

CABINET – 14 OCTOBER 2026

MEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Councillor Duncan Borrowman

As Cabinet will be aware, Shropshire is home to the 25-metre radio telescope at Knockin near Oswestry, one of seven telescopes that together form e-MERLIN, the UK's National Radio Astronomy Facility operated from Jodrell Bank Observatory. The telescope is a distinctive local landmark in North Shropshire, but it is also part of a world-leading scientific instrument supporting thousands of researchers worldwide and contributing to cutting-edge astronomical research.

The decision by the Science and Technology Facilities Council and UK Research and Innovation not to renew operational funding for the facility threatens not only the future role of the Knockin telescope within the national radio astronomy network but also the wider scientific capabilities of Jodrell Bank Observatory itself. The consequences extend beyond astronomy. The facility supports highly specialised scientific, engineering and technical expertise, contributes to the UK's space capabilities, and has demonstrated applications in areas such as satellite and space debris tracking. It is also an important educational resource, inspiring thousands of young people to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Given the significance of this infrastructure to Shropshire, can the Leader confirm that Cabinet supports efforts to secure a sustainable long-term future for e-MERLIN and the Knockin telescope, and will work with local MPs, Government, UKRI, STFC, the University of Manchester and other stakeholders to make the case for continued funding of this nationally important scientific asset?

2. Councillor Ben Jephcott

Who is responsible for organising litter collection from the verges beside the A5 and A49, in particular the stretches around Shrewsbury, and the Battlefield Link? If it is Shropshire Council, rather than National Highways on the A49 and A5, what plans do we have to ensure this essential task is carried out and on what schedule? When was the last full litter collection along these verges carried out? Why did it stop happening? How has the budgeting and planning for this essential activity changed over the last decade?

3. Councillor Harry Hancock-Davies

Residents, parents & Harlescott Junior School have raised serious and continuous concerns about parking around Featherbed Lane, The Parks and the surrounding areas during school drop-off and pick-up times.

Vehicles are regularly parked partly on pavements, close to junctions and in locations which restrict access to residents' properties and obstruct public transport. During a visit to the school, I also witnessed the difficulties this creates for pedestrians, including parents pushing their disabled children in wheelchairs, as well as the wider concerns regarding the safety of children travelling to and from school.

The school and its Governors have raised the possibility of physical measures, including metal barriers being installed around the junction of The Parks, and there have also been previous requests for Civil Enforcement Officers to attend during the busiest periods. However, this does not seem to have materialised.

Given the continuing concerns of residents, parents and the school, can the Council confirm what action it proposes to take to improve safety around Harlescott Junior School and assess what physical measures could be introduced to prevent dangerous and obstructive parking? I would also ask that the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder and appropriate Council officers meet with me to discuss these concerns in further detail and consider what practical measures can be taken forward

4. Councillor Duncan Kerr

Cabinet reports and decisions on the 17th Jan 2018 and 11th April 2018 set-out the Council's strategy and prioritisation for assessing area of the County for the parking strategy framework including new resident's parking schemes.

The prioritisation approved was the following framework:

Phase 1 Shrewsbury

Phase 2 Ludlow

Phase 3 Bridgnorth

Phase 4 Oswestry

Phase 5 All other areas

Following the suspension of work in Bridgnorth work started in Oswestry in 2022 and I have several emails with Kevin Aitken and Harry Guest regarding its progress which seemed to stall.

Since the election in May 2025 I have heard nothing. As the prioritisation approved in 2018 is still, to my knowledge, Council policy I assumed that as soon as resources became available the work in Oswestry would be re-started.

However the response you gave at the Council meeting on the 24th September to a question for Cllr Halliday implied that rather than resourcing the continuation of the work in Oswestry you would be re-directing these resources to Shrewsbury which does not accord with the framework.

Can you confirm whether this is the case when was Council policy changed and what consultation was carried-out before-hand

5. Councillor Robert Jones

The new Local Plan offers an opportunity to develop locally distinctive policies that reflect Shropshire's priorities, environmental assets and economic strengths. Agriculture remains one of the cornerstones of Shropshire's economy and identity, supporting jobs, businesses, food production and the wider rural economy.

Best and Most Versatile agricultural land is a finite resource which, in most cases, once lost to development, is effectively gone forever. While individual developments may only result in a relatively small loss of agricultural land, the cumulative impact over time can be significant.

Given the importance of safeguarding productive agricultural land for future generations, food security, economic resilience and natural capital in the face of climate change, can the Portfolio Holder tell us:

- Whether the Council is considering a specific locally distinctive policy approach to safeguarding Best and Most Versatile agricultural land within the emerging Local Plan?
- Whether the Council is reviewing examples of good practice from other local planning authorities, such as Cheshire East, where highly robust policies have been developed and implemented to ensure proposals affecting BMV land are rigorously assessed?
- Does he agree that the permanent loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land should only occur where clearly justified and that temporary developments affecting such land should be required to secure its restoration to productive agricultural use once the development ceases?

6. Councillor Andy Boddington

- Will Ludlow services 701 and 702 participate in the £2 national fare cap from January 2027?
- Under their current contracts, who retains fare revenue and bears revenue risk?
- Would a reduction from £3 to £2 require additional council funding after government reimbursement?