

**LOTON AND TERN
LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE****NOTE OF DECISIONS AND ACTIONS STEMMING FROM THE MEETING HELD
ON 17TH MARCH 2014
7.00 PM – 8.45 PM
AT
THE ALBERBURY VILLAGE HALL, ALBERBURY****Responsible Officer** Mathew Meade-mail: mathew.mead@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743 252534

Committee Members Present:**Shropshire Council**

John Everall

David Roberts

Tern Electoral Ward (Chair)

Loton Electoral Ward

Town/Parish Councils

Elliott Blackmore

Barry Bennion

Pam Furber

Phil Heath

Lynne Padmore

Tom Evans

Tony Hill

Patrick Siese

Bicton Parish Council

Upton Magna Parish Council

Bomere Heath Parish Council

Withington Parish Council

Uffington Parish Council

Great Ness and Little Ness Parish Council

Montford Parish Council

Alberbury with Cardeston Parish Council

Officers Present:

Mathew Mead

Community Action Officer

1. Welcome and introductions

John Everall welcomed councillors, officers and members of the public to the meeting. Approximately 20 members of the public were in attendance.

2. Apologies for Absence

David Nunn (Great Ness and Little Ness Parish Council) Tom Evans attended in his place; Malcom Colclough (Astley Parish Council); David Sandbach (Westbury Parish Council)

3. Disposable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

4. Notes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the previous LJC on 17th October 2013, and the Chairman signed the minutes.

5. Police update

PC Jon Summerfield from the Shrewsbury Rural and North Safer Neighbourhood Team addressed the meeting.

He explained that his team included himself and two CSO's, together with 3 special constables covered much of the LJC area, as well as the Longden, Ford and Rea Valley Area, and Gains Park and Bowbrook in Shrewsbury. In addition to his time any incidents would be attended by the police response unit based in Shrewsbury.

The Safer Neighbourhood Team is based at Pontesbury Police station, but aim to be out and about in the community as much as possible. They are very much an intelligence based team, and will focus on an area where reports of crime, Anti Social Behaviour or suspicious behaviour have been seen. In recent weeks the team had been focusing on speeding on Racecourse Lane in Bowbrook and incidents of car crime in the area. They also work closely with partner agencies such as Shropshire Council, Alcohol Reduction Partnership and Housing Associations to tackle problems.

Crime in the area was generally low but Jon warned people to be aware of issues of thefts from cars; thefts of machinery and equipment from outbuildings; and phone based scams telling people their credit cards had been used in London, and that a courier was coming to collect their card for evidence. Jon also encouraged any members of the public who witnessed crime or suspicious behaviour to call the police on their 101 number.

6. Presentation: Chris Taylor, Connecting Shropshire Project

Connecting Shropshire is a project designed to provide Shropshire with high speed broadband. It is a £24 million project run in partnership with BT, which aims to provide a minimum of 2mbps speed to 72,000 properties in Shropshire, but together with BT's commercial operation 93% of properties should have access to fibre based broadband, and 87% to super-fast broadband of at least 24mbps

The programme started in October 2013 and will be rolled out across the county over the next two years. The work involves upgrading phone exchanges and linking these to local BT boxes (the green exchange points seen in most towns and villages). This is quite a technical process and until the work is done it is hard to give exact details of how soon the new services will be available, and what speeds will be available.

However in the LJC area Montford was one of the first exchanges to be upgraded in 2013. Work was also in progress at Halfway House, Pontesbury, Northern Shrewsbury, Upton Magna and Harlescott, meaning services in some areas of the LJC would be available in the spring. Further work at Bomere Heath, Hadnall, Shawbury and Cross Houses would start later in the spring.

The Connecting Shropshire team will contact the local Parish Council when new services are available and do local publicity to raise awareness of the new services.

Residents can also look at when they are likely to receive the new faster speeds by looking at the Connecting Shropshire and Open Reach Websites

www.connectingshropshire.co.uk

www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/where-and-when/

Questions from the meeting then took place. Asked how much the new service would cost to residents, Chris stated that this was down to the package people had with their phone/internet provider. People wouldn't automatically get the service but would have to take out a contract with a provider. This could range in price depending on speeds and add-ons such as free phone calls or tv packages. One advantage of the rollout programme was that more providers should be available to customers giving them a greater choice.

Residents also asked how fast the service would be if they lived a long way from the exchange. Chris explained that the super-fast broadband was provided up to the exchange box, and from there went to households via the copper network. Generally after 1.2 km the speed started to fall, so the further away you were from the exchange the slower the speed was likely to be. However it was dependent on other factors, and BT were exploring ways to speed the copper network too. It is difficult to say with any certainty what speeds might be in any area, until the full technical checks had been undertaken.

Shropshire Council was also bidding for a further £11 million from the Government's Super-Fast Broadband Extension Programme to help provide broadband in areas not covered by the BDUK programme. These are generally rural areas where delivering broadband in a different way such as Wi-Fi, satellite or cabling to the property might be needed. The Connecting Shropshire project would work with communities in these areas to provide the best service possible for them.

7. Presentation: Ian Kilby – Planning Services Manager Shropshire Council. Localism v National Planning Policy Framework. What it means for Shropshire.

Ian Kilby explained that there were two main pieces of government policy which were affecting planning policy in Shropshire at the moment, which were the 2012 Localism Bill, and the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Localism Bill was about a bottom up approach to planning which gave communities a greater say in how and where development would take place, and also gave them new powers to take control of community assets as part of this process. Over the last two years Shropshire Council has been developing its Site Allocation and Management of Development (SAMDev) Policies based on localism and developing policies in towns, villages and parishes. This includes piloting some Neighbourhood Plans in the county, which is an important part of the Localism Bill, and gives communities a greater say in the development in their area.

SAMDev has been in development in Shropshire since 2009, and is further ahead in the county than in any other unitary authority formed in 2009. Over 300 Parish Council meetings have been attended, thousands of public responses have been received and three periods of public consultation and site checks have taken place in

line with the recommendations of Localism. The Council is confident the plans will provide a framework to deliver sustainable development in Shropshire up to 2026.

However the plans are still around 12 months from being formally adopted, and still need to go through an enquiry by the Planning Inspector.

At the same time the Government has introduced new national Planning Policies through the National Planning Policy Framework, introduced in 2012. Significantly in section 49 of the policy it states that there should be “a presumption in favour of sustainable development” and is designed to significantly increase the level of house building in England. The policy also requires planning authorities to ensure enough land available to allocate five year’s worth of housing demand, and it’s over this definition of the “Five Year Land Supply” that there is a conflict between Localism and NPPF.

Under the current rules Shropshire’s SAMDev policies are not yet approved, and as a result the current level of land available in Shropshire is judged to be 4.95 years (September 2013). This means Shropshire’s policies are not considered to be “up to date” so any planning applications will instead be judged on National guidelines outlined in the NPPF

This has meant that in recent weeks Shropshire Council has received a number of planning applications for housing developments which sit outside the policies of SAMDev, but do meet the broader NPPF policies. This leaves Shropshire Council planners in a difficult situation as they know the applications do not meet local needs but are having to recommend approval based on the policies of the NPPF. Should these applications not be approved, the developer can appeal and test cases suggest the Planning Inspector is favouring NPPF policy over local policy. Successful appeals mean the tax payer has to pay the cost of appeal which can be a sizable figure.

Shropshire Council feels this situation is unfair, as while the SAMDev policies are not fully adopted, they are sufficiently progressed to show the Five Year Land supply issue will be more than adequately met locally, and even on current assessments the supply of land is only fractionally below the national target. Shropshire also has granted permission for over 5000 new homes which have yet to be built, and the recession led to a depressed house building market which affected numbers in Shropshire over the last 5 years. Allowing development which goes against local aspirations is also harmful to the process of Localism, and appears to be taking the decision making process further away from Town and Parish Councils.

The next stage of SAMDev consultation starts on 14th March and runs for 6 weeks. Once this process is completed and assessed it will then go to the Secretary of State for inspection and the public hearing over this will probably take place in the autumn, with the policy approved in the spring. Until this time NPPF will take precedence in Shropshire, but representatives from Shropshire and neighbouring councils are making representation over the situation to the Housing Minister Nick Bowles. Who has previously visited Shropshire and praised the Councils approach to planning. They want to discuss with him whether greater consideration can be given to the SAMDev plans, ahead of its approval in 2015. Shropshire is not alone in experiencing these problems with the 5 year land supply, but the Government seem keen to push forward with NPPF policies to encourage more house building in England.

Members of the Committee asked a series of questions around the Council's planning policies. These included details on how the Five Year Land supply is calculated. Ian directed people to the Council's Policy statement which can be found on the link below:

<http://shropshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/five-year-housing-land-supply-statement/>

Members also asked if the new Community Infrastructure Levy on open market housing had been a contributing factor to less homes being built in Shropshire, and in turn affecting the five year land supply. Ian responded that he didn't feel this was the case, as developers liked the certainty that the CIL brought them when planning a development. The lack of house building seemed to have been caused by the recession as from 2009 to 2012 the number of homes being built had been in decline. However in the last year there had been a 30% increase in applications which was a sign the market was responding.

A number of questions were raised over what the term "Sustainability" actually means. Ian said that the issue of sustainability has been considered as a whole through the NPPF and there is not just one definition of policy. Planning QC's have given presentations to Parish Councils that show that under the NPPF most of Shropshire could be considered suitable for development. The NPPF is very much written as a mandate for development, and while this doesn't give total ability to build anywhere, it is hard to turn down applications based on the NPPF criteria.

Questions from the public were then taken. These included a question on whether Neighbourhood Plans could be a way for Shropshire to work locally and deliver policies that local people approved of. Ian replied that Shropshire had piloted this approach over the last two years, but so far Much Wenlock is the only community that has produced a plan which they plan to take to referendum. In other areas a "Neighbourhood Plan Light" approach had been taken where communities consult on their planning needs, and these are then adapted as part of the SAMDev policies. SAMDev itself is a bottom up approach that adopts the localism approach. However both Neighbourhood Plans, and SAMDev must be based on NPPF policies.

Further questions were asked why the SAMDev policy had taken so long to adopt, as Shropshire became a unitary council in 2009. Ian responded that the process had taken longer than anticipated, but this was in part to the Council taking the localism approach and consulting with communities and town and parish councils over the last few years. Arguably the plans should now have been adopted, but the worth of consulting more widely should be reflected in the final plans.

The Chairman thanked Ian for attending the meeting and updating the Committee on what was clearly a difficult issue, and one that is giving concern to many parish councils. He hoped the issue of the Five Year Land Supply could be solved as soon as possible.

8. Resolutions from Parish Councils

No resolutions were put forward for the LJC to consider.

9. Loton and Tern Local Joint Committee Funding report.

The Community Action Officer gave an overview of the funding for the LJC.

In 2013/14 this Local Joint Committee had a total budget of **£18,389** available to spend. This is made up of £17,000 from the LJC budget, £1,120 from the arts funding and £269 carryover from 2012/13 budget.

So far in this financial year £11,964.96 has been spent by the Committee, leaving **£6,424.04** to be committed in this financial year.

Shropshire Council had voted not to have a funding budget for 2014/15 so these would be the last grants available to the LJC. Any unspent LJC funding cannot be carried forward to the next financial year.

The Committee had received 9 applications since their last meeting, and there was insufficient funding available to support all the applications to their full extent. **Members were asked to support the recommendation that projects LJC10.39 to LJC10.48 are awarded 69% of the grant requested.** This allows the LJC to support all of the projects from the remaining grant fund available.

The Committee voted 9 votes for the proposal. Councillor Blackmore voted against the proposal saying that each project should have been assessed separately and judged on its merits to see if they were delivering value for money. The resolution was passed by 9 votes to 1, and grants were awarded as outlined in the table below.

	Project	Total Cost	LJC Request	Grant Awarded
10.39	Alberbury Notice Boards	£1,500.00	£750.00	£517.20
10.40	Withington PCC Church Path	£9,205.00	£2,000.00	£1,379.20
10.41	Bomere AED scheme	£518.00	£250.00	£172.40
10.42	Westbury Dog Bins	£1,430.00	£715.00	£493.06
10.44	Bicton PC - Seat replacement	£500.00	£250.00	£172.40
10.45	Vron Show	£375.00	£350.00	£241.36
10.46	Upton Magna Car Park	£20,000.00	£2,000.00	£1,379.20
10.47	Montford VH Car Park	£3,400.00	£1,000.00	£689.60
10.48	Bicton Play Area upgrade	£3,312.00	£2,000.00	£1,379.20

10. Community Action Update

At previous meetings of the LJC the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service had given presentations on potential closures of Baschurch Fire Station and a reduction in engines in Shrewsbury, as part of the reforms needed to meet the services budget cuts.

The Community Action officer reported that these cuts had been averted through a mixture of public response to the proposals, and the service being able to generate extra income through local taxation than expected. The station manager at Baschurch wanted to pass on his thanks to the Committee and members of the public for taking part in the consultation and supporting their local station.

As outlined in the funding report the Local Joint Committee would not have a funding budget for 2014/15, but would still have the support of the Community Action Officer and a small budget for room hire, publicity and admin, so the Committee could continue to meet if they wished. The meetings would be the same as normal with the exception of the funding report agenda item. Further work would be undertaken within Shropshire Council to better define the role of the LJC in the future and this could be discussed in more detail at their next meeting. Committee members did raise concerns that without a funding budget peoples interest in attending the meetings might be diminished.

11. Have Your Say Question Time

Members of the public raised the issue of Shropshire Council spending £190,000 over 2 years on Bright Lake Consulting, as part of the measures to help the Council save £80 million over the next two years. This story had just been featured in the Local Press.

It was suggested that the consultant and portfolio holder for this piece of work could be invited to give a presentation at the next LJC meeting.

12. Date of next meeting

Full Public Meetings

Thursday 10th July 2014
Thursday 23rd October 2014
Thursday 19th March 2015

Planning Meetings

Wednesday 18th June 2014
Thursday 25th September 2014
Thursday 19th February 2015

Venues to be alternated between Loton and Tern Wards

Meeting closed at 8.45pm

Chair: _____

Date: