

CABINET 05/01/22
Public Questions

Question from:	Stephen Mulloy	
Subject:	Landholdings	
Portfolio Holder:	Lezley Picton	Approved
		
<p>The Council's Constitution says:</p> <p>"As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in your or your local authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute."</p> <p>As Leader of the Council your role is to not only provide direction but leadership and the setting of standards and expectations for others to follow...you need to lead by example and Sect 27(1) of The Localism Act 2011 requires a relevant authority to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority.</p> <p>There are a number of landholdings belonging to the company, CMS JAW Ltd, that you do not seem to have declared, and I understand that the advice given to you by the Monitoring Officer is that you do not need to declare these landholdings, reliance being made on the LGA guidance below:</p> <p>In general, there is no requirement to list the landholdings of companies or corporate bodies included in the register. The only requirement is to register any tenancy between such bodies and the authority (under the corporate tenancies). Obviously, you can only be expected to register those you ought reasonably to be aware of, so, for example, if you work for a large housebuilder you may not be aware of which land in the local authority's area they had options on. You do need to be mindful of your level of control in the company and the effect this may have on your benefit from the land. For example, if you and your spouse jointly owned a farming business, you would be the sole beneficiaries of any land owned by that farm and as such it is strongly advised to register land held by companies in which you have a controlling interest.</p> <p>https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/guidance-local-government-association-model-councillor-code-conduct</p> <p>Declarations are a matter for each individual councillor, but seeing as you and your partner apparently jointly own CMS JAW Ltd, then despite what the Monitoring Officer says, it seems from the guidance above that you are strongly advised to register all the landholdings of that company. So, my questions to you are:</p>		

1. In light of recent actions by some of the local Conservative Members of Parliament, do you not feel you should declare all the landholdings of CMS JAW Ltd located within the Council area to avoid bringing the council, and Shropshire in to further disrepute; and

I am very conscious of the need, especially as Leader of Shropshire Council, to maintain the public's confidence in the actions and behaviour of councillors. I am confident that I have followed the correct procedures at all times. CMS Jaw Ltd does own some very small/insignificant pieces of land that have been left over following developments and or transfers. None of these pieces of land are developable but if any of them were to be affected or impacted upon by other developments of any sort then of course I would declare any interests in the usual manner. I believe that I have complied with both the previous Code of Conduct and the new one (from 1st December) by registering my interest in CMS Jaw Ltd.

2. Did you receive any tenants discount when CMS JAW Ltd purchased the council smallholding, Villa Farm, Condover (SL160705) from Shropshire Council, and was the sale openly marketed?

I was not involved with CMS Jaw Ltd when Villa Farm was purchased and the sale, which took place in March 2004, was pre-Shropshire Council.

Question from:	Emma Bullard	
Subject:	MWRR	
Portfolio Holder:	Ed Potter	Approved

Has a date been set for the Northern Planning Committee to make a decision on the North West Relief Road? If so when will that be? In July 2019 the council expected the planning committee decision to be made in spring 2020. By December 2019 the date was expected to be in the summer 2020. Since the planning application was submitted in March 2021, committee dates have been suggested in summer 2021 and then in late autumn. The previous portfolio holder for Highways appeared to expect a planning decision by the end of 2021. The current portfolio holder for physical Infrastructure has been quoted in the press recently as saying that the North West Relief Road is settled and that attention can now turn to other infrastructure projects. Saying that the road is settled suggests that the case is ready to go to the planning committee. If it is not ready, what are the issues that still need attention? How close are they to being resolved? Is there a deadline for claiming the funding allocated by the Department of Transport from the Large Local Majors fund?

It was anticipated that the report would be considered at planning committee in December 2021. However, as the report was being prepared for December, there were still some outstanding matters requiring further attention by statutory consultees before they could finalise their formal responses, ie. Environment Agency, Archaeology, and others. It was considered necessary to give more time for the matters to be concluded and it is therefore anticipated that the application will go to committee in Spring 2022.

In terms of the deadline for claiming DfT funding, officers have been working closely with DfT who are fully aware of the project timelines and there is no concern.