

Member Questions

Council 26 September 2024

Question from Councillor Ed Potter

In recent weeks I have been approached by a number of parents who have raised concerns over the availability of state schools places in the Shropshire Council area. Some have made enquiries with Shropshire Council's admissions team as to what places are available should they move their children from their current provision in the private sector as a result of the potential charging of VAT on private schools fees as confirmed in the Kings Speech of 17th July 2024. I note the recent statistics which places Shropshire Council among the best in our region when it comes to school admissions, however, I would like to ask the portfolio holder

- Does Shropshire Council have an idea of how many additional school places might be required?
- What provision has been made should there be an influx of pupils requiring school places?
- Should places be available out of catchment what implications are there for school transport?

Question from Councillor Joyce Barrow

Since the ending of the delivery of school safety and active travel training through a commission with WSP, can the Portfolio Holder for Education please advise, what has been done as a local authority, to counteract this during this academic school year.

Can she outline, if possible, any future plans around this?

Question from Councillor Rob Wilson

My question concerns the cost of home to school transport to the Council in urban areas which should be served by high quality walking and cycling networks. For the academic year 2023-2024 what was the total cost of providing home to school transport from addresses in Shrewsbury to schools in Shrewsbury? What is the cost excluding young people with additional needs? If possible, please could you also include the costs for our other market towns?

Question from Councillor Dan Thomas

Hundreds of Shropshire people are in urgent need of affordable housing. In my Much Wenlock division alone, more than 50 families with a local connection to the parish, are actively applying for homes on HomePoint, face several barriers, and are anxiously awaiting a solution.

Much Wenlock recently welcomed a development of 12 affordable low-energy homes in the town, which has helped address this need. Yet, using HomePoint to apply for these homes has been a constant source of distress for families in housing need. The system leaves families waiting far too long to learn the outcome of their applications, and it is generally perceived as being an impediment to users rather than being of assistance.

Would the portfolio holder please outline the measures being taken to develop the HomePoint system or, indeed, a replacement interface in such a way that it works better for the people of Much Wenlock and of Shropshire?

Question from Councillor Rachel Connolly

Today's meeting marks almost 9 months since significant damage was caused to New Road in Bridgnorth as a result of a vehicle crashing through barriers and falling 50 m down an embankment before landing on the road below. Thankfully no one was injured. This is a well-used road and footpath connecting Low Town with High Town on a steep gradient.

Temporary barriers of up to 20m in length have been in place since then but are regularly knocked over making the area unsafe, requiring immediate attention.

The vehicle caused extensive damage to the original barriers, the barrier posts, and the barrier foundations. The vehicle further destroyed a street lighting asset and the associated cabling, which means at least 6 out of 8 streetlights have not been working since December 2023. It also damaged a brick wall further away from the immediate area at the top of a set of steps. I have been informed by a council officer that the impact of the damage on the foundation is significant and a full design and installation package will be needed to resolve the damage which will take considerable time and money.

The combination of temporary barriers often vandalised, and a lack of adequate lighting is causing significant concern from residents regarding their safety.

Given that it has been 9 months, a considerable time since the incident, please can I ask when this issue will be resolved, and the safety of this thoroughfare restored.

Question from Councillor Duncan Kerr

The Cabinet made the decision to impose charges for Green waste at its meeting on the 7th July. I attended that meeting and stated that this action should be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment which was not included in the published report. After the meeting I wrote to the Chief Executive and Head of Legal and Governance and received a reply stating that they accepted that such an assessment is required. I was told that the assessment was then considered by the Cabinet member after the decision was made. I am sure that the Leader will agree with me that this does not meet the Council's legal obligations under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and that the Conservative group, and indeed the Labour Government, need to practice what they say about equality.

As has been reported in the press this rushed and ill thought out decision-making has been detrimental to the disabled and elderly. Impacts that were readily foreseeable and could have been avoided.

Given her opposition to long-term planning evidenced by her rejection of a motion calling for a Waste minimisation strategy in 2022 (ironically on the grounds that it might mean charging for green waste) what measures will the Leader be taking to ensure that all Cabinet members understand the importance of Equality Impact Assessments in making future decisions?