

## CABINET – 8 JULY 2026

### MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

1. Councillor Rosie Radford

In light of the increased national focus on exploitation of vulnerable adults—including practices such as 'cuckooing' highlighted in the Crime and Policing Act 2026 and in the context of the additional challenges of rurality in Shropshire, can the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for community safety outline how the Council is working in partnership with policing, housing providers and community organisations to identify risks earlier to ensure that vulnerable residents are able to remain safe and independent in their own homes?

**Response Cllr Ruth Houghton**

Adult Exploitation is a priority for the Safeguarding Adult Board, and an Adult Exploitation Pathway and assessment tool has been developed to further support all practitioners across Shropshire in identifying and working with vulnerable adults who are at risk of or being exploited. The work is overseen by the multiagency Tackling Exploitation Group is co-ordinated by the Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership Business Unit which also supports the co-ordination of all Community Safety Partnership (CSP) activity as well, therefore it ensures that the CSP is fully informed of this activity and cited on any issues that might require their support.

The CSP also has a 4P (Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue) Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Plan which identifies the current level of activity that is being undertaken for the 10 primary SOC types (drug trafficking, modern slavery and human trafficking, fraud and economic crime, money laundering, cybercrime, organised immigration crime, child sexual abuse and exploitation, illegal firearms trafficking, bribery, corruption and sanctions evasion and organised acquisitive crime) and highlights any areas of concern and actions that need to be taken by partners. Activity within this plan include police working with housing colleagues to protect and safeguard victims in their own homes, or in extreme circumstances, finding alternative suitable accommodation and using relevant partnership powers, ancillary, and civil orders to protect the vulnerable, such as using closure notices to restrict access to residential and commercial property.

At the last Community Safety Partnership meeting Shropshire's Serious and Organised Crime Profile was presented. Due to the sensitivity of this information, it cannot be shared publicly however it allows multi-agency partners to explore the action that can be taken to identify and support victims. Nationally the highest proportion of referrals to the National Referral Mechanism in 2025 related to males reporting labour exploitation (43%) or criminal exploitation (23%). Referrals flagged as "county lines" cases by decision makers in 2025 accounted for 9% of all referrals and the majority of these were for male children at the point of referral.

The Government will produce statutory guidance on the offence of Cuckooing that was introduced in the Crime and Policing Act 2026, and this will include what police, and other partners can do to support victims of Cuckooing. The CSP and wider partnerships (Adult Safeguarding Board and Children's Safeguarding Partnership) are aware of the legislation change may add further measures if required, to ensure their plans outlined above, to reflect any changes to guidance.

## 2. Colin Taylor

My ward of Bridgnorth South and Alveley is regularly being used as a fly tip area. In particular, the area of Six Ashes, Wotton and the BOATS off Wotton Ford and Hollow ash lane are having to be visited by our fly tip clearing up teams on a weekly basis.

What are council doing to deter this anti-social activity by means of putting in cameras at known "hot spots". Inspecting of the tipped material to find evidence of who tipped the rubbish.

What are the deterrents being put in place and when will they commence?

How much is the antisocial behaviour costing council to visit, clear up and dispose of the detritus in actual finance terms.

Does council log long term environmental damage caused by the tipping of rubbish that may have contained Asbestos or other noxious substances that can have long term effects on health and the local environment?

### **Response from David Vasmer**

I share the concerns raised regarding the persistent fly tipping issues in Bridgnorth South and Alveley, particularly at Six Ashes, Wotton, and the BOATs off Wotton Ford and Hollow Ash Lane, where clearance teams are attending regularly.

These locations demonstrate exactly why Shropshire Council's Fly Tipping Strategy is focused on three key themes, enforcement, prevention, and partnership working.

Every reported fly tip is assessed by Council officers. They examine tipped materials, witness information, vehicle details, and other intelligence to identify those responsible. Where investigations identify sufficient evidence to meet the evidential threshold, the Council will pursue appropriate enforcement action, including formal warnings, fixed penalties, or prosecution where justified.

It is the responsibility of anyone arranging waste disposal to ensure that whoever they employ has the correct licences. If someone's waste can be identified on a fly tip, they can be issued with a £600 Fixed Penalty Notice. For individuals who fly tip their own rubbish, Fixed Penalty Notices are now being issued by Shropshire Council for £1000 or £500 depending on circumstances.

The Strategy also supports the targeting of resources at known hotspot locations. This includes reviewing locations with recurring incidents and considering measures such as surveillance, signage, intelligence-led enforcement and working with local communities and landowners. While it would not be appropriate to discuss operational details in public, I can assure you that persistent hotspot locations are regularly reviewed as part of our ongoing response.

Deterring fly tipping requires more than one measure. Our approach combines enforcement action against offenders, public awareness of legal waste disposal responsibilities, engagement with residents and parish councils, and the use of intelligence to focus resources where they can have the greatest impact. The objective is not simply to clear fly tips but to reduce future incidents and change behaviour.

Fly tipping imposes a significant cost on the Council through investigation, clearance, transport, disposal, and administration which is in excess of £140,000 per annum. Every incident diverts resources away from other frontline services. The Council monitors these costs and uses the information to help target preventative and enforcement activity where it is most needed.

Any fly tip suspected of containing hazardous materials, including asbestos or other potentially harmful substances, is managed in accordance with established procedures. Specialist assessment and removal are arranged where necessary, and the Council works with relevant agencies to ensure risks to public health and the environment are appropriately addressed.

In conclusion, the issues highlighted at Six Ashes, Wotton Ford and Hollow Ash Lane are recognised, and our Fly Tipping Strategy provides the framework through which we seek to tackle them by identifying hotspot locations, gathering evidence, pursuing offenders where the evidential threshold is met, and working proactively with communities to prevent repeat incidents and protect Shropshire's environment.

### 3. Rosemary Dartnall

Residents in the south-east of Shrewsbury and the villages have complained about the planned closure of Meole Brace Park and Ride. The complaints come from people who choose to use P&R for varied reasons including convenience, cost, mobility issues, avoidance of town centre congestion and concern for the environment. Many have said they will probably have to drive into town if Meole Brace closes.

Falling user numbers is the stated reason for closure, so please quantify the reduced passenger numbers and the time period in which it occurred.

Substantial construction adjacent to the site has changed the access from the retail park to a newly constructed junction with no signage at all. I suggest the inconsistency of P&R signage on some approach roads, at the previous access and the complete absence of any signs at all at the new junction and entrance must be a contributory factor.

Park & Ride is an important part of how Shropshire Council might begin to reduce traffic within Shrewsbury – the service in all parts of Shrewsbury should be maximised rather than reduced. It is a significant service with potential to bring much of the Shrewsbury Movement Strategy into being.

On behalf of residents and P&R users, current and future, I ask that you suspend the closure of the Meole Brace site, add appropriate signage on all approach roads and at the entrance to allow a six months or longer trial period with a wider programme of social media posts to increase passenger numbers.

### **Response from Cllr Rob Wilson**

Thank you for the question, Rosemary.

I don't disagree with the sentiment of the question, park and ride facilities are an important part of our transport mix, and the decision to suspend the Meole service from November is not one that we, or our officers, wanted to make. However, it was the only rational choice to make, though I accept others may disagree.

The one issue that you have not posed in the question is funding, and this is the overriding problem. This year Shropshire Council has retendered 21 different bus services across the county, approximately one third of the county network. At present this costs approximately £3m, to keep every service like for like would have cost an additional £550,000; on top of this whilst Shropshire Council's base budget contribution has been protected, the revenue funding available from the Government has reduced by £200,000; additionally the vital 64 bus from Market Drayton to Shrewsbury was at risk, and the council will be picking up the full cost from the Autumn. All in all that leaves the council with a funding gap of approximately £1.25m.

Passenger data shows that Meole Brace carries significantly fewer passengers than the other two Park & Ride sites, accounting for just over a quarter of total use across the three locations. This has resulted in a higher subsidy per passenger compared to Oxon and Harlescott.

So we have had to make choices. We have chosen, in line with the council's Bus Service Improvement Plan, to protect the most essential services in the county, where there is no other option. This includes keeping Market Drayton, Ellesmere and Broseley connected to our county town. I am sure that Cllr Dartnall is not suggesting that we choose to cut these important communities off from work, education, healthcare, friends and family?

I am also proud that we will be connecting Wem and Ellesmere again, there has not been a direct regular bus connection between Wem and Ellesmere for decades, and this project restores that link.

Whilst I recognise that using another park and ride site may be inconvenient, there will still be two options in Shrewsbury at Oxon and at Harlescott, the additional journey time to reach them is not significant, and the service at both will be better than in the past, buses every 12 minutes at peak times, buses running from 6 in the morning until 10 in the evening, newer vehicles, new shelters and real time information. This is about having to take a step back in order to take two forwards.

Due to the funding available we are being asked to do more with less, and I believe that is what we are doing for the people of Shropshire

#### 4. Andy Boddington

In an announcement that it would "work closely with local councillors and town and parish councils throughout the process" of retendering bus contracts. Why was this not done?

#### **Response from Cllr Rob Wilson**

Thank you for the question, Councillor Boddington.

I would respectfully disagree with the suggestion that local councillors and town and parish councils were not engaged as part of this process.

The 2026 local bus retendering programme covered 21 separate bus services across Shropshire, representing approximately one third of the Council's supported bus

network. Throughout the review, officers considered passenger feedback, correspondence, service performance information and representations received from Members and local councils over a number of years.

As part of the review process, a range of service options, frequencies and operating arrangements were developed and tested through the tendering exercise. As the scale of the financial challenge became clearer, it became apparent that the Council would not be able to retain every service unchanged and that decisions would need to be taken about how best to protect essential connectivity across the county within the funding available.

Once the outcome of the tendering process and the potential options were understood, officers and Cabinet Members met with the relevant local Members and town and parish councils in the affected areas, including Shrewsbury, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Wem, Ellesmere, Broseley and Much Wenlock, to provide detailed briefings on the proposals and to explain the rationale behind them.

In relation to Ludlow specifically, officers undertook a substantial review of the town bus network during 2025, working closely with local Members to develop revised timetables and service patterns. Those revised timetables formed the basis of the 2026 retendering exercise. At the time, it was made clear that if the 2025 review proceeded, the Council would not be in a position to undertake a further detailed timetable review in 2026 due to the resources required to procure and implement the new contracts. That position was understood and supported locally.

The engagement undertaken therefore reflected both the scale of the programme and the need to balance difficult funding decisions across the county, whilst ensuring affected communities and elected representatives were fully informed of the outcomes.