

COUNCIL: 14 December 2023
PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question from:	Michael Hinds
Subject:	Declaration of Interests
Portfolio Holder:	Lezley Picton

The declaration of interests for the current Leader of the Council and the current Chair of Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee state that they are partners. The remit for the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee includes scrutiny of the leader's portfolio of responsibilities. How do the Leader of the Council and the Chair Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee ensure that there is no conflict of interest between their public roles and their declared partnership?

The declaration of interests for the current Leader of the Council and the current Chair of Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee state that they are partners. The remit for the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee includes scrutiny of the leader's portfolio of responsibilities. How do the Leader of the Council and the Chair Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee ensure that there is no conflict of interest between their public roles and their declared partnership?

Cllr Wild has been Chair of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee since May 23 and Chair of its predecessor, the Performance Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee since 2017. I have been leader since 2021.

It is the remit of the whole committee to scrutinise the administration's policies and it is the whole committee who set the work plan for the year. I can assure Mr Hinds that there is no conflict of interest in this matter. We are both very clear that it is our responsibility to act at all times in the public interest and if either of us considered there to be a personal conflict we would, of course, not take part.

I should also add that the recent strengthening of the scrutiny function following the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny review, which was at my invitation, has ensured greater openness, transparency and cross-party working across process and substance.

It is not unusual for familial relations to occupy these positions and Mr Hinds will find a number of councils across England have similar arrangements including our immediate neighbours to the east.

Question from:	Ruth Cranley
Subject:	Traffic & Safety Issues on London Road
Portfolio Holder:	Dan Morris

Further to my question to the Council on 21st September regarding the ongoing traffic and safety issues on London Road in Shrewsbury, Councillor Dan Morris replied: "Following the site meeting, council officers will work with the police on implementing safety measures. Any recommendations will be added into the programme of work for

the county and work undertaken when funding is available.” That site meeting took place over two months ago and the Highways Officer and the Police and Crime Commissioner agreed that there were serious issues needing to be addressed and made a number of recommendations, including some pledges of funding from the PCC, so could Councillor Morris please advise what action has been taken or measures added to the programme of work as promised and what is the timescale for implementing them? This does not include the Shirehall overflow car park he mentioned previously, which is both impractical and unaffordable for most residents. There have been further near-misses on London Road since my previous question, highlighting the urgency of the situation.

I can confirm that Officers met with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the residents to discuss their concerns following the collisions on the resident’s vehicle. It is noted that engineering improvements and behavioural changes to driving could benefit the area. These works have been added to the programme and are awaiting funding, being prioritised against other schemes. Officers are also working with the PCC regarding funding the work on the road. They have contacted the Council recently regarding their next round of funding and officers are working on projects to apply to them for funding. When the council has the feedback from this, it should be able to be more specific on timings for implementation for any works.

As noted, Shropshire Council has implemented a residents parking scheme on Shirehall overflow carpark to allow cars to park off the road. Whilst this may not practical for some as indicated in the question posed, it should be noted that it could be an option for other people, particularly perhaps whilst awaiting the funding decisions of any potential new engineering improvements for the area.

Question from:	Chris Naylor	
Subject:	Consultants	
Portfolio Holder:	Lezley Picton	

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Lezley Picton, recently admitted that consultants appointed to help the Council make savings had only saved £5m but cost £3m.

When the consultants were appointed in February this year Cllr Picton said she hoped "they're going to help us save more than £51m."

Given the amount of officer time that must have been taken up by providing information for and working with the consultants, hasn't their contribution been a waste of time and money that could have been better spent to support Shropshire residents?

PwC were appointed to help provide the capacity and capability to help deliver transformational savings identified within the MTFs. As at the end of November we have committed £3.3m of one-off spend which is linked to the delivery of 16 projects being run in parallel and £37.7m year on year savings. The additionality provided by PwC means that their costs will be covered by savings delivery in excess of that built into MTFs, and an element of this will be reinvested to secure transformational savings into 24/25 and

beyond. Rest assured, we are committed to ensuring that our efforts and resources are being used in the most effective manner to support Shropshire residents.