

Member Questions

Council 12 December 2024

Question from Councillor Kevin Pardy

On 14 October Shropshire Council announced the delay of 11 scheduled and much-needed road resurfacing projects across the county, citing the council's financial crisis and the need to save money as the reason for the delay. The delay of resurfacing was to help the council make savings (See Shropshire Council Newsroom 14/10/2024).

In number, the cancelled projects amount to 25% of the planned resurfacing for the current year. The portfolio holder made a statement linking the cancelled projects to Shropshire Council's financial crisis, in which £62.5m revenue savings are required in the current financial year

However, road resurfacing is funded by government, allocated to highways authorities such as Shropshire Council, based on the mileage of A and B class roads within each council's geography. Please explain how delaying these projects helps Shropshire Council manage its financial crisis and why the allocated budget appears to be overspent to what seems to be a very substantial degree?

Question from Councillor Rosemary Dartnall

Staff/agency staff

This is a question about people working for Shropshire Council, comparing directly employed staff and those indirectly employed through agencies. It is also about how recruitment is managed by the council.

- Please describe briefly the HR department's involvement in all aspects of recruitment and whether third party recruitment agencies are used to provide any elements of the process?
- How many people, by directorate, are working on behalf of the council?
- How many of those people are directly employed by the council?
- How many are employed indirectly via agencies?
- How do the terms of employment differ between agency and directly employed staff?
- What is the differential cost between directly and indirectly employed staff including on-costs?

Question from Councillor Brian Williams

Now that the new procedure for Shropshire Council tax payers to obtain a time slot to visit a waste disposal site has been in operation for some weeks, could the portfolio holder give an update on the effectiveness of the procedure and indicate any teething problems or significant difficulties that have had to be overcome for both staff at the sites and those visiting to dispose of their waste.

Question from Councillor Rob Wilson

Please can you confirm that both Greyfriars and Frankwell footbridges in Shrewsbury were recently closed because they were deemed dangerous, and that no remedial action was taken? Instead Shrewsbury Town Council cleaned the bridges to make them safe after being contacted by concerned local businesses.

Question from Councillor David Vasmer

Given the External Auditor has criticised the Council for not preparing for the possibility of the NWRR being cancelled, what consideration has the Council given to the loss of the LEP funding and what contingency plans does it have in place to mitigate the loss?

The External Auditor highlighted serious governance failures with meetings cancelled, not minuted and spending not properly authorised. What changes has the Council made to comply with the External Auditor's concerns?

The Council was planning to use £136m of funding from the Local Transport Fund (allocated after the part cancellation of HS2) to improve transport infrastructure throughout the County. This is the commitment made by Cabinet Member Cllr Ian Nellins when the funding was announced in February:

“first indications are that it will offer the opportunity to improve the county's roads, bus and rail services, and transport infrastructure, which is great news for the county.”

Why has the Council turned its back on the rest of the County and abandoned any improvements in local infrastructure in preference for ploughing much of the Local Transport Fund money into the NWRR?

Why is the Council ignoring the instruction given by former Transport Minister Guy Opperman over the £136m allocated to Shropshire from the Local Transport Fund? In February this year the Minister was quoted in the Shropshire Star as follows: "The money can't be diverted into the controversial Shrewsbury North West Relief Road, which is a separate project".

Question from Councillor Colin Taylor

In view of all the changes taking place in the restructuring of provision of services to Shropshire at all levels,

Can Council be informed of the amount of reliance being placed on PWC for advice and guidance.

How much has been paid to PWC in this financial year to date and how much is projected to be paid to them in total for this Financial year.

Has a flat fee been agreed or are they remunerated by the day, the week or the month?

What criteria are used to ensure that we are getting value for money .