

**CABINET – 05/06/24
MEMBER QUESTIONS**

Question from:	Bernie Bentick	
Subject:	Meole Active Travel Quarter	
Portfolio Holder:	Chris Schofield	Approved

On the 29th February 2024, I hand delivered and emailed a letter to Tim Collard and The Democratic Services, from the Shropshire Councillors representing Belle Vue, Meole, Radbrook and Porthill, requesting explanations for the incoherent and sub-standard plans for Phase 1 of the Meole Active Travel Quarter, which did not conform to LTN 1/20 guidance, and an urgent meeting to discuss the issues, in view of the declared short timescale for submission to Government.

Two months later, no response has been received and no meeting arranged.

Would the portfolio holder:

1. please provide a response to the letter?
2. arrange an urgent meeting as requested?
3. explain why local Members weren't closely involved in drawing up the plans, having contributed considerably to the original bid for Government funding?
4. explain the reason for the delay in response?
5. explain exactly and in detail what, if anything, has been sent to Government and if nothing, precisely what will be sent and when?

I can confirm that the response to your letter has now been sent to you. Unfortunately this was due to the project officer being off work and I therefore apologise for the delay.

The support of local members is greatly received when securing grants. However it is not standard practice for members to be involved in designing the schemes and not something that Cllr Hurst-Knight or I were either part of. The team have updated all elected members of the recommended scheme and the final design throughout the process.

With regards to Government involvement, the team have monthly meetings with Active Travel England who are the grant provider. The scheme has been discussed with them to ensure they are meeting the grant expectations and increase the likelihood of receiving funding for the building of the scheme. The grant provider will receive a finalised design and report in the coming weeks. As mentioned previously, the officer responsible was unwell and that has delayed the final submission.

Question from:	Peter Broomhall	
Subject:	Potholes	
Portfolio Holder:	Dan Morris	Approved

I would like to know, how long after the highways technician has applied the white paint around the potholes, do they wait before they repair the hole?

Along New Street, in Wem, the potholes had white paint around them but after several weeks it has worn off and no repairs completed. From the Doctors surgery up to Bazeley Way is so dangerous (especially for cyclists) because of the uneven road.

In fact, the High Street and Aston Street are terribly uneven still, after repairs were carried out.

Shropshire Council has developed a digital twin database for the highways asset, this means that all potholes are photographed on inspection and are geotagged giving us a very precise pothole location. Geotagged photographs are also taken when the work is completed giving us a 360-degree perspective on both the problem and the solution. This system ensures that the paint markings are not required to identify the problem and fix it whether applied by a technician or an inspector.

The impact of the wettest spring on record remains with us and regretfully this means that sometimes the temporary marker paint has gone before we get to repair the pothole, but the digital twin allows us to track and resolve them.

Service improvements such as a remarkable 29% pothole productivity improvement in April 24 compared to April 23 highlight the important difference between a failing asset and a failing service, which leads the "more for less" challenge and should serve as a timely reminder to support our valued services where appropriate.

Question from:	Rob Wilson	
Subject:	Overgrown Hedging	
Portfolio Holder:	Dan Morris	Approved

I am concerned by the inaccessibility of many footways in the county due to overgrown hedging and vegetation which in places makes more than half of the footway unusable. Often this is due to private hedging and vegetation. Though most householders maintain their boundaries correctly, the council has the power to request and then enforce action on the minority who do not.

Since 2009 when Shropshire Council was established, please can you provide annual data for:

- How many letters have been issued to householders requesting that they cut back hedging and vegetation which is overhanging the footways?
- How many of these cases resulted in the council cutting back said hedging and vegetation, and issuing a payment demand to the householder?
- How many of these cases resulted in the council having to take further action to recoup its costs?

The service recognises the importance of encouraging and facilitating walking and cycling. The acute financial pressures all councils are experiencing also means that prioritising our available resources is essential in order to operate within the financial envelope.

Issues around over hanging hedges and vegetation are generally identified by members of the public or picked up routine footway inspection. In order to make this more efficient, we are encouraging more of these types of issues to be reported via FixMyStreet. Where these issues constitute a safety hazard, the council will instigate discussion with the responsible party to take action.

However, in most instances these will be low priority, however a request will be made to take proportionate and appropriate action.

Last financial year Shropshire Council issued 248 letters to individual property owners.