

PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

COUNCIL 17 JULY 2025

1 Question from Andrew Sceats

'The Council decided to found, wholly own and supervise the activities of Cornovii Developments Ltd, a local building company.

The Council should now consider investigating whether Cornovii's two main aims - (1) meeting unmet housing need and (2) providing financial assistance to the Council, are being achieved?

(1) Other companies currently concentrate on building the more profitable 3-5 bedrooms houses. When Cornovii was founded, the Council waiting list showed a 50% need for one bedroom, 33% for 2 bedrooms and 3% for 4 bedrooms plus. Also there were identifiable groups needing accommodation including; young people, old people and those with differing disabilities and health issues.

From statistics provided by Cornovii it seems not to have provided an alternative model to other providers, concerning target groups.

(2) There were significant start-up costs and ongoing costs, so instead of Cornovii providing a financial contribution to the Council, it has been steadily increasing its loan liability to the Council. Cornovii had a borrowing facility of £14 million at 31/3/2020, £42 million at 31/3/2024 with a projected peak loan debt of £56.165 in December 2027. These amounts are within a Council loan facility of £69 million!

These figures don't include the cost of Cornovii projects using Council-owned sites which occasionally have been funded by share issue in Cornovii (which is its own company!!).

The term 'financial assistance to the Council' was both unquantifiable in target amount and length of time it was to be achieved'.

2 Question from Tamarin Bibow

1. I have lived in Ruyton XI Towns with my husband and young family since 2021.
2. We live on part of the B 4397 heavily used by traffic of all sorts heading to and from the industrial estates and business parks on the North side of Shrewsbury as a “rat run”.
3. We suffer personally, as do many local residents, from serious pollution, both noise and air quality resulting from traffic forced to come through our village. Most of these vehicles use the rat run only because drivers see no practical alternative.
4. But as a Shropshire resident with a local business, children to take to school etc I'm just as concerned about the wider impact of cancelling the North West Relief Road. If the project is not delivered what other options are there for relieving congestion, not just in the rural villages surrounding Shrewsbury but in the town itself?
5. Please can the Council Leader now supply more detail as to:
 - the next steps
 - what measures the new Administration plans to take to divert traffic away from existing rat runs and from Shrewsbury town centre.

3 Question from John Palmer

In April 2009 the newly-formed Shropshire Council steered its exciting new £37m entertainment venue Theatre Severn into full activity, becoming a regional beacon, attracting residents and visitors to vibrant Shrewsbury, a town renowned for its culture and heritage. Promised as a facility for all the community, it includes the Walker Theatre, which has a standing capacity of 500.

In recent years, the Tories' laissez faire disinterest in the venue's social responsibility to serve all ages, has allowed market forces to narrow the breadth of music gigs in the Walker Theatre to mostly lame tribute shows and beardy trad folk, aimed at a moneyed mature audience demographic. The stark feeling is: "Under 30? You're not catered for - as punter or local artist".

Finances are tight. Yet this new, newly progressive Council surely has a perfect chance to seize the reins?

Will this Council suggest raising middle-class mainstream main theatre performance ticket prices, thus allowing subsidising of low-cost entry to gigs by more dynamic, fresh touring bands, with support from the best burgeoning talent amongst young local artists? Given such showcase opportunities, some young local artists may well progress to offers of European tour slots: cultural exchange to make the far right isolationists weep! How about it?

MEMBER QUESTIONS

1 Question from Councillor Susan Coleman

Connect on Demand Service

This service is increasingly successful since its introduction by the last administration. It was scheduled to be extended to a number of villages in Severn valley namely Atcham, Buildwas Leighton, Eaton Constantine, Uppington and Wroxeter areas

On enquiry as to the dates for this I was told by officers “while there is interest in expanding the service across Severn Valley, any rollout is contingent on funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) via the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)” submitted to UK government in June 2024

It was reported recently that the number 20 Radbrook bus service in Shrewsbury will continue to operate for at least another year thanks to Government bus service improvement funding awarded to Shropshire Council

Does this mean that the BSIP has been accepted and the funding is now available to extend the Connect On Demand services through places outside Shrewsbury such as into Severn Valley ?

2. Question from Councillor Brendan Mallon

The council is considering two separate Battery Energy Storage Systems in Tern. As explained in detail in my objection statements, these have demonstrated a significant fire risk nationally and globally. Such fires produce highly toxic gases and widespread heavy metal fallout. These fires cannot be extinguished, burn for many hours or days and require rapid fire service response to prevent spread through adjacent battery units within the site.

Currently the UK has no published requirements or standards for this technology. The National Fire Chiefs Council publishes guidance which has been ignored in both proposals in Tern, specifically the requirement for two, separate access points for fire

response. One site is immediately adjacent to the A5 and the other the junction of the A5 and A49, potentially causing traffic chaos and a greatly delayed fire service response in the event of an incident.

What standards are the council applying in Tern and throughout the county during the approval of these sites to ensure the safety of citizens and first responders and protect the environment from long term heavy metal pollution in the event of a fire? Has an environmental impact assessment been made? Have Emergency Planning officers conducted any contingency planning for such an event?

3. Question from Councillor Carl Rowley

I would like to request that the council provide a detailed financial breakdown of the expenditure on the Northwest Relief Road (NWRR) project. Specifically, I seek clarity on the allocation of the £39 million spent to date.

As we know, the initial budget allocations were as follows: £6 million for planning and design, £8 million for land acquisition, and £5 million for project management and contingencies, totalling £19 million. Consequently, there is an apparent additional expenditure of £20 million.

While I understand that price increases may have inflated these initial quotes, it is also worth noting that £8 million would have been saved due to the absence of compulsory land sales. Therefore, it is crucial for us to understand the allocation of these funds, particularly since no construction has commenced and is not expected to start soon.

It is imperative that both councillors and the general public comprehend the financial mismanagement brought upon this council by the previous administration regarding this project