

Question for People Overview Committee 11.08.2021 from Alex Wagner

“Many parents in Shrewsbury feel that there are currently not enough places at local secondary schools for them to be given a real choice on where is best for their children. Though there are some spaces at Shrewsbury Academy and an expansion of classroom space at Meole is planned, unprecedented development in town – especially in areas farther from the Academy than the other 3 secondary schools – overshadows this. This feeling of a lack of choice is accentuated by misleading claims from large-scale developers on what school's buyers can go to.

Various in Bowbrook alone, developers in Design & Access statements and on their public-facing website for buyers, have claimed the Wakeman School (which closed in 2013), Shrewsbury Secondary (which doesn't exist), Shrewsbury School (which costs £9k / term) and Walton High School (which is 30 miles away in Stafford) are viable for buyers.

One good idea proposed was to turn the new primary school in Bowbrook into an all-through with secondary places. On this note, I have two connected questions: Would the Council be able to provide local residents and the public with an update on the time-scale in which they expect to achieve this ambition of a new secondary school?

If the Council cannot give even a rough time-scale to the opening date, could they give an estimate to when we may see plans for the all-through school presented to Council?”

Response:

Thank you for drawing attention to the references being made by developers in their Design and Access statements and public-facing websites for buyers regarding local schools. The authority clearly has no input or control on how they promote and market their developments, however if Cllr Wagner is able to share the details on the specific references, officers in Learning & Skills will contact these developers to request that they correct any clear inaccuracies.

There are currently sufficient secondary school places in Shrewsbury to meet the forecast demand for places in the town across the town's four secondary schools. As noted in the question, the Council is investing in a new 5 class teaching block at Meole Brace School which will open in the autumn, while there are currently unfilled places at Shrewsbury Academy. The expansion of provision at Meole Brace School in particular, is in direct response to the increased demand for secondary school places resulting from the housing developments in Shrewsbury in recent years and forecast to be required in the current Plan Period through to 2026.

Further expansion in secondary school places in Shrewsbury will be dependent on a wide range of factors, not least the formal adoption of the Local Plan and the allocation of housing in the town in the next Plan Period. Other factors include the number of houses approved, the annual build out rate, the rate at which they are occupied and the yield of secondary school aged children from this housing. In school place planning, officers are currently using a secondary pupil yield factor of 0.1415 in Shrewsbury. This means that 200 houses have to be built and occupied to

result in school places being required for a single class of secondary aged pupils. Two of Shrewsbury's secondary schools have over 800 pupils, while the other two have over 1,200 pupils. This gives a sense of the number of houses that would need to be built and occupied to require an additional secondary or all-through school in the town and for that school to be financially and educationally viable.

A preferred option in addressing any forecast requirement for additional secondary school places in the next Plan Period is likely to initially focus on further expansion(s) of existing secondary schools. This makes greater financial and economic sense and would not have a negative impact on existing schools, by drawing pupils away into a new school, potentially compromising their viability and creating expensive unfilled school spaces in the short to medium term.

School place planning officers will continue to carefully monitor planning approvals for large housing developments, and the build out rate from these developments, to ensure that there are sufficient primary and secondary school places available for Shrewsbury families. However, given the current capacity in the system, a decision on further expansion in secondary school places is unlikely to be a requirement until the second half of this decade.

Questions for People Overview Committee 11.08.2021 from Cllr Kevin Pardy:

1 The new Youth Services model has been an abject failure to date, I define failure as young people not receiving a face-to-face service. The transition from the old model to the new model has so far failed because Shropshire Council have been unable to recruit outreach workers. Why was it that Children's Services did not have outreach workers in place before the transition date or delay transition when they realised not having workers in place would mean young people would not be receiving a service?

Response:

Thank you for raising this issue. Shropshire Council like you recognises the importance of the right support being in place for young people, and that the needs of and pressures on young of young people have changed over time such that the traditional positive activities provision on its own does not meet the needs of our most vulnerable.

We do not agree that the new youth service development is a failure.

For clarity, the new model was put into place following a scrutiny task and finish group which put forward the recommendations which were agreed by cabinet. The proposal set out that Shropshire Council would focus its resources on detached and outreach work, and that positive activities/youth clubs be supported by Town and Parish Councils. Council officers have worked, and continue to do so, with Town and Parish Councils to ensure that this provision continues to be in place, and we are pleased that the majority of Town of Parish Councils have responded to the demand in their local area, and the vast majority of youth clubs continuing. It is noted that not all Town and Parish Councils have put in place their own provision.

The new Youth Service model was not a binary decision to close one range of activities to put in place different ones. It was about enhancing not replacing the support to young people, and it will provide additional capacity to support a different cohort of young people across Shropshire. The resource available to support young people and youth provision across Shropshire has increased by £365,000 (total detached youth service budget for 21/22). It has also allowed further resources to be accessed and have added another £850,000 to the resources. It was a clear strategy to enhance youth provision across Shropshire, and put in place support for those young people who are most vulnerable to exploitation. This approach has been welcomed by key stakeholders.

During the Covid pandemic much face-to-face work was ceased, although some provision for some young people was delivered online. This was a direct result of the pandemic and direction from the Government, not a result of actions taken by Shropshire Council. Provision is slowly starting to reopen.

It is not correct to suggest that young people are not receiving face to face support because detached youth workers are not in place. We acknowledge that it has taken longer than expected to put the additional staffing into place, and we have worked hard to do this against the current climate. This has been impacted upon by the Covid pandemic. However, as explained previously, this does not mean that no face-to-face work is not taking place, since youth club type of activity is being picked up by Town and Parish Councils.

Children's Services have now recruited to the manager and the majority of the detached youth worker grade 7 posts, and we will be starting a new apprenticeship programme to 'grow our own' detached youth support. The programme starts at the end of September 21, providing a longer-term solution to the current national recruitment issues.

To date the current team in place have been gathering intelligence and evidence that suggests where greatest need exists, undertaking reconnaissance in local areas and speaking to young people. The team have engaged with Town and Parish Councils, local elected members, Shropshire Youth Association, schools, police, youth justice service, and planning in detail – getting policies and procedures in place, creating a robust induction programme ready for when detached youth workers join the team.

It is inevitable that establishing and implementing a new service will require some transitional time.

2 *Shropshire Council have been unable to recruit qualified youth workers at a pay rate below the accepted level. We have fully qualified and experienced youth workers working with SEND youth. These SEND workers are expected to be given notice of redundancy in the not too distance future. Why are these youth workers not being considered as outreach workers for the new Youth Services model?*

Response:

Whilst unable to comment on individual cases, our HR policy seeks to secure alternative employment wherever possible, for staff who are at risk of redundancy. Through the consultation process individuals are informed that they can be placed on the re-deployment register and be considered for suitable alternative posts. It is an individual's choice whether they regard other vacancies to be suitable alternatives.

Shropshire Council will pay JNC qualified workers the going rate of pay. However – given that there is a national shortage of JNC qualified workers currently operating at this level, it is prudent to ensure that a flexible sustainable recruitment plan is in place. This includes using the apprenticeship levy to fully support the growth of skills and knowledge of detached youth support apprentices.. provider has been sourced and adverts to attract apprentices will in place end of September/beginning of October 2021.