

WITHINGTON PARISH COUNCIL REPORT – JANUARY 2022

Firstly, I wish you all a Happy New Year.

A few items from me and then I thought it would be useful to give you some details around what the Council is currently doing around Climate Change and have included an update from the Portfolio Holder.

Local Matters

Boundary Review(s)

There are no further updates on the Boundary Review.

Litter Picks

You may have noticed that there are currently lane closures on the A5 at night to enable the litter picking teams to work. You will be aware that we cannot undertake litter picks on trunk roads without lane closures. More litter picks are planned throughout the winter months whilst the vegetation is low.

NWRR

No date has been agreed for the planning application to be heard. We are still awaiting responses from some statutory bodies. As soon as I hear a confirmed date, I will let you know.

Budgets

As you will no doubt be aware I, and fellow councillors, were very disappointed with both the amount of funding provided in the Local Government Financial Settlement for Shropshire Council and also that it was, again, a one year settlement which does not help us in any way. We do have a balanced budget for this year, but it is not without pain. I should point out that the balancing was only able to take place due to us using the last of our financial reserves.

There is no doubt that Shropshire Council is in the midst of a perfect storm – increased costs around Adult's and Children's Social Care, further increases due to the pandemic and then the government's white paper on Social Care could well increase the number of adults having access to care and therefore increasing costs again. I will also reiterate that looking after our most vulnerable residents is a priority. However, in this financial year approximately 85% of our budget will be spent on 3% of our population. It also means that when Council Tax increases, it is increasing to fund social care costs not services that affect the whole of our population and the council tax rises go nowhere near the increased, annual costs which are currently running at circa £12M.

I and our MPs will continue to lobby the government and all our MPs are under no illusions how serious our predicament is.

Kind regards,

Lezley, Shropshire Councillor for the Tern Division, 11 January 2022

UPDATE FROM COUNCILLOR IAN NELLINS, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURAL ASSETS AND THE GREEN ECONOMY

Climate Change

Shropshire Council has committed to achieving Carbon Net Zero by 2030. A lot of good work has started, more is planned, but there is a lot more to do. Education and understanding of the requirements to fight Climate Change is vital, so Carbon Literacy Training for Cabinet and senior Directors is due to take place before Christmas. Training for all Members will then be offered in early 2022. The strategy to achieve Net Zero is as follows:

Power Down

The Council continues to reduce through projects and measures including:

- Switching all corporate power consumption to identifiable renewable sources.
- An on-going programme of improvements to its buildings to install additional insulation, together with low carbon heating, lighting and solar power generation, currently valued at around £1.1m (60% grant funding) and saving around 210 tonnes of carbon per year.
- Delivering the first carbon neutral road surfacing programme by any UK local authority (project won the National Highways Awards 2021), saving over 280 tonnes of carbon.
- Supporting Shropshire residents to make the transition to electric vehicles as one of just four UK areas to trial world-leading 'Agile Streets' on-street smart EV charging and installing an initial 50 new charge points in market towns across Shropshire using around £200,000 of Government grants.
- Working with local Housing Associations, taking steps to help residents suffering from fuel poverty and helping social housing tenants by installing £5.8m of insulation and heating improvements in Shropshire to date.
- Supporting wider community efforts to decarbonise as a founder member of Zero Carbon Shropshire and grant funding projects such as county-wide energy mapping.

The above highlights the wide range of carbon reduction projects which the Council is supporting, both to reduce its own carbon footprint, and help Shropshire businesses and communities to do the same. Early indications are that our carbon usage was reduced by a further 8 to 10% over the past 12 months. That figure will be confirmed in a report in Jan 22.

Power Up

Shropshire Council has adopted an objective of becoming 'energy self-sufficient' by 2030. To help deliver this and to improve access to renewable energy for other public sector organisations and local businesses, Shropshire Council:

- Will develop a new 1MW solar farm on the former Maesbury Road landfill site in Oswestry to supply power to local businesses. There is potential for this project to expand up to 2MW.
- Is working with local electricity companies to screen its own property portfolio to identify other opportunities to generate power, either for its own use or to supply other public sector organisations and local businesses.
- Is using £70,000 Government grant funding to work with a range of local project partners, including Zero Carbon Shropshire to develop the potential for local heat networks in north Shrewsbury and Shrewsbury town centre to decarbonise heating in these areas.
- Actively examining the opportunity to attract the development of one (but possibly two) Hydrogen facilities in the County.

Capture and Storage

The Council is:

- Seeking opportunities to work with others to capture and store carbon in horticulture and agriculture using carbon credits using a pilot project for Biochar production.

- Supporting widespread tree planting by making available around 30,000 trees per year free of charge for communities through the annual 'Community Tree Scheme'.
- Encouraging communities to participate in the Queen's Green Canopy project.

Waste and Recycling

Along with our partners (Veolia), the council has continued to maintain a high level of recycling. During the period 2020/21 the total waste processed was 172.186 tonnes. The percentage breakdown of that waste was 53.36% recycled/composted, 44.36% used for energy and 2.28% sent to landfill. The Battlefield Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) generates renewable heat and energy from the non-recyclable waste. Energy not used at the plant is then sold to the grid.

The 3rd bin, for mixed recycling has proved to be popular with residents and will be proposed at FC in Jan. (The delay is due to the election causing a postponement of the Dec FC). Once the proposal is passed then communications will initiate the request procedure and the initial order will be placed. The roll out will begin in Mar/Apr 22 and is likely to take up to 3 months to complete. It is anticipated that the 3rd bin will result in a greater percentage of recycling. Shropshire is presently in the top 20% of unitary authorities for recycling. The aim is to get up to the top 5%. Recycling has been the main contributor to our carbon reduction during the past year. It is anticipated that the 3rd bin for mixed recycling will further improve that rating.

Electric Vehicle Chargers

The installation of 50 x public Electric Vehicle Chargers has started. The aim is to have all 50 installed by the end of Nov 21. The chargers are 7Kw. These can be load balanced down to 3.5Kw. The total cost of phase 1 is £214K. SC will contribute £30K, and the remainder will be paid through grant funding. Phase 1 will see installations at the following locations:

BEIS (November install operational in early Dec)

1. Oswestry (6 No) – Oak Street car park
2. Whitchurch (6 No) - Brownlow Street car park or Newtown car park)
3. Shrewsbury (6No)- Abbey foregate car park
4. Bridgnorth (6No)- Severn car park

OZEV Dec Install operational in Jan)

1. Shrewsbury (3 No. EVCP) - Frankwell Quay (3 No.)
2. Bridgnorth (4 No. EVCP) - Listley South Street car park (High town – 4 No.)
3. Ellesmere (4 No EVCP) – Cross Street car park
4. Bishops Castle (4 No EVCP) - Harley Jenkins Street car park
5. Ludlow (4 No) – Mill Street (location now under review due to complaints from residents).
6. Market Drayton (6 No) – Towers Lawn car park.

Future Towns for consideration for phase 2 are:

1. Much Wenlock, Falcons Court Car Park – 2 No TC/OZEV (75%)
2. Cleobury Mortimer - (4 No) Childe Road West car park
3. Wem (4 No) – Mill Street car park or Co-Op car park)
4. Shifnal – Aston Street car park (TC already looking to development allotment area for overspill car park with EVCP under CIL funding.
5. Broseley – Town Hall/Library 2 No TC/OZEV (75%)
6. Gobowen Rail Station (4+2)
7. Ludlow Castle Street car park. Bank of 4-6 no of 7-22kW fast charging points

Flooding

Flooding is a major concern across the Severn Valley catchment and is likely to have a major effect on many areas across the county. SC is a member of the Rivers Flooding and Coastal Committee, and I have also taken a place on the Sub-Committee in order to hopefully attract more funding for flood defences and resilience at vulnerable sites in our region. Shropshire Council leads on the River Severn Partnership and great opportunities are being pursued with the National Trust to create additional water catchment on National Trust estates to help slow the flow.

Active Travel

Planning has started in order to establish the infrastructure for Active Travel to be delivered to all the Market Towns. The initial phase has started in the Porthill and Copthorne areas of Shrewsbury. This included a consultation phase which resulted in a lot of interaction with the public, which will help to establish the best way forward. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) has been funded, and following a tendering process, the contract has been awarded to City Science. City Science have already produced a plan and will be conducting surveys around Shrewsbury and the main Market Towns over the next few months. This is a long-term project which will see safe cycling and walking routes between Market Towns and their nearby villages/parishes (out to a 10KM radius) from the Market Town.

Street Scene

Idverde have the contract to look after Street Scene. Several areas have voiced concern over Street Scene issues, but improvements are being made and will continue. I will be meeting with representative of both Kier and Idverde next week (Thu 25th Nov) to discuss issues and hear plans for improvements. Idverde also has the contract for the Welcome Back Fund. Their staff have started to engage with Town and Parish councils to establish what works they (the councils) want completed within their respective funding allocation. The works is planned to be completed during January and February.

Shropshire Goes Electric

The Shropshire Goes Electric event was hugely successful. Around 1500 people attended the event, which offered residents a 'one stop shop' where they had the ability to learn more about Electric Vehicles and supporting charging infrastructure. There are already around 800 electric car owners in Shropshire, some of whom attended the event to over advice on their experience as Electric car owners. Feedback from exhibitors has been very good and orders for Electric Vehicles have already been made due to the event. Similar future events will be planned.

Blue Print

The Council owned 'Blue Print' has a scanning ability which will process archived documents into a digital format. This process will save paper and storage costs. Opportunities to further utilise the service commercially are now being explored. Other large businesses and Government Departments could benefit from the Blue Print service. That will see companies making savings on transportation, paper and storage, while making money for Shropshire Council.

Summary

Climate Change affects everyone and every portfolio / department in SC. A lot of cross over and liaison work between officers and members from all areas of the council has contributed to the success so far. A further two Climate Change officers will be recruited in the next few weeks. This will allow more work on projects which will help to achieve the SC goal. Unfortunately, this is not always appreciated by some sections of the community, for whom it will never be enough! There is a long way to go, but I am very optimistic that SC is on track to achieve the goal of achieving Carbon Net Zero by 2030.