

CABINET 8 FEBRUARY 2021

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Question from Mr Jon Newson

Subject Reg 19 pre-submission draft local plan

The proposal for site WBR010 in the 'Reg 19 pre-submission draft local plan' does not take into account the previous planning appeal refusal (14/00398/out) which was upheld by the Planning Inspector. The previously refused development site is included within WBR010 and the reasons given by the Planning Inspector have a bearing. It is not documented at Stage 3 of the site assessment for WBR010 that this previous upheld refusal and decision by the Planning Inspector has been taken into account. What is the reason for the previous decision, of the Planning Inspector, not to be a factor at the Stage 3 site assessment? Within the process of Stage 3 site assessments of WBR007, WBR008 and WBR010, there is no facility for these to be considered together. Taken together, these sites would represent approximately a 50% increase in the number of dwellings within Worthen. It would seem reasonable that such a significant change to the community should be assessed and part of the appraisal. What is the reason for these sites, joint impact, not to be considered? Both these points have been previously brought to the attention of the council, however there has been no explanation offered, just a restatement that a process was followed. I would urge that the specific issues raised should be addressed so that the rational for not considering these issues can be understood.

The site assessment process, captured within the overall Sustainability Appraisal, has provided evidence to inform the Draft Local Plan proposed site allocations. For each site this has included an assessment of a site's potential impact on a number of factors, from flood risk, landscape, highways, heritage, ecology, trees and public protection. Officers have then provided a planning balance judgement, taking these issues into account, in arriving at preferred site allocations for the new emerging Local Plan, covering the period 2016-2038.

Having considered the outcomes of the site assessment process and assessed this option against other reasonable site alternatives (all documented in the site assessment process) site WBR010 – land south of the B4386 – is proposed for inclusion within the emerging Local Plan for a development of around 20 dwellings. This proposal is currently subject to the statutory consultation at Regulation 19 stage. To this end, officers have not dismissed previous views on the site expressed by other parties, including individual planning inspectors, but it should be noted that the previous Inspectorate decision referred to was taken within the context of the currently adopted Local Plan and not against the development needs of the emerging Local Plan.

The Regulation 19 consultation has recently been extended by three weeks to take account of added lockdown restrictions, and now closes on 26th February. It is considered that if individuals or organisations wish to raise an objection to the emerging Local Plan, this current consultation represents the best mechanism to express these views. All comments which are made to this current Regulation 19 consultation will be sent to an independently

appointed Planning Inspector, along with the Council's evidence, when the Council submits the Plan for Examination later in 2021. We therefore encourage everyone who wishes to have their say on current proposals to make their views heard through the Regulation 19 consultation process.

2. Question from Mr David Kilby

Shropshire Council Leisure Services

Can Shropshire Council confirm that during the period 2012/2013 they signed a contract with Shropshire Leisure Community Trust Ltd (SCLT) to provide leisure services across the Shropshire area up until 2022?

Can Shropshire Council confirm that at the time of signing the contract they were fully satisfied that SCLT was a properly democratically constituted trust and that in their opinion, they were satisfied that the governance of SCLT was entirely fit for the purpose of providing leisure services as agreed to deliver the aforementioned contract.

Could the Council also confirm that as of the 4TH February 2021 they are fully satisfied that SCLT currently meets the required governance tier 3 level standards as set out in Sport England and UK Sports governance guidance documents, a pre-condition of being able to attract additional grants for future sports provision, at any one of the five facilities, they are contracted to run that is the Quarry Pool, Sundorne Sports Village, Oswestry Leisure Centre, Whitchurch Swimming Pool and Market Drayton Leisure Centre?

I can confirm that Shropshire Council signed a contract with Shropshire Community Leisure Trust in 2012/2013 to provide leisure services at the following facilities – Quarry Swimming & Fitness Centre, Shrewsbury Sports Village, Oswestry Leisure Centre, Market Drayton Swimming Centre and Whitchurch Swimming Centre.

The Council entered into the contract with SLCT after carrying out an evaluation of their governance model and satisfying itself that it was properly constituted as an industrial and provident society (now a registered society), registered with the Financial Services Authority (which is the regulator for such societies) and accepted by HMRC as having charitable status.

The contract was let after a formal competitive tendering process. The Council evaluated the delivery model as part of the formal evaluation process set out in the invitation to tender.

Based on this, the Council was satisfied that the tender by Serco Leisure Limited, which provided for SLCT to be the contractor was the preferred tender.

The position as of the 4th February 2021 is that the Council have held discussions with Shropshire Community Leisure Trust over several months regarding governance and working towards tier 3 level standards. It is agreed by both parties that those standards are not currently in place and an independent review of the existing governance should be undertaken by the Trust. That process has been agreed by the Trust board.

3. Question from Mr Nick Saxby

What action will the council take on offensive waste left on Whitchurch bypass?

After becoming increasingly aware of the widespread litter accumulating on the bypass, particularly in the laybys, a group of volunteers have been spending mornings cleaning up. We have had to stop this as a result of covid restrictions, but I wanted to try and make progress on an issue never-the-less.

The volume of waste that we have removed, from a stretch between Tarporley Road and Belton Farm, has totalled approximately two tonnes. It is saddening to have discovered that there is essentially a land-fill site in orbit around Whitchurch.

[I will attach photographs to demonstrate the scale of the issue].

This is a huge issue in itself, and much of the waste we have cleared has been sitting on/in the ground for apparently a long time. This raises concerns about the diligence with which the Council and/or its contractors have been maintaining the roadside.

An even more striking issue is that we have been surprised that a common find along the roadside are bottles full of urine.

The practice of truck drivers urinating in bottles and disposing of them has been highlighted in the media in the past, and is relatively well known. However, we have been shocked at the sheer volume of bottles which we have found. I am also dismayed to share that we have found more than one tupperware box of excrement too.

As you are aware, the road is a busy route for hauliers heading North/South through the midlands, particularly for connecting to ferries across the Irish Sea. It seems that drivers are stopping over for rest breaks along the A41 outside Whitchurch.

Though I understand that truck drivers have a need to relieve themselves, we do not agree that the only course of action should be sealing their urine in nondegradeable containers and leaving them around our town.

I have already written to the Road Haulage Association and corresponded with their Midlands & West Regional Operations Manager. He has acknowledged that this particular problem is widespread, and unacceptable.

He pointed me towards the National Planning Policy Framework, which outlines the requirements of local authorities to ensure that provision is in place for lorry drivers to access facilities without parking in inappropriate locations and/or causing a nuisance.

Although there is a rest area for lorries just to the South of Whitchurch (at the junction of the A41/A49). It would appear that drivers either are unaware of it or unable to use it. Clearly there is a need for some sort of intervention.

I would like to put forward the following questions:

- **Will the Council review the impact of the maintenance of the Whitchurch bypass?**
- **What options are available to prevent lorry drivers (or anyone else) from leaving offensive waste around Whitchurch?**
- **Will the Council commit to taking pro-active steps, and work on long term solutions to littering and offensive waste dumping on the bypass?**

As an informal suggestion, I would like to suggest that the provision of new, adequate signage could be an interim solution. Perhaps Whitchurch-based artists and designers could be involved?

In response to Mr Saxby's question. Litter is a problem Nationally and Local Authorities across the UK face a very challenging situation tackling the issue, particularly on highspeed roads such as the A5 and roads like the Whitchurch Bypass. Shropshire has its own challenges with several major roads cutting through the County where opportunistic individuals and accidental littering poses real issues. Litter is present in some very challenging places such as central reservations and verges on numerous high-speed roads which presents health and safety issues for our contractor and its staff. There is also the hidden menace of litter and fly tipping out of sight and on private land/unregistered land, which poses the problem of getting contractual staff and equipment to these often secluded places.

- The Council via the Street Scene Team is bringing forward an improved programme of litter picking on high speed roads, it is true that there have been issues with covering staff absences, and staff redirected to deal with floods and clean ups, winter etc. it is recognised that an improvement needs to be made, and additional work will be instigated over the next few weeks.
- Opportunistic littering is a National problem and Local Authorities have seen an increase during the Covid 19 period. The Council will certainly look into the issue both at Whitchurch and other problem areas . This will need careful consideration, as many opportunistic littering is done often at night or at times when no one is about and also in places normally not visited by individuals but accessible to those with less desirable intentions.

As said, there is a clear intent to improve and a programme of activity will come forward as soon as agreed with the councils Street Scene Contractor.