

CABINET 8 SEPTEMBER 2021
MEMBER QUESTION TIME

1. Councillor David Vasmer

Cllr Charmley recently announced that Shropshire Council has applied to Central Government for more funding to finance the North West Relief Road:

1. What is the current estimate of the funding needed to finance the North West Relief Road?

I refer Cllr Vasmer to a question asked by one of his Lib Dem colleagues at Cabinet on June 7th. At which his question included the following statement.

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.

Recent amendments to the planning application mean the revised figure is now £7M lower. These values are based on estimates within the OBC, and will be refreshed and market tested, then brought back to Council Members for approval as part of the production of the Full Business Case

2. Presumably the application to central government for more funding was contained in a letter addressed to the Department of Transport. Can you send me a copy of that letter or any other similar exchanges with central government?

The application for the NWRR Funding was in the form of the submission of the Outline Business Case. This was published on the Council website at the time of submission and is available via the Council website.

3. When is the full Business Case likely to be published?

I refer Cllr Vasmer to a response given to his Lib Dem colleague asking the same question at Cabinet on June 7th.

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

2. **Councillor Julian Dean**

In response to the Afghan Crisis, I know many of us are looking in horror and considering what more this country could do. I'm writing to ask you about the plight of child refugees in our area.

Could you let me know;

How many unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASCs) are currently in care in our area?

What percentage this is of our child population and whether this is therefore the required 0.07%?

Do we participate in the National Transfer Scheme rota and if so, when are we next expecting to take more UASCs?

Research suggests that one in ten asylum seekers crossing the Channel is an unaccompanied child. Will you commit to supporting the large numbers of UASCs currently in Hotels in the south-east waiting for local authorities to offer them a placement?

Response

Thank you for your question in relation to our care and support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. As Lead Member for Children I had already requested a full paper exploring this issue be prepared for Cabinet and this is timetabled for 28th September 2021 Cabinet. This will detail the position in full. However to answer your questions at this time;

Childrens Social Care and Safeguarding are working proactively with other Local Authorities in the West Midlands Region to ensure that we offer safe homes for children who arrive unaccompanied. We have done so consistently over recent years and responded to children and young people as they have either arrived in Shropshire, or where they have needed to be transferred from their arrival point. Initially we took children and young people from Kent as they were the receiving Local Authority.

In recent months we have received children and young people directly from the Home Office Centre at the port.

UAS children currently in our care:

% of this of our Child Population:

The 0.07% of Looked After population is not seen as a requirement, it is a measure to ensure equity across Local Authorities, when Local Authorities reach that figure they are able to no longer take additional children whilst other Local Authorities have space. It only covers children under 18 and does not reflect the over 18 population we continue to offer care and support to as Care Leavers. It is also a number that goes up and down depending on our Children Looked After population, and as those UASC young people become 18, we have had a number this year. The number of children we are due to take on the rota is calculated on a range of measures to ensure equity across the region. To date we have accepted to support more than our rota allocation of children and young people.

Currently our 0.07% allocation is 40 children under 18. We will most likely fulfil that allocation by the end of this year.

The National Transfer Scheme operates on a regional rota and we accept children and young people when it is our region and then our turn to take a child. So they have been arriving here regularly in recent months. We have also supported other Local Authorities who have had larger numbers of asylum seekers in their area who are quarantining, and taken their turn on the rota to support them.

We have been, and will continue to be, committed to supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. Regionally we work with the home office to meet the needs of the Refugees they are resettling. These children come from a range of countries, not just Afghanistan. Many of the children coming from Afghanistan will come with family and will be resettled as a family. We take whichever children the Home Office identify as being in need of transferring to us, it is likely this will become more children from Afghanistan in the weeks and months ahead.

Currently we have:

37 over 18s

Some of whom have leave to remain, some whose Asylum Applications are still being processed. When leave to remain is granted we offer support up till age 21 and up to 25 if the young person wants it.

17 under 18s

2 have arrived last week, (wk. ending 27/8/2021),

3 arriving 31/8/2021

Total 22 under 18.

Total: 59 young people.

Since April 2021 we have taken 15 unaccompanied children / young people, of which 13 have come to us through the National Transfer Scheme and 2 directly from the port.

These children and young people come from a range of countries, including:

(Due to small numbers leading to the possible identification of individuals it is not appropriate to give specific numbers from each country)

Afghanistan, Albania, Sudan, Vietnam, Iraq, Iran.

We are able to care for Children and young people in a range of accommodation including:

Foster Care,
Supported Board and Lodgings,
Supported Living.

The Home Office organise the hotel accommodation for both adults and children coming into the UK and if they require support from a Local Authority they make contact with the Council.

A full paper on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children and young people is tabled for Cabinet on 28th September 2021.

3. Councillor Tracey Huffer

Youth providers in Ludlow have been informed that the foyer area of Ludlow Youth Centre can only be used for a maximum of three people. With the winter approaching, this will bring an end to current youth club activities as they cannot be held outdoors in winter weather. It will also leave Ludlow Young Health — a mental health and wellbeing support project – without a home.

Children are back at school. They are playing sport and engaging in social activities both indoors and outdoors. They are allowed to cram into cinemas.

Ludlow Youth Centre is entered through wide double doors and arguably has more ventilation than most venues. Yet, Shropshire Council has declared that it is unsafe for youth activities. At the same time, it regards the building as perfectly safe for people using the offices which once supported young people as music and chill out rooms.

My question is:

- 1) What legally binding government Covid regulations remain in place after the general easing of legal restrictions on 19 July that restrict the use of buildings?

The need to ventilate buildings is becoming more and more important. The new Step 4 COVID Secure guidance has been published (see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-covid-19>) and has more of a focus on risk assessment, self-Isolation and ventilation supplemented by cleaning and face coverings.

Employers still have a legal duty to manage risks to those affected by their business. The way to do this is to carry out a health and safety risk assessment, including the risk of COVID-19, and to take reasonable steps to mitigate the risks identified. The working safely guidance sets out a range of mitigations employers should consider including:

- cleaning surfaces that people touch regularly
- identifying poorly ventilated areas in the venue and taking steps to improve air flow
- ensuring that staff and customers who are unwell do not attend the workplace or venue
- communicating to staff and customers the measures you have put in place

- 2) How many Shropshire Council owned or managed buildings are current subject to restrictions because of ventilation assessments?

- 3) Which are these buildings?

Combined answer to 2 and 3 below:

Currently the following buildings have been surveyed and most have some restrictions in relation to full occupancy pre pandemic levels:

- Bridgnorth YC
- Canern Brook
- Castle Court Oswestry
- Castle View
- Castle View dance studio
- Castle View annexe
- Drovers House
- Edinburgh House
- Food Enterprise Centre
- Ludlow YC
- Mount McKinley
- Old street Ludlow

- Oswestry Library
- Registrars Office Shrewsbury
- Shirehall

4) Ludlow Youth Centre is classified by the council as a corporate asset. What capital value does it assign to the Youth Centre in its accounts?

In accordance with the Council's financial asset valuations, at the 31 March 2021, it was valued at £851,000

5) Can the council give a guarantee that Ludlow Youth Centre will not be sold or transferred, other than as a building that will continue as a youth centre, during the current administration?

Work continues to be undertaken to maximise the use of these community based assets to make them available to deliver community related services or other Council priorities for the locality. This may include other models of ownership or indeed a transfer to a suitable organisation to operate the building for the future. However, no formal decisions have been taken at this time.