

CABINET 18 JANUARY 2021

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Rob Wilson

Later at this meeting you will discuss the Big Town Plan Masterplan Vision, it states that "implementing a series of measures focussing on different modes of transport, to reduce private car traffic through the town centre" will "create the opportunity to change the use of space in the town centre". That being the case, it seems counter-intuitive that the current range of traffic measures in the town have been suspended for the latest lockdown. Please can you explain why this has happened. Can you commit to them being reinstated when restrictions are lifted?

RESPONSE

In response to the question, relating to Social distancing measures. The measures have been removed for the lockdown period in Shrewsbury and Ludlow (other static measures such as wider footpaths etc in other towns have remained), these are key interventions which close roads and redirect traffic and cause concern for some residents but predominantly provide support and social distancing for pedestrians and other users of the high street. The removal of the social distancing measures was based upon the governments stay at home message, and that footfall has reduced. The social distancing measures are funded from central government designed to support and encourage people to return to the high streets. Established data from Springboard, which provides accepted data on impacts within town centres, has stated that "perceived safety (social distancing) is a key issue for returning to high streets as are other issues ie car parking fees. This information was recently reported to last year's Scrutiny committee. So, the measures are there to encourage use of the high streets to ensure our local economies and funded for that purpose from central government .

Shropshire Council is monitoring our town centres with partners, ie the Shrewsbury Recovery Task Force, and once the lockdown ends then social distancing measures will undoubtedly return to our town centres to support and encourage activity in our high streets as and when appropriate. Obviously, the available guidance for this period is not available yet but there seems to be little doubt that measures should return to support our town centres to encourage economic revival when appropriate as this is what the measures are designed to achieve.

2. Graham Tate

Conservative controlled Lincolnshire County Council have announced a general Council tax increase of 1.99% for financial year 2021 to 2022. Can we expect a similar increase for Shropshire Council Tax?

Full Council will approve the increase in Council Tax at the Council Meeting on 25 February 2021 as part of the 'Council Tax Resolution 2021/22' Report. The recommendation from officers, and built into our Financial Strategy, is for a general increase of 1.99% (the maximum allowed). We need to carefully consider the impact of increases in Council Tax on our households in these difficult times, against the need to fund essential services to the most vulnerable in our communities; the financial impact of which is growing at a rate far in excess of the Council Tax increase officers have assumed. Until February Council, however, no decision will formally be taken.