

CABINET – 10 SEPTEMBER 2025
RESPONSES TO PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

Public Questions

1. Graham Betts

In section 6.6.8 of the Officer Report for planning application 13/03285/FUL, concerning Darwin's Walk and Bowbrook housing developments in Shrewsbury, it is stated that the road is designed to accommodate a bus service and a subsidy has been negotiated with the developer. That subsidy is quoted as £519,480 in section 6.9.1.

The CIL etc. accounts provided using a Freedom of Information Request state that the bus service should start within three years of the link between Hanwood Road and Mytton Oak Road being completed. The stated completion date is 2019, the service should have started by 2022 at the latest, and therefore the first bus is three years late.

Those accounts also state the sum now available is now zero and £33020.93 has been spent without a bus being provided. It is assumed that the £33020.93 has been used to subsidise another bus service that does not pass through the development.

On the basis of the above, it appears the residents of Darwin's Walk and Bowbrook developments have paid significantly for a service that the Council has not provided, the money is lost and another bus service not mentioned in the Officer Report has been subsidised by those residents.

Can the cabinet please explain these anomalies, why the stated bus service does not exist, when it will be provided and where is the money paid by residents for the service?

Response – Cllr Rob Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth

Officers in the Council's Passenger Transport Group can confirm that they have started to draw-down the allocated Section 106 money amount of £33,020.94 and this is being used to support the Local Bus Service 20 operated by Lakeside Coaches. It is acknowledged that whilst it does run through the development, it does pass via the junction of Red Deer Road and Hanwood Road with a stop approx 100 metres from this junction.

All current allocated money is being used in accordance with S106.

2. John Palmer

420 affordable homes were completed in 2024/25, well above target. ("Delivery of affordable homes" - paragraph 4.1 of the Performance Monitoring Report Q1 2025/26, agenda item 10) Whilst prominently highlighting and celebrating this, does the Cabinet wish to accelerate these numbers, and move heaven and earth to fulfil the Government's seachange target of 1,994 new homes a year in the council area? (BBC Verify housing tracker online) Younger people want and need much more new housing, and surely helping move earth and creating heaven - and defying the NIMBYs - would build on these impressive affordable homes stats? Only 1,110 new homes in the area received their first Energy Performance Certificate in the year to June 2025. (BBC Verify housing tracker). We have a housing crisis: are you going to help fix it?

Response: Cllr James Owen, Portfolio Holder for Housing & Leisure

Thank you for your question and for recognising the significant progress made in delivering affordable housing across the Shropshire Council area.

We are proud to confirm that 420 affordable homes were completed in 2024/25—well above our original target. This achievement reflects the Council's commitment to addressing housing need and supporting residents across our communities. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of our partnerships.

However, we fully acknowledge that this is only part of the picture. The Government's updated housing target of 1,994 new homes per year for Shropshire, as highlighted by BBC Verify, represents a substantial increase from previous expectations. Meeting this target will require a coordinated and ambitious response, not only from the Council but also from developers, infrastructure providers, and national government.

We are in the early stages of preparing a new Local Plan which will need to respond to the Government's new mandatory housing figures, calculated using the national standard methodology. In seeking to respond to this new housing challenge, the Council's Local Plan will propose policies to secure that an appropriate percentage of this is affordable housing to support locally identified needs.

Further to this, we are actively reviewing our housing strategy to ensure it aligns with the emerging Shropshire Plan and reflects the new administration's priorities.

Finally, while we are committed to increasing housing supply, we must also ensure that growth is supported by appropriate infrastructure—schools, transport, utilities, and health services. This is a shared challenge, and we will continue to work with partners and government to secure the necessary investment.

3. Olly Rose

I am pleased to see the report on item 6a the pump track in Oswestry. Having worked for years to secure this, it is the first time it has been on an SUC Cabinet agenda.

It would be remiss of me not to remind the Cabinet that this is an urgent matter. As well as the great need for young people's health and wellbeing, damage is being done to the Oswestry Hillfort and to the adjacent coppice and that is one reason why there is strong support from the community, English Heritage and Oswestry Town Council for this provision, the construction of which can be funded by the Town Council.

A new, accessible to all, pump track/skateboard park has the potential to be a great demonstration of partnership working between Parish and Shropshire Councils but only if you seize the initiative and make rapid progress now. So can I have a re-assurance from the Portfolio-holder that Shropshire Council will proceed at pace and not continue to bank this land in the hope that at some stage in the future it will have the finances to develop it.

That has been the situation since you first got planning permission in 2008 and it would be good to hear his agreement that as this hasn't worked in the last 17 years it needs this change

The importance of both collaborating with the Town Council and providing a new pump track for the young people of Oswestry is recognised. I have asked officers to continue exploring this and other potential options, and to bring a report to the October Cabinet meeting recommending a preferred approach. This will enable the appropriate formal decision-making process to take place and support the delivery of the track

MEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Cllr Craig Emery

In February 2025 Shropshire Council gave permission for a temporary road closure in Pantglas due to a collapsed area of carriageway - this temporary road closure has been extended several times with no progress to works being completed on the ground. The road closure has split the community of Pantglas. Can cabinet members update the community as to an expected timetable for the completion of works in the area? Can they further provide reassurance as to how similar schemes will be better managed from now on, so that local members can track progress.

Background Information

Email received 15/08/2025

To whom it may concern,

Please find enclosed details of a temporary road closure:

Road Closure: Unnamed Road Pantglas, Oswestry

Start Date: 26th February 2025

End Date: 26th September 2025

Purpose: Urgent Road Closure due to collapsed carriageway.

Works Promoter: Shropshire Council

Works Promoter Ref: Unknown (promoter_works_ref)

Enforcement pattern for Unnamed Road Pantglas, Oswestry: All the time

Response: Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways & Environment

A section of the original stone culvert had collapsed leading to a void forming under the road and a hole appeared in the road surface. Due to the position of the hole the road has had to be closed on an emergency basis.

The work to repair the culvert involves the replacement of a section of the original stone culvert with a 900 mm concrete pipe.

Works are planned to commence from 1st September 2025.

The works will take approximately four weeks to complete.

Managers do their very best, but the lack of appropriate financial resources and personnel does make it harder for staff to respond in a timely manner. However, that does not stop us from reviewing our responses and looking for improvements so, thank you very much for submitting your question.

2. Councillor Chris Naylor

I and other Councillors are excited by the new Administration's Partnership initiative, and I'd thank the Deputy Leader for his recent presentation to Condover Parish. Another of my Parish Councils, Church Preen - which has more than a few pothole problems - has seen the successful Parish Partnership project in Devon, and is now keen to offer a volunteer team to fix signs, check drains and even do minor pothole works. I'd be very grateful for an update on the overall progress of this important initiative.

Response: Cllr Alex Wagner, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities

As Cllr Chris Naylor will recall, I along with the Chair of Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr David Minnery, reached out to our Town and Parish Councils in June 2025 to get their views on resetting our relationships.

Cllr Minnery and I have been humbled by the responses so far with over 88 of our local Councils responding, the vast majority in favour of further discussions about how we work more closely together.

In the meantime, we have been working with colleagues at Shrewsbury Town Council, with whom we already have an existing working relationship on issues including street maintenance, to produce a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set out a clear framework in which to move forward successfully.

Whilst the MoU is not a legal document it helps formally agree how we want to work together in mutual respect, trust, and transparency, as equal partners from the very beginning. We have shared this with our colleagues in the Town and Parish Councils and asked them to confirm if they would like to sign it and thereby symbolise our commitment going forward.

It is intended to set a basis of collaborating that we recognise may eventually reach different outcomes for different areas, but which we hope can provide solutions for both the sparsest most rural parish and the largest market town. Once signed, we can then work together to review opportunities and ambitions, and begin to implement these as quickly as we can.

In addition to this important work, we have also asked Cllr Minnery to lead an Overview and Scrutiny 'task and finish group' to develop a policy that can be considered by Cabinet which would create effective local partnerships aimed at working in closer partnership. This work will use examples from elsewhere to help define our own approach.

So, while we take advantage of immediate opportunities, we are looking to agree a long-term that ensures we work in partnership with local leaders to benefit our local communities. This partnership working approach is likely to form the basis of a new strategic plan for Shropshire Council which will be discussed later at Cabinet today.

I would also add that it was excellent to meet with Condover Parish Council in Cllr Naylor's division, and hope that they might take us up on our challenge of being a first pilot for a 'rural cluster' whereby they and their neighbours take us up on our MoU and jointly support direct labour to improve the public realm.

3. Councillor Andy Boddington

Numbers 4-5 King Street, which have been knocked into one, were formerly a Costa Coffee. The fabric of the buildings deteriorated during that period. Decay has increased since Costa Coffee closed in May 2023. Cement has flaked from the front wall. A pane of glass fell out onto the pavement of King Street.

This Ludlow's greatest eyesore and an embarrassment to the town and Shropshire. Despite a year and a half of discussions between myself, council officers, the owner and the contractor, nothing significant has been done to the building. It is opposite a popular venue, the owner of which says it is affecting his business.

Ludlow has run out of patience on this. Shropshire Council can move it forward by issuing a notice under Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Can the council:

- 1) Conduct an urgent building inspection of both the exterior and interior of the building?
- 2) Issue a Section 54 notice on the owner to ensure there is a maximum focus on bring this Grade II listed building into repair?

Response: Cllr David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

Council Officers are aware that external condition of 4-5 King Street, which is a Grade II listed building, has been gradually deteriorating over recent years and for some time prior to the Costa Coffee branch closing. This includes flaking paintwork and defects with part of the render on the front elevation of the property, both of which have been noticeable since at least 2021. We are further aware that residents and Cllr Boddington have raised increased concern about the deteriorating condition of the exterior of the building over the past 18mths, including via social media.

The owner of the property sought pre-application planning advice regarding proposals to repair and refurbish the building last year. They have subsequently advised officers that they intend to bring forwards applications for planning permission and listed building consent this autumn, with a view to letting the property to an end user towards the middle of next year. Ahead of this, the owners removed inappropriate materials that had previously been applied from the floors of the building, together with some stripping out of the previous café fixtures, with the agreement of the Conservation Officer, last year.

Officers have also agreed that the owner can undertake a package of repairs to the render and front elevation of the building ahead of submission of their planning applications. The owner's surveyor continues to advise officers that they are currently in the process of appointing a scaffolding contractor to enable them to undertake these works. They have further advised that once they have appointed a contractor they will apply to the Street Works Team for a scaffolding permit, also taking account of the need to avoid scaffolding being in place, and the pavement below it restricted, during the Ludlow Food Festival weekend of 12 – 14 September. Officers have arranged to meet with the surveyor dealing with the property this week to inspect the interior and exterior of the building and further impress on them and the owner the need to progress these repairs as soon as reasonably possible now. They will provide myself and Cllr Boddington with further updates once this meeting has taken place.

Section 54 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Area) Act 1990 provides the Council (as the local planning authority) with the power to undertake works which appear to them to be urgently necessary for the preservation of a listed building. Case law has clarified that these works should be restricted to emergency measures to keep a building wind and weatherproof, safe from collapse, and/ or prevent vandalism or theft, and must be the minimum works necessary to achieve this and not include those that are just desirable. Any such works are therefore limited to measures such as temporary roof coverings to provide shelter, temporary structural shoring and scaffolding, and boarding up and installation of temporary security doors and window grills. Before proceeding the local planning authority must firstly formally warn the owners of a building that it is considering talking enforcement action, in order to provide them with an opportunity to act themselves and therefore prevent any cost arising to the public purse. Likewise, works cannot proceed until a Notice (often referred to as an Urgent Works Notice) has been served that specifies the scope of the works to be undertaken, and providing the owner with a minimum of seven days to respond. Under section 55 of the Act, the owner can appeal to the Secretary of State via the Planning Inspectorate against subsequent attempts by the local planning authority to recover its costs for undertaking urgent works.

Given these considerations, officers have advised me, and I agree, that an Urgent Works Notice would not be the appropriate enforcement tool to utilise in this case, and that any challenge against such a notice is likely to succeed in the circumstances, especially given that negotiations with the owner remain ongoing and that other planning enforcement powers would considered be more appropriate.

With regard to the safety to the public, the Council's Building Control Team have recently investigated a dangerous structures case after receiving reports of debris and glass falling from the building and the deteriorating state of repair, which included dialogue with the owners. However, a Building Control Surveyor has checked the building again over the weekend of 6-7th September, after they were made aware of Cllr Boddington's concerns. Any further such incidents should be reported directly to the Building Control Team so that they can be investigated in relation to their powers under the Building Act 1984.

4. Councillor Teri Trickett

Will Cabinet consider ensuring that site visits for planning applications are arranged in line with Local Government Association good practice guidelines, so that all controversial and significant sites have a visit planned?

<https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/applications/planning-committee/planning-committee-support/planning-committee-protocols>

In addition:

Will Cabinet ensure that local Members are invited to these site visits and sent the details alongside Planning Committee Members, as the current practice of not inviting them is undemocratic?

In accordance with the Council's own policy, will Cabinet ensure that landowners of land adjacent to a prospective planning application are notified directly, rather than having to find out indirectly through parish or town councils or via their local Member?<https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/planning/applications/planning-committees/committee-site-visits/>

Response: Cllr David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

By way of background, Officers and members, including myself and both Chairs and Vice Chairs of the planning committees are working together to review the member protocol for these committees, and this will look at all areas of the committee's operation including agenda setting and site visits.

Will Cabinet consider ensuring that site visits for planning applications are arranged in line with Local Government Association good practice guidelines, so that all controversial and significant sites have a visit planned?

<https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/applications/planning-committee/planning-committee-support/planning-committee-protocols>

Site visits by planning committee are not required in every case, and decisions are taken at the agenda setting meeting when it is decided by the Planning Services Manager in consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair (in accordance with the Constitution) where a matter should be determined by the relevant planning committee. Once the agenda is set the agenda setting panel consider the costs and benefits of visiting the application sites. In some cases, a guided and formal site visit is a necessary part of assisting planning committee, and this is subject to its own protocol. Officers can assist members in understanding sites through plans, maps and photographs and some developers will provide a "fly through" or visual impact study with photographs, but I agree that in some cases issues such as topography, relationship to adjacent land and the impact of development requires a site visit in order to be properly understood and considered later during the committee meeting proper.

A committee site visit can be used to clarify physical features and to view the site and its overall setting, including from any private land necessary. The site visit is not a formal part of the planning committee meeting therefore it is important that no decisions are taken, or seen to be taken on any application at the site visit. There should be no discussion held as to the merits of the proposal. Officers will attend in order to clarify any factual information.

This is in accordance with the LGA guidelines.

In addition:

Will Cabinet ensure that local Members are invited to these site visits and sent the details alongside Planning Committee Members, as the current practice of not inviting them is undemocratic?

The planning and development services manager has confirmed that local members will be invited onto site visits and this has been implemented with immediate effect. It is acknowledged that members play a vital role in their local areas and can add to site visits with local knowledge and insight, as such we have taken action to ensure that this happens going forward. Members are reminded that planning committee acting in their capacity as decision makers on planning applications are acting in a quasi-judicial role.

In accordance with the Council's own policy, will Cabinet ensure that landowners of land adjacent to a prospective planning application are notified directly, rather than having to find out indirectly through parish or town councils or via their local Member?
<https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/planning/applications/planning-committees/committee-site-visits/>

The publicity requirements for planning applications are set through the planning acts. Landowners of adjacent land can attend a committee site visit, however they may not enter private land without the express permission of the owner as they are not part of the site visit. Members of the public can attend and listen those parts of the site visit which are carried out on public land but members should not discuss matters relating to the application. If adjacent landowners or other members of the public wish to address planning committee or state their views then they should attend the formal planning committee meeting in accordance with the protocol on public speaking at planning committee, this is the opportunity for adjacent landowners to address planning committee directly in the formal meeting.

As site visits are carried out in order that members can view site characteristics and the general location and it is not open to members or the public to discuss the application at this forum there is no requirement or benefit to inviting neighbours to the committee site visit. Should it be considered necessary to visit adjoining land in order to help inform committee then officers may consider writing to neighbouring land owners to gain this permission, however this is rarely necessary. Further, officers and members (accompanied by authorised officers) have powers of entry to enter land at any reasonable time for the purpose of surveying the land in connection with the determination of a planning application, in practice it is likely that the landowner will have granted specific consent, however this power of entry does not extend to members of the public or adjacent land owners.

5. Councillor Rosemary Dartnall

I've pursued road safety measures in Column & Sutton, a residential area that's accommodated 2000 new homes with traffic volume increased, just as anyone would expect.

Following complaints I have engaged in extensive discussion with residents, local police, the PCC and council officers. Despite successfully making the case for a number of improvements, with officer agreement, change simply does not happen.

Examples;

- Wenlock Rd - new Toucan crossing – first lobbied for by my predecessor to 2021, but now more needed. Highways applied for CiL funding end 2024 with decision March 2025.
- yellow lines on a section of Wenlock Rd and Huxley Close
- upgrading existing zebra crossings, speed limit reduction on London and Wenlock roads.
- no externally funded footpath from Weir Hill to London Rd nor improvements to Belvidere Bridge – S106 funded

Although I have regularly pushed for information I have received no communication of consequence. Not even an update that shows progression and/or a timeline for completion. I've heard nothing concrete about any of these and other necessary minor projects. Residents simply do not understand and neither do I. What is the problem?

The administration of CiL and S106 monies is opaque when it should be managed openly with full transparency including the involvement of elected members. Please explain why S106 and CiL allocation is managed so mysteriously? What is being done to change this?

Response: Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways & Environment and Cllr David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Planning

Cllr Vasmer:

- yellow lines on a section of Wenlock Rd and Huxley Close

This proposal has previously been raised by local residents which resulted in the commencement of a formal consultation around yellow lining and associated parking restrictions/enforcement to resolve reported issues in the area. This consultation was originally completed in parallel with the adjacent proposals around traffic management measures in support of the local School Streets initiative. In the light of the current suspension and review of the School Streets Pilot Programme, it is now proposed that this consultation is re-run in isolation around the yellow line restrictions in the area of Huxley Close only. This will allow officers to assess the residents responses to this matter in a focused way and allow any recommendation to pursue

an enforcement scheme to be made accurately around the local implications of such. It is envisaged that this could be completed with around 6 weeks from commencement, and residents will be informed of the start of this process. We apologise for the delaying on this matter, this initiative was previously being led by officers now longer with the council.

- upgrading existing zebra crossings, speed limit reduction on London and Wenlock roads.

This matter will again require detailed consultation around the proposals, the potential benefits and impacts on traffic movement and pedestrian safety locally and in the wider area, alongside affordability for the council. As such it is also proposed that detailed plans are now prepared for the launch of this consultation in collaboration with the local Member and Portfolio Holder.

Cllr Walker:

Section 106 Planning Obligations (S106) agreements are generally applied to the direct impacts from development and are secured prior to the granting of planning via a legal agreement which specifies how the funds are to be applied. In contrast, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds are generally used to mitigate the cumulative impacts of a number of developments, and therefore not generally applied to schemes at the planning application stage.

Shropshire Council makes decision regarding the allocation of CIL funding in accordance with the CIL Regulations and National Planning Practice Guidance, and in relation to the priorities identified in three key sets of Council documents - the 18 Place Plans, the Strategic Infrastructure and Investment Plan, and the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement. These documents are all published on the Council's website, together with a range of other explanatory information. The highest priority for the use of CIL is given to critical infrastructure needs resulting from new development, in particular ensuring there is sufficient capacity in our schools, roads and health facilities.

The issue of S106 and CIL funding was reviewed by a Member Developer Contributions Task and Finish Group in 2023-24 and its findings reported at the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 July 2024. As a result of this Officers are currently preparing a Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document which it is hoped to be brought to Cabinet for agreement to consult later in 2025.

With regards the allocation of CIL funding to specific projects, this is normally done via an Expression of Interest (EoI) process administered by the officer led Internal Infrastructure Group (IIG), which meets quarterly. This process has agreed a number of projects for approval, including schemes related to highways, additional education provision, additional GP provision and new and enhanced leisure provision.

However, it is recognised that there has been recent concern expressed about the transparency of this process, including the need for greater member oversight on this decision-making process. The process of allocating CIL is likely to be subject of further Member scrutiny later in 2025 and officers are committed to working with members to ensure this process is fit for purpose and fully transparent.