

**PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

**AGENDA ITEM 5**

**QUESTION 1**

**MRS JOYCE BRAND**, Ludlow resident, will ask the following question:

What was the total cost, including the internal furnishings, of the building at the Welsh Bridge constructed to house the Council offices and which has since been handed over to the University of Chester to use as an off-site campus? Was the money for that project raised by loan and if so what are the annual repayments at what interest rate and was this a PFI scheme?

**MR M PATE**, Leader has replied as follows:

The council have rented the Guildhall to the University of Chester as an empty building. The fit out and furnishing of the building has been carried out by the University of Chester at their cost.

**QUESTION 2**

**MS MARILYN GAUNT**, Ludlow resident will ask the following question:

Will the new Leader of the Council commit himself to apologizing to the people of Shropshire at Full Council Meeting for the damage done to the reputation of our County by the behaviour of the Ex-Leader of the Council in his role as sole shareholder of Shropshire's Private Company IP&E Ltd?

**MR M PATE**, Leader, has replied as follows:

Thank you for your question. It is always a difficult judgement to make, as to whether to apologise for the conduct or behaviour of another individual, whatever the facts and circumstances. I do, however, acknowledge that the Council's reputation can be harmed by the behaviour of any Shropshire Councillor who regrettably is found to be in breach of our Members' Code of Conduct.

### **QUESTION 3**

**MR NEIL RICHARDSON**, on behalf of the Churches' Ludlow Under Pressure Group

The Youth Service in the County has been severely reduced and may struggle to survive at all (in Ludlow). Churches Together Around Ludlow (CTAL) are considering a proposal for a churches' youth worker, and its financial implications.

What resources would Shropshire Council be able in principle to commit over a three year period, to support a local community-wide initiative that would be managed by a church-backed group?

**MR D MINNERY**, Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People has replied as follows:

I have recently visited Ludlow at the invitation of the local councillors to listen to the plans for assisting the local young people that are being developed following the youth locality commissioning activity. I understand that a workshop is going to be held at the end of the month to look at the issues affecting young people in the town and that a wide range of local organisations including Churches Together Around Ludlow will be invited to this. The workshop is part of a wider ambition of local members to work with local organisations from all sectors to improve the opportunities available to young people in the town, and is being organised with the support of the local Community Enablement Officer and Locality.

It's important that communities continue to be able to influence how resources are used to meet local need and the commissioning of youth activities through the LJs is a good example of how local organisations are able to shape the decisions that are made locally and play a part in meeting the needs that have been identified.

I have agreed to also look at these issues and to see if we can assist with bringing together the Voluntary Sector locally. To this end I have already advised the relevant Portfolio Holder and Deputy and we will be working with Officers to see how progress can be made both here and across Shropshire.

I am very aware of the difficulties that our young people often face in gaining employment and broadening their life experience and I will be working with others to develop relevant policies to achieve our aims. It is still very early days in the life of this new Administration and there are many challenges ahead, but I do believe that the earlier we address the issues that affect young people the more we reduce the probability that we will need to deal with their problems in later life.

It is far too early to give any assurances that Shropshire Council could commit resources to this, or any similar project, given the severe financial pressures that we face but I will undertake to monitor progress closely.

#### **QUESTION 4**

**MR DAVID KILBY**, Secretary to the Shropshire Playing Fields Association, will ask the following question:

It is my understanding that Shropshire Council do not have a robust up-to-date Open Space Needs Assessment for Sport and Recreation provision in place as required by National planning Policy Paragraph 73 and 74.

This needs assessment if in place would provide vital evidence to inform local communities including Town Councils, Parish Councils and indeed Shropshire Council with regard to their planning policy documents, which would include impacting on Town Plans, Parish Plans, Place Plans, Neighbourhood plans, SAMDev, and the Shropshire Core Strategy.

Additionally an Open Space Needs Assessment is vital in providing evidence towards attracting vital funding for communities when decision makers are considering how to spend Community Infrastructure Funds.

Could this Council tell the people of Shropshire the impact not having a robust Open Space Needs Assessment in place has cost communities in terms of not attracting its fair share of community infrastructure monies and what impact it has had on not providing communities with vital sport, play and recreational facilities either in the right format or the right location and therefore the negative impact and cost this will have on the health and well-being of our local communities as we move forward?

Could this Council also explain why it does not have the appropriate needs assessment in place and what it intends doing to remedy this deficiency?

**MR M PRICE**, Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing, Regulatory Services and Environment has replied as follows:

Shropshire Council does not believe that there has been any significant detrimental impact in not having a robust Open Space Needs Assessment in place. The existing needs assessment (2008) identified shortfalls in provision which led to the establishment of a Public Open Space contribution target of 30m<sup>2</sup> per bedspace for newly built residential development in Policy MD2 of its recently adopted SAMDev Plan. This target is quite demanding and has allowed Shropshire Council to negotiate substantial developer contributions towards play provision from new development schemes, including financial contributions towards play equipment in Market Drayton and Wem and both land and substantial financial contributions towards play provision in Shrewsbury.

Similarly Shropshire Council does not believe that there has been any significant detrimental impact for communities in terms of not attracting their fair share of community infrastructure monies. The impact of the recession has meant that only a small proportion of the anticipated CIL revenue has so

far been received and very little has been spent to date, although in Clive, a CIL funded project has formalised local open space provision through the acquisition of Renshaw's Field. The allocation of CIL funds to play provision is a function of the annual Place Plan process, described here: <http://shropshire.gov.uk/place-plans/annual-review-cycle/> and is a product of discussion between the relevant Parish Council, Shropshire Council staff and local Shropshire Councillors about the best use for the limited funding available in the context of identified priorities.

In terms of its impact in not providing communities with vital sport, play and recreational facilities either in the right format or the right location, again Shropshire Council believes this has been minimal. The public open space design requirement described above continues to deliver significant additional open space as part of the design of both SAMDev site allocations, e.g. St Martins (4Ha), Whitchurch (5Ha) and Shawbury (5Ha), and larger windfall planning applications. The optimum use of these spaces will be determined in conjunction with the local parish or town council with reference to the content of the relevant Place Plan.

At present Shropshire Council does not have the appropriate needs assessment in place due to the limited capacity of the Policy team as it has until recently, been fully committed to completing the recently adopted SAMDev Plan and demonstrating the availability of a 5 year supply of housing land and there has therefore been no capacity available to update this information.

That said, as Mr Kilby has previously been advised in response to questions raised at the Environment Services Scrutiny meeting on 30 November 2015, in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, Shropshire Council has already started to assemble updated information about the need for public open space across Shropshire as a contribution to the evidence base for the forthcoming review of its Local Plan which will start during 2016. Updated information concerning local need for sports playing pitches for Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Whitchurch has already provided as part of an update to the Council's Playing Pitch Action Plan Phase 1 and this information was used to update the relevant 'Place Plans' for these areas in May 2015. Phase 2 of this work is expected to start shortly and will be supplemented by a further study later this year which will review the need for other types of open space provision across Shropshire.

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