

MEMBER QUESTIONS

Question from Councillor Roy Aldcroft

Since 2016 Woore Parish has been preparing to become a major transport route for vehicles building the HS2 rail-route at Onnely. Work starts next year on the road network between Stone and Onnely, affecting the A51, A53 and A525. This is to prepare the roads and junctions for some 700 HGV's journeys per day for seven years as the project progresses.

This will, of course, seriously affect the parish of Woore, it's school, village centre, local traffic and local residents, businesses and facilities.

Can the Portfolio Holder for Highways assure the parish of Woore that Shropshire Council will continue to support Woore Parish Council and its residents over the seven or more years that project will take? Ensuring compliance with agreed mitigations and seeking a speed limit along the route through the parish of thirty miles per hour?

Response from Councillor Richard Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Regulatory Services

I would like to thank Cllr Aldcroft for his question as I am aware of the concerns residents of Woore Parish Council have regarding the impact of HS2. Officers and Members will continue to support Woore PC to ensure that this impact is reduced and necessary mitigation is put in place. Officers have regular meetings with the Parish Council and HS2.

However, the mitigation has to provide a safe highway network. Whilst there has been a continued campaign to reduce the speed of traffic through the parish to 30mph, all the internal and external professional advice from highway engineers has been clear that reducing the speed will actually result in the potential for accidents. Moreover, for the police to enforce the reduced speed, it will require additional measures such as speed humps, which I understand are not supported. We will continue to work with the PC and community to find other measures.

Question from Councillor Ruth Houghton

The Shropshire Plan has an objective that focuses on healthy people. Given that this Government are not including leisure centres, many of which include swimming pools, in the new Energy Bills Discount Scheme will the portfolio holder confirm that Shropshire Council operated and contracted out leisure centres and swimming pools will be supported to develop and deliver sustainability plans that will reduce energy costs in both the short and longer term thus ensuring that these facilities remain both viable and, most importantly, available for the local communities that they serve?

Response from Councillor Rob Gittins, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital

Shropshire Council have shown their commitment to directly operated leisure facilities and supporting third party operators since the pandemic commenced in

March 2020 through provision of additional revenue support, via Council budgets and external funding, namely the National Leisure Recovery Fund which was successfully applied for and distributed.

As recovery from the pandemic continues, the current utility cost increases add significantly to the challenges operators face. Shropshire Council are committed to continue their support, working closely with Property Services and Carbon Support colleagues to identify suitable facilities with a view to making funding applications to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and Low Carbon Skills Fund. These applications form part of a carbon reduction feasibility plan which is being developed for all leisure centres. If successful, projects supported by the funding will reduce the carbon footprint of those facilities. While reducing the carbon footprint of a site does not automatically reduce the operating costs, it is anticipated that increased energy efficiency will reduce the facilities exposure to energy price instability.

More detailed plans for individual sites are being considered, however, these require significant capital investment not necessarily supported by external funding. In the meantime, all leisure facility operators in Shropshire, including the Council themselves, have implemented and are continuing to implement measures to reduce utility consumption such as LED light fittings, Building Management System optimisation and modification, temperature optimisation, variable speed drives on circulation pumps and air-handling units, replacement of inefficient boilers and pool filters and fitting water flush controls.

We continue to support operations at all leisure facilities to ensure they continue to remain available for local communities and support, wherever possible, those national sport, leisure and physical activity organisations lobbying government to include leisure centres in the Energy Bills Discount Scheme.