

**CABINET**  
**17 JULY 2024**  
**PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

**Colin Sheward**

Question on Job losses understand 300 jobs in line for redundancy a) will be in FTE or will it be actual workers in post (60% of SC staff are P/T) obviously this would cause variation to eventual savings. b) does it cover Educational as well as "general" posts c) as SC employs more women workers are there special/worries about making 20-300 women redundant d) will people in apprenticeship training be safeguarded? e) likewise people with declared disabilities (already low number in employment) background to these questions found SC work force strategy 2022-2025

**Response:-**

- a. This was an estimate at a point in time, and figures quoted were full time equivalent posts, based on an average full time equivalent post budget of £50,000 including on-costs
- b. This covers all council employees but excludes support staff employed directly by maintained schools
- c. A Workforce Equality, Social Inclusion, and Health Impact Assessment will be undertaken to determine impact on protected groups and associated mitigating actions.
- d. All roles will be considered as part of the review
- e. See response to c above.

**Dr Jamie Russell**

How much money will have been spent on the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road by the end of 2024? Will all of this cost to date be included in the Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR), or excluded as 'sunk costs'?

**Response:**

By the end of the 2024 Financial year, assuming that the current programme is met, the council would expect total expenditure to be £36.5m by the end of the 2024 financial year. It can be confirmed that all scheme preparation costs from the point of Outline Business case onwards to the completion of construction will be captured as part of the BCR calculation, in line with DfT requirements.

**Mike Streetly**

Re the CPO documentation section headed NWRR - SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE MODES OF TRANSPORT: The planning application for the proposed North West Relief Road included plans for extensive improvements to facilities along Welshpool Road for people on foot or bike. These were described as an important mitigation for the extensive negative impacts of the proposed new road. The CPO and SRO documents submitted to the cabinet meeting on 17th July do not appear to show these measures being progressed.

Could you please confirm whether Shropshire Council still plans to implement these measures as part of the overall NWRR package?

The Council can confirm that improvements around active travel will be undertaken along Welshpool Rd in line with the development of the NWRR. Funding for these works will be through a combination of the existing periodic maintenance budget and the potential allocation of elements of the recently confirmed Local Transport Fund award. This element will be confirmed once further national guidance is available (recently delayed by the General Election).

Could you also please confirm that the roundabouts on the proposed new road will have at grade crossings for people on foot or bike and that these are not compliant with LTN1/20?

We can confirm that the roundabouts on the North West Relief Road will have at grade crossing facilities for walker and cyclists. The Holyhead road roundabout will also have an underpass for walkers, cyclists and equestrians. The original design date for the NWRR predates the LTN 1/20 guidance and therefore was not required to reference this at Outline Business Case. Adaptations have subsequently been made through to detailed design to adapt these original designs. It should be noted that LTN 1/20 is indeed only guidance, and there are acceptable design solutions that can be still found where there are practical constraints on delivering a fully aligned solution. Its also to note that the finalised designs have been considered carefully by the Local Planning Authorities statutory Highways consultee, and have been supported as appropriate for the scheme, and end user, as part of their formal response to Planning Committee.

5.3.15. of the Statement of Reasons says that "The Proposed Scheme could significantly reduce the journey time for the last 3-4 miles into the Town Centre which would make bus travel more attractive." Could you please confirm how many of the current bus services that use the town centre will have more than a 10% reduction in journey time?

Work is currently underway to revise the traffic modelling scenarios within the Outline Business case to present day, in line with the requirements of the Full Business Case. The benefits that will accrue to all motorised road users, including public transport, will be captured as part of this, and this is due for publication in autumn 2024.

## **David Macey**

At April 2024 Cabinet Portfolio Holder Dan Morris updated the proposed car parking increases report. This update, and the original January report, make no reference to increases on 31st October 2022, just 14 months prior to the January report. By including this wouldn't this have given Cabinet a better-informed perspective highlighting significant increases, well above high inflation, in a short period of time comparing charges prior to October 2022 increases to the proposal? In this short period Band 6 will have a 100% increase since pre 31/10/22 moving from 30p/hour to 60p. A 1-year permit before 31/10/22 was £192 increasing by 33% to £256 on 31st October 2022. The proposal is an additional 50% increase to £384. A 100% increase since before 31/10/22. St Julian Friar Permits increasing 71% from £448 to £768 for the same period. Other carpark increases range from 40% to 60%. Compared to inflation, compounding the highest inflation of 11.1% 2022, 10.4% 2023, a permit costing £192 before 31/10/22 would be £235 in 2024 up 22.7% (worst case) The Band 6 proposal is 100% increase, 4.4 times highest compounded inflation and 5.8 times the average compound inflation rate of 17.2% (2022 Ave 9.1% 2023 7.4%). Whilst appreciating this is still to go to public consultation can the Portfolio Holder give justification to recommending these disproportionately high increases compared to high inflation over the

last few years and why 31/10/22 increases were omitted from the reports as they are surely relevant from a full cost increase perspective?

**Response:**

The context of the increases and the period to which they apply needs clarification. The increases in October 2022 were approved in Feb 2022, prior to that they had not changed since 2018. The pre-October 2022 charges, were in effect 2018 prices and so any changes reflect a change over a much longer period, i.e. 6 years not 2 years.

On this basis, the suggestion is that 100% increase over 2 years equates to 50% pa is not reflective. The more representative 100% increase is over 6 years, which is 16% pa.

The Season tickets and resident permits are based on the hourly rate, but have significant discounts of 65% off the full hourly rate for Season Tickets and 74% off the full hourly rate for Resident Permits.

The 2018 Parking Strategy was quite rigid on how charges should be informed by the characteristics of the town, the proximity of the car park to destinations dependent on it and the likelihood of finding a space. This was relaxed in the current report, but this was mainly to accommodate the immediate issue of the widening gap between Shrewsbury and Shropshire as a whole. The report also gave approval for a new 2024/5 Parking Strategy to be discussed, changes considered and a consultation. This will include the benefits of a more flexible guidance by which individual towns and car parks are assessed to ensure the charge in each car park is still appropriate.

**Graham Betts**

Planning application 13/03285/FUL, for Darwin's Walk development in Shrewsbury, detailed to the Planning Committee in section 6.9.1 that £3,595,554 was raised for 'infrastructure' projects. This included £519,480 for a bus service through the estate in accordance with section 6.6.8, and £151,000 for the local road network. There has been no bus service introduced and the roads through the development include a cycle path that remains unmarked and unsigned. After more than 5 months, a Freedom of Information request made in January 2024 (RF#6141), appears to indicate Shropshire Council is unable to account for the sums quoted in 6.9.1 and how they have been used. The information provided to date only accounts for approximately half of the sums quoted. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, several review requests have been made to the Council and the information has still not been provided. Because the requested information remains outstanding, the Council is in breach of the law. Can the Cabinet please explain 1) Why the Council cannot account for the apparently missing sum of approximately £2 million, 2) Why it has difficulty complying with a straightforward request for information, 3) Why the bus service has not been brought forward as indicated in the Planning application and therefore expected by the residents who ultimately paid the sums detailed?

1. Why the Council cannot account for the apparently missing sum of approximately £2 million,

Planning approval 13/03285/FUL relates to land at Darwin's Walk for 118 dwellings. Planning approval 13/03534/OUT, and its subsequent Reserve Matters approval (14/03844/REM) relates to land south of Mytton Oak Road and is for 425 dwellings. References to local infrastructure provision made in both Committee reports for the above sites, relate to the combined costed infrastructure needs of the sites which are to be met by a combination of developer contributions, ie S106 and CIL.

Therefore the financial contributions for local infrastructure referred to in both reports are consistent and apply to the totality of the two applications. These contributions are as follows:

- Strategic Road Network - £759,850
- Town wide highways network and sustainable transport - £626,250
- Local road network - £151,000
- Local bus service - £519,480
- Community Facilities (education and on site play provision) - £1,184,574

**This totals £3,241,154**

The financial contributions from these two linked schemes derived **from the two S106 agreements** is therefore **£2,149,041**. The remainder of the £3,241,154 would be funded by the CIL derived from the scheme and S278 works.

2. Why it has difficulty complying with a straightforward request for information,

The Council apologies for the delay in responding to your request for information

3. Why the bus service has not been brought forward as indicated in the Planning application and therefore expected by the residents who ultimately paid the sums detailed?

The Council have started to draw-down the Section 106 money, which is being used to support a bus service that was commercial and was going to de-registered by the operator and would resulted in no bus service operating.

## **Robert Jones**

My youngest child was diagnosed with a speech delay in 2022 and was referred for an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP) assessment, and although the initial assessments were begun within 20 weeks, the plan was not completed and issued until 58 weeks after the referral. Although, due to the efforts of his primary school, my son was not significantly disadvantaged by this delay, many children and their families are not so lucky. According to the latest data published by the government for 2023, Shropshire Council's performance in issuing EHC plans for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities within the statutory 20-week period has fallen, with just 38% completed on time, worse than the 46% of the previous year, and this has been consistently worsening over the years since 2019. Shropshire's performance is below the average across England, and falling more sharply than the English average. Meanwhile, neighbouring authorities such as Telford and Wrekin issue nearly 100% of EHC plans on time, even though all areas have seen similar increases in requests and councils across England face a similar conditions as Shropshire both in terms of rising requests and limited financial resources. Why has Shropshire Council so continued to fail children and young people with SEND? What concrete steps have been or will be taken to ensure 100% of EHC plans are completed within the 20-week deadline in future?

## **Response:**

We are sorry that our performance in meeting the 20 week timescale for issuing EHCPs has not met the standards required and that your child's EHC Needs Assessment took longer than average to complete. Delays in the process have been linked to the significant increase in requests for EHC Needs assessments that have been received in Shropshire. In 2022,

new requests increased by 46% which was double the national average with a further 72% increase in assessment requests between 2022 and 2023.

Likewise, the number of new EHC Plans issued by Shropshire Council has increased by 20.3% between 2021 and 2022 and by 154% between 2022 and 2023 compared to 26.6% nationally.

Considerable investment has been made in the SEN Team, including the recruitment of additional workers via agency contracts, however the increase in staffing has not been able to keep pace with the increase in demand. We have taken steps to recover and stabilise the team through our recovery planning and we are actively working to secure permanent members of the team, starting with the EHCP Team Manager with interviews scheduled for early August.

Work has also been undertaken to address the increase in demand which has been focussed on the development of an agreed local framework called “Shropshire’s Ordinarily Available Provision” which outlines the level of support and interventions that can be expected to be delivered through high quality teaching and SEND Support, prior to an EHC Needs Assessment, which will enable students to have their needs met at the earliest opportunity. The framework is available on the public Local Offer site here [SEN support | Shropshire Council](#)

Ensuring improvement in the 20 week performance has been identified as a key priority by the Council and the SEND and AP Partnership Board. Regular monitoring meetings with the DfE have taken place with the DfE SEND Advisor sharing examples of good practice from other local areas. The Service Manager for SEND and Inclusion also presented a paper in May 2024 outlining a recommended recovery plan with the aim of issuing new EHC plans to above the national level (50%) by 31 December 2024 through the recovery plan. The actions in the recovery plan are based on the best regional and national practice, following examples of Local Authorities that have consistently delivered close to, or at, 100% timeliness. The recovery plan was approved by the Partnership Board and actions have been implemented.

These actions have already resulted in an improvement in the monthly performance of timeliness for issuing new EHC plans, which has increased to 43.3% in June, and we are confident that improvements will continue. Our target is to be in line with the national average by the end of December 2024 and to be well above the national average by the end of March 2025. Beyond March 2025, we will then strive to achieve 100% timeliness as soon as possible.

Positive work has also taken place to improve overall quality of EHC plans. The partnership developed and implemented a consistent EHCP Quality Assurance Framework in October 2023 for all new EHC plans and those amended through the Annual Review process. The framework is based on regional and national good practice, including peer review with a local authority consistently identified as delivering high quality EHC plans. The framework is available on the public Local Offer site here [EHCP quality assurance standards | Shropshire Council](#)

We remain committed to working across education, health, social care and with parents to ensure all children and young people with SEND are able to receive the support they require to enjoy and achieve strong outcomes in their lives.