

COUNCIL 27th FEBRUARY 2020

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Question from Steven Mulloy

Agenda item 22 - **Project Combination of the Oxon Link Road & North West Relief Road** has been made an exempt item under paragraph 10.4[3] of the Council's Access to Information Rules (copy attached) but paragraph 10.5 says:

*"Information is **not** exempt if it relates to a proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission pursuant to regulation 3 of the Town & Country Planning General Regulations 1992."*

Agenda item 22 is related to a proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission and has already had a planning application submitted and withdrawn for the Oxon Link Road (18/03166/EIA), and another planning application for a scoping opinion (19/05023/SC) of the whole scheme.

So why is this Council's executive breaking its own Rules and excluding the press and public from agenda item 22?

Response from Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport:

The rationale for the exempt status of the report is that the Council did not wish to make it public before the public consultation started. However, considering the timeframes, internal advice and the consultation being announced on Monday 2nd March, the decision has been taken to amend the status of the report to public for the purposes of the full Council meeting on 27th February.

Question from Mr Mark Fermor, Chair, Shropshire Cycle Hub

Since most of us were children we have more than doubled the atmospheric carbon loading, and we have destroyed more than half of life on the planet. We are in last chance saloon and we need to act now.

We can achieve the changes needed. We have the technologies. One of them is the bicycle.

Does the Council agree that achieving Zero Carbon Britain means a shift in priority towards active travel by foot and cycle?

Is the Council committed to investing in cycling to achieve aspirations set by UK government to make cycling and walking a natural choice for shorter journeys.

At Shropshire Cycle Hub we would like to work with the Council and others to achieve a fivefold increase in cycling by 2025 appropriate for Zero Carbon Shropshire. Does the Council support this aspiration?

Does the Council agree that to achieve the change it must invest in infrastructure at least to the level advocated by Sustrans and others at £34 per resident per annum and start this year (£12M/a).

What is the Council's existing budget for new cycling infrastructure this year?

Will the Council ensure that no new highways schemes are approved that require use of the Council's scarce resources until a new budget for cycling infrastructure has been established appropriate for the climate and health emergencies we face?

Response from Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport:

The Shrewsbury Big Town Plan explicitly places walking and cycling at the heart of its principles, principally through its priorities for *'Making Movement Better'*, namely promoting:

- *Pedestrian priority in the town centre;*
- *A better pedestrian and cycle network across the town; and*
- *Measures to reduce through traffic in the town centre.*

Cycling and pedestrian priority is also actively promoted in the development of the *'The Big Network'*, aimed at improving personal mobility through cycle routes and enhanced public transport links, and *'The Shrewsbury Green Network'* supporting health and well-being through walking, cycling and greater access and enjoyment of

outdoor space and the countryside. The Big Town Plan supports the need to improve air quality and reduce carbon through reducing the need for many vehicles to enter the town centre.

As we now move towards delivery of significant public realm and infrastructure developments, the need to provide innovative and effective walking and cycling routes and facilities is clearly being adopted in master planning proposals for sites throughout the town.

These proposals have been informed by a diverse range of consultations and workshops, attended by residents, businesses and stakeholders such as Network Rail, Transport for Wales and the Environment Agency; unanimously supporting the need for improved cycling and walking facilities. Consequently, the emerging movement strategy for the town recognises the role of well-connected walking and cycling routes supported by a truly integrated public transport infrastructure, including both bus and rail providers.

Question from Mr Frank Oldaker

Both the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water consider the North West Relief Road to be a very serious threat to Shrewsbury's drinking water supply. The Environment Agency say that their preferred solution is to re-route the road away from the borehole source protection zones. So if the Council cannot completely satisfy The Environment Agency that other protective measures will provide security to this borehole source will they change the route of the road to reassure the people of Shrewsbury that the safety of their water supply has the highest priority.

Response from Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport:

Since the funding announcement, Shropshire Council has been working closely with the Environment Agency and Severn Trent to address their early concerns regarding the road.

A great deal of work has been done so far and continues to be done and there are ongoing regular meetings which are both collaborative and constructive, with the council taking on board all the comments and queries raised by both organisations.

The council will continue to work with all stakeholders and is undertaking further public consultation in March before submitting the planning application. Any planning application would not be successful if there were outstanding environmental concerns of this nature and there will be continued dialogue with both the EA and Severn Trent in order to mitigate these to their satisfaction through the design process.

Regular updates will be provided on the Council's website

Question from Mr Rob Wilson

The Conservative Party manifesto at the 2019 General Election committed to “Low Traffic Neighbourhoods”. Working with Local Councils to reduce ratrunning cars and lorries, making side streets nicer to live in and safer to walk, cycle and play in. What plans does Shropshire Council have to introduce Low Traffic Neighbourhoods across Shrewsbury? In particular when will Shropshire Council tackle ratrunning along New Street in Frankwell?

Response from Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport:

Version 4 of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) is currently being developed for Shropshire Council. Local Travel strategies are a legal requirement and the drivers of technological and societal changes are all now requiring a revised approach by the Council requiring a strategic plan that supports future aspirations derived from wide consultation and also delivers practical proposals that contribute positively to our communities. LTP 4 will cover the period 2020/21 to 2035/36. It will cover all aspects of transport and highways, including walking, cycling, public transport, car-based travel, freight, and the management and maintenance of highways. LTP4 will consider broad approaches to key themes environmental issues, in less than 20 years there will be no more sale of petrol, hybrid or diesel cars, what is the approach and infrastructure response? As the time period in infrastructure terms is minimal.

Transport planning, its impact on communities in terms of social , environmental and economics are key , at a local, regional and national level, and the Council will have a strategic plan to evidence its approach, and crucially have the evidence base and wider support to compete for funding and wider initiatives and opportunities.

A feasibility report addressing pedestrian and cyclist safety on New Street, Shrewsbury was undertaken in February 2017. Following recent further assessment a trial scheme for a one way system with a contra flow cycle lane is now under development. It is envisaged the trial will run for a 4 week period during the spring/early summer. Further detail will follow and be communicated.

The draft of LTP4 will be presented to Scrutiny in the near future and then consulted on widely before inviting Cabinet to approve.

A feasibility report addressing pedestrian and cyclist safety on New Street, Shrewsbury was undertaken in February 2017. Following recent further assessment a trial scheme for a one way system with a contra flow cycle lane is now under development. It is envisaged the trial will run for a 4 week period during the spring/early summer, the evidence of this will be circulated before any formal decisions are taken.

We are currently developing a Next Generation Shrewsbury Park & Ride service with the ambition of it becoming the first choice of travel for people coming into

Shrewsbury, reducing the amount of single vehicle movements within the Town, doubling the amount of passengers and positively impacting on air quality, whilst reducing the carbon footprint within the town.

To compliment this strategy we are undergoing a number of trials of the service which has seen a doubling of the frequency of the service at Meole Brace and the introduction of various Electric buses. We are currently exploring a number of potential avenues to access government funding to realise our ambitions, not only with Shrewsbury Park & Ride but across our Shropshire Public Transport Network