

PUBLIC QUESTIONS
COUNCIL 6 JULY 2023

Question from Barry Greig

The council declared a climate emergency in May of 2019 stating a pressing need to be net zero, both as a council and within the wider county by 2030.

The council advised in response to a recent FOI (Council ref RFI# 4853) that no planning and budgeting has taken place 1/3rd (four years) into the corrective period of the Council declared emergency. With no council plans or costings in place more than 4 years, the emergency clearly isn't anywhere near as important or pressing as the 'emergency' status would suggest or specifically warrant.

I feel compelled to ask why has the council made no structured and costed planning around a declared emergency situation 1/3 into a corrective action period?

I also ask is there any reason why the council should not immediately rescind their emergency declaration due to their own inactivity and as an elected body it is also something that has bypassed the election process with no involvement of the voters of Shropshire?

Finally, are there any good reasons why the Council should not remove all references to the 'emergency' on the council website?

Response from Cllr Ian Nellins, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Climate Change is an extremely complex challenge which will affect every Council service, member of staff, Shropshire business and local community. The UK Government has adopted legally-binding targets for carbon reduction. In this context, Shropshire Council is continuing to plan and invest in measures to improve its own carbon performance (see carbon monitoring report, Cabinet 6 June 2023) as well as actively supporting wider community efforts to improve Shropshire's carbon performance. Many of these measure will also help Shropshire Council reduce costs.

Accurate data and comprehensive monitoring and reporting systems for carbon performance are still being developed nationally and locally. Just because Shropshire Council does not hold the specific information which Mr Greig previously requested in his FOI, it does not follow, as he contends, that Shropshire Council is inactive or that "no planning and budgeting has taken place 1/3rd (four years) into the corrective period of the Council declared emergency." We are focussing on actions that we know will save carbon and costs to the council such as installation of solar PV on many of our building stock. These have saved the council hundreds of thousands of pounds since they started being installed in 2012. For further details of this good news story please see: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/shropshire-climate-action/energy-and-heating/solar-energy/>

Question from Frank Smallman

We are representatives from Condover and St Edwards Primary School Worship committee and are promoting children's voice within our local community.

We would like to ask you the question. How are you promoting children's voice within Shropshire Council?

Response from Councillor Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

A range of activities capture children's voices. For example the Health, Wellbeing and Prevention Directorate are currently designing a survey to capture young people's views on their health and well-being needs. This will be a survey which forms part of our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). A further example of such activity is involving young people in workshops to shape SEND provision across Shropshire.

The Youth Support team carried out a survey of secondary aged students last year to gain young people's views of a range of topics including local activities and facilities. The Youth Support Team are also due to appoint a Participation Officer who will work with 13-19 year olds to capture their views and use this to help shape future offers. The Virtual School has a responsibility for education provision of children who are looked after (CLA) and children with a social worker also has Participation Officers who will seek the views of young people and provide activities to meet their interests.

Children who are looked after and children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will have review meetings for their EHCP or PEP (Personal Education Plan). The child's views must be captured for both of these documents. Often children will attend for all or some of the review meeting. Others prefer to write, draw or talk to a trusted person.

We have involved young people on some appointment panels for staff who work closely with children especially those who are in care. We also have a children in care council (CICC).

At a school level we encourage all schools to have student stakeholder groups such as student councils or eco-groups and we promote the use of pupil panels when schools are interviewing for a new headteacher.

We previously had a youth parliament. We are investigating how we can re-introduce something similar.

In Children's Social Care:

Each child is asked for their views for every child protection conference, however they want to give them and are offered the opportunity to attend if they are of an age.

Every Child Looked After completes their views for CLA Reviews, either a form or on Mind of My Own – the app that we have to engage children in sharing their views, contributing to their plans.

We had a young people's advisory board acting to advise the Team developing Caer Bryn – our recently opened Children's Home promoting independence.

We listen to young people and this year 2 young people have shared their views and come to Senior Leadership Meetings to talk to us and inform our service development. We have examples of practice changing as a result.

We have a Children in Care Council who do pieces of work sharing their views about issues that affect them.

We have a Care Leavers Forum that works with Care Leavers to get their lived experience and inform developments for our 18+ group. We are developing a participation strategy to develop this offer further.

Question from Christopher Forde

Looking at the Shropshire cycling & walking 10 year plan, I was surprised by the lack of information about those who would be unable to use plan. I am referring to people with Disabilities. From a personal point of view as a blue badge holder, it is essential for me to be able to travel independently by car iwithin the towns identified by in the 10 year plan.

A) Has any form for exploration / investigation been completed by the council to identify the needs of people with disabilities to travel, to, from and within Shropshire?

B) How many parking spaces in general will be increased or reduced, including curb side parking in Oswestry over the ten year plan.

C) How many blue badge parking spaces will be increased or reduced within in Oswestry over the ten year plan.

D) What are the number of council car parking spaces available both to the general public and to people with blue badges in each of the areas within the walking & cycling zones across Shropshire and the total numbers that will be increased or reduced over the ten year plan.

E) Have Shropshire council plans to increase, decrease or change the bus service over the 10 year plan within the walking & cycling zones, if so what are they.

F) Can Shropshire council confirm any plans or suggestion to reduce people's freedoms to travel by car, including whether by the use of cameras to issue fines or roads blocked off, reducing in one form or another people's right to travel that are not currently

Response from Cllr Ian Nellins, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

A) Has any form for exploration / investigation been completed by the council to identify the needs of people with disabilities to travel, to, from and within Shropshire?

Not specifically. However, all LCWIP schemes will seek to be compliant with Department for Transport's Local Transport Note 1/20 (LTN 1/20) which puts planning for pedestrians and cyclists with disabilities at the heart of all schemes. People with disabilities and mobility issues are as important users of the transport system as everyone else, which is why we consulted with local disability groups during the development of the plan. We understand that people in this group may not be able to walk or cycle, and the aim of this plan is not to remove access by car for anyone who needs it. Some of the proposals, such as tackling pavement parking, dealing with uneven pavement surfaces and widening footways will benefit those who use mobility aids such as wheelchairs and walking frames, even over short distances. All schemes will have a disability assessment integrated as part of the detailed design and feasibility studies, which will happen at a later date

B) How many parking spaces in general will be increased or reduced, including curb side parking in Oswestry over the ten year plan.

The LCWIP is a high level document and specific details such as loss of parking spaces depends on what type of scheme is put in place. Stakeholder engagement and public engagement will be carried out further down the line when schemes are at a more advanced stage of development and details, including loss or gain of parking spaces, will be made available at this time.

C) How many blue badge parking spaces will be increased or reduced within in Oswestry over the ten year plan.

See response above

D) What are the number of council car parking spaces available both to the general public and to people with blue badges in each of the areas within the walking & cycling zones across Shropshire and the total numbers that will be increased or reduced over the ten year plan.

As the consultation has recently closed and is presently being assessed, it is too early to give an accurate response to the impact on parking spaces. As such, no decisions have yet been made on any of the potential projects. That said, the need for sufficient Blue Badge parking spaces will of course be carefully considered.

E) Have Shropshire council plans to increase, decrease or change the bus service over the 10 year plan within the walking & cycling zones, if so what are they.

Shropshire Council has recently submitted 2 significant bids to transform public transport across the County, through its Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Bus Partnership with bus operators, whilst the initial funding submissions

have been unsuccessful at this time, we have continued dialogue with the Department for Transport to ensure we are in the best possible position to attract the required funding to the County to improve public transport services. The initial Bus Service Improvement Plan can be found on Shropshire councils' website and will be update annually.

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F) Can Shropshire council confirm any plans or suggestion to reduce people's freedoms to travel by car, including whether by the use of cameras to issue fines or roads blocked off, reducing in one form or another people's right to travel that are not currently

The LCWIP is about giving people a genuine choice between using their car, walking/wheeling or cycling, so that those people who may want to walk or cycle but currently feel like the car is their only option for confidence and safety reasons will be able to do so. Rather than diminish access, we hope to increase the range of journeys that people can make without requiring a car, which is particularly important for people who do not or cannot drive, and during the cost of living crisis when the cost of fuel is high.

We are introducing School Streets in Shropshire which will restrict car access to specific streets outside of schools on safety grounds. This is to give children the freedom to get into school without congested school entrances and improve air quality around the school site.

Question from Rev. Paul Cawthorne

The risk assessments of the proposed NorthWest road scheme seem culpably inadequate: financial, ecological and traffic flow downsides seem systematically underestimated. The environmental assessment wasn't even available to the public at time of WSP consultation .

Additional costs are clearly externalised or put off, such as:

- risk insurance for remediation of unintended disruption of town water supply by damage from roadworks
- new work needed on the Uffington roundabout to prevent gridlock at Battlefield roundabout for commuters from Hadnall
- increased costs of materials necessitating a more realistic cost-benefit calculation.

It seems obvious that councillors are being corralled into approving this scheme to free up land for housing rather than for the stated objectives of the road. Is the level of risk being proposed misfeasance in public office?

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

I can confirm that the range of risk and mitigation assessments undertaken in support of the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road fully comply with those requirements set by Department for Transport and also the wide range of Statutory Consultees engaged through the Planning Application process. The results of these are in the public domain, including the full Supplementary Environmental Information documentation submitted in February 2023. This addressed the key remaining issues raised through consultation, and work to conclude this process with consultees is now nearing completion.

The project continues to monitor forecast costs around risk mitigation across a number of carefully monitored scenarios, and these costs, along with the final construction cost, will be brought back for the consideration of Full Council as part of the Full Business Case (FBC) due at the end of the year. It is important to note at this time that Planning Permission, and any subsequent decision to move to road construction following the FBC are related, but entirely separate processes.

Question from Jamie Russell

On 28 June 2023 the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), the government's climate adviser, published a report saying that the UK had gone backwards on progress towards net zero in the last 12 months and that urgent action was needed to get back on track.

In his covering letter the committee chairman, Conservative peer Lord Deben, writes: 'Our children will not forgive us if we leave them a world of withering heat and devastating storms where sea level rises and extreme temperatures force millions to move because their countries are no longer habitable. None of us can avoid our responsibility. Delay is not an option.'

The report recommends a national review of current and future road-building projects to assess their consistency with the government's environmental goals. This is to ensure that decisions do not lock in unsustainable levels of traffic growth. Schemes should only be taken forward if they meaningfully support cost-effective delivery of Net Zero and climate adaptation.

What are the implications of such a review for the proposed North West Relief Road, given that it will result in adding more CO2 into the atmosphere under any meaningful timescale?

Response from Cllr Ian Nellins, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport

The Shrewsbury North West Relief Road received Programme Entry under the DfT Large Local Majors Programme in 2019 and is now in delivery. As such, the Council has not been made aware of any suggestion that future government infrastructure investment decisions would be applied retrospectively to such projects.

That notwithstanding, the proposal to deliver the NWRR has been carefully reviewed in the light of the Council's stated carbon position. A rigorous carbon modelling and forecasting exercise, both for the construction phase and the future lifetime use of the scheme has been undertaken and is published on the Council's website. Further to this, the methodology and conclusions within the report have been independently reviewed by an academic specialist at Birmingham University and this is also available through the website. The findings of the report highlight a net carbon legacy for the scheme in the region of 27k tonnes over the lifetime of the scheme. This impact has already been considerably mitigated through informed design choices (build materials and methodology), and the acknowledgement of net carbon savings on the highways network more widely within Shrewsbury. Work continues on developing approaches that will deliver further reductions in the project's carbon legacy, potentially to net zero over the lifetime of the road, and a funding commitment to this has already been made within the project budget.

Question from Mike Streetly

On 23 June 2023 DEFRA told Shrewsbury and Atcham's MP that, in relation to the proposed North West Relief Road, "The Environment Agency [has] outstanding concerns about issues to do with protecting the water resources aquifer from which Severn Trent Water draws water supplies for the town of Shrewsbury. The Environment Agency does not consider the information supplied by the Council and its representatives to demonstrate an appropriate level of assessment and risk mitigation."

If Shropshire Council builds the road-against the Environment Agency's advice, will it be liable for the costs of remediation/ replacement of the water supplies if they become-contaminated by a spill on the road and how would Shropshire-Council underwrite such a risk?

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

As applicant for the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road, Shropshire Council continues its ongoing and positive engagement with all statutory consultees. This includes the Environment Agency, where discussions continue around the appropriate risk and mitigation plans for the road during construction and in future use. As a responsible scheme promoter, appropriate controls and risk management plans will continue to be refined by the Council as part of the current planning process, with the input of the Environment Agency and other agencies, in order to provide appropriate levels of reassurance to all parties.