

CABINET
20 NOVEMBER 2024
RESPONSES TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS

David Andrew

1. When the green refuse bin stickers were ordered, why, before they were sent out, was there no process in place to check that the quality of what was produced was fully up to the specified standard? 2. The contract made with Veolia appears to have been made in a way advantageous to the company, in that they are now to be awarded compensation for having less work to do. In appendix 1 this shows as continuing until and possibly beyond 2026. This eventually gets passed on to householders in Council Tax. Please explain fully what the contract was and how long the compensation will continue to be due. 3. Because the first consignment of stickers was seriously faulty, a second batch was commissioned from another supplier. This meant that postage costs were incurred twice. Who paid the cost of the postage for the first batch? 4. The booking of visits to the recycling centres has already been problematic, with the phone not being promptly answered, if at all, and the online booking system breaking down. What is being done to improve this situation? Will Shropshire Council accept that the introduction of booking has been a failure and abandon it?

Response

1. When the green refuse bin stickers were ordered, why, before they were sent out, was there no process in place to check that the quality of what was produced was fully up to the specified standard?

Due to the short timescale to put a system in place the decision was made to use the MiPermit system which was already in place and has been used successfully for several years, they were confident that they could deliver the stickers to both our required timescale and to the specifications we provided and there had been no issues with them previously. Once the system went live it was clear that the number of subscribers was causing their supply some issues and whilst we requested samples for several weeks these were not provided and as we had no alternative at that time the roll out of stickers started on 2 October however by the 3 October we had been inundated with complaints that the stickers were falling off the bins and by the 4 October officers had stopped the rollout and a new supplier had been secured.

2. The contract made with Veolia appears to have been made in a way advantageous to the company, in that they are now to be awarded compensation for having less work to do. In appendix 1 this shows as continuing until and possibly beyond 2026. This eventually gets passed on to householders in Council Tax. Please explain fully what the contract was and how long the compensation will continue to be due.

I'm not sure what you are referring to when you say compensation, the council has a contractual obligation to pay Veolia for all the services they provide. In terms of the garden waste we will not know the total number of customers until the end of the subscription

window in March 2025, this gives resident plenty of time to subscribe. From April 2025 the number of customers will be known, and we will then review the collection efficiency, and this is when additional savings will be achieved, so that the whole cost of service is covered by the revenue generated by those residents that want the service and not through council tax.

3. Because the first consignment of stickers was seriously faulty, a second batch was commissioned from another supplier. This meant that postage costs were incurred twice. Who paid the cost of the postage for the first batch?

There has been no cost incurred by the Council for the first batch of stickers.

4. The booking of visits to the recycling centres has already been problematic, with the phone not being promptly answered, if at all, and the online booking system breaking down. What is being done to improve this situation? Will Shropshire Council accept that the introduction of booking has been a failure and abandon it?

Average wait time on Waste HRC and Voice queue since the new booking system went live is 11 mins and 38 seconds.

We try our best to answer our calls as quickly as possible, however, as many topics are extremely delicate, such as the death of a relative or reporting abuse these can increase other customers wait times. Our aim is to treat all our customers as individuals and work through their issues as professionally and efficiently as we can, but this does result in longer wait times than we would ideally like at certain times of the day/week.

Since the launch of the booking system the CSC have made 85 bookings for customers. Residents can also go into any Council run library and the staff there can also make a booking for them.

In general, the feedback regarding the booking system has been positive.

Frank Oldaker

As the effects of climate change become ever more evident it is clear all countries around the world will have to deal with weather events of increasing frequency and much greater intensity than experienced previously.

Being particularly vulnerable to flooding from the River Severn it has to be of concern what this means for us. The upper catchment of the river is susceptible to intense rainfall and could see even more than hit Cumbria in 2021 when 300mm fell in 24 hours. This would cause unprecedented damage to communities all along the river - in many places overcoming existing inadequate flood defences.

So can we please be advised whether the Council has a plan to deal with such an event and if not is such a plan to be prepared?

In outline it would need to cover all aspects of the emergency from a failsafe warning system, for all likely to be affected, to actions required as the situation developed, including

of course necessary help to those affected and the provision of accommodation for people who lose their homes.

The number of devastating events around the world in the last year, and the consequences we have seen of most authorities not having had a robust plan in place, is a stark warning that being prepared is a necessity

Response

Shropshire Council is undertaking a wide range of both strategic and operational work in recognition of the challenges faced by the River Severn and future management with climate.

Since 2019, the Council has jointly led the River Severn Partnership, with the Environment Agency, as a source to sea approach bringing together all partners along the full length of the river. This work has led us to secure over £50million of additional government investment supporting the future management of the Severn. Whilst some of this funding is being used to address existing flood defences by the Environment Agency, for example at Bewdley, a significant element is being used to develop a comprehensive management strategy for the Upper Severn covering Shropshire and Powys and known as the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme. The Council is part of the Joint Project Board for this Upper Severn Strategy along with Powys County Council, the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales. Community drop in events are now taking place to provide an update on this work, with three planned in Powys before Christmas and one in Oswestry on the 13th January and one in Shrewsbury on the 29th January.

Alongside this major programme of flood infrastructure, the Council leads or participates in a range of wider operational measures to ensure we provide the best response in the immediate term for our communities. This involves working closely alongside the other risk management authorities such as the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water through our Strategic Infrastructure Network.

We support a range of flood forums including a newly formed business led forum for Shrewsbury Town Centre. We are ensuring our development process takes an adaptive approach to managing the uncertain risks of future climate change and are for example preparing an adaptive flood strategy for our work in regenerating Shrewsbury Riverside.

Within our flood management work, we are leading the way in future innovation and delivering a range of demonstrator projects which are testing interventions with land owners and academics. Over the last 12months, we have also secured £3.7million as an Innovation Region to pilot work on the use of digital technology within water management and have projects in delivery exploring real time monitoring and licencing.

In terms of robust future plan, we are working with the Environment Agency and through the River Severn Partnership to prepare a 2100 plan focused on climate resilience which will ensure a joint management approach for the entire Severn Basin.

Recognising that the above will take time to deliver over the next few years I need to be clear that Shropshire Council are a Category 1 Responder under the Civil Contingencies Act and as such hold core emergency plans which enables the Council to respond to, and recover from a wide range of possible emergencies. During a significant rainfall event in Shropshire the Council would work with other Risk Management Authorities at Tactical Co-ordination Group (TCG) level to effectively respond to the event. This TCG would be the

main link for the Council to request additional resource from Central Government and/or the Military if an individual flood event escalated to where external support was required.