

CABINET – 19 NOVEMBER 2025
RESPONSES TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Public Questions

1. Jane Gallagher

Question:

Naturally the very difficult financial position that the new Lib Dem Administration has inherited means the Shropshire Council Cabinet will be considering the future of all its assets. It is therefore understood that the future of the iconic internationally-acclaimed Shirehall buildings are under consideration.

While we can imagine that opportunities for financial partnership with the Council may be on offer to retain and adapt the Shire Hall, Save our Shirehall campaigners ask whether, having declared a climate emergency in 2019 and set out a strategy and action plan in December 2020, how would any proposal to demolish the Shirehall and redevelop the site fulfil the Council's published Climate Strategy and Action Plan which state its intentions to become net zero by 2030, including a specific action to sequester carbon? What environmental assessments have been undertaken to demonstrate that any such demolition would not contribute to an increase in the Council's carbon emissions.

Response:

This is a hard question to answer. There are some unknowns to which answers are required.

The Shirehall has had very little money spent on it in recent times. Some say it is no longer fit for the purpose it was built for. Parts get cold, other parts get hot, even rooms next door to each other vary in temperature. Ask any employee what their working conditions were like, and the vast majority will agree with the statement I have just made. It cost a lot of money to heat and ventilate it. It used a lot of energy to heat and ventilate it. I grew up in the 1960's. The house I lived in had no heating; during the winter there was often ice on the inside of the glass windows. Living conditions have much improved, working conditions have improved, expectation of working conditions have improved.

To bring the Shirehall up to the level workers have a right to expect will cost a lot of money, will need a lot of work and consequentially a lot of carbon will be generated in carrying out the work. Do we have the money to do this, sadly no. Can we bring it up to the expected, wanted net zero condition, I very much doubt it.

Until very recently, even though workers were told in October 2024, 12 months ago that Shirehall was closing and they would need to work from home until alterations had been carried out to the guild hall, some staff were still working in there.

In February 2022 a motion was passed by the then majority party declaring the Shirehall building and associated environs within a marked boundary as surplus to requirements.

It was a council decision so only another council decision can alter it. What we have done is paused this decision and asked experts to look again at the site. Do a reappraisal. The results are just being received. We would like to retain the council chamber and some of the associated buildings, but we do need to take account of the cost, both in cash terms and in

net zero terms. The site is much too big for our present requirements. What I and we have done is paused the decision and asked for an up-to-date appraisal with alternatives. I and we plan to hopefully bring the results to a public meeting in the near future

2. Keith Trubshaw

Question:

Sports Village Development

1. Did the council and the development team explore the options offered by new technology that would enable full engagement of all stakeholders by creating a digital twin of the project? One whereby problems could be identified and solved or eliminated before a spade goes into the ground, substantially reducing or potentially eliminating the possibility of cost overruns, which plague public projects of this kind.

The project team is unclear what is meant by a Digital Twin – However, The Sports Village project was subjected to a full Public Consultation in March – May 2024. We have selected a design and build team lead by Pellikaan Construction Ltd who are one of the leading pool and leisure centre developers in the UK and Europe. Their building methodology involved computer modelling of all aspects of design and construction. The detailed designs have been completed alongside detailed surveys which can only be completed through on-site investigations to ensure a complete understanding of the site conditions and build risks are understood. The project has assigned a contingency so if approved there will be funds available in the event that unforeseen conditions are exposed.

2. Will it be a matter of public record that when costs overrun, the council declined to explore ways in which those overruns could have been avoided.

The recent experience of the Council at Whitchurch is that our design and construction team delivered this £14 million project ahead of schedule and under budget – we are not expecting the project to exceed the estimated budget but if overrun was to occur this would be reported to Cabinet and Council and be made public.

3. John Palmer

Question:

(nb Cabinet report only just published Fri 14 Nov, so under the rules I am still within deadline). In the Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2025/26, published online only on Friday 14 November ahead of this meeting, the updated Table 2 (between paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 of the report), and paragraph 4.5 itself, outline the budgetary implications of the for-now paused Shrewsbury North West Relief Road project's spend to date of £38.895m. Both the Central and Adverse forecast scenarios have enormous budgetary implications, and the request for Exceptional Financial Support from the Government potentially needs to embrace either forecast scenario. After 16 years of Tory quagmire, secret machinations, ideological environmental desolation, and performative traitorism, Shropshire residents are left with this mess. So, will Cabinet today update everyone on why there is silence in recent

months about resolving the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road spend issue with the Government?

Response:-

Thank you John for your question.

I note your concern, and also your thoughts including, to quote from your questions the secret machinations of the previous administration. This one, which I am a member of has given a commitment of openness and transparency. This I totally support.

The cost to build the NWRR, estimated nearly 12 months was of course £215m and, as you intimate, this estimated cost is more than our council can afford. No further update on costing has been sought and yes, I can confirm all work on the road is paused. What the cost to build it now is not known but it will be in excess of the figure just quoted.

Discussions concerning this road, which also involve our MP have and are taking place with the Department of Transport. No solution has yet been arrived at, but government officials have confirmed that at no time has or was any commitment made by any officer of the government, past or present that they would pay the full cost of this road's construction. Furthermore, we are in discussions with Department for Transport to consider an alternative scheme that would enable the Council to retain existing government funding to partly cover write off costs for the current scheme. These discussions continue and I assure you that we will inform residents as soon as a resolution has been agreed.

The council is also in discussions with MHCLG to ensure that they are fully aware of the associated write off costs for the NWRR should the scheme formally be cancelled by Council. Part of the NWRR incorporates what was formally called the Oxon Link Road. This subject appears on the council's forward plan.

Until clarification can be sought from government to resolve this issue, the Council will continue to report the latest position openly.