

## **CABINET 19 OCTOBER 2022**

### **MEMBER QUESTIONS**

#### **1 Councillor Rob Wilson**

Recently Active Travel England asked Local Authorities to complete a self-assessment of their commitment and capability to deliver Active Travel schemes. Which tier did Shropshire Council place itself in? Did Active Travel England agree with this assessment? How much Capability revenue funding has been awarded to Shropshire Council as a result? What will Shropshire Council be spending this funding on?

#### **2 Councillor David Vasmer**

Will the Cabinet join Shropshire residents in opposing Government plans to allow fracking?

#### **3 Councillor Roger Evans**

I note the recent U-turns that have been made by the Government and the increasing pressure they face on their budget. This includes the increasing need to trim future expenditure and put in place policies to ensure their Climate Change targets are met.

We have seen in the press reports on how inflation is increasing the cost of all future construction projects. This was most recently seen when agreeing the capital funding needed to deliver a project at our last Council meeting.

The estimated cost of constructing the North West Relief Road was originally £80m and is years out of date. Using the examples above its likely cost will now be much higher than that original quoted. Under the present arrangement all costs over and above the original agreed budget will be met by Shropshire Council.

Will the Cabinet agree that until an updated estimate of cost is published, and assurances obtained from government to meet the extra project costs, instruct officers to stop all work connected with its construction?

Finally, can cabinet members inform both elected members and the public the how much has so far been spent on the NWRR project.

#### **4 Councillor Peggy Mullock**

It is clear that the cost of living crisis will have a significant impact on a large number of families and residents in Shropshire this winter and beyond.

We know many families and residents will struggle to pay their bills, keep their homes warm and afford basics, including food, this winter. This has been likened to the scale of the problem of the Covid pandemic with estimates from the Rowntree Foundation that the minimum acceptable standard of living for a couple with 2 children is £43,400 between them. The impact on residents' health and wellbeing is predicted to be significant.

What support is available locally for residents and what specifically are Shropshire Council doing to respond to the crisis?

## **5 Councillor Kate Halliday**

On 4<sup>th</sup> Oct Shrewsbury Town Council (STC) held an extraordinary meeting to discuss the proposed health and wellbeing hub. The meeting was very well attended by Shrewsbury residents, many of whom expressed concerns about the proposals and are worried that with such a large change to GP services locally the only option to be presented at the consultation stage in April '23 will be to co-locate 6 practices together into one hub. STC Health and Wellbeing Hub working group were disappointed that there was no representation from Shropshire Council other than Public Health, when there were issues of planning and travel that the public asked questions about. Given the concerns of residents about the proposals and the engagement process:

- A) Will Shropshire Council investigate the legality of the engagement exercise to date, in accordance with the Gunning Principles?
- B) Will Shropshire Council actively investigate other funding options to support primary care estates with the practices involved in the hub proposals?

## **6 Councillor Julia Buckley**

One year ago the cabinet member for highways categorically assured me and the other residents of Bridgnorth that our highways depot was closing only temporarily due to some health and safety issues at another site. One year later cabinet is proposing a permanent closure, to sell off the asset and plug a hole in the Conservative's budget deficit.

Since the closure, Bridgnorth residents have repeatedly vocalised their concerns about:

- Injuries arising from reduced gritting on strategic pavements to schools
- Inadequate quantities, slow re-stocking and appropriate location of sandbags during flooding
- Slow responses to repair requests and reports "closed down" but not fixed by highways maintenance
- Dangerous pot holes and pavement surfaces

The statistics published in the report appendix relate to increased reporting of problems and do not address directly any of these issues.

Furthermore, despite repeated assurances of the legal requirement to do so, there has been zero consultation on this proposal with the residents or town and parish councils.

Can the cabinet member please explain to the residents, why their concerns have been ignored?

Why has the legal requirement for consultation not been fulfilled?

And why were the local elected Shropshire members for Bridgnorth not shown this report before it was published? Despite copies made available to the press 36 hours earlier?

Within the report, the Director states:

*7.27. From an outcomes angle for communities, engagement with all Members as community leaders, and through Cabinet and Portfolio Holder, will continue to help the service and therefore the Council to ensure that information, feedback and concerns are raised with Highways and that actions may then be identified as necessary to mitigate any negative impacts.*

Does the cabinet acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of Bridgnorth residents have repeatedly and consistently raised their concerns about the reduced service felt in the Bridgnorth area since the closure? (not least including the petition of over 2,000 signatories)

Referring to para 7.27 does the cabinet understand that this abject failure to deliver adequate services in Bridgnorth has led to a very negative impact in terms of reduced public trust and confidence in this Council?