

## **FULL COUNCIL – 25 SEPTEMBER 2025**

### **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

#### **1. Question received from Councillor Beverley Waite**

“As cars continue to increase in size, will the council give consideration for larger spaces, particularly for those with babies and young children as is commonplace in supermarket car parks? I understand that there would be a revenue implication for such a measure, but I am concerned that residents with young families are being unfairly treated.”

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

Car bloat is a well-recognised phenomenon. Last year it was reported that the average width of a new car in the EU and UK passed 180cm in the first half of 2023, having grown an average of 0.5cm each year since 2001. As a father of young children, I am well aware of the difficulties this presents, however, there is no simple solution. Disabled bays in car parks are regulated by Blue Badges, but there is no equivalent for young families. Supermarkets are private land, so are subject to different rules to a local authority. This means that the council would be unable to enforce such a scheme. Also, as you stated in your question there would be a revenue implication for the council, and in the current financial situation this would be difficult to resolve.

#### **2. Question received from Councillor Sarah Marston**

I have been contacted by residents of Myddlewood, Myddle, Harmer Hill, and Burlton recently. They are deeply concerned about the speed of traffic passing through their villages. Will the council consider bringing in lower speed limits and implementing additional safety measures, where necessary, to increase safety for residents, especially our children and older people?

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

Our manifesto at the council elections said that we would “Introduce 20mph speed limits where there is the support of the parish council and local councillor”. This follows the successful approach taken by the Liberal Democrat/Green coalition at Oxfordshire County Council over the last four years. The evidence there and elsewhere shows that there is a reduction not only in collisions and the number of people killed and seriously injured, but savings on car insurance premiums too.

We have held initial discussions with Council officers about reviewing Shropshire Council's policy on the use of 20mph speed limits. The hope is that this will make the process for implementation simpler and more cost effective. This work is complicated by the previous administration's policy to only introduce these safer limits outside of schools, which, whilst noble-sounding, is not evidence-based in making journeys safer.

We will share more details about how this review will impact existing proposals for 20mph schemes as soon as possible.

### **3. Question received from Councillor Harry Hancock-Davies**

Shropshire Council has declared a financial emergency whilst millions in unpaid Council Tax and Business Rates remain uncollected. Given that the previous Conservative administration cut the Revenues & Benefits budget, the very team responsible for collecting this income, what steps has the current administration taken to strengthen Council Tax and Business Rates collection?

#### **Response from Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance**

My thanks to Cllr Hancock-Davies for raising this important question.

I too am concerned not only within this department but in many other areas of the council where teams have been reduced in number under the previous administration and their efforts to use any means possible to reduce costs. We need to review this policy and look more carefully across the authority in how we deliver a balanced budget. Staffing numbers will have to change, up or down, but we aim to do this in a more considered way.

To answer to your specific question concerning the amounts of outstanding unpaid Council Tax and Business Rates. I had already asked question and also raised queries on a number of issues that fellow councillors have raised with me. I am also concerned that due to what I perceive the present staffing levels the way some demands had been sent out to our businesses and residents.

The staff does urgently need to be increased, and I have had it confirmed in the last few days that both a short term and a longer plan is being discussed and put together including a revised software addition to assist in what we both want to achieve.

In the present position we find ourselves in any extra income that we can obtain is to be welcomed. Last year, before becoming part of this new administration, I did both note and asked questions concerning the councils external auditors comments about the amount of outstanding debt the council has.

Debt levels have increased substantially in the last few years. An example of the this is the £6.6m it increased by in 2024 – 25. A comparable situation, although smaller, exists concerning the Business Rates collection. My aim is to continue to reduce this as part of the short-term plan I am implementing. As at the end of the 2024 – 25 fiscal year the amount of Council Tax owed to the council amounted to £28.2m. I am pleased to report that “2.28m of this has already been collected by the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2025.

#### **4. Urgent Question received from Councillor Carl Rowley**

Will the Council pledge its full support to St Martins School during this extremely difficult time following the devastating fire at the weekend? While I recognise that the school operates as an academy and is not under the direct control of the Council, we do have a statutory duty to ensure that education is provided. Council officers, school officials and I are working closely to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils, staff and the wider community. I ask that this Council formally commits to doing everything within its power to assist the school in its recovery and to ensure continuity of education for all affected

#### **Response from Councillor Andy Hall, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education**

Thank you for your question Cllr Rowley

We fully recognise the impact of the fire at St Martin's has had on the local community, and of course on pupils. It was deeply shocking to see the scenes from the school on Sunday evening. The council contacted the school and trust as soon as we were alerted to the incident to offer support, whilst recognising the status of the academy trust as the appropriate authority. We are working closely with the Trust, fire and rescue service, and other partners to support the community and ensure that the pupils can return to school as soon as possible.

The school and trust continue to keep us informed about the situation. We have also asked for school and trust leaders to keep the local member informed of the situation, we have received confirmation that they will do this. We have sought reassurance regarding the support for vulnerable pupils.

The Local Authority is very mindful of our pupils with a vulnerability, including looked-after children or those on child protection plans for example. Extra support and access to educational resource has been offered where relevant and the Education Welfare Officer is available for advice where parents/carers may have queries about attendance or re-integration following the incident.

Additionally, in order to support pupils in receipt of free school meals we have arranged for St Martins School to use the Council's Edenred account to issue meal vouchers to their 149 pupils who receive free school meals over the coming weeks whilst they work through getting children back into school over the phased return. This will have no impact on the household support fund as the payment is made by the school, utilising the administrative system of the council in the short term.

The Shropshire Music Service has also liaised with the school and will be loaning musical instruments to replace those affected by smoke and soot damage. We continue to offer assistance where needed and requested and are coordinating with the Department for Education to address the situation effectively. I'd like to pay tribute to school leaders for their dedication and hard work in this challenging time.