

CABINET
1 DECEMBER 2021
PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Jane Asterley Berry

The River Severn and its tributaries are vitally important to Shropshire's landscape, are essential biodiverse habitats and are crucial to people's mental and physical health. Currently, sewage and other pollutants are frequently discharged into them. An ecologically healthy Severn and its associated rivers and brooks should provide social and recreational opportunities for local people and visitors. It would promote our well wellbeing and the wellbeing of the plants and animals we co-exist with.

QUESTION In order to tackle all barriers, what resilient and timely steps will Shropshire Council take, working with Severn Trent Water and other relevant partners, to achieve both 'excellent' Bathing Waters Status (Bathing Water Regulations 2013) and 'Good Ecological Status' (The Water Framework Directive 2000) for the Severn and its tributaries?

Response – Ian Nellins

The River Severn and its tributaries are vitally important to Shropshire's landscape, are essential to biodiversity and are an important part of many people's mental and physical health and in some cases their livelihoods.

As part of the Local Plan review Shropshire Council is working with utility companies and the Environment Agency to assess the impact of future growth and development on water treatment works within the county to ensure we grow sustainably.

Some areas of the County such as the Clun catchment are especially sensitive in an ecological sense and we also actively engaged with Natural England in developing plans for improving the water quality of the River Teme. Shropshire contains a number of internationally designated wildlife sites and there are many designated sites downstream of the county, including two Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and we are very conscious of the role the county plays at the top of the Severn catchment in establishing water quality.

Shropshire Council was instrumental in setting up and actively leads the River Severn Partnership, which is a catchment wide partnership of councils, the Environment Agency and other key stakeholders to collectively address the challenges posed by climate change, the need for a green economic recovery and to recognise water as an important part of our infrastructure and environment. The Partnership is jointly chaired by Mark Barrow our Executive Director of Place here at Shropshire

Council. The Partnership is national pilot for the Adaptive Pathway Programme and is bringing forward a range of demonstrator programmes including some focused upon improving water quality to bathing water standards.

Stephen Mulloy

This Council has a duty to listen to the concerns of people who live, work and study in Shropshire, and as Leader of the Council you have gone on record as saying that you want to listen to the people of Shropshire so I am here today to see if you will listen to my concern.

Agenda item 6 today will see reports from the scrutiny committees rubber stamped by your Cabinet. I attended two meetings of the Place Overview Committee which was supposed to be scrutinising planning enforcement. I raised concerns about how ineffective planning enforcement is and pointed out that planning breaches on historic buildings and in conservation areas are just being ignored by officers, and perhaps even more important at this time of year, conditions that control surface water drainage are not being checked before being signed off, which may be exacerbating the flooding we see each year.

Responses to those concerns were either misleading or patronising and when one member asked for more details on the issues I raised he was swiftly closed down by the chair, and another member waved his arms impatiently seeking an end to the meeting (All of this is of course available to view in the recording of the meeting).

Can I ask that you refer the issue of Planning Enforcement back for proper scrutiny so that lessons can be learnt from the past to improve services going forward?

Response – Ed Potter

In response to your request for further scrutiny of planning enforcement in the future, the intention is to provide regular reports to the planning committee meetings on planning enforcement performance. If the chair of scrutiny wants to review what progress is being made and whether further improvements are necessary, there is an opportunity to include this on the Scrutiny work programme in the future. With the regular oversight of enforcement by planning committee, it is hoped that this will give members the assurances they need.