRE

Report For Shropshire Council Communities
Overview Committee



Shropshire Food
Poverty Alliance

1. Food crisis Vs food poverty

Food crisis and food poverty can be very different. Food crisis might be short-term for many, an unexpected life event or change for those with low financial resilience may spiral into financial crisis needing short-term help from a foodbank until the situation mends. Food poverty can be long term and more damaging to those affected and can be defined as “the inability of individuals and households to obtain an adequate and nutritious diet because they cannot afford healthy food”.

The causes of food poverty are complex and in many cases down to a combination of factors, including:

- Financial: Low wages combined with a high rate of part time and insecure work makes it difficult for many households to keep pace with the increases in the cost of living.
- Difficulty accessing healthy affordable food: People on low incomes can struggle to access low cost, healthy food. Many in poverty may not have their own transport and those in rural areas where public transport is limited, will struggle to access cheaper supermarkets. Even in towns, access is an issue for those without their own transport.
- Nutritional & cooking skills: The UK government recommends that we all plan our meals using the nutritional advice in the Eatwell Guide, however those in low income households may focus on cheap and filling foods, rather than those with optimum health benefits. Many may simply not have the cooking skills and experience they need to create meals from cheap, healthy ingredients.

Food poverty can be the tip of an iceberg of problems whereby families have only the food budget left to cut and whilst Foodbanks report that food crisis can cross social boundaries and affect anyone, there are many households living in chronic food poverty who are never able to afford a healthy diet.

Food poverty affects some of the most vulnerable in our society across all age groups including children, the elderly and those living with disability. It is not confined to those out of work, working families are impacted during school holidays when there are no free school meals, and older people living alone increasingly face the challenge of buying and preparing healthy food especially where their health is deteriorating and particularly after being discharged from hospital.

Chronic food poverty has far-reaching impacts on health and remains on the national political agenda. The House of Lords Food, Poverty, Health and Environment Committee are currently hearing evidence on the link between poor diet and health. Healthy life expectancy is almost twenty years shorter in the lowest income group when compared to the highest, with diet playing a significant role. The Chair of the Committee Lord Krebs said:

*"With healthy foods three times more expensive than unhealthy foods, people on low incomes are struggling to afford to eat well and levels of obesity and weight-related diseases are rising. The UK has the highest proportion of people worried about having enough to eat of all European countries."*¹

¹ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/lords-select/food-pov-health-enviro-comm/news-parliament-2017/lords-evidence-food-insecurity-sustainability/>

It is difficult to estimate the scale of the problem in Shropshire as currently there are no official measures of the level of food poverty but our own research suggests that:

- More than 1 in 5 children in Shropshire are living in poverty²
- 27,000 Shropshire families, both in and out of work may have reduced food budgets due to Welfare reforms³
- Shropshire households have collectively lost an estimated £102 million per year from their budgets due to welfare reforms since 2015⁴
- 90% feel that food poverty levels are increasing (Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance Survey)

2. Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance: background, purpose, research and action plan

The Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance, a consortium of organisations committed to working together to tackle food poverty in Shropshire, was formed in January 2018. The alliance provides a co-ordination role for food projects across the County, has researched the scale of food poverty in Shropshire, is identifying which existing initiatives are working well and action planning how to tackle gaps in provision. It brings organisations together for closer working, resolving issues and identifying potential resources.

Our membership includes public, faith and voluntary organisations including food banks from across the county. The Alliance is currently co-ordinated by Shrewsbury Food Hub, and is steered by representatives from Citizens Advice Shropshire, Shropshire Council Welfare Support, Public Health, Age UK, the Diocese of Hereford, Shropshire Food Banks and University Centre, Shrewsbury.

The Alliance's vision is that everyone in Shropshire should:

- have access to sufficient good food
- be able to afford a healthy diet
- have the skills and knowledge to prepare healthy food.

Some of the underlying causes of food poverty are rooted in national or strategic issues which the Alliance recognises we cannot change, however we commit to finding pragmatic ways in which we might support and supplement those affected. Throughout 2018 the Alliance carried out participatory research to help develop a Food Poverty Action Plan for Shropshire, the aim of which is to try to reduce the risk of food poverty for families in Shropshire by connecting up support services and increasing the opportunities for families to access low cost healthy food to ensure a healthy and nutritious diet.

As part of this process the Alliance has:

- Mapped levels of food poverty
- Gained insight by interviewing people in food poverty

² 31% of children in North Shropshire, 26.2% of children in Shrewsbury and 29.8% of children in Ludlow are living in poverty <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2019/>

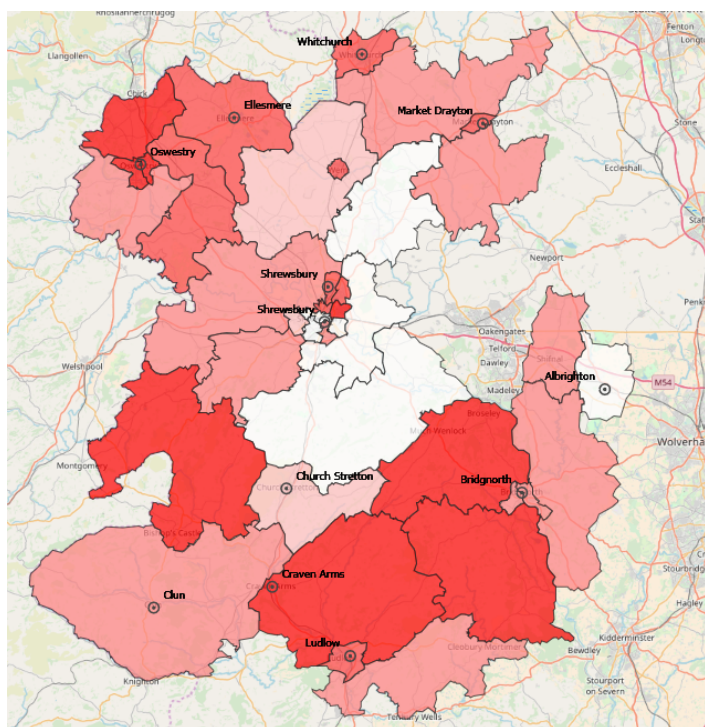
³ BEATTY, Christina and FOTHERGILL, Stephen (2016). *The uneven impact of welfare reform: the financial losses to places and people*. Project Report. Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University.

⁴ BEATTY, Christina and FOTHERGILL, Stephen (2016). *The uneven impact of welfare reform: the financial losses to places and people*. Project Report. Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University.

- Carried out surveys (Organisations, schools and individuals in food poverty) with 100+ responses to date
- Visited food banks across the county
- Run three workshops to create connected solutions (58 attendees)
- Researched best practice from other counties to identify which approaches might work best in Shropshire

Mapping Food Poverty in Shropshire

Because the UK does not routinely collect data on levels of food poverty, the Alliance worked with CREST at University Centre Shrewsbury to understand which parts of the county are more likely to be affected by higher levels of food poverty. The map below combines five key indicators, with the darker red areas highlighting areas with higher levels of food poverty.



Indicators used:

Food retail businesses per square km, benefits claimants, adult obesity, households with slow internet access, households without access to a vehicle.

The location of food banks is also marked.

“Our Menu for Action”

The resulting 12-point Action Plan can be viewed in more detail at www.shropshirefoodpoverty.org.uk. The plan aims to:

- increase support for people in crisis,
- prevent food poverty by supporting people in maximising their income and supporting projects to improve access to low cost food, growing and skills in health and nutrition
- Increase awareness of the issue and embed it in the policy of statutory bodies and community organisations, so that we can develop an effective strategic response across the county.

This menu sets out how we can build on the resources we already have in the community to support people in food crisis, prevent people falling into food poverty and strengthen partnership working. It stresses the importance of

building from the grassroots up to meet local needs in each locality but our challenge is how we can hope to deliver on this with very limited funding. Some of the actions can be achieved by connecting existing resources, but many will need additional resources to create positive impact.

3. What is currently happening to address food poverty in Shropshire?

Foodbanks

Shropshire's food banks provide invaluable support to an increasing number of people in food crisis.⁵ Initiated by local church groups, food banks run on limited resources and rely upon the goodwill of the community for food donations and upon volunteers to run each session. They have built strong links to referring agencies across the county to ensure that food is available to people if they experience a crisis and Shropshire foodbanks are also innovating by extending the range of food they offer and the number of people reached.

More recently though, some larger Shropshire foodbanks diversified their support into a "foodbank plus" model to address the person's underlying issues, their hierarchy of needs starting with the person themselves, their money issues including access to debt and budgeting advice and leading to more practical skills to make best use of their available money by teaching food budgeting and cooking skills. There may be help to get online and support to upskill in order to seek and apply for work through resident job clubs. In part, these early developments have been supported by small pump priming grants from Shropshire Council's Welfare Support Team.

- Bridgnorth Food bank have developed their weekly food bank sessions by inviting representatives from the local housing association and mental health teams who are able to offer immediate support to clients when it is needed.
- Shrewsbury Food bank have developed a foodbank plus model, enabling them to work with clients more intensively over the longer term on the causes of their situation. Through their 360 programme they are able to offer money advice, cooking courses and assistance in getting back into the workplace.
- Oswestry Food bank runs a job club, helping people to get online and apply for jobs.
- Whitchurch food bank run a 6 week "Eat well, spend less" course for Housing Association tenants (funded through Meres and Mosses), teaching them to cook healthy nutritious food that they can take home to their families.
- Ludlow food bank has begun a voucher scheme for food bank clients so they can access fresh fruit and vegetables at local greengrocers. They have also experimented with a meat voucher in collaboration with a local butcher. In addition, they have developed a cookery leaflet which helps clients to make the most of their food parcel.
- Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth food banks have started to offer surplus fruit, vegetables and bakery items from supermarkets to food bank clients. As most of this food is past its best before date, it is offered separately in addition to the food parcel.

⁵ In spring 2019 the Trussell food banks in north Shropshire (Oswestry, Whitchurch and Market Drayton) reported a 27% increase over the previous year and Shrewsbury Food Bank reported a 23% increase.

- Whitchurch foodbank have been working with local schools to address holiday hunger. Working with local schools they have also supported 55 families on low incomes throughout the holidays with food parcels to help feed children who normally would receive free school meals.

Other community responses

The community sector across Shropshire have also developed a wide range of projects which help address food poverty. Many of these projects bring free or affordable food to the whole community, with the aim of overcoming the stigma felt by some accessing foodbanks.

- Ludlow Hands Together are co-ordinating the Ludlow Food Network which brings together all organisations in the town with a connection to community food. There are regular community meals in the town, and Hands Together Ludlow are planning the collection and distribution of surplus food to the community. They also run social inclusion and technology groups.
- Market Drayton Town Council have funded cookery courses at the Zone to help those out of work and in food crisis to build their cooking confidence.
- In Oswestry Osnosh run a free community meal on Thursday Lunchtime cooked from unsold supermarket food. They also collect supermarket surplus which is available to the community on Fridays at low cost.
- Shrewsbury Food Hub collects unsold food from 18 supermarkets and delivers it free of charge to 56 community groups in the town, including schools, the foodbank, and the ark. They also support open food share tables in four churches in the town, where anyone is welcome to come and take surplus food away for free or a small donation. In addition, some of the schools use the surplus food to directly support families at the school in high need.
- In Shrewsbury Riversway Elim Church run a community fridge and freezer 3 days a week. Surplus food is available for free or a small donation to the community.
- In Wem the Youth Club and local businesses have come together to run a cookery course (funded through Meres and Mosses Housing Association) and a free breakfast club throughout the summer holidays. There is also an Incredible Edible community garden where produce is freely available for the community.

Grassroot pilots

The Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance would like to encourage more community initiatives which increase access to affordable healthy food. As part of this objective we are working with Shrewsbury Food Hub which has been successful in gaining funding to work with four communities in Shrewsbury and Wem to test grassroots approaches to improving access to good food. Community meetings have been held in Meole Brace, Harlescott and Wem to discuss what is already available in each area and what types of projects the community would like to see developed.

- The community in Meole Brace have decided to develop a monthly community meal at the Meet Place cooked by local residents. They also have started a holiday lunchtime club for children addressing holiday hunger.
- In Harlescott the community are planning a cookery project based at Shrewsbury Academy which aims to work with families to build cookery skills and a community meal at the Grange centre.

- The community in Wem are considering ways to extend their food hub to bring more free food into the community.

Shropshire Larder Website

Shropshire Larder [Home](#) [Emergency food](#) [Low cost food](#) [Eating well](#) [Money advice](#) [Local to you](#) [About Us](#)



In April 2019 the Alliance launched the Shropshire Larder website (www.shropshirelarder.org.uk) which brings together locally relevant information for people in Shropshire who are living on a low budget. The site collates information on how to access food banks, the location of community food projects, how to eat well on a budget and where to access support from local agencies in Shropshire.

4. There is more that could be done

These incentives are laudable and show what can be done by tapping into existing community resources but they are small scale and isolated and will not address long-term food poverty in Shropshire. Across the UK there are a wide range of initiatives which have been developed to support people on low incomes and in food crisis to access healthy affordable food. Many of these approaches could be adopted in Shropshire.

- Improving the Food Bank Plus model. Placing specialist advisors within food banks or fast-tracking referrals is proven to reduce food poverty and address the underlying issues quicker.⁶ Some food banks in Shropshire have adopted this model, but smaller foodbanks lack the necessary resources (financial, time and space). In addition, many of the organisations providing advice in Shropshire have limited resources. Creating closer links between agencies and improving signposting has the potential to address the underlying issues behind food poverty quicker.

⁶ See <https://feedingbritain.org/what-we-do/flagship-projects/food-bank-plus/>

- Building skills and knowledge. Skills building is a key aspect of many projects across the UK. Improving budgeting skills, combined with developing nutritional and cookery skills for children, families and older single people can help low income households to better manage their budgets and improve health and wellbeing.
- Community led projects which increase access to healthy affordable food. Affordable food boxes, Food co-ops, food clubs and community meals bring low cost food into areas of high need and can help to increase access to affordable food in rural areas. Projects can also bring benefits to specific groups, eg. Help with shopping for older people, food parcels for people being discharged from hospital or community meals to overcome social isolation. This gives people alternatives to foodbanks themselves perhaps reducing the stigma felt by many.
- Breakfast Clubs and Holiday Hunger. Research has demonstrated that breakfast clubs for children reduce hunger and improve concentration and behaviour.⁷ However, many schools in Shropshire are ineligible for funding from national schemes such as the National School Breakfast Programme and school budget constraints prevent schools from providing a free breakfast to children from low income families. Across the country there is a growing concern about holiday hunger for children who receive free school meals in term time, with many counties setting up schemes.

5. Challenges and opportunities

Food poverty is a symptom of greater poverty that can seriously affect health and wellbeing, children's education and family stability. The principle of helping those who are in food poverty to better manage budgets, improve nutritional skills and showing them how to create and cook good meals for themselves and their families must inevitably benefit Shropshire's poorest and more vulnerable residents and ultimately therefore Shropshire Council.

Challenges for the community sector

In the current financial climate, extending incentives to tackle food poverty across Shropshire may need to tap into what is already available and in regular use, incorporating food poverty and its alleviation into design and thinking. There are many organisations and individuals in the community who are keen to deliver projects, but the challenges faced by the community sector include co-ordination, funding, joint working and space for community projects.

1) Co-ordination

The response to food poverty in Shropshire remains piecemeal and until the Alliance conducted research in 2018 there was no strategic response or effort to bring organisations together to share knowledge and collaborate. The Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance is working with organizations across the county, collating and sharing information, identifying funding opportunities and raising food poverty awareness however there is only funding for this co-ordination role until April 2020. The council has match funded external grants using money from Public Health and from the Welfare Support Team but these sources are now exhausted and the coordinator role is at risk.

⁷https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603946/Evaluation_of_Breakfast_Clubs_-_Final_Report.pdf

2) Funding

Identifying funding for community led initiatives including Food banks and community food projects in the current financial climate is challenging. Organisations in the community sector often rely on short-term piecemeal funding, and although the will to deliver more services for their communities is there, funding is a real barrier. Foodbanks in Shropshire rely on the community for food and monetary donations, and in some parts of the county donations do not always match the local need. One possible solution is to prepare joint funding bids for a partnership of organisations delivering food poverty initiatives across the county, however there is limited capacity in the community sector to co-ordinate and prepare large scale funding bids.

Challenges for Shropshire Council

In many other parts of the country, councils are taking a lead role in developing strategies to address food poverty. There are 57 Food Partnerships across the UK, many of which are led by local authorities, which aim to tackle food poverty, build community food knowledge and skills, develop a sustainable food economy and reduce waste and the ecological footprint of the food system.⁸ There are a further 68 Food Poverty Alliances which focus purely on the issue of food poverty.⁹ There are also twelve Feeding Britain pilot areas where different approaches to food poverty are being piloted.¹⁰ These approaches have demonstrated the benefits of investing in a coordinated response to food poverty.

It is recognized that Shropshire receives less funding than many other counties, and therefore the council may not be able to have the same level of involvement as some council areas. In lieu of direct financial support however, there are opportunities to use what the Council already has in place within our infrastructure and organisation to help with poverty and to work more collaboratively with those organisations combatting food poverty

1) Joining up our own support

The Customer Service Centre (CSC) handles the majority (over 250,000) of contacts from Shropshire citizens each year and many present in some form of need. Uniquely our CSC includes the First Point of Contact (FPoC) team for adult and child services and concerns and alongside this we are building a new multi-team support model whereby the direct help the Council has available to give can be used in real time to support people. Key to this is the Welfare Support Team with its access to crisis funding, working alongside the Safeguarding, Adult Services and Mental Health Social Workers and Occupational Therapists all collectively supporting the FPoC team. All homelessness calls are handled by the Welfare Team who use crisis funding to de-escalate risk, provide budgeting advice to aid customer resilience and in appropriate cases illustrate through better off calculations how work could improve finances. This approach is

⁸ See <http://sustainablefoodcities.org/index.html> for more information.

⁹ See <https://www.sustainweb.org/foodpower/map/> for more information

¹⁰ See <https://feedingbritain.org/> for further information

helping to identify and tackle poverty in general whilst attempting to increase personal resilience but it is incomplete as not all of our available help is in this “single front door”.

There is a case for integrating at the point of maximum customer contact, our own natural in-house provisions that we as a council have at our disposal, from crisis funding to free school meals and transport, school uniform grants to help with heating and fuel poverty. In this way, those who approach us in need receive maximum help in real time to support them in a crisis whilst provision of budgeting guidelines and better off in work calculations give people something to aim for.

2) Estates and infrastructure

The community sector sometimes struggles to find affordable space from which to run projects. For example, the ability of some foodbanks to diversify their help is currently restricted by their location, a case in point being Bridgnorth where the foodbank stated a willingness to expand their range of help with appropriate premises. Similarly, Oswestry foodbank were not able to work with Council services from The Centre in Oak Street because rental costs were prohibitive to them. Other community initiatives such as community meals and cookery projects also struggle to find suitable accommodation. For example, a new community meal initiative in Shrewsbury lead by Osnosh and supported by Shrewsbury Food Hub is struggling to find free regular premises.

There is possibly more the Council could do to accommodate foodbanks and other community food initiatives alongside our own community provision so that they become part of the wider support network for vulnerable people, not just a place to go in crisis but part of the journey to resilience. This would require the council to offset any rental requirement against the longer term value of increasing budgeting, shopping and cooking skills and thereby resilience in return for rent-free accommodation. This could particularly be the case where unused kitchen facilities in our premises might be used to run community kitchens and skills courses.

3) Transport infrastructure

There may be scope to utilise the Council’s daily transport infrastructure as a means of transporting food between foodbanks to meet demand or to other community led food poverty projects that connect people in rural areas with cheaper sources of healthy food.

Whilst the logistics of this are likely to be complex, involving our own regular daily transport and delivery infrastructure, deliveries and travel within our estates services and individual staff journeys, there may be potential to tap into this at minimal if any cost to the Council in order to help foodbanks transfer stocks to meet varying demand as well as transporting produce that would help fuel other community food incentives similar to those illustrated earlier in this report.

4) Assistance with funding bids

Shropshire Council has long experience of assisting VCS organisations to make collaborative bids for funding. The staff that fulfilled this role are still within the workforce but are now engaged in other roles. With the agreement of appropriate line managers we could still utilise this expertise and their contacts to assist the Food Poverty Alliance with funding bids.

Conclusions

To conclude, Members are respectfully asked to recognise both the good work to tackle food poverty that is in progress across the County and the challenges that this faces in respect of funding ongoing incentives and particularly the risk to the co-ordinator role that is so central to helping set these up.

The Council, both a major provider and procurer of support and services for our more vulnerable residents can do much to help identify need, alleviate crisis and obtain specialist help for people in need but access to our own provisions is uncoordinated and may require separate contacts in order to access help. This may be beyond the ability of our most vulnerable residents and could increase the time taken to get the help needed. Additionally therefore, members are respectfully asked to consider the role that Shropshire Council can play in supporting these incentives and how joining up of our own services might assist this.

The Council, as a major county-wide organisation represented in many communities, has both premises and transport infrastructures that we could potentially use to extend food poverty incentives. Whilst much good work is being done in our communities through groups and individuals who are willing to take up the challenge when given support and direction, members are respectfully asked to consider whether the council could utilise its own assets and transport infrastructure in a supporting role.

Chris Westwood

Customer Services and Welfare Support Manager

On behalf of Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance

4 November 2019

This page is intentionally left blank



<u>Committee</u>	<u>Item</u>
Communities Overview Committee	
November 2019	<u>Public</u>

Place Overview Committee Work Programme 2019 – 2020

Responsible officer

Tom Dodds, Statutory Scrutiny Officer

tom.dodds@shropshire.gov.uk

[01743 258518](tel:01743258518)

1.0 Summary

1.1 This paper presents the Communities Overview Committee's proposed work programme for the year ahead. The committee has based its programme on topics from Shropshire Council's Strategic Action Plan. During the course of its work programme, the committee will also

- scrutinise thematic priorities
- respond to emerging issues and
- follow up on previous work.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Committee members to:

- confirm the proposed committee work programme attached as **appendix 1**.
- suggest changes to the committee work programme and
- recommend other topics to consider

3.0 Background

3.1 The Communities Overview Committee bases its work programme on topics from Shropshire Council's Strategic Action Plan. It also

- scrutinises thematic priorities
- responds to emerging issues
- follows up on previous work
- carries out cross-committee work through task and finish groups.

3.2 On 4 September 2019, elected members met to discuss the council's corporate plan, and identify themes from the plan for each committee to scrutinise. In doing

this, overview and scrutiny ensures that the basis of its work aligns with council objectives. The groups identified a number of themes for each committee, which were then shaped by the scrutiny chairs and leaders of political groups into a set of work priorities for each committee.

3.2 At this meeting, participants also noted the high number of task of finish groups currently underway, and suggested that committees, where possible, bring the work of task and finish groups back into the committee’s programme of work.

Accordingly, a proposed task and finish group to look at how Shropshire Council works with town and parish councils in Shropshire, has been reincorporated into the draft work programme.

3.3 A refreshed overview and scrutiny work programme for this committee is attached as **appendix 1**.

3.4 A list of ongoing task and finish groups is attached as **appendix 2**.

4.0 Next steps

4.1 Overview and scrutiny updates this report on an ongoing basis and presents it to each overview and scrutiny committee. This will allow members the opportunity to contribute to its development at each committee meeting.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

None

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

All

Local Member

All

Appendices

Overview and scrutiny work programme

Overview and scrutiny task and finish groups

Appendix 1
Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2019 to 2020

Communities Overview Committee

Topic	Intended outcomes or objectives	What output is required?	Who needs to be heard from?	Expected impact or added value	Work date
Food poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive a briefing on the nature of food poverty in Shropshire. To understand the dimensions of food poverty, including the cost of food and access to fresh food. To scrutinise how the council works with its partners to tackle food poverty. 	Committee overview report	Director of Place	Shropshire Council is better placed to work with partners to tackle food poverty.	25 Nov 2019
Working with town and parish councils (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To agree a terms of reference for a review of how Shropshire Council engages with town and parish councils in Shropshire. 	Review terms of reference	Director of Place	Shropshire Council engages effectively with town and parish councils.	25 Nov 2019
Third sector support for vulnerable adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand how the local authority works with the third sector to support vulnerable adults To make recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the support that we provide. 	Committee overview report	Director of Adult social care	Shropshire Council makes effective use of its funding of third-sector agencies who support vulnerable adults	27 Jan 2020
Working with town and parish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify where Shropshire Council reaches into households e.g. 	Committee overview report	Director of Place	Shropshire Council engages effectively with	27 Jan 2020

Communities Overview Committee

Topic	Intended outcomes or objectives	What output is required?	Who needs to be heard from?	Expected impact or added value	Work date
councils (2)	<p>Council Tax emails or paper bills, and what opportunities exist to share messages or signpost to messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To seek feedback from communities, Voluntary Community and Social Enterprises and Town and Parish Councils on their views of effective engagement that reaches all areas of communities 			town and parish councils.	
Homepoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand how Homepoint meets the needs of people in Shropshire seeking housing Explore how Homepoint could meet the needs of young adults seeking housing. 	overview report presentation	Director, Adult Services	Homepoint provides an effective service in providing housing for those in greatest need.	27 Jan 2020
Working with town and parish councils (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To research and evaluate different models of engaging communities To learn from other similar councils and from neighbouring councils in Wales about their approaches to engaging communities and their learning 	overview report presentation	Director of Place	Shropshire Council engages effectively with town and parish councils.	16 Mar 2020

Communities Overview Committee

Topic	Intended outcomes or objectives	What output is required?	Who needs to be heard from?	Expected impact or added value	Work date
Rural Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To scrutinise Shropshire Council's draft rural strategy 	overview report presentation	Director of Place	Shropshire Council provides effective services to rural communities.	16 Mar 2020
Public transport funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To receive an update on funding for public transport 	overview report presentation	Director of Place	Shropshire Council supports a well-integrated public transport network	16 Mar 2020
Working with town and parish councils (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify a preferred model for Shropshire Council To recommend a framework for engaging communities based on evidence of what works and is best for Shropshire. 	Committee overview report	Director of Place	Shropshire Council engages effectively with town and parish councils.	April 2020 (additional Meeting)

Appendix 2

Current and proposed task and finish groups

Title	Objectives	Reporting to
Financial Strategy and Innovation and Income Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To understand the process and activity stages for developing the Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2022/23 and how these translate into the Council's annual budgets• To consider and scrutinise the proposals and emerging plans for the whole Financial Strategy and 2019/20 budget, including how they align to the four pillars. This will be through their development and their implementation, in particular for innovation and raising income.• To consider the alignment of the Financial Strategy and the new Corporate Plan being developed autumn 2018.• To consider the recommendations and areas for action identified in the Corporate Peer Challenge report relating to the Financial Strategy, and how they are being addressed.• To consider the direct and indirect impacts, including risks, of 2019/20 Budget proposals on current services and customers.• To complete specific pieces of work to identify and work up alternatives to emerging plans, including the feasibility of any alternative proposals• Make evidence based recommendations in relation to plans and approaches for innovation and income generation, and alternative proposals for future budget setting.	Performance Management Scrutiny Committee
Road casualty reduction		

Title	Objectives	Reporting to
Community Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand how community transport operates in Shropshire, and the demand for community transport services. • Identify how the community transport groups, the council, and other partners can work together to provide community transport to people in Shropshire who do not have access to public or private transport. 	Communities Overview Committee
Engaging Diverse Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review and propose the scope of Place Plans including their geography and subject areas • To propose options to ensure Place Plans are developed from the bottom-up • To understand how rural enterprise features in our procurement / commissioning processes. • To proposed opportunities to engage with Strategic Levels within the Council and partners in Place Planning • To engage with Town and Parish Councils on options to reset their relationship with Shropshire Council • To identify appropriate and effective mechanisms to communicate with and engage with diverse communities that can be used to inform co-design and collaboration on a range of matters • Make evidence based recommendations 	Communities Overview Committee

Title	Objectives	Reporting to
Brexit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider the information brought together to develop a view for Shropshire of the possible implications of Brexit for the Shropshire economy and the achievement of the Economic Growth Strategy. • To identify, with the relevant officers, the key evidence and related requirements of what Shropshire would require from a future UK funding approach. • To make evidence based recommendations to Cabinet. 	Performance Management Scrutiny Committee
Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand how Shropshire Council currently uses Section 106, CIL and NHB and the impact that this has had • To understand how Section 106, CIL and NHB could be used in Shropshire to enable or encourage projects or initiatives for economic growth and prosperity • To learn from other places how they have used Section 106, CIL and NHB to enable or encourage projects or initiatives for economic growth and prosperity • To make evidence based recommendations on how Section 106, CIL and NHB could be used in Shropshire to enable or encourage projects or initiatives for economic growth and prosperity 	Performance Management Scrutiny
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review Shropshire Council's existing work to reduce its CO²e output. • To scrutinise existing council policy and practice and recommend policy changes that would support further carbon reduction. • To identify and evaluate opportunities to reduce spending and generate income by adopting low-carbon technology and practices. 	Place Overview Committee

Title	Objectives	Reporting to
Youth work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand different models of providing Youth Services in a place like Shropshire. • To review information and evidence of need and demand for youth work in Shropshire. • To engage with Town and Parish Councils and explore their thoughts on their role in youth work. • To identify opportunities to lever in additional resources to deliver youth work • To identify how the impact of youth work should be measured and reported • To make evidence based recommendations on the options for youth work in Shropshire. 	Communities Overview Committee
Dog fouling and dangerous dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To scrutinise how the local authority tackles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ dog fouling ○ dog attacks ○ stray dogs • licenced dog breeding 	Performance Management Scrutiny Committee
Signs, banners and street furniture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand existing policies, charges and administrative arrangements • Scrutinise existing policy and suggest draft policy. • Identify opportunities to set and administer policy and licencing arrangements with town and parish councils. • Look at how other local authorities set and administer policy, to identify potential ways to improve arrangements in Shropshire. 	Place Overview Committee

This page is intentionally left blank