

Public Questions

Council 29 February 2024

Question from Mr Timothy Ashton

To ask the Portfolio Holder for Culture about the Council's state of knowledge concerning William Shakespeare's familiarity with Shropshire and the playwright's setting of As You Like It in the Wem-Soulton-Hodent area; to ask what formal steps have been taken and will be taken by the local authority to exploit this information to unlock cultural, economic and social opportunities for the people, business and students of Shropshire and to recover the county's identity as the destination of the English Grand Tour; to further ask if the texture of this matters as set out in public lectures in the City of London and the town of Wem can formally entered into the Council's consciousness.

Question from Mr Mike Streetly

Could you please confirm what the expected total pre-commencement costs of the combined Oxon Link Road and North West Relief Road are to date and what they will be (including costs of business case preparation) at the point at which road construction starts?

Question from Jamie Russell

Shropshire Council says the North West Relief Road is "fully funded" by central government.

However, there is confusion over what "fully funded" means.

[Highways Magazine](#) recently asked the Department for Transport (DfT) to clarify the "fully funded" claim.

In response, the DfT stated it is committed to fully funding the NWRR's outline business case (OBC) cost, subject to the approval of a full business case.

The OBC cost was a maximum of £80m.

This is supported by the government's [Network North](#) webpage. It lists ten schemes, including the NWRR, due to receive money from the cancelled leg of HS2. It states: "These schemes, subject to successful business case approval, will benefit from an uplift in government contribution from 85% to 100% of their costs at the outline business case (OBC) stage."

If the DfT's definition of "fully funded" is £80m, this leaves the NWRR with a significant shortfall.

Last September, council reports identified a funding gap of £95m suggesting the NWRR's cost is £175m+

The DfT has not publicly said it will cover this shortfall.

- Does the council's definition of "fully funded" align with the DfT's statement that it will only fund the full OBC cost of £80m (subject to the approval of a full business case)?
- Does the council have written confirmation from the DfT that it will fund the scheme beyond £80m?
- If the DfT funding is only £80m, who will pay the £95m shortfall; overrun costs; and any financial reparations required if the drinking water is contaminated?

Question from Ms Emma Bullard

Could you please explain what formal measures Shropshire Council has put in place to ensure complete separation of the Highways Department, NWRR project team and Cabinet from the Local Planning Authority function.

Could you please publish the relevant document(s) describing these measures.

Question from the Rev Paul Cawthorne

Noting the atrocious state of the roads in Hadnall and Clive parishes, including chippings being catapulted onto the pavement in Hadnall as repairs now increasingly fall apart within months of being done, please confirm what percentage of work time Mark Barrow spends on new road planning relative to his portfolio managing the permanent repair of potholes in existing roads.

Are rerepair costs of 1. increased use of bagged tarmac 2. residents' car damage costs from the chronic pothole pressures on springs, suspension, joints and tyres factored into county value for money costings by the Council chief financial officer?

Please release the optional new road funding expenditure projection for 2024 and the 2024 budgeted expenditure on permanent pothole repairs as opposed to temporary bagged tarmac repairs.

Question from Ms Karen Pearce

In the Large Local Majors & Major Road Network Schemes - Quarterly Monitoring Return for 2023-24 Quarter 2 we read that the dept for transport has paid grants of £10,444,794 to Shropshire Council for the NWRR project but that £7,158,262 is outstanding.

The text says "It is to be noted that no payment of grant has yet been awarded to Shropshire Council for either the 2022/23 financial year or the 2023/24 forecast, therefore the balance outstanding is £6,438,078 which we would urge payment of ASAP."

Could you please provide an update on these figures? Could you also explain the £720k difference between the figures?