

CABINET 16/02/22
Member Questions

Question from:	Rob Wilson	
Subject:	NWWRR	
Portfolio Holder:	Dean Carroll	Approved
<p>In answer to my question about the North West Road at Cabinet on the 19th January 2022, the Cabinet member for Physical Infrastructure said: “The Full Business case is expected to be completed for Member review, prior to its submission to DfT, by Winter 2022.” He later confirmed to me by email, that this means by the end of 2022. On 8th September 2021, the then Cabinet member for Highways, in answer to a Cabinet question by Cllr David Vasmer said “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.” Please can the Council explain why, in the space of 4 months, the Full Business has seemingly been delayed by up to a year?</p> <p>In order to prepare and submit a Full Business Case in line with the requirements of the DfT, there are certain conditions that need to be met. These include the receipt of Full Planning Permission for a project, and a fully resolved forecast project cost. Until the cost forecast has been made, key calculations around Value for Money and the Benefit Cost Ratio are not able to be assessed and reported to DfT. Such calculations are then used as key assessment criteria by DfT in evaluating the projects business case.</p> <p>Due to the ongoing liaison with bodies such as Natural England and Environment Agency in order to satisfy planning requirements, the project has been advised that the planning determination has now been pushed back to summer 2022. Many of the environmental management, mitigation and monitoring solutions being agreed with these agencies will have an effect of the final NWWRR designs and therefore cost. As such, until the planning permission is granted and final costs established, there are elements of the FBC that cannot be drafted, reviewed and approved. The FBC will also need to be considered by Members at Full Council in advance of its submission, and the revised programme now being reported allows the time for all of this to be undertaken.</p> <p>The delay in submission of the FBC does not, at this time however, mean that the NWWRR programme overall is critically impacted around the forecast construction and road opening dates.</p>		

Question from:	Rob Wilson	
Subject:	The Frith	
Portfolio Holder:	Dean Carroll	Approved
<p>I welcome the fact Cornovii has handed over the keys to the first homeowners at The Frith. It was clear from the photos published that significant amount of ground has been paved. With regard to the flooding issues faced in Shropshire, what efforts are being made on Cornovii developments to use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)?</p> <p>CDL implement sustainable drainage solutions across all its sites, at The Frith CDL used permeable paving with changes in levels along with underground water storage tanks to</p>		

minimise surface water outfall. CDL will use this technique along with balancing ponds (where appropriate) on other developments to minimise surface water outfall and deliver improved outfalls into the existing drainage system. This solution has been developed by The CDL Team, its engineers in partnership with Severn Trent and Welsh Water.

Question from:	Julian Dean	
Subject:	Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme	
Portfolio Holder:	Ian Nellins	Approved

The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme, Phase 2 (LAD2), is designed to enable local authorities to deliver energy efficiency improvements to low-income households in low energy performance homes, thereby lowering bills and reducing carbon. Many said the fund was flawed in design (see Inside Housing in May last year^[1]). The fund closes at the end of March 2022. Of the £300m in the fund, the Midlands was allocated £61.2m.

How much of this fund was allocated to Shropshire? How many Shropshire households successfully applied for grant funding under the scheme? How many household projects i) have been started; ii) have been completed; iii) are expected to successfully access funds?

If there is likely to be a significant underachievement compared to the both the allocation and the actual level of need what factors do you consider account for this? What are the prospects for the next tranche (LAD3/HUG – Sustainable Warmth Competition) delivering to significant numbers of households in the county?

Meanwhile the recent Corporate Carbon Monitoring report included reference to a £7m budget for county-wide housing retrofit working with Housing Associations, but this has not appeared in the capital strategy priority capital schemes schedule.

Why is this not yet a priority scheme, allowing it to appear in the capital budget proposal for 2022/23?

What plans are in place to ensure the project management of this £7m fund is able to address the constraints faced by the various iterations of LAD (which evidence from elsewhere suggest are to do with the supply chain and the procurement processes involved)?

^[1] <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/news/councils-struggling-to-meet-unrealistic-deadlines-for-flawed-green-homes-grant-programme-70750>

1. How much of the LAD2 fund for the Midlands was allocated to Shropshire?

£2,267,200

2. How many Shropshire households successfully applied for grant funding under the scheme?

so far 350 see below for more detail

3. How many household projects:

a. have been started;

140 mostly assessment stage

b. have been completed;

13 HHRSH installs + 1 Park Home externally clad

c. are expected to successfully access funds?

at present we still hope to hit our initial target by the end of June.

4. If there is likely to be a significant underachievement compared to the both the allocation and the actual level of need what factors do you consider account for this?

- **Delays in MEH procurement**
- **Supply chain constraints**
- **Rising costs**
- **Shortage of Assessors/coordinators**
- **Complexity of properties**
- **Complexity of works**
- **Unrealistic grant values**
- **Shropshire not attractive to installers as it doesn't offer economies of scale these works rely on and large distances to travel**

5. Why is the £7m budget for county-wide housing retrofit referred to in the recent Corporate Carbon Monitoring report not yet in the in the capital strategy priority schemes list, which will presumably form the capital budget proposal to full council in February?

These schemes do not include any contribution for the Council they are entirely funded by government or RSL/landlord contributions.

6. What plans are in place to ensure the project management of this £7m fund is able to addresses the constraints faced by the various iterations of LAD (e.g. supply chain and procurement)?

- **Where possible all contracts include an extension or ability to extend into the following scheme**
- **Bring more resource into the AWEE Team**
- **Bids include requirement for main contractor to act as "umbrella" organisation to allow local non accredited installers to take part in the scheme then apply in their own right in future**

Question from:	Julian Dean	
Subject:	Street Trees	
Portfolio Holder:	Dean Carroll & Ed Potter	Ed – approved Dean - approved

Over the last couple of years a number of street trees have been lost in the Porthill Division, usually due to poor health of the trees. Offers of replacement have occasionally been made, and I understand that Shrewsbury Town Council has offered to support the planting of appropriate street trees using techniques which provide long term sustainability to both tree and footway, ensuring continued accessibility. However no new trees have been planted.

Street trees are a valuable part of our biodiversity, they add to the street scene making places more pleasant to live and they will form an important element of climate change adaptation, providing urban cooling and shade in heat waves. Community support for planting and maintenance of trees could support any planting programme.

Please update me on the current policy and practice with regard to street trees.

Can an appropriate policy for street trees please be developed to allow for the replacement of lost trees, and with a view to increasing tree populations in urban environments wherever possible?

Shropshire Council recognises the multiple and diverse benefits provided by trees and woodland in general and trees in the urban environment in particular, where the societal values of trees are arguably at their greatest. Street trees are hugely important from environmental, landscape, wildlife and economic perspectives.

A growing body of evidence suggests that towns should aim for a minimum canopy cover of 20%, to provide a sustainable urban forest resource. Study of tree canopy cover by division across Shropshire shows that canopy cover currently ranges from a low of 6.8% in Harlescott to a high of 24.7% in Broseley. The tree canopy cover for each division can be seen on the Council's website at:

[Tree planting opportunities heat map \(arctgis.com\)](https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/tree-planting-opportunities-heat-map)

There is currently no overarching strategic approach or specific budget for tree planting and maintenance within Shropshire Council. Each service area is responsible for carrying out tree planting and maintenance works on its own land, but the vast majority of any available budget is inevitably directed to essential tree safety works, as identified during inspections carried out by the Council's tree officers.

The Council has a commitment to plant 345,000 trees by 2030. It is estimated that by 2030 these young trees will have stored around 730 tonnes of CO2 but by maturity these trees could store at least 135,000 t CO2. We are currently a little below the planting rates required to hit that target but hope to get back on track this coming planting season. A particularly effective approach to reaching this target is to enable communities to plant the right tree in the right place. At present our primary support for this has been financial, providing free trees via the annual Community Tree Scheme. We will continue to work with other groups and organisations and engage with other initiatives to further support local communities to plant and care for trees.

As one such example, Shropshire Council is a key partner in the DEFRA funded Trees Outside Woodland project. One element of this work is to support the development of Community Tree Nurseries, to increase the supply of trees locally. We have already provided around £15k of funding to Shrewsbury Town Council to enhance their capacity for growing and distributing trees at their Weeping Cross nursery and we are about to provide over £25k to support other tree nurseries this financial year. This includes The Chemists Patch garden and tree nursery in

Shrewsbury that supplies trees to the Belle Vue Tree Planting Group and could supply trees to other areas where new tree planting is needed.

With regard to policy, the Tree Team writes the corporate tree safety policy in consultation with the land owning service areas and other relevant stakeholders. The Tree Team is intending to bring forwards a revised tree safety policy this Spring. The Team is also currently in the process of establishing a corporate working group to address the pressing threat to our county's tree stock posed by ash dieback disease. However, the need is recognised for a wider corporate strategy for trees and woodland, including the planting and maintenance of new and replacement trees, and a mandate for this will be sought through the emerging tree safety policy and ash dieback action and recovery plans.

Question from:	Alex Wagner	
Subject:	Cycling & Walking in the County	
Portfolio Holder:	Ian Nellins	Approved

On 3rd February 2022 the Council issued a press release announcing that it been awarded more than £140,000 of Government funding to help enable and promote cycling and walking in the county. It went on to state that the Council will now consider how the funding will be spent, and how it feeds into the ongoing development of the council's new local cycling and walking infrastructure plan (LCWIP). This press release is still live on the Council's website. The Deputy Portfolio Holder for Physical Infrastructure confirmed on Twitter that this was new funding. Is it not the case that this funding from the DfT Capability Fund was awarded last year and is already funding the LCWIP being produced by City Science, therefore it is not available to fund new infrastructure projects?

Council's funding allocation from the Capability Fund was confirmed in October 2021 via letter from the Department for Transport (DfT). This letter confirmed that the allocation of £140,302 was to be paid in one instalment in December 2021.

Capability Fund funding is revenue funding and therefore is not to be used to fund the construction of infrastructure projects but can be used to fund the planning of active travel infrastructure projects (including the commissioning of feasibility studies) as well as implementing travel behaviour change and training initiatives. The attached Capability Fund Guidance states that it is expected that funding is to be used for interventions and activities which support the following funding objectives:

- To support the development of infrastructure projects to the new standards set out, including updating previous plans (such as LCWIPs) as necessary;**
- To promote increased levels of physical activity through walking and cycling for everyday journeys;**
- To support access to new and existing employment, education and training through cycling and walking.**

Council's funding is being used to fund the following activities

- **Development of the Shropshire-wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) - £70,000**
- **Adult Cycle Skills Training - £5,000**
- **Residual Funds (£65,303) will be used to combined with the Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 to fund the following initiatives:**
- **School Travel Planning and Travel Behaviour Change (Shrewsbury)**
- **Feasibility Studies (Mytton Oak Rd and Radbrook Rd)**
- **Crowmeole Lane Follow-up Trial Bus Gates**



Local Authority
Capability Fund Guide

Question from:	Rosemary Dartnall	
Subject:	Climate Emergency	
Portfolio Holder:	Ian Nellins	Approved

In September 2021 this council passed unanimously a motion acknowledging the need for urgent action in the face of the Code Red Warning for Humanity communicated and highlighted by the IPCC's latest report on the scientific consensus of the Climate Emergency. This council undertook eight resolutions for action. Please can you update the council on the implementation of the four resolutions below.

- 1. Develop Climate Emergency mitigation training for all teams across the council, including cabinet and all members. Appoint champions in all departments.** Please provide information further to your update in January. Have all portfolio holders and council executives completed accredited climate mitigation/carbon literacy training? Has such training for council staff and members been scheduled?

The senior leadership team (Cabinet and most Directors) have now completed accredited carbon literacy training and the Council is currently applying for corporate carbon literacy accreditation and developing a wider training programme for other Council members and officers which will be made available later this year.

- 2. Strengthen the council's procurement policy so that all suppliers and contractors operate appropriate and rigorous Climate Emergency mitigation practice aligned with our own.** Please update council on what steps have been taken to improve and align climate mitigation in respect of council workload carried out by third party providers.

We know that 'Scope 3' emissions (ie those emissions generated indirectly in our supply chain) are the most significant part of our corporate carbon footprint. The Climate Change Team have been working with colleagues from Procurement and we have now built a requirement into the standard procurement documentation for contractors to advise us about their current proposals. Initially this will form part of the 'non-mandatory' requirements in procurement documentation but in future, potential suppliers will need to meet minimum standards to be able to be awarded a contract. There will need to be a staged approach in order to give the market time to align itself with our aims in respect of carbon reduction. Additionally staff involved in commissioning, procurement and contracting will need to build the skills and

capacity required to be able to clearly specify our requirements, evaluate contractor commitments and actively monitor delivery of these.

We have grant-funded the Shropshire Climate Action Partnership, working with the Shropshire Chamber and the Federation of Small Businesses to commission and manage the provision free carbon performance advice to 300-500 small businesses in Shropshire during 2022-3, including the potential to refer potential corporate suppliers to the project for advice.

Finally, as an example of good practice, we are already commissioning installers for the Affordable Warmth housing retrofit scheme on the basis of a procurement approach which allows us to rate social value equally with cost and select installers who will act as an umbrella organisation to provide training for sub-contracted local installers in the energy efficiency and low carbon accreditation schemes which are required for effective climate mitigation.

3. **Produce a quarterly report detailing Climate Emergency performance and the impact of the management and operation of all council services and projects.** When will the first quarterly report be published?

The annual report, which was extensive, was published in January. Shorter quarterly reports will be distributed in April, July and September. We won't be able to track carbon emissions on a quarterly basis, but we will give updates on progress with projects and initiatives.

4. **Proactively reduce the number of short car journeys taken, particularly in our towns at first: Act to discourage cars from our town centres, develop low traffic zones, create safe active travel routes and improve urban public transport.** Please describe the range and extent of new measures undertaken since September to address this high priority commitment to reduce traffic emissions in Shropshire towns. Specifically, how are cars and other motor vehicles discouraged from entering Shropshire town centres?

Shropshire Council's recent bus bid, if successful, would provide for a significant improvement to public transport with improved availability and this incentive to switch to public transport and the new vehicles being electric or hydrogen to support reduced or zero emissions between and within Shropshire's market towns. A range of other measures, including the potential development of 'Low Traffic Neighbourhoods' and weekend traffic closures, are currently being tested in Shrewsbury to help address and specifically reduced traffic and air quality concerns. The next Local Transport Plan for Shropshire is being developed using a future ready approach that considers and prioritises the mobility needs of people, places, and activities rather than the transport mode-based approaches of the past with its requirement to follow the guidance of the national transport decarbonisation plan and following the recent Members workshop on ;LTP decarbonisation was a key aim and objective of this plan.

Recognition of the role of active travel in maintaining sustainable communities and strengthening links with environmental and health agendas will be key to this. Work has also recently started on developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Shropshire to provide a strategic, long term approach to developing walking and cycling networks and identifying cycling and walking improvements required in Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Oswestry, Church Stretton and Whitchurch and settlements within 10km of each of these towns. Finally in Shrewsbury, work on the 'Big Town Plan Movement Strategy' is exploring improvements to the public realm to support active travel modes (walking & cycling) and the opportunities presented by reductions in cross-town traffic. Cabinet reports are scheduled for the summer period for the LTP4 / LCWIP for Cabinet approval. It should also be remembered that agreement at last years Scrutiny meeting on LTP4

agreed that a Performance Board to monitor and report on LTP4 implementation and outcomes was agreed which would also produce an Annual report on progress.