

FULL COUNCIL – 11 DECEMBER 2025
PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

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Public Questions

1. Question received from Susan Wedlock

This question concerns Shropshire Council's support of the Boxing Day Hunt Meet in Ludlow. At the last council meeting, we asked why the hunt was permitted to bring a pack of unleashed dogs into the town centre despite the Public Space Protection Order which prevents anyone else from bringing even one unleashed dog into the town. Your answer clearly showed that you were not only ignoring documented health and safety risks from hounds and their faeces, but you were keen to treat the Ludlow Hunt - a commercial business - differently from everyone else and give them privileges for which anyone else would receive fine. Your reply contained significant factual errors and glossed over all of the health concerns highlighted in our question. We have since asked repeatedly for clarification, but all our emails have been ignored.

These are our questions:

When are you going to answer our questions?

Or, if you are ignoring us - why are you ignoring us?

Why are you putting your biased support of the Ludlow Hunt ahead of the health and safety of the public?

All we are asking is that the Ludlow Hunt are treated in the same way as everyone else. That is not unreasonable.

RESPONSE: Councillor Tom Dainty Deputy Portfolio Holder, on behalf of Councillor David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Environment

Section 21 of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 (TPCA 1847) provides local authorities with the power to temporarily close roads where they are "liable to be thronged and obstructed" due to public processions, rejoicings, illuminations, or similar occasions. This legislation has historically been used for local, short-duration events where the primary concern is managing congestion and ensuring public safety during gatherings.

The Boxing Day event in Ludlow falls within this scope because:

- It is a traditional, community-based event attracting spectators and participants in a concentrated area for a limited time.
- The closure is temporary and specific, designed to prevent obstruction and maintain safety for all highway users.

- TPCA orders allow us to act quickly and proportionately without imposing unnecessary administrative burdens on organisers or the council.

While TPCA does not itself mandate risk assessments or event management plans, Shropshire Council requires organisers to:

- Provide risk assessments and control measures as part of their application.
- Notify emergency services and relevant authorities to ensure coordinated safety planning.
- Implement appropriate traffic management, signage, and stewarding during the closure.

These steps ensure that public safety is not compromised. The council's role is to provide the legal mechanism for closure, not to manage the event itself, which remains the organiser's responsibility.

Shropshire Council does operate a Safety Advisory Group, and the event organisers are actively consulting with them regarding their proposals. The SAG is a multi-agency forum that provides advice and guidance to event organisers to help ensure public safety.

Members of the SAG include:

- Shropshire Council departments (Emergency Planning, Highways, Public Health, Licensing, and Public Protection)
 - West Mercia Police
 - Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
 - West Midlands Ambulance Service
- Other stakeholders may be invited depending on the nature of the event (e.g., NHS, Environment Agency).

2. Marcus Watkin

Recent BBC reporting has confirmed that the Shrewsbury Station gyratory bus-stop scheme fails to meet established accessibility standards, creating clear disadvantages for pedestrians, wheelchair users, visually-impaired people and others with mobility impairments. Despite repeated representations from residents, disability groups, businesses and other organisations — together with a petition of nearly 6,500 signatories — the Council has proceeded without revisiting the scheme or addressing the documented accessibility concerns.

There is substantial public concern that legitimate issues have been minimised or dismissed, and that the Council's approach does not reflect the transparency, accountability or equality-duty obligations expected of a public authority.

Formal Questions:

1. On what basis has the Council chosen not to address the accessibility failings identified in the BBC reporting, and how is this decision compatible with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and associated accessibility guidance?

2. What formal weight has the Council given to the petition of nearly 6,500 residents, and why has the Council elected not to take action despite such clear community opposition?
3. Will the Council now commit to an immediate, comprehensive review of the gyratory scheme's impact on disabled people and pedestrians, including structured engagement with disabled user groups and independent accessibility specialists?
4. If such a review is to proceed, what is the Council's precise timetable for commencing the review, consulting affected stakeholders, publishing findings, and implementing necessary modifications?
5. What mechanisms will the Council put in place to ensure transparent, timely feedback to stakeholders and the wider public regarding how their concerns are influencing future decisions?

RESPONSE – Councillor Rob Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Transport & Economic Growth

1. On what basis has the Council chosen not to address the accessibility failings identified in the BBC reporting, and how is this decision compatible with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and associated accessibility guidance?

The Council is taking the accessibility issues identified in the BBC reporting very seriously. Regarding the bus stop, this is currently suspended, and the Council is working with Arriva to resolve this. Shropshire Council is commissioning an independent safety review to investigate how the completed project complies with relevant legislation, and what remedial action may need to be taken. This will include considering an Equalities Impact Assessment.

2. What formal weight has the Council given to the petition of nearly 6,500 residents, and why has the Council elected not to take action despite such clear community opposition?

Shropshire Council understands the high level of public concern. This is why the project was rapidly considered by the Economy & Environment Scrutiny Committee on Thursday 13th November, with verbal recommendations taken to Cabinet on Wednesday 19th November. Further to this the Economy & Environment Scrutiny Committee conducted a rapid Task & Finish process on Monday 24th November, with a report taken to Cabinet on Wednesday 3rd December. The petitioner was able to speak directly to this Task & Finish Group. Alongside this an independent safety review is being commissioned which will consider how the scheme complies with relevant legislation, and what remedial action may need to be taken.

3. Will the Council now commit to an immediate, comprehensive review of the gyratory scheme's impact on disabled people and pedestrians, including structured engagement with disabled user groups and independent accessibility specialists?

Shropshire Council is already in the process of conducting such a review. This is being carried out independently of our existing technical partners. One of the key requirements of this review will be to understand how the scheme impacts on all

users. This should explain how the scheme complies with relevant legislation, and what remedial action may need to be taken.

4. If such a review is to proceed, what is the Council's precise timetable for commencing the review, consulting affected stakeholders, publishing findings, and implementing necessary modifications?

A comprehensive scope has been drafted for the independent review, and this will be taken forward once legal and procurement advice is obtained on the appropriate route to market. Early indications are that from commission to receipt of a full report will take approximately 12 weeks, given the level of detail required to inform the chosen consultant and the breadth of the review itself. In the meantime, a formal, interim Stage 3 Road Safety Audit has been instructed. Implementation of any potential modifications would be subject to consultation, formal approvals, funding and resource availability.

5. What mechanisms will the Council put in place to ensure transparent, timely feedback to stakeholders and the wider public regarding how their concerns are influencing future decisions?

The new administration at Shropshire Council has been clear that lessons need to be learned from this project, and others that have fallen short. A key recommendation of the Task & Finish group which reported to Cabinet last week was to use this issue "as a catalyst for organisational change, fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and continuous learning." This has been heard loud and clear by the council leadership and must be evident in future projects.

3 Question from Joanna Blackman

At the [National Emergency Briefing](#) on the climate and nature crisis held last week (27/11/2025), ten of the UK's leading experts briefed an invite-only audience of around 1,250 politicians and leaders from business, culture, faith, sport and the media with the latest implications for health, food, national security and the economy.

Leading experts warned that we face "[unprecedented societal and ecological collapse](#)" including starvation, economic collapse, civil unrest and wars if we don't take decisive action to limit further global warming and preserve nature.

[Paul Behrens](#) at the University of Oxford said "Britain has seen three of the five worst cereal harvests on record occur this decade. Things could get so bad, it leads to civil unrest, We face a choice. We can continue with business as usual, watching our food systems crumble, and then bracing ourselves for political and civil unrest. Or we can act now."

The Emergency Briefing concluded that we need "a world war II level of leadership – so leadership as if the survival of our society depends on it, because it does". (In the words of [Mike Berners-Lee](#), the chair of the event).

In the light of these unprecedented risks to local, national and global communities, will the Council:

1. Arrange to watch the film of the Emergency Briefing?
2. Discuss and agree a plan for how the Council will play their role as part of this world war II level of leadership?
3. Disseminate this vital information widely, including by organizing emergency briefings for the public?

Links:

National Emergency Briefing:

<https://www.nebriefing.org/>

New Scientist article:

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2506263-emergency-response-needed-to-prevent-climate-breakdown-warn-experts/>

RESPONSE: Councillor Heather Kidd, Leader

Thank you for your question. The Council acknowledges the importance of the issues raised at the recent National Emergency Briefing. Climate change and nature loss present significant challenges for communities locally and nationally, and we remain committed to playing our part in addressing these.

We understand that the recording of the briefing referenced will be publicly available once it is released, and Members and Officers are welcome to watch it.

The Council has an established Climate Strategy and Action Plan, which sets out our approach to reducing emissions and supporting nature recovery. We continue to deliver projects such as energy efficiency improvements, renewable energy installations, and carbon literacy training. These efforts will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain aligned with emerging evidence and national guidance.

We recognise the value of keeping residents informed. The Council will consider options for sharing relevant information, including through existing communication channels and community engagement initiatives. Any future events or briefings will be planned in line with available resources and priorities.

In summary, the Council will continue to work towards its climate objectives, monitor developments, and explore opportunities for collaboration with partners and communities. Updates will be provided through normal reporting processes.

4. Question from John Palmer

Has the form for Shropshire Council to apply for £71.361m of Exceptional Financial Support arrived yet from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government? If not, is the

Council concerned about being strung along? If it has arrived, have you applied for the £71.361m loan yet? On what date will you apply? Or is there prevarication from this Council? The Tories, who wrecked Shropshire Council's finances, have a lot to answer for.

RESPONSE: Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Yes, Officers are currently working on the Council's application for EFS and are anticipating submitting this on 12th December 2025.

5. Question from Andrew Sceats

At the July Council meeting I asked a question about the delivery of Cornovii Developments Ltd (CDL) meeting unmet housing need and providing financial assistance to the Council. Having looked at Council accounts for years 23/24 and latest (and earlier) CDL accounts at Companies House I am concerned by; no information available for staff costs including salaries, expenses and other remunerations, no information about office costs and their usage levels. 5 sites have been acquired at a cost of £570,493 of 'worthless' company shares. The sale seems to be questionable as the criteria contained in section 1.9 on page 32 of the Council accounts seem not to have been met. If this is so, it could have serious implications for officers and councillors. The Council accounts (page 113) state for CDL total expenditure £0.806 million, income of £0.298 million. Very little financial assistance to the Council for its large financial support to CDL to date! So with the foregoing information, together with new houses for sale being changed to houses to let and a 'price drop event' with sale prices being reduced by 10% Perhaps the 'over engineering' of the new properties using all electric are some of the reasons why sales have slowed. Would it not be prudent to suspend any new CDL building projects which have not started and have a revised future vision?

RESPONSE: Councillor James Owen, Portfolio Holder for Housing & Leisure

Thank you for your questions. Cornovii Developments Limited (CDL) does not publish Directors' remuneration in the accounts filed at Companies House because there is currently no legal requirement to do so for small companies. In the first two financial years of the company, the accounts were prepared by Shropshire Council and they did include this level of detail. In more recent years, CDL's accounts have been prepared by Azets. Directors' salaries and related costs are included in the full accounts provided to the CDL Board and to Shropshire Council; however, the abridged version that is filed at Companies House does not include individual director-level remuneration or benefits. Looking ahead, the law is changing: for tax years beginning from April 2026, companies will be required to file profit-and-loss accounts, which will therefore include salary information. For full transparency, total Directors' remuneration transferred to CDL for the year ended 31 March 2025 was £63,206.

We would like to reassure you that we are continually reviewing CDL business plan against market changes and demand against any risks. Independent Board Members receive a small salary only and have received no other payments. Six Directors were appointed to the CDL Board in 2020, of whom three remain. One of the replacement Directors has also since stepped down. The four departures were for the following reasons: two Directors were Shropshire Council representatives and stepped down from the CDL Board when they left

Council employment; one Director sadly passed away; and one Director left due to health issues.

For clarity on where payments appear: the Council does not pay CDL employees. All salaries and employment costs are recharged to CDL (previously via Shropshire Council and now via STAR Housing). This is why you will not see payments to CDL staff—including Directors—in Shropshire Council's statements of account. Where residents have referred to disclosures for earlier years (e.g., the Executive Director's salary shown in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 accounts), that reflects the different preparation approach in those early years and the fact that the filed small-company accounts for later years do not require itemised director remuneration or benefits.

I hope this information provides some clarity to your questions.

6. Question from John Crowe (Save our Shirehall)

If Shropshire Council is formally resolved to proceed with its 2022 resolution on disposal of Shirehall, we note that it was agreed then by Council that terms and conditions would all be subject to approval at full Council. Will the Cabinet Member please confirm that : -

- a) - in the event of a sale being proposed that these terms and conditions will cover all aspects and,
- b) - the full Council and public can consider the terms and conditions, as Council previously agreed?

RESPONSE: Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

This is a difficult decision, but one that is necessary to secure the best outcome for Shropshire in challenging times. We have looked at every option, and these are listed in the report being considered later today. The recommendation we feel offers the greatest benefit to our residents and the council's finances.

We have tried to be open and transparent and that is why the report is in two parts. Part 2 is in the private sections as there is a need for commercial confidentiality with a number of figures.

The review, which comes at a time of unprecedented financial pressure for the council, sets out a clear recommendation for the future of the now-vacant Shirehall building and surrounding site.

The current recommendations within the report being considered include at 3.2 the following recommendation

"3.2 Completes additional masterplan options for a mixed-use development incorporating healthcare, affordable supported living, commercial, and residential elements. Prepare and finalise a business case for consideration by Council at a future meeting."

Therefore, subject to the recommendations being approved, a full business case as set out above will come before full Council before being agreed.

As is stated in a just released press statement we recognise Shirehall has been an institution for many residents and visitors, hosting numerous events, meetings, and public gatherings, playing a significant role in community life.

MEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Question from Councillor Sarah Marston

Given the significant safety concerns on the B5476 through Harmer Hill, and the petition signed by 103 residents requesting a reduction in the speed limit, will Cabinet/Council consider reducing the current limit from 40mph to 30mph?

This section of road is residential, with multiple properties and developments accessed directly from the carriageway. The existing 40mph limit creates a dangerous environment for pedestrians, including children and the elderly, and for vehicles exiting side roads such as Bridgewater Place, Lily Pad Cottage and adjacent properties, and the cottages to the north end of the village.

Observations from electronic speed sensors on the A528 and B5476 indicate that most drivers would comply with a 30mph limit if clearly signed. There is precedent for such a change as this was implemented some years ago on the A528 Ellesmere Road in Harmer Hill, and crash data shows a higher incidence of serious and fatal collisions on the B5476 compared to the A528 between 1999 and 2024.

Will Cabinet/Council commit to reviewing this section of road and implementing a 30mph limit with signage, to improve safety for residents and road users?"

RESPONSE: Councillor Tom Dainty Deputy Portfolio Holder, on behalf of Councillor David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Environment

The Traffic Team will undertake an investigation on the B5476 through Harmer Hill, collating speed and collision data along with understanding foot fall and residential activity. The Police will then be asked to comment on the suitability of any speed limit reduction. If at that point all parties agree that the speed limit reduction is appropriate, the route will be placed on future works programme list for funding allocation.

2. Question from Councillor Robert Jones

Residents in my division have brought to me their concerns about the impact on the River Perry of an ever-growing number of residential developments. The river's catchment covers a wide area, from Gobowen and the east of Oswestry, across to Ellesmere. Many of these areas have seen and are likely to continue seeing new residential developments. The surface runoff from rainfall on these sites has an impact on river flows, with economic consequences for riparian landowners downstream who are responsible for maintaining the river. In addition to that, there are concerns about the management of wastewater outflows into the river, and the limited capacity of the sewage network to cope with the increased demand from new developments. Both of these issues are considerably exacerbated by the increasing frequency of extreme weather events linked to climate change.

In planning for the future growth and development of our county, how are we going to address these issues to ensure development is sustainable?

Will Shropshire Council be revising and updating its Sustainable Drainage Systems handbook to align with changes introduced by DEFRA earlier this year? Some of the changes introduced include a hierarchy of runoff destination; a requirement that the first

5mm of rainfall be retained through onsite infiltration; and the introduction of design criteria for developments that consider major storm events.

RESPONSE: Councillor David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

As part of the future preparation of the County's new Local Plan, the identification of sustainable sites for growth will take account of a range of physical constraints, including whether the site is fully or partially within an area of identified flood risk, including surface water flooding. A Strategic Flood Risk Assessment will be prepared in 2026 to support this analysis. The Council will also be assessing the current capacity of waste water treatment plants, including consideration of whether upgrades to facilities and their related networks is required to accommodate planned growth; this will be covered in an update to the Water Cycle Study, also likely to be prepared in 2026.

Acting as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), Shropshire Council have duties as set under the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, and to act as a statutory consultee to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for all major development.

Although the LLFA is only designated as a statutory consultee for Major Development (defined as development larger than 10 properties, 1,000+m2 of floor space, or sites over 1 hectare), in Shropshire the LLFA also provides bespoke comments on minor development in urban areas, within 10m of a watercourse, and for development in mapped floodzone. This approach ensures any development proposals in areas at risk are appropriately considered irrespective of their size.

As part of this consultee role the LLFA assess the potential impact of the proposed development in terms of existing flood risk to the site and its potential impact on the surrounding catchments. This consultee role is currently delivered through the Council's Engineering Consultant WSP. When reviewing planning applications WSP will consider the development proposals against both Council policy set out in the SuDS Handbook, and where appropriate, supersede this with any updated national policy. As a result, any planning conditions applied to new development by the LPA will be in line with the most up to date guidance.

The Council are currently in the process of updating our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy document which sets out an overarching policy on how we deliver the LLFA Statutory Consultee role. It is hoped that a draft of this strategy will be available in the new calendar year. Once this new strategy has been formally adopted by Shropshire Council the LLFA will look to update the SuDS Handbook in line with the agreed overarching policy.

3. Question from Councillor Chris Naylor

Cllr Roger Evans kindly responded publicly at 19/11 Cabinet to a Shirehall question from my constituent Jane Gallagher. I appreciate Shirehall is not in my division, however I feel I'm permitted to ask this question as clearly the Council's headquartering is of importance to all.

Cllr Evans, you stated that staff - you said the 'vast majority' - were unhappy with Shirehall. But the few I've spoken to say they are unhappy with Guildhall and strongly wish they were back at Shirehall. So could you please provide any recent survey information/other data to confirm that the 'vast majority' were indeed unhappy with Shirehall. And indeed, please could you share any survey/other data which demonstrates staff are happier here at Guildhall.

Having had experience myself of repurposing older buildings, including regeneration of Kings Cross's modernist estate 'Maiden Lane', I know an effective cost-saving option for a building like Shirehall is a Joint Venture with a commercial partner. The partner injects capital initially to refurbish - and fix the heating Cllr Evans mentioned - so the Council moves back, while retaining ownership, and then agrees opportunities for income generation.

A finance expert assures me this would be attractive to investors. I've also been assured by others who know Shirehall well - including an architect, an engineer, and too a services expert who knows the heating system - that the initial refurbishment investment would be only £3-4 million. Could Cllr Evans please confirm that such a Joint Venture option has been fully considered?

RESPONSE: Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Our recent staff survey (June 25) did not ask a specific question on work bases, however some staff did provide further information in response to the free-text questions around improvements which included reference to working at the Shirehall and Guildhall. Regular informal discussions with the workforce indicate that staff feel happier at Guildhall and this is an improvement on the Shirehall. There is room for improvement at the Guildhall and a review is currently underway of how we better utilise the space and teams are engaged in this process.

Thank you for your suggestion regarding a Joint Venture (JV) approach for the refurbishment of Shirehall. As part of the Shirehall Strategic Review, the Council undertook soft market testing to explore a range of partnership and investment models, including potential JVs with commercial partners. However, this process did not yield a viable or attractive JV model for the Council. The main reasons were:

Any JV partner would expect a commercial return, typically through rent or a share of ownership, which would likely cost the Council more in the long run than borrowing directly via the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB). The current financial emergency for Shropshire Council makes the prospect of borrowing money that does not create a financial return, extremely challenging and not viable for the authority.

The Council's technical and financial assessments indicate that the true cost of refurbishing Shirehall to modern, compliant standards is approximately £55 million—not £3–4 million as sometimes suggested.

The soft market testing did not identify any credible partner willing to deliver a full refurbishment at the lower cost figure.

If there was a credible fixed-cost proposal for a compliant refurbishment to deliver a modern and efficient building at £3–4 million, the Council would be very interested to see the details.

4. Question from Councillor Brendan Mallon

Recent problems around severe congestion and Emergency Services access due to the Gyratory works calls into question the assumptions behind the Big Town Plan (BTP). Shrewsbury Moves' Telraam traffic data clearly demonstrates the impact of these works. Year-on-year, traffic on Castle Foregate travelling at 6 mph or less has increased by 657% and across town by 128%. Despite installing a new cycle lane alongside the existing cycle path, two-wheeled traffic on Castle Foregate is down 31%, Wyle Cop 29% and Smithfield 33%, so the dream of increasing cycling has yet to be realised....

To the extent that data-gathering and modelling were conducted to determine the feasibility of the BTP's ultimate objective, removing most road traffic from the town centre and replacing it with foot and cycle movement, do the assumptions made still hold true in light of the actual outcome so far? Can any of these plans be considered valid in the context of the NWRP suspension, a project fundamental to BTP feasibility? Given the rurality of Shropshire and our ageing population, was there ever solid evidence a transition from cars to cycling was ever achievable? If we wish to continue making profound changes to the lives of Salopians, can you provide Councillors and residents full transparency on all data, modelling and assumptions used to justify the Gyratory works and the even more sweeping changes to come if we continue with the Big Town Plan?

RESPONSE – Councillor Rob Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Transport & Economic Growth

The issues around the Station Gyratory are well documented. They serve as stark evidence of the lack of strategic transport policy planning under the previous Conservative administration, failing to robustly support and ensure alignment of hard won capital funding into the most appropriate projects that further improve our wonderful County town. I am grateful to the rapid Task & Finish Group for exposing the many failings, not least the disconnection between that particular project and the Big Town Plan and Movement and Public Space Strategy.

Moving on, Cllr Mallon has rightly identified the problem, Shrewsbury is a medieval town, designed for people on foot and horses. We now have to balance this with modern forms of transport, and this hasn't been seriously addressed since Pride Hill was pedestrianised.

I must however correct Cllr Mallon, the objectives of the Movement and Public Space Strategy are to increase the economic viability of Shrewsbury town centre to benefit the whole county, and increase accessibility to the town centre by a variety of modes of transport, including private vehicles. The trial weekend closure of High Street and Shoplatch has been an almost unmitigated success, but knock-on impacts have not been addressed.

Is Cllr Mallon suggesting that the North West Relief Road should be built at a cost to the county of nearly £1000 for every man, woman and child? Or that steps shouldn't be taken to improve journey times for buses, emergency vehicles and those driving to the town centre? I have only heard the Reform group say what they wouldn't do, not what they would do.

5. Question from Councillor Carl Rowley

In recent months, Kent County Council has claimed savings of £32 million over four years and £7.5 million by 2030 by cancelling estate retrofits and halting EV fleet transition linked to Net Zero targets. Durham County Council has also rescinded its climate emergency pledge, citing financial pressures and the need to prioritise statutory services.

These examples show that significant savings can be achieved by reviewing non-essential commitments. In light of our ongoing financial challenges and the need for greater accountability, will this Council commission an opposition-led internal audit, modelled on the DOGE approach, to identify non-essential expenditure across all departments? Reducing spend in these areas would not affect essential services but could save millions.

The audit should specifically examine:

- *The costs of delivering Net Zero targets and Climate Emergency commitments, including capital works, fleet transition, and governance structures;*
- *Net Zero projects planned for the next two financial years that could be delayed or stopped until our finances are sustainable;*
- *Expenditure on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion initiatives, including staffing and programme costs, which could be paused without breaching statutory duties.*

The aim is to provide a clear, evidence-based assessment of potential savings and ensure resources are focused on core services during this period of financial constraint.

RESPONSE: Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Thank you for your question, Cllr Rowley. Whilst your proposal includes equalities, diversity and inclusion initiatives I have focused on addressing it by taking account of the climate change aspects.

The Council's focus on achieving net zero by 2030 and therefore being carbon neutral is underpinned by the declaration of a Climate Emergency by this Council in May 2019. This is a policy priority set by Council and any deviation from this position would need to be agreed by Council.

In terms of reviewing policy, the Council has effective mechanisms to ensure opportunities for cross-party and apolitical consideration of learning and opportunities to propose changes. Our Overview and Scrutiny Committees are the right vehicle for this work, looking into opportunities for the council and concerns for their communities. They will also be able to ensure that the aims of the Council's Improvement Plan are built into their consideration of the topics they look at. In doing so they can make evidence-based recommendations to Cabinet and to Council. We have had some very good work carried out through our Overview and Scrutiny Committees that I know you have been an active member of.

As the Administration we positively and actively promote transparency and the involvement and engagement of Members from all groups in the work of the Council. We are very happy for Members to use the levers that we have available to us, in this case our Overview and Scrutiny Committees. We would encourage robust investigation into matters that allow recommendations to come forward that present considered, well-evidenced and deliverable options that can help the council be financially stable and sustainable.

