

## **CABINET 10 NOVEMBER 2021**

### **MEMBER QUESTIONS**

From Councillor Rob Wilson

In a recent BBC Shropshire debate the Cabinet member for Built Infrastructure stated that it is a fact that traffic volume will continue to increase. What year on year percentage increase in traffic levels is deemed acceptable?

#### **Response:**

The last DfT forecast projected a 51% increase in national traffic by 2050 so it stands to reason that this will lead to an increase in travel demand in the county. The council is however able to influence this demand and the impact it may have through the work that it is undertaking through its ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plan, Local Cycling & Walking Strategy, Local Transport Plan and Electric Vehicle Strategy and more broadly within rail strategies for the region. Recent behavioural changes arising as a result of lockdown during the pandemic is also likely to change forecast demand both locally and nationally.

There is no figure on what is and isn't acceptable for such growth as this will be influenced by the capacity of the network at the time and the carbon impact that traffic growth has. We are seeking to proactively increase capacity with schemes such as North West Relief Road and Mile End Roundabout to ensure we have a highway network fit for future needs and looking beyond those projects to realising long held ambitions around improving the capacity and safety of our trunk roads such as the A5 and A49. The accelerating growth of electric vehicle usage should see any carbon impact of any growth kept to at least current levels.

From Councillor David Vasmer

1. Why is Shropshire Council moving forwards with the Smithfield Development Framework which will have a major impact on movement in Shrewsbury, when the Big Town Plan movement strategy has not been finalised, and in fact is going out for further work?

#### **Response:**

Whilst a town-wide strategy, that will include the immediate and rural hinterland, the movement strategy specifically aims to explore and understand the movement requirements necessary to bring forward development in Riverside. The Smithfield SDF is a document of principles

and, whilst there is an indicative layout to demonstrate how these principles could be applied, not a definitive development solution.

Assurance can be given that any future development will only be adopted once the principles of the SDF have been aligned to those of the movement strategy.

2. On 4<sup>th</sup> November I attended a Schools Forum meeting when a paper was presented showing what Shropshire Council is proposing to substantially increase charges for Schools who use our catering services. It was stated in the paper that these charges would apply from next April.

No warning had been issued. Schools are totally unprepared for this sudden increase in meal costs. Parents are similarly also unprepared for these increases.

The largest share of Schools income is used to pay staff wages. The balance is used to help provide the help, assistance and materials that children need.

For Primary Schools around half the children are in KS1 and receive free meals at a price fixed by Government. Some of the KS2 children will also receive free school meals, again at a price fixed by government. All this income is fixed and schools have no ability to increase it.

The extra cost incurred by this sudden huge increase means the charge will either have to be paid by a few parents of KS2 children who purchase meals, or schools will have to use some of their small education budget to pay for this large increase.

School budgets are tight. We are one of the lowest funded authorities in England. Many schools have already considered and are in the process of agreeing their budget for next year. Staff costs have been appraised and largely decided on. For small schools it will mean that they can spend less on children's education.

A) Why have schools been given so little time to consider changes to the schools meals service?

B) I ask that any changes be given further consideration over at least the next year so that students, parents, teachers and governors can respond to proposed changes and then have enough time to prepare for any changes that are agreed.

**Response:**

Officers are currently consulting with schools' representative forums on proposals for changes to catering contracts. An initial meeting took place on 4<sup>th</sup> November and a further meeting is being held on 11<sup>th</sup> November. It is important to note that Shire Services is a trading service. Feedback and opinion from the school forum meetings will be included within a decision report to be considered by Cabinet at a future date. Your questions relate to the timing of changes which are yet to be decided by Cabinet. Your points and questions will be addressed, along with feedback from schools, when Cabinet considers the Shire Services Catering Operations report at a future meeting.