

MEMBER QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES COUNCIL 16 JULY 2026

Question from Councillor Adam Fefjer

Collaborative Approach to Addressing the Infrastructure Backlog: Clive Road

Residents across the county continue to feel the impact of the long-standing infrastructure backlog, particularly in areas where roads have deteriorated beyond the point where temporary repairs are effective.

One such example in my ward is Clive Road. As both a ward member and a resident, I have raised concerns about the worsening condition of the road surface for many years. Unfortunately, repeated patching has failed to resolve the issue, and the growing number of potholes is now becoming a significant safety concern for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians alike.

I appreciate that the department is having to balance a large number of competing priorities across the county. With that in mind, could the Portfolio Holder provide an update on any current or plans for Clive Road?

Response from Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste

Over last winter the number of outstanding potholes here in Shropshire more than trebled because of some exceptionally challenging weather. In addition, like many rural Councils with large rural networks, we are dealing with a legacy of under investment, and asset deterioration rates have outpaced investment for many years.

However, in Shropshire the new administration is reversing years of under investment by giving Highways the priority it deserves – one demanded by residents. We are investing more in our highways with over 160 schemes of surface dressing and resurfacing this year. A new pothole repair team was created when we took over in May last year and we have set up three more teams to tackle the dramatic increase in potholes created by the cold and wet winter weather. In addition, the Department for Transport has committed extra funding over the coming years, will reverse years of decline in our highways network.

The Council manages investment in roads using a data-led process which draws together intelligence on network condition, customer enquiries and reactive defects recorded on the link of carriageway. This intelligence is analysed to determine a priority programme of maintenance, which is validated by area highways teams.

With regards to Clive Road, this does not currently form part of the prioritised list of sites for Capital investment. However, I will ask the local highways technician re-inspect Clive Road and commission works to ensure that the road is safe for all vehicles

Question from Councillor Andy Boddington

At least eight litter bins in Ludlow have been removed in the last few months, including in St Laurences churchyard, Hucklemarsh Road a footpath to Stanton Road. Why?

Response from Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste

Shropshire Council has not made a decision to remove litter bins from Ludlow as a cost saving measure, nor has there been any reduction in service levels relating to litter bin provision.

Following concerns raised by local residents and Ludlow Town Council, the Council carried out investigations which identified a number of litter bins that were not recorded within its asset management and route mapping systems. In some cases, these bins had been emptied historically but were not included within the current network of locations used by operational crews.

Where bins were found to be missing from Council records, further checks were required to confirm their status and ownership before they could be added to scheduled emptying routes. As part of this process, the Council has also been monitoring these locations to better understand how frequently the bins are used and whether there is an ongoing need for litter bin provision.

Shropshire Council recognises the important role that litter bins play in helping to keep communities clean and reducing issues such as littering and dog fouling. Work is ongoing to ensure that appropriate bin locations are accurately mapped, properly maintained and included within future service arrangements.

The Council is aware of the specific concerns regarding the bins at Hucklemarsh Road, Weyman Road and St Laurence's Churchyard and officers will continue to work closely with Ludlow Town Council to fully investigate these locations and identify a suitable solution to address the issue of the missing bins.

Question from Councillor Greg Ebbs

Can the Portfolio Holder provide an update on the rollout and operational status of ANPR cameras across the council area, including any outcomes achieved to date and the anticipated next steps for the programme?

Response from Cllr David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Waste**Question from Councillor Dawn Husemann**

It has been brought to my attention that it is normally the case with contracts with the big consulting houses such as PwC that certain provisions are built into the contract to protect the consulting body should the contract be cancelled. Apparently these are referred to as "tails in contracts" or "earn out clauses" but may be known by other terms and could be something like the "ex client has to pay the consultant say 5% of

any future savings arising from the consultants work/intellectual property". So will the council please confirm that the £13m paid to PwC is the full extent of our commitment to them or are there any other financial commitments due now or that may become due in the future or are contingent in any way?

Response from Cllr Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

The £13m is the full expenditure including termination payments

Question from Councillor Brendan Mallon

It has come to my attention that extraordinary extensions to consultation periods are being made available by the planning department, sometimes with multiple extensions being granted to stretch the process out well beyond a year.

This is an inordinate amount of time. The government's planning guarantee policy is "that no application should spend more than a year with decision-makers, including any appeal. In practice this means that major planning applications should be decided in no more than 26 weeks and non-major applications within 16 weeks."

It is implausible that individuals or small developers would have such extraordinary latitude. No one should be permitted to game the system, tying up our already overstretched Planning resources and extending uncertainty for residents.

Will the Council take decisive action to end this ongoing mockery of the Planning System and furthermore, provide clear and robust policy for Members, Officers and the public on how far deadlines can legitimately and reasonably be extended and well-defined parameters for extensions, including the maximum number of extensions and a maximum duration, in order to prevent further subversion of our processes?

Response from Cllr David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

The Council's draft Local Plan was officially withdrawn from examination in July last year. The withdrawal of the draft Local Plan, alongside the significant increase in Shropshire's housing need driven by the Government's 'standard methodology', has meant that the Council can not currently demonstrate a 5 year housing supply of deliverable housing sites. This changes the policy position of the Council as it now has to consider what is commonly called the 'tilted balance'. Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states: "*Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development*". In effect the 'tilted balance' means a decision maker should generally apply less weight to locally adopted planning policies where they relate to housing delivery, which includes the consideration of an area's adopted development boundary, as they are considered out-of-date.

This has led to a significant increase in applications submitted as more applicants are submitting speculative planning applications which have had very little if any pre-application advice. This means that a lot of work that is undertaken during pre-app is

now being carried out during the applications process. Prior to the 'tilted balance' the Council was able to take a harder line on not carrying out so much work during the application process and pushing applicants to use Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) or the pre-app process. Now the 'tilted balance' is a consideration it effectively means the application has to be approved unless the criteria in NPPF para 11 part d are met. As part of the consultation process Officers will try and redress issues raised by consultees as well as residents and Town and Parish Councils to try and ensure the best development possible is secured on site.

The increase in applications was being dealt with by the same number of staff initially, but the Planning Department is now working on a recruitment strategy to improve workloads and response times.

Most applications that take more than the statutory timeframes have an Extension of Time (EOT) which is agreed with the applicant/agent. This means they have agreed that the Council can have additional time to determine the application. If an EOT has been given, then the Council is not liable to pay any money back for not determining the application within certain timeframes.

Question from Councillor Donna Edmunds

On Monday 22nd June I submitted a set of written questions to officers on the Dutton Close, Stoke Heath asylum placements — on what officers knew and when, our statutory duties, the likely cost, and what risk assessments have been done — and I have received a substantive answer to none of them. Nor have I had an answer to subsequent questions along similar lines. Meanwhile, the council has written to both the Home Secretary and the Parish Council in regard to the scheme. Can the leader explain why those letters were not shared with myself as the ward member, despite me asking directly about this issue, and say whether she will commit today to full written answers to my questions without further unnecessary delay?

Response from The Leader, Cllr Heather Kidd

Statutory responsibilities for the accommodation of asylum seekers rests with the Home Office alone, and not with the Council and local authorities. The Council has no decision-making powers in relation to the sites, and any assessments and consultations regarding sites, including risk assessments and costs, is also a matter for the Home Office and Serco.

The Council is unable to share publicly details of correspondence, including letters, and meetings with the Home Office and Serco, because this correspondence is based on information provided to the Council confidentially by the Home Office and Serco.

The Council must ensure that as part of our statutory duties to vulnerable people, asylum seekers are offered appropriate protections and response. Risk assessments and costs in relation to these are confidential due to the sensitive

information they contain regarding individuals, and because they are based on information that has been shared in confidence with the Council by the Home Office and Serco and is often subject to change.

The Council would like to assure the Local Member and all residents that we have been resolute in our objections to the inappropriate use of Dutton Close. The Council also understands the frustration caused to residents when we are unable to share information given to us in confidence. We are calling for more openness and transparency by the Home Office in terms of their processes and protocols around their Asylum Dispersal Programme, and meaningful engagement with local authorities about this.

The Council remains committed to working with Local Members and Town and Parish Councils to the greatest extent that we are able to.

As Leader, I would also like to take this moment to speak directly to the residents of Dutton Close, Stoke Heath and surrounds, and to your Parish Council. I know this has been a very challenging time for each and every one of you. The worry, stress and fear caused in your community by the escalation of this situation has no doubt been overwhelming. I also know the restrictions on what we can say publicly is frustrating for you all. What I can seek to assure you of is that advocating for our residents in relation to the inappropriate use of this site has been at the forefront of our response. I hope that confirmation from the Home Office that this site is withdrawn is allowing you some space to start to recover. If there is anything we as a council can do to support this, please do get in touch. My thanks also to your Parish Council for all their advocacy and support to residents, and to our local partners for the collective efforts to both challenge and respond to this situation.