

**MEMBER QUESTIONS  
CABINET 18 OCTOBER 2023**

**Cllr Rosemary Dartnall**

Families of children attending Mereside Primary, Shrewsbury were invited to attend open days and apply for places at three Shrewsbury Secondary Schools, all within reasonable distance for an 11 year-old to travel. More than 10 Mereside families living in the South SUE were not offered a place at their first, second or third school choice. Instead they were offered Shrewsbury Academy, 4.7 miles away. All families appealed: some were successful, others not.

Column and Sutton division has many hundreds of new homes, and residents often express concern that their children will not have a school place when the time comes because they live in new homes and fear inadequate infrastructure is in place. This particular school year includes a high birth rate and therefore a statistical bump in numbers moving through education, but will this happen in subsequent years?

Please clarify why there were not sufficient secondary school places available for all children living in the catchment for Priory, Meole and Belvidere Schools. Why were parents not warned that some children would need to be schooled further from home and given the opportunity to visit on open days and consider applying for a place at Shrewsbury Academy? Will there be sufficient places available next academic year, and subsequent years, for pupils already in primary education in the South SUE and other parts of the catchment for Priory, Meole and Belvidere Schools?

**Cllr Julia Buckley**

1. Since becoming cabinet members and portfolio holders with responsibility for finances and corporate resources, and highways, could Cllr Gwilym Butler and Cllr Dan Morris confirm whether they have completed any training on the following Shropshire Council policies:
  - Financial Regulations
  - Roles of cabinet members and portfolio holders (found within the Constitution)
  - Members' code of conduct
2. And if so, why did they not apply this knowledge and comply with Council's financial regulations and corporate governance protocols during the debate at Full Council on 21 September 2023?
3. Should cabinet members who breach financial regulations and bring the Council into disrepute, resign from their position?

**Cllr Pam Moseley**

In June, Council tendered for “Floating Housing Support including Housing Advice and Prevention of Homelessness”. The contract with Sustain (staff from 4 Housing Associations) was to finish on 30 September.

The tender’s short description reads: Housing Support Services will support people whose needs are such that their ability to support a tenancy or remain independent in their home would be compromised without that support.

Current support workers deal with a list of around 100 clients across Shropshire, with a waiting list of 60-70 clients, typically working with clients for 3-6 months. They help tenants maintain tenancies, set up home, apply for benefits and grants, learn to budget, deal with debt, and can address other issues such as family problems, mental and physical ill health, mediation, safeguarding, property adaptations, hoarding, and cuckooing.

No bids for this contract were received by the Council. The contract with Sustain was initially extended to the end of October, and latterly until 31 December 2023.

Without such assistance, there is a risk that some residents will not be able to sustain their tenancies, and not be able to continue living in their home; some will be evicted. Not only catastrophic for them, this will also have consequences for this Council – which has a duty to the homeless - and other public services, including the NHS.

With no new contract for floating housing support in place, what plans does Shropshire Council have to provide this very important function in the future?

### **Cllr Rob Wilson**

On the Kingswood Estate in Copthorne, Shrewsbury, 148 residents have signed a petition against the proposed installation of telegraph poles for broadband. It states: “We, the undersigned residents of Kingswood Estate, Shrewsbury, object to, and emphatically do not want the unsightly poles and connected wires, which Fibre Heroes are apparently about to erect, having marked their locations throughout the estate, without any prior consultation with us the residents. Future installation of any fibre broadband or similar system should be placed underground.”

105 households are represented in the petition, which is 64% of the estate.

It seems an entirely backward step to install telegraph poles in such an area in 2023. What will Shropshire Council do to support residents to maintain the visual amenity of their neighbourhood?

### **Cllr Kate Halliday**

The council average waiting times for the Blue Badge scheme have increased in recent months causing difficulties for those who wish to apply for or renew their Blue badge. The Blue Badge scheme provides a lifeline for residents with disabilities, enabling them/their carer to park as near as possible to essential amenities.

The council has communicated that they are attempting to improve the waiting times, however residents tell me that they are still being told they need to wait weeks for their applications to be dealt with. I have been informed by an applicant that the council used to send out reminders to existing Blue Badge holders and that they are no longer doing so.

Could the Portfolio Holder confirm:

1. The current average wait time for a Blue Badge Application, and the steps that are being taken to improve wait times.
2. Confirm that the scheme is no longer issuing renewal notices to existing Blue Badge holders, and if so, consider re-introducing this in order to make the system more efficient for customers and the council.