

## **CABINET – 3 DECEMBER 2025**

### **MEMBER QUESTIONS**

#### **1. Cllr Ed Potter**

I Attended my final meeting as the LA Governor for the Westcliff Federation last week before it joins a multi academy trust although SEND will remain the responsibility of Shropshire Council after transition. At the meeting all four schools raised concerns around the delay to EHCPs for children at these schools. This was placing significant pressure on the teaching staff as well as causing disruption to other children's education not to mention the increased financial pressures for schools already stretched to capacity. Could the portfolio Holder update me as to what is being done to clear the back log and speed up the processing of EHCPs and ensure that all children in Shropshire are receiving the support they need and deserve?

#### Response:

The response below outlines the context, challenges and examples of development work undertaken to improve the impact of the SEND system in Shropshire, including the crucial role of mainstream schools in successfully meeting the needs of children and young people with increasing levels of SEND needs.

Shropshire Council, the Integrated Care System and education providers (whether maintained or Academies supporting children and young people aged 0-25) all hold statutory duties in relation to meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND. It is important to recognise that this duty does not disappear from the school with the transfer of a mainstream school into an Academy Trust.

A briefing was shared with all Shropshire Council Members outlining the support that should be available to all children and young people through Inclusive Mainstream provision, prior to an EHCP assessment being requested. However, like other LAs nationally, Shropshire continues to see an increase in the requests for EHCP assessments and challenges meeting the 20-week timescale. It is worth noting that nationally, only 45% of requests for EHCP assessment are completed within the 20 week timescale. This briefing has been included as an appendix 1.

People Overview and Scrutiny also explored this area extensively through a written report, discussion and challenge during the meeting in October 2025. Details of the report are available in the link below.

People Overview and Scrutiny [Performance Report](#) – October 2025

Should any of the staff at The Westcliffe Federation require any further information, advice or assistance on these matters, they are able to contact Shropshire Council personnel who will be able to follow up. Details of the services and teams are included in the information and Council website links below.

**Context:**

- Shropshire has seen a significant increase in the number of children and young people in receipt of EHCPs from 2500 in May 2024 to 3247 in October 2025.
- The EHCP Team was restructured between October 2024 and March 2025, with ongoing recruitment as there was a 40% deficit of staff with agency staff leaving due to the restructure of the team. The EHCP team was fully staffed on 1<sup>st</sup> May, at which point demand for requests for assessments had continued to increase, which created a backlog of requests for new assessments, alongside the backlog of annual reviews.
- The new Case Officers have mostly come from a teaching background, and it has taken time for training and establishment of the team.
- Demand for EHCP request continues and has currently outstripped the capacity of the service. Work is underway to assess this position as we develop the budget requirements for the 26/27 financial year, alongside potential changes to the SEND system nationally, which continue to be delayed.

**Update on what is being done to clear the backlog and speed up processing of EHCPs:**

- Recruitment of further fixed term case officers is now underway to support with speeding up the statutory process and return it to timescales.
- The annual review recovery team is still in place to make sure that all annual reviews are up to date moving forward and remain up to date with further recruitment
- Review of the structure of team in line with continued increasing requests for statutory assessments is in progress, as part of the budget development work for 2026/2027.
- There is an impact on timeliness due to capacity in other services and timeliness of which they return their Advice to the EHCP team (Educational Psychology, Social Care and Health). These services are also being reviewed to increase capacity to support with meeting statutory deadlines, for example the Educational Psychology that is currently modelled on 137 requests for statutory assessment and on average 700 a year is requested from the Service.
- Quality of the EHCPs that are being produced are now consistently good.

**Support for all Children and Young People in Shropshire:**

- Our schools are able to access funding via the Graduated Support Pathway to assist with meeting children and young people's needs in school. [Graduated Support Pathway | Shropshire Council](#)
- Our schools are able to access Inclusive Development Grant Funding to support inclusion and prevent exclusion.
- Our schools are able to access capital funding to change their environment to support our children and young people in school.

- Our schools can access current outreach offers via the Change Programme [Alternative provision specialist taskforce \(APST\) | Shropshire Council](#) [Outshine | Shropshire Council](#)
- Our schools can seek advice and support via the Education Quality Advisors, Inclusion Consultation Panels and The Inclusive Pathway.
- Advice lines, support and training are also available to schools for speech and language needs [SLT advice line](#), [SLT online training offer](#).
- The Child Development Centre also has an [advice line](#).
- The system has published information about [support locally available for neurodiverse CYP](#)
- [Shropshire Universal Autism Support Service - Kids](#) offer support to CYP 0-19 and their families – a diagnosis is not needed to access support from this service.
- Schools can access the School Nursing Service to support with mental health needs in school and Social Prescribing Services.
- [Kooth online support](#) is available for children and young people aged 11 – 25.
- SENCOs are able to access regular Inclusive Practice Network Meetings via the EQAs and CPD.
- Resourced provisions (Hubs) are now part of a cohesive network and receive regular training, monitoring and support through EQAs.
- 3 new SEND Support Officers have been appointed to support schools with respect to the transition of children from EYFS settings to mainstream schools.

## 2. Cllr Julian Dean

In September a member of the public asked for an update on the many road safety and active travel schemes that had failed to make progress in Shrewsbury. The response accepted that not enough had been delivered. Subsequent to that I have repeatedly asked for a meeting with senior officers and portfolio holders at which members in the affected areas could get full and frank explanations regarding the progress or otherwise of these schemes. To date I have had no response or offer of a meeting.

In line with the administration's commitment to transparency can I have an assurance that members will have the chance to collectively quiz staff and portfolio holders regarding the schemes concerned so that we can inform our residents who continue to expect promised measures to come to fruition, and who are frustrated at the lack of candour and the failure to even see temporary schemes, such as that at New Street and the weekend pedestrianisation in the town centre through to permanency.

### Response:

I want to thank Cllr Dean for his question, and to have the opportunity to explain the work going on within the council to understand these issues.

We are in the process of conducting a review of projects which are in some stage of delivery, including items in the Place Plan, those with CIL allocated, and those which

have benefitted from Active Travel Funding. The early indications are that there are significant discrepancies between the expectations that residents and councillors may have, and what is now achievable with the remaining funds after preliminary design work has been undertaken. When this review has been concluded, I think this may be an area which scrutiny may wish to consider as part of its work programme.

### **3. Cllr Colin Taylor**

Tourism in Shropshire supports over 10,500 jobs in the county and contributes a fraction of under one billion pounds a year to our economy. Therefore it is vital that everything possible is done to assist this sector of commerce and encourage growth providing more jobs and wealth across the county. In my ward, Bridgnorth South and Alveley, the main visitor / tourism attractions are the Severn Valley Country Park, the Severn Valley Railway and the National Trust Dudmaston estate

The Sustrans route NCR 45, runs through the SVCP and runs parallel to the SVR, I believe that the SVR covers the insurance for this section as it is leased from the SVR. Since it was established has become a major part of the visitor experience for the area. It does in fact continue to run all the way up through Shropshire.

Given Sustrans' withdrawal of maintenance support for the sections of National Cycle Network Route 45 through Severn Valley Country Park, what steps will Shropshire Council take to ensure the route remains open and safe for public use, and how will we secure long-term funding and community involvement to maintain this strategic active travel corridor?

It is vital to the local areas economy and jobs creation and sustainability as well as to the many hundreds of people who use it regularly to maintain their health and fitness.

#### Response:

Route 45 was established in conjunction with Sustrans (now known as the Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust), to promote cycling locally and across the UK and in some cases with support in terms of maintenance funding. Whilst many of these routes traversed highway routes many did not and in the case of Route 45, it was over private or privately controlled land such as the Severn Valley Railway. Indeed, the route extends along the former railway line over land owned by Wiley and Apley estates beside the River Severn.

The withdrawal of Sustrans maintenance funding is regrettable and has placed an additional burden on the Severn Valley Railway who have sought financial assistance from the Council to help with maintain access over land in their control.

Unfortunately, due to the Local Authority's financial difficulties, the Council was unable to assist.

Whilst I personally have sympathy for Cllr Taylor's valid and important points, funding one section of Route 45 would need to be considered in the wider context and not in isolation. Therefore, the maintenance liability would need to be assessed over the length of the route, against competing priorities and whether in the round it represents value for money.