

CABINET 7 JUNE 2021

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1. From Helen Morgan

The news that the Council will commence surveys as a first step to implementing 20 mph zones outside our schools was welcome this week. However it was reported in the Shropshire Star that the Cabinet member for physical infrastructure, highways and built housing, said investigations could reveal that "current conditions could suggest that a 20mph speed restriction is unnecessary or inappropriate and would deliver minimal benefits". Can the Cabinet confirm whether it is still committed to implementing 20 mph zones outside all of Shropshire's schools as approved by Council in December 2019? If not can the Cabinet indicate likely conditions that would make 20 mph inappropriate, in their view? Furthermore can the Cabinet confirm the expected timeline to implement 20 mph zones outside primary schools? In The Meres, the three primary schools of Myddle, Cockshutt and Welshampton all sit on very busy roads and are in urgent need of further speed restrictions. Thank you.

I can confirm this project is progressing in accordance with the previously approved report. Currently we are actively collecting or arranging to collect data from all 150 schools (noting that there are 120 sites as there are multiple schools on the same site). The data collection will consider speed, volume, weight, direction, time of vehicle usage, plus any local monitoring or analysis that may be required. Further, all school leaders and local members have been briefed on the progress and detail of this project.

Then, we will analyse this data and consider the appropriate intervention, as you would expect this will be in consultation with school leaders and local members in order to produce a programme of works / interventions to reduce speed recognising the local context and circumstances which is an equally important consideration.

A capital budget is identified and committed to this project from April 2022 onwards to fund the work (again as detailed within the approved Cabinet report). Until all the data is captured, analysed and a programme of works developed (of which the approach and methodology of the assessments) is expected to be considered by Scrutiny in the autumn, then, other than reiterating the guiding principle of introducing speed reductions outside of all schools. Only at the point of a confirmed programme, informed by the technical considerations, metrics and local discussions, would we be confident in confirming which interventions at which schools, and at this point it could well be the case that some schools may not be supported by this particular programme.

The project will last at least for the next 3 financial years, and I can confirm that the project is achieving its programme as laid out in the approved Cabinet report (even allowing for Covid and schools closures which would have rendered any capture of traffic data unreliable).

2. From David Walker

At Cabinet on the 11th of March, I asked a question regarding media output saying CIL and s106 money would be used to fund the NWRR. The response from Cabinet was as follows:

"In light of the detail needed and the short time available to respond, a written response will be provided after the meeting."

Given that I still haven't had a response to my question, some 4 months later, despite querying the lack of a reply, I believe that sufficient time has now passed to provide an answer. So I will repeat my question with some amendment for the passage of time. Apologies but this also means more length. I would also respectfully request that you now also treat this as a Freedom of Information request.

As a Civil Engineering Surveyor working on the design, construction and maintenance of roads for over 30 years I find it incredible that Shropshire Council is pressing on with the NWRR when the available data shows it isn't needed, fails to recognise the climate emergency and the desired relief of traffic can be achieved for far less cost or financial risk by fixing the pinch points on the existing bypass.

The Outline Business Case (OBC) submitted to DfT set out the case for the road based on traffic modelling, future growth, active travel and public transport considerations, plus the wider environmental impacts of the forecast traffic growth left unaddressed. Following detailed options assessments on alternatives to the NWRR, the business case was reviewed and accepted by DfT and the funding award made. Full details of the OBC and the options assessment are available at <https://shropshire.gov.uk/roads-and-highways/shrewsbury-north-west-relief-road/outline-business-case-obc/>

In recent media output, there has been comment from cabinet members about the use of CIL and s106 money to contribute to building the NWRR. The council have published their Infrastructure Statement dated December 2020, some 10 months after year-end. Many authorities have been quicker at reporting their Annual Infrastructure Statement. Indeed Shropshire Council used to publish CIL figures much earlier in the year. Sometimes as early as May.

The Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) is required to be issued by the end of December for the previous financial year. This is exactly what the Council has done.

Tweets published yesterday (May 27, 2021) by Shropshire Council state:

"The cost of building the NWRR is estimated to be £87.1m. The DfT will invest £54.4m. Other funding sources include LEP funding of £4.2m and £8.7m which was for the former Oxon Link Road. We will provide the balance of the cost of £19.8m...

...We will provide the balance of the cost, and accept responsibility for any cost increases." These figures have been quoted numerous times yet the media is full of stories about how difficult procurement of materials and labour is currently with costs increasing by as much as 50%. Clearly, under current conditions, the risks of overrun costs increasing significantly is much higher.

Why has no business case for the road been published? If Shropshire residents are to bear the overrun cost this should have all been evaluated before planning was even considered. Will you publish the full business case for the NWRR?

Further to the OBC publication as above, Shropshire Council will be submitting a Full Business Case (FBC) to DfT based on the resolved scheme design. The FBC will be considered for approval by Council Members before submission, noting the forecast costs at that time. The FBC is programmed for completion in December 2021. The FBC will include further updates to the expected build costs based on detailed design, using market testing and current supply chain information to inform the outturn costs and updates to the traffic forecasting and benefits model. Upon DfT acceptance of the FBC, the NWRR will move to its construction phase

What are the total balances for the CiL categories at the end 2020/21 financial year?

We do not have this information currently to hand and key officers are on leave this week so suggest we can send this information directly to Mr Walker as "to follow".

How much of the CiL categories / s106 money has been allocated to the NWRR?

The NWRR has one existing allocation of Strategic CiL, £300k, to contribute to Churncote Roundabout improvements. There are no other planned uses of Strategic CiL on the NWRR.

Does that allocation have any implications for items listed in the Infrastructure Statement/Regulation 123 lists, given they are both out of date and don't mention the NWRR?

It has no implications on the items listed in the IFS

Does Shropshire Council intend to move money from CIL Local to the CIL Strategic pot to facilitate funding the NWRR -if so how much?

The NWRR has one existing allocation of Strategic CiL, £300k, to contribute to Churncote Roundabout improvements. There are no other planned uses of Strategic CiL on the NWRR.

Will there be any unallocated funds left after contributing to the road - if so how much?

No other CIL funding has been allocated to this project to date.

Quoting the council's website:

The CIL Regulation 123 List is annually signed off by Cabinet, following the process set out in the Core Strategy and its accompanying Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document and Code of Practice.

Why then is the last published list so out of date, a list that makes no mention of the NWRR?

The CIL Regulation 123 list was replaced by the Infrastructure Funding Statement.

Speaking as a parish councillor, parish councils should be setting their budgets knowing exactly what their CIL neighbourhood funds are so that they can properly plan their own activities. This leads to excessive sums being held in balances and lengthy delays in project planning. Wouldn't a more timely approach to reporting be more beneficial to everybody?

The Neighbourhood Fund element of CIL receipts collected each year is distributed to parish councils annually as a single payment at the end of the financial year.

3. From Adam Shipp

The previous council leader had proposed selling council assets to pay for the North West Relief Road (NWRR).

However, there were two different versions of the amount of land and the expected price per acre. Could you please answer the following questions:

Exactly which land is to be sold?

The SUE West development contains two landowners of which Shropshire Council has the largest land holding comprising 55% of total development land which it intends to sell subject to achieving market value.

What is the actual expected price per acre and who estimated it?

The Council commissioned chartered surveyors Gerald Eve in 2019 to undertake a valuation but the council cannot at this stage share the expected price estimated as this would compromise our ability to negotiate the best value for the public purse and is commercial sensitive information.

What proportion of the Council's landholding are you currently expecting to sell?

100% of the land at the SUE West development

How much land does the Council own and what is the maximum proportion it will sell to fund the NWRR?

We would seek to sell approximately 21 Hectares.

4. From Harry Taylor

The Environment Agency has objected to the planning application on the grounds of potential impact on Severn Trent Water's Shelton public water supply borehole (and Hencott Pool SSSI). Given that the previous portfolio lead for Highways said 'Any planning application would not be successful if there were outstanding environmental concerns of this nature' will the council now withdraw the application? Similarly, you have received an objection from Barratt/David Wilson Homes who are the developers of the Shrewsbury West Sustainable Urban Extension. You previously claimed that the development is dependent on the NW road application being approved so does their objection mean that the council will now withdraw the application?"

Any major project of this type will receive objections as part of the public consultation to the planning application. Some of these objections may be known and submitted as a holding objection while the council continue to work to mitigate the issues of concern and others may be objections that the council had not yet been aware of and gives the council the opportunity to mitigate issues that had not previously been considered. Work will therefore continue to mitigate as many of the concerns raised within the consultation and as such the council do not intend to remove the planning application.

