

MEMBER QUESTIONS
COUNCIL 21 SEPTEMBER 2023

Question from Councillor Garry Burchett

Could the Cabinet Member for highways give me an estimate for the amount of traffic that would be removed from travelling through Shrewsbury town Centre when the North West Relief Road is built?

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Response from Councillor Dan Morris, Portfolio Holder for Highways

The following information is already in the public domain as part of the current NWRR Planning Application. The traffic model indicates the difference in flows at the three entry points into Shrewsbury Town Centre (i.e all vehicles for all routes at these 3 locations) for the AM and PM peak hours at opening year and 2038.

We see a marked traffic reduction along the key cross town entry points at Welsh Bridge and Castle Gates in particular as a result of the North West Relief Road. These reductions in Town centre traffic directly assist in reducing congestion and delays in the town centre and frees up capacity to facilitate other potential enhancements.

As part of our assessment we also reviewed a specific route that traffic takes through the Town centre via The Mount, Smithfield Road and Chester Street, which is the route that it is anticipated traffic would most likely reassign from and onto the North West Relief Road.

Looking therefore at traffic that takes this route through the Town Centre, the model indicates the traffic flow reduction for the opening forecast year at morning and afternoon peaks is an average of 52.75%, and in 2038 remains at an average of 43%. It's also to note that these figures do not currently build in the anticipated additional effects on reducing traffic movements of parallel initiatives such as the Big Town Plan and the proposed town centre redevelopment programme.

Question from Councillor Julian Dean

As we head towards another winter with many struggling due to energy costs, what progress can the administration report with regard to upgrading the council's housing stock with appropriate insulation to improve health and wellbeing and reduce bills whilst also enabling the conversion to non-fossil fuel heating systems as will be required by local and national commitments to achieve carbon net zero?

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

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) – Gobowen EWI Phase 1 is now complete, the aim of the scheme was to improve the energy efficiency of 26 Cornish Style pre-fabricated properties in West Place / Hammonds Place Gobowen and enhance their external appearance.

The works comprised of:

- Installation of external wall insulation system by Permarock (EWI) with a 1.5mm Silicone Ultra render finish to the properties external walls.
- Full window & door replacement.
- Full replacement of roof coverings, battens and roofing membranes.
- Removal of the existing insulation materials.
- Installation of 450mm of insulation in the roof void and high-performance roof insulation to the mansard slopes.
- Full replacement of all rainwater goods.
- Replacement of existing soffits with ventilated plastic profiles.
- Replacement of existing mechanical vents to bathrooms and kitchens and installation of new Vent Axia units with humidistats.
- Installation of new canopies over entrance doors.

The works were undertaken by our main contractor Sustainable Building Services (UK) LTD a contractor which is experienced in this type of retro-fit energy efficiency project. The final project cost is £1.67million with DESNZ - Dept for Energy Security and Net Zero (formally BEIS – Dept for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) providing £280K of grant funding towards these costs.

The completed works have improved the properties EPC ratings from 'Band D' to 'Band C' in line with the current Government targets for all social housing to have a minimum EPC C by 2030. In addition the works have improved; internal comfort conditions (this has already been noticed by residents), reduce energy usage and heating costs for residents helping to decrease fuel poverty and help reduce the occurrence of damp and mould by increasing the internal surface temperatures of walls & ceilings. The works also benefit the wider environment by a reduction in carbon emissions by approximately 29 tonnes per year and enhance the properties appearance and the visual amenity of the area.

The works will also give a reduction of planned future maintenance works on such items as roof coverings, RW goods, external waste pipes, windows and doors, internal ventilation & external decoration.

Since 2021, STAR Housing have continued to invest in our existing homes to improve their efficiency, reduce heating costs and prepare for net zero. We have completed the following upgrade works to the Council's housing stock, and indicative figures for upgrades planned for this year have also been given:

Upgrade Works	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 - indicative	TOTAL (properties)	TOTAL (expenditure)
Loft Insulation top up's	5	103	42	150	£60,000
Window replacement	19	23	20	62	£348,000
Cavity Wall insulation	0	0	22	22	£16,000
Boiler replacements	375	183	145	703	£1,842,000
Air Source Heat Pump installations	49	10	10	69	£552,000
External Wall Insulation	0	0	26	26	£1,600,000
TOTALS				1,032	£4,418,000

All of the above works have improved the energy efficiency of the properties, providing greater thermal comfort and will have contributed to reducing the cost of energy bills for the residents. A number of properties have been fitted with renewable technologies, namely Air Source Heat Pumps, and STAR Housing continue to fit these systems wherever possible in off grid properties.

In Summer 2023, we completed our first external wall insulation (EWI) full retrofit project funded by the social housing decarbonisation fund which saw £1.6million invested in improving the energy efficiency of 26 properties in the Gobowen area. We have worked with the Government's social housing social housing accelerator initiative to undertake an assessment of our readiness and preparation for net zero investment, in advance of developing our next Asset Strategy in 2024 which will set out how we will achieve our long-term sustainability goals.

In STAR Housing's 30-year Property Investment Plan, a provision of £20 million has been made for energy efficiency improvement works to be completed over the next 5 years in order to achieve EPC Band C on all properties in the housing stock. 1,863 (47%) of our homes are currently below EPC band C.

Additionally, we continue to support our residents through the cost-of-living crisis through our Financial Inclusion Team and the delivery of front-line housing support.

Question from Councillor Ruth Houghton

Shropshire Council, through its Public Health duty, commissions services from, and contracts with, local NHS Providers. How does the Council ensure that there are robust HR processes in place within each NHS provider organisation and that the services delivered are fully supported by an Equality Impact Assessment?

Response from Councillor Cecilia Motley, Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Communities

Public Health has mandated and statutory functions to improve the health of the population of Shropshire – some of the public health services provided to support our population, particularly Public Health Nursing, Drug and Alcohol treatment and recovery and NHS Health-checks, are commissioned and delivered by third parties, including, but not limited to the NHS.

In Shropshire, currently, the Public Health Nursing and Sexual Health services are contracts held by NHS Provider Trusts. The Council ensures that there are robust HR processes in place at several stages. Firstly, as part of the procurement evaluation, HR processes are assessed along with HR policies. A question in the evaluation process is asked to enable prospective providers to demonstrate their HR policies and procedures. An example of this is below:

Describe your staffing model for the delivery of the service: This should include:

- How staffing requirements are assessed, monitored and maintained.
- Retention of staff
- Maintaining services during periods of staff absence short and long term or emerging priorities.
- Ensuring staff professional registration is achieved, recorded and maintained
- Training of staff and CPD

- Staff appraisal
- Training of the wider workforce including partners
- Appropriate employment checks including DBS

On-going monitoring is undertaken through regular contract monitoring meetings including any HR issues arising. This will include any forecasted retirement or leavers as well as any recruitment, retention and sickness issues. Mandatory training, professional registration and appraisal compliance is also monitored. The NHS Trusts are expected to raise any service or workforce issues with the commissioner at the earliest opportunity and to have within their risk register for discussion. Business continuity plans are also assessed as part of the procurement evaluation process. Any significant changes in service provision would require a business case and/or discussion with commissioners and equality impact assessment be undertaken before changes are implemented.

When developing a specification for a public health service this will be developed in line with national guidance and national specifications where these exist. The needs of the local population will also be assessed linked to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and the service specification designed to address the identified needs and the population demographics and levels of inequalities. Services are expected to demonstrate both through the tender / procurement process responses and through their ongoing delivery that they respond to local needs including the rurality of Shropshire, and their delivery models and staffing / workforce structures continue to take this into account. Quarterly contract performance meetings are held with providers to review progress and ensure any issues in delivery have appropriate mitigation plans in place which are monitored. However, the vast majority of the services delivered through these contracts are mandated and offered universally with additional targeted support for individuals/families as required and follow the suggested national service specifications

Question from Councillor Vivienne Parry

AIR B&Bs and Holiday lets are businesses and are asked to pay for rubbish bins, they are not doing this ,asking people who stay on holiday to take rubbish with them home but in many cases this does not happen it is dumped in the waste small black bins on street, or in parks or in the street all over the floor. Councill waste bin collectors not the dustbin men tell me that they have been told not to collect and it stands on the ground for days not collected with vermin running over it.

I have then asked for a collection which I would think costs this Council more money and because it has been left on the floor spills everywhere needing to be swept time and money .The officer Zoe Mortimer came to look at this last week I hope we can do something about this as it makes Ludlow look bad and I am sure visitors wonder why our beautiful town is left in this state .Asking one of the pubs in town the landlady said she pays £150 a week for her waste to be removed why are other businesses able to get away with not paying . Please can something be done urgently

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

The responsibility for waste disposal sits with the property owner. Normally domestic waste will be disposed of through normal collection services funded through the council tax. For traders it is their responsibility to arrange for trade waste collection for which the business is required to pay. If these properties are being let via AIR B&B, then it would be classified as trade waste. If specific properties can be identified that are causing issues, then these can be investigated and assessment made of what action the Council could take. If there is evidence which can be attributed to a business then ultimately the council can take enforcement action.

Question from Councillor Bernie Bentick

Regarding adoption of developments within Shropshire,

1. How does the Planning Dept decide that a development is ready for adoption and what is the time standard for adoption, after the development is ready for this?
2. How many and which specific developments are outstanding & what steps are being taken to clear this backlog?
3. How does the Planning Dept assess whether Section 106 agreements have been delivered, how many and which specific agreements have not been delivered & what enforcement action has been taken?

Response from Councillor Chris Schofield, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services

Clarification has been sought and we understand the breadth of the question is to include adoptions for open space and highways.

1. There is not a standard time period for adoption. We work with developers to ensure that the standard of roads or open space areas meet the required specification before they are adopted. In terms of housing estates, as an example, this can often be beyond the occupation of the dwellings on the site. Open space areas are often done in the latter stages of a development as you would expect.
2. We do have lists of developments that are outstanding. Of course, our enforcement team have complaints to respond to where developments have unadopted roads or open spaces. Officers in the enforcement team follow these up to ensure that the works are completed.
3. The planning service has a dedicated team that monitors all Section 106 agreements and can provide details on all clauses of agreements that have been delivered and those outstanding. Clauses within S106 agreements have different trigger dates for delivering the requirements, so although there may be contributions or works outstanding, this does not necessarily mean that there has been a breach of the S106 agreement.

We would welcome Cllr Bentick to spend some time with officers to go through the information we hold to see how controls and enforcement are applied.

Question from Councillor David Vasmer

Could officers provide a list of schools within Shropshire that have been found to contain buildings made from reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (Raac) given concerns about its safety ?

What arrangements are the Council putting in place to further identify schools which might be at risk

Are there any other Shropshire owned buildings that could contain Raac?

A response to this question will follow