

CABINET

8 MARCH 2021

MEMBER QUESTIONS

1. From Cllr Brian Williams

I am the Council's representative on the Montgomery Canal Restoration Trust. I am aware that the Council has a considerable input into the scheme for the restoration of the School House bridge which was demolished many years ago and which has caused a major blockage to the restoration of the canal into Wales and to Welshpool. As the Council is assisting in the planning application, the Highways issues and the financial problems of meeting the cost, could the Chairman please give an update on how these matters are progressing.

Response:

Shropshire Council is fully supportive of the aspiration to reopen the Montgomery Canal in Shropshire. To this end, the Montgomery Canal Restoration Project Board was set up in September 2020 with the aim to enable the restoration of the Montgomery Canal in Shropshire and maximise the associated benefits. This restoration is seen as an important economic driver for the north west of the county, which will result in a boost to the visitor economy and associated businesses, as well as health and wellbeing benefits to residents. The Council is working with the Canal and River Trust, the Montgomery Canal Partnership and the Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust on the development of a new Economic Impact Assessment, which will clarify these economic benefits.

The Council's Highways Engineering Services, Development Control and Legal teams have also been working collaboratively with the Canal and Rivers Trust, Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust, Montgomery Canal Reconstruction Limited and other stakeholders to ensure this project is delivered to the programme timescales. The Council has further made a number of financial concessions in order to support this project which will bring much needed tourism and employment opportunities to the Oswestry and surrounding areas. In addition some of our service providers such as Balfour Beatty Civil Engineering have agreed to loan construction equipment free of charge during the construction of the bridge works as part of their commitment to Social Value and working in the local community.'

2. From Cllr Dan Morris:

Please could the Cabinet update us about the number of businesses that Shropshire council has helped since the start of the Pandemic last year, and how much money the Council has distributed to these businesses? Furthermore, please could I also ask that cabinet recognise the extraordinary work done by Council officers in navigating their way through the process of distributing the

funds that have so helped businesses in Shropshire that have been mandated to close or been materially affected by the pandemic?

Response

I can confirm the following details based on the final pay run of last week on Friday 26th March 2021 (although I have also provided an estimate for the latest grant covering the period to the end of this financial year, which is due to land this week). The below provides a breakdown of the grants awarded to date covering the last twelve-month period across the 15 different COVID-19 support grants during this period;

Grant Funding Support – March-September 2020

- Small Business Grants – £52,240,000 awarded to 5,224 businesses
- Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grants – £29,645,000 awarded to 1,709 businesses
- Discretionary Grants – £5,132,000 awarded to 883 businesses
- TOTAL – £87,017,000 awarded to 7,816 businesses

Grant Funding Support – November 2020-March 2021

November 2020 (Nov 4th – Dec 2nd national restrictions)

- Local Restrictions Support Grant (closed addendum) – £4,449,218 awarded to 2,952 businesses
- Discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant – £648,962 awarded to 469 businesses
- TOTAL – £5,098,180 awarded to 3,421 businesses

December 2020 (Dec 3rd – Jan 4th Tier 2 and Tier 3 restrictions)

- Local Restrictions Support Grant (closed Tier 2) – £167,859 awarded to 108 businesses
- Local Restrictions Support Grant (open Tier 2) – £1,482,832 awarded to 1,308 businesses
- Local Restrictions Support Grant (closed Tier 3) – £297,882 awarded to 1,060 businesses
- Local Restrictions Support Grant (open Tier 2) – £59,841 awarded to 322
- Local Restrictions Support Grant (sector) – £9,718 awarded to 5 businesses
- Christmas Support Payment (for wet led pubs) – £275,000 awarded to 275 businesses
- TOTAL – £2,293,132 awarded across 3,078 payments

January 2021 (Jan 5th – Feb 15th national restrictions)

- Local Restrictions Support Grant (closed addendum) – £6,483,771 awarded to 2,873 businesses
- Closed Business Lockdown Grant – £12,957,000 awarded to 2,873 businesses
- Discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant – £4,620,000 awarded to 901 businesses
- TOTAL – £24,060,771 awarded across 6,647 payments

February/March 2021 (Feb 16th – Mar 31st national restrictions)

- Local Restrictions Support Grant (closed addendum) – £6,791,475 awarded to 2,873 businesses* (estimate as of 1st March, awaiting funds to be awarded to Shropshire Council)
- TOTAL for Nov 20-Mar 21 – £38,243,558 awarded across 16,019 payments

TOTAL COVID-19 GRANT SUPPORT (to date)

- £125,260,558 awarded across 23,835 payments through the past twelve-month period

3. From Cllr Les Winwood (on behalf of Cllrs Christian Lea, Les Elliott Lynch, William Parr, Michael Wood, Tina Woodward, Robert Tindall, David Turner)

Following full council and the discussion around car parking charges, Could we ask for a definite response to the opening of shops on the 12 April with free Parking in all Shropshire council car parks to give the market towns a shot in the arm and boost trade in a bid to attract local residents back to our high street , This we hope will help to make our high streets a thriving hub

Is the cabinet aware of local concerns about pressure on car parking In Bridgnorth and are there any plans being considered to promote extra car Parking spaces near to the town centre?

Response:

Shropshire Council recognises the need to support and enable our market towns and local businesses to recover from the COVID 19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on our market towns economies and the wider national economy is well rehearsed and understood. Therefore, we will be providing free parking in all Shropshire Council car parks for the period of April 12th for two weeks until Sunday 25th April between the chargeable hours of 8am until 6pm, (the dates could be amended if there is a change to government advice) . Providing free car

parking for these two weeks will support our town centres and rural areas in ensuring that we can attract as many shoppers, visitors and tourists to our town centres as possible. This builds upon the Christmas initiative of free parking that we previously introduced to support our towns.

Further, we will be also supporting our towns with social distancing , pedestrianisation of Shrewsbury High Street between 11am -5pm, Wyle Cop and Castle Street , and predestination of King Street in Ludlow on Fridays and Saturdays, and providing Park and Ride to ensure that we build confidence and encourage our town centres to be bustling again and wider pavements where required . Business will also be able to take advantage of Pavement Permits which will allow shops and business to extend their trading areas to further provide economic stimulus once they have gone through the appropriate process.

Hence I'm pleased to announce this initiative to support our towns and Shropshire economy.

NOTE:

1. For off street car parks only – on street charges will continue to apply.
2. If government advice on dates is amended then the offer will reflect government advice
3. Current season ticket holders for car parks will be extended by two weeks
4. Evening charges on Raven Meadow will continue to apply - free parking is for 8am – 6pm only.
5. Approximate cost is £200k for the two week period .

Question 2. Is the cabinet aware of local concerns about pressure on car parking In Bridgnorth and are there any plans being considered to promote extra car Parking spaces near to the town centre, From Les Winwood, Christian Lea, Elliott Lynch and William Parr

Yes, I share the concerns of local members over car parking in Bridgnorth. I can confirm that an Area Assessment Study has been commissioned and we should have the results of that, complete with recommendations towards the end of this month. We will then work up some firm proposals for additional car parking and other transport measures in Bridgnorth and commence a programme of engagement and consultation later this year

4. From Cllr David Turner

In October 2019 Shropshire Council submitted a Maintenance Challenge Fund Bid expression of Interest (EOI) to the Department of Transport. This is to address the causes of flooding in four known high-risk hotspot areas and seek to mitigate the risk of flooding from highways by upgrading the physical drainage infrastructure. One of these high-risk hotspot areas is Much Wenlock.

The project value is a little over £3m and I understand it would be implemented subject to the EOI being approved and then the submission of more detailed work to satisfy the DFT. I have had conversations with officers, and I understand that, in the case of Much Wenlock, a catchment-wide solution is being sought.

In September 2020 I asked a question at Cabinet about its agenda item regarding the River Severn Partnership Flood Prevention. In responding to my concerns about pluvial flooding in communities such as Much Wenlock, the Leader assured me that a full assessment of the risks and potential solutions would be brought forward as either a strategy for the River Severn catchment or the Council's own highways and drainage capital programme. In closing, he said that hopefully that would happen quite soon.

Is the Department of Transport grant time-limited? If so, until when?

The grant funding received is not time limited.

We were advised that the finances are approved and allocated in this year's budgets – has this been rolled into 2021-22?

Yes, the grant funding will be rolled into 2021/22 financial year.

I understand that the project is now in the hands of WSP and that there will be extensive engagement and consultation. When will this take place?

We are developing a timeline for this project but anticipate that design and consultation will commence in the early part of 2021/22 financial year.

5. From Cllr Ed Bird

I'm very pleased that full council approved the investment into Shifnal Town Centre, some £2.7 million which has been supported by the Town Council. However, residents have highlighted the state of the rural roads, some of which are in a shocking condition such as Evelith Lane, near Shifnal. Could cabinet confirm how they are going to tackle this and other lanes around the county

given its extensive road network as it poses a risk to damaging vehicles and a particular risk of physical harm to cyclists.

Local residents have been doing a fantastic job of collecting litter in the district during lockdown. Given they are doing this fantastic work voluntarily can the council make a commitment to ensuring the timely collection of bin bags that have been filled by residents?

The £2.7 m scheme to improve Shifnal town centre that is funded from developer contributions to address the infrastructure issues in the town will improve and transform the town centre. The scheme is agreed by Shropshire Council and Shifnal Town Council and construction is hoped to begin this summer. We can confirm that Evelith Lane (near Shifnal) is in our highway's capital programme for 2021/22. We will continue to inspect this lane and address any safety defects until resurfacing work is carried out.

Under the current national lockdown restrictions, strictly speaking people who leave their home for anything other than essential purposes are breaking the rules which we all must adhere to, to help reduce the risk of transmission and spread of this deadly virus. Regardless of their good work and intentions, which under normal circumstances would be welcomed and supported by us, people should not be engaging in this type of activity until the restrictions are lifted and when it is safe to do so. That said we do take our responsibilities seriously. There is no expectation on anyone to volunteer their time to carry out work on land that we are responsible for maintaining. We know that many people as part of their daily exercise do collect litter, we are more than happy to collect bagged waste and remove as long as we are made aware that there is waste to collect.

6. From Cllr David Vasmer

On 24th February 2021 the Council announced that it plans to do a litter pick alongside several Shropshire roads during March 2021. This is to be welcomed but

1) When was the last time such an initiative was taken?

Numerous sections of roads across Shropshire and the A5 were litter picked last year. I would be happy to circulate a list if required, but it is accepted that improvements on the high speed roads and coordinating this work with Highways England is required, hence the initiative.

2) Are there plans for regular litter picking in the future?

We have a programme of key roads (high speed) to be litter picked three or four times per year this will be updated to the media and our web site asap for information. This programme of work began through the night on the evening of March 8th .

3) When is it planned for other areas to be treated in a similar way?

An initial list of roads has been issued to start on March 8th, all key roads will be added to this list and publicised on the councils web site which will be continually updated as per the original media communication.