

FULL COUNCIL – 25 SEPTEMBER 2025

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1. Question received from Rev Paul Cawthorne

Please confirm:

1. What percentage of claims are paid out where an invoice or receipt from a garage is submitted 2. Why repairs needed on the Clive to Hadnall road reported in the spring have not all been repaired including several near Sansaw which are now deep and dangerous and causing further damage 3. When the potholes marked by council employees 2-3 months ago will actually be repaired, now the markings are fading and not visible while driving at night, so that potholes are not avoidable, especially when cars are coming on other side of road 4. When the current multipothole chicanes at the bottom of Clive bank and in Sansaw will be repaired, to ensure one does not have to scare drivers coming in the opposite direction by swerving right across the road in front of them.

Response from Councillor David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Environment

What percentage of claims are paid out where an invoice or receipt from a garage is submitted

While invoices and receipts are considered as part of the supporting documentation for a claim, they are not sufficient on their own to guarantee payment. Each claim is assessed individually and must meet the evidentiary standards set out in our claims guidance. Crucially, compensation will only be offered where it is demonstrated that Shropshire Council is legally liable for the alleged damage. If the evidence submitted does not establish liability or fails to meet the required standard to validate the claim, no settlement will be made.

Whilst the question does not specify any timescales, we can advise that during the 2024/25 financial year, we received 785 claims relating to pothole damage. In 72.7% of these cases (571 claims) liability has been accepted, with repair invoices obtained to substantiate the losses before any settlement figures were agreed, and the claim finalised. In other instances, while claimants may have submitted invoices or receipts, no payment has been made where legal liability could not be established.

Why repairs needed on the Clive to Hadnall road reported in the spring have not all been repaired including several near Sansaw which are now deep and dangerous and causing further damage

The condition of the network within this parish is not unique within Shropshire, or indeed across the country with almost all rural highway authorities struggling to keep on top of defects, with the pace of deterioration outstripping budget and resource availability. In Shropshire we have seen pothole numbers increase by 53% over the last three years. It is acknowledged at a national level that our country's roads require considerable extra investment, in order to keep our roads safe and prevent additional potholes forming.

We recognise the impact that highway maintenance has on our communities and businesses and as a result the new administration has made highways one of its key priorities. The council is currently repairing well over 500 potholes a week and has committed extra resources to help reduce pothole numbers.

When the potholes marked by council employees 2-3 months ago will actually be repaired, now the markings are fading and not visible while driving at night, so that potholes are not avoidable, especially when cars are coming on other side of road. When the current multipothole chicanes at the bottom of Clive bank and in Sansaw will be repaired, to ensure one does not have to scare drivers coming in the opposite direction by swerving right across the road in front of them.

We have committed additional resources to tackle potholes and are working hard to reduce the backlog of defects. We are aware of the defects at this location and will schedule repairs as soon as possible.

2. Question received from Emma Bullard, Sustainable Transport Shropshire

Sustainable Transport Shropshire welcomes the adoption of the Shrewsbury Movement and Public Spaces Strategy (SMPSS) and we look forward to contributing to its successful implementation.

In the years preceding the SMPSS various schemes were proposed to support and enable active travel across the town. Some of them gained approval and had thousands of pounds spent on design and consultation but have not been delivered. Shropshire Council's Active Travel webpage has no current information about any active travel schemes.

Please provide an update on the following schemes. Are they going ahead or have they been superseded by the SMPSS?

If they are going ahead please give details of the timescale.

1. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). How will the proposed routes be prioritised for delivery? Will they be incorporated into LTP4 so that they are a factor in future developments?
2. The Bicton Active Travel Corridor, including
3. Crowmeole Lane point closure. The intention was to enforce this through ANPR but it is still not enforced.
4. Bank Farm Road/Longden Road. A government grant was used to design improvements here.
5. Copthorne Road crossings and Porthill 20mph zone. Approved but still not delivered.
6. Weir Hill to London Road connection.

We welcome the news that a new Active Travel Manager will start work soon. In addition to the schemes already mentioned, will this officer also have input into other developments, such as new housing and employment, and the RSH expansion, where there is an important active travel component?

Response from Councillor Rob Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth

As you rightly point out, there has been too much promise, and not enough delivery. This point is exemplified by the list of incomplete schemes in the question. We aim to change that, but unfortunately this is in a climate of financial constraint. It's important to note that the LCWIP for Shrewsbury was written in advance of the Movement & Public Space Strategy, this means that potential schemes in Shrewsbury will need to be considered in light of the MPSS in terms of compatibility and value for money.

I am pleased that we are welcoming a new Active Travel Manager to the council this month, this role is key to improving policy and delivery going forwards. The more people who can swap short journeys to walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, more capacity will be created on our road network for those who need to drive.

3. Question received from Ron and Jane Berry

Shropshire Council's pension fund, LGPS Central, invests over £142m in companies directly linked to Israel's genocidal assault on the people of Palestine. Public questions, in March and June 2025, have asked the Pensions Committee to consider divestment, but so far LGPS Central has maintained its existing policy.

Shropshire Council, like all local authorities in England and Wales, has received a letter from Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), detailing councils' legal obligation to divest from companies enabling genocide. The council has yet to issue a response.

The International Association of Genocide Scholars states that Israel's conduct in Gaza meets the legal description of genocide defined in the UN convention, a view supported by many human rights organisations, including some in Israel itself (notably B'Tselem and Physicians for Human Rights). They contend that Israel's western allies have a legal and moral duty to take action.

Despite those arguments and despite a great deal of available evidence, the UK's Foreign Secretary recently declared that Israel's behaviour in Palestine doesn't constitute genocide. In doing so he defends the UK Government, which is itself supplying arms and extensive logistical support to Israel's campaign.

Is it not time for Shropshire Council to respond to PSC's letter by debating the issue of divestment? Shouldn't the full council consider members' individual and collective responsibilities in light of the mounting evidence of genocide?

We ask: Will Shropshire Council join the growing number of councils who have withdrawn investment from companies which aid Israel's assault on the people of Palestine?

Response from Councillor Heather Kidd, Leader of the Council

Thank you for your question, which has been raised with Shropshire Council, one of 166 employers within the Shropshire County Pension Fund (SCPF).

Advice received by Pension Funds is to await further guidance on this matter and not take knee jerk decisions which could increase costs and damage fund performance. To confirm, SCPF does not hold any Israeli Government Bonds and there are no Israeli stocks held by LGPS Central investments. There are 12 Israeli stocks in the passive equity index as this simply looks to mirror global markets, valued at c£6m. The Pensions

Committee will always need to take its own legal advice, on behalf of its employers and members, not Shropshire Council.

In terms of Shropshire Council, I can confirm that there are no Treasury investments by the Council directly with Israel. We only deal with the larger UK based banks and Money Market Funds.

4. **Question received from Susan Wedlock**

The Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for Shropshire prohibits dogs from running freely in public streets, with a £100 fine for non-compliance. Unlike other PSPOs, there is no exemption for hunt dogs. Yet on Boxing Day, the Ludlow Hunt brings a large pack into town, all running loose. Any ordinary dog owner would be fined. There are also serious hygiene and health & safety concerns, documented on the AAF website, when hounds interact with children.

We asked why the hunt is given privileges denied to others. The council's response claimed that farming activity, livestock movement, hunts, and possibly shoots could be exempt, despite hunts not being farms and hounds not being farm animals. This reasoning was muddled, particularly as it suggested exemptions might apply to "organised and timed events, for example hunts." Our requests for clarification, supported by evidence regarding road closures and PSPO law, were ignored for months.

After formal complaints, the council replied but made a **fundamental error**, incorrectly stating the Ludlow Hunt is a humane drag hunt. It is not; it is a controversial trail hunt, which will soon be illegal.

The council also admitted it unofficially allows the hunt to ignore the PSPO because of who they are and because of tradition. This is scandalous. Everyone must obey the PSPO; the council has a duty to enforce it fairly and consistently. The PSPO exists to **protect the public**, and tradition should never override this legal duty. Granting exemptions undermines safety, the rule of law, and public trust.

Response from Councillor David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Environment

Shropshire Council's position remains the same as previously stated. The Order exists to address persistent antisocial behaviour such as drug use, vandalism, or dangerous dogs and dog fouling. There is no evidence to suggest any antisocial behaviour associated with this organised event by those taking part or attending. Trail hunt hounds are not "dogs at large" in a public space, they are under professional control and are brought into the area briefly and with advance notice and planning.

Trail hunt hounds are professionally trained, monitored, and vet-checked, with high welfare standards. We note your concerns with safety, however the Ludlow Boxing Day has met peacefully and successfully for many years, and there is no evidence of harm from large numbers of dogs being at this organised event.

In the UK, trail hunt hounds (like foxhounds used in trail hunting or other working packs) don't fall under pet dog regulations – their welfare is mainly overseen through self-regulation by hunting organisations rather than direct statutory law.

Shropshire Council affords all communities and groups the same entitlement to hold public events within our area of responsibility with each application assessed on a case-by-case bases.

5. Question received from Frances Rickford

What plans there are for regulating the proliferation of self-contained holiday accommodation, to mitigate the impact on residential neighbourhoods and on the availability of homes to rent. Some English councils (eg Wiltshire) now require change of use planning permission for the conversion of a residential home into a full time Airbnb-type business. Will Shropshire do this, and if not why not?

Response from Councillor David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

The last government were looking into introducing a new use class (i.e. planning category) and registration scheme for short term holiday lets, such as Air BnB, which would have the impact of limiting the use of a dwelling in this way to 90 letting days a year. This has not been brought forward as of yet by the current government.

Short term holiday lets are seen as an integral part of the UK's visitor economy. Holiday cottages, home stays and self-catering apartments have long catered for the needs of tourists, those travelling for work, or people in need of overnight accommodation. Nationally there has been an emergence of the sharing economy and digital platforms to facilitate short-term letting. They can, however, when there are too many in one location, have the effect of "hollowing out" communities by impacting on the availability and affordability of local rental housing and increasing house prices driven by additional demand from owners of short-term lets, as well as those used for larger parties which can lead to anti-social behaviour.

We are in early preparation stage of the local plan and we will review any evidence as part of this process. If it becomes clear there is an issue to address, and we do not currently have any data to suggest that it is an issue in this county, then we could consider a localised policy, subject to the introduction of new relevant legislation which would set the parameters for this type of use.

Planning applications for change of use from domestic houses to short term holiday lets, where a material change of use has occurred, will be dealt with on their own merits in the context of local and national policy, although many short term holiday lets do not require planning permission and this requires legislation rather than policy to be changed.

6. Question received from John Palmer

On 26 September 2024 this Council, in its desperate last throes of Conservatives Administration, approved plans looking to sell 10 of its car parks, for 125 years, using a financial agreement called an Income Strip. The upfront additional capital receipt secured was budgeted at up to £30m, and the council would lease back the car parks for a fee each year. This controversial plan quietly disappeared before the 2025/26 budget was set in February 2025. Was that because it was found to be illegal? What were the reasons it was dropped? Can the current Council confirm this idea is definitively consigned to the dustbin of history, or is a revival option not ruled out?

Response from Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Thanks John, for your question.

This decision was of course taken whilst, as you state in your question, the previous administration ran this council.

To refresh memories, in the Autumn of 2024 -25 the much-vaunted councils transformation programme could not be funded. Various different ways to raise need money were looked at by the then Administration who were running the council. The preferred method put forward at a Scrutiny Committee was the so-called Income Strip. At that meeting the majority of members present voted to approve this proposal. As noted in the official minutes, I voted against the proposal for the reasons stated in them. This then became an agenda item at the full council meeting held on 26 September 2024. At that meeting, and on a recorded vote, again as stated in the official minutes, I and all the other Liberal Democrats present at that meeting, voted against the proposal.

I have been told that Income Strip was however not progressed with. The official reason I am told was that there were two other alternative methods also being considered and as a result and after further consideration the Capital Direction method was chosen. This, again I am informed was because the length of this loan could be varied whereas the Income Strip model would have tied the council into taking out a long term loan of up to 125 years. No mention has been made to me about whether the use of various break clauses had also been actively considered to reduce the original 125-year loan term.

I wish to also add that, as I understand what happened, due to the worsening financial situation the council was in, this money was used to fund the councils transformation programme which included paying PwC and the councils redundancy costs.

Regarding the last point in your question concerning whether the income strip model might be used to raise funds in the future. At present, as I understand the original proposal, no I would not support it.

I have however seen examples that some councils have used the Income Strip method to raise funds and then invest them in specific capital projects which were supported by both the community and that council, whilst also generating extra income. I do therefor remain open to further discussion and will continue to seek clarity on these matters to best represent the interests of both our council and our community.

My priority will always be to ensure transparency, fiscal responsibility, and strict adherence to appropriate rules when decisions of such magnitude are placed before the council.