

Report 11 to Whixall Parish Council

by Shropshire Councillors Peter Broomhall + Edward Towers – January 2023

Dear All – Happy New Year! Please find below our eleventh written report as your County Councillors:

Full Shropshire Council Meeting....took place on Thursday 15th December 2022 in the Council Chamber at Shirehall, Shrewsbury. SY2 6ND.

After introductory remarks, minutes, etc there followed Public Questions. There were two:

1. The first in the context of Climate Change and the Climate & Ecological Emergency (CEE) Bill that is currently being debated in Westminster and the Shropshire Council's Climate Emergency Declaration in 2019 where it committed to doing all it could to help the UK meet the 1.5C target enshrined in the 2015 Paris Agreement and achieve net zero by 2050. The question then asked whether the steps proposed by SC's Task & Finish Group in July 2022 were being implemented. [This group had agreed to support the Bill (minus the provision on Citizen's Assemblies). The original CEE Bill motion required the council to inform local media of the decision to support the Bill; write to local MPs asking them to support the Bill; and write to the CEE Bill Alliance, the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, expressing its support.
2. The second was also related to SC's Climate Emergency Declaration in 2019 and applied this to the proposed North West Relief Road for Shrewsbury asking:
 - a) Will the NWRR increase or decrease Shropshire's total emissions over its lifetime?
 - b) How many years will it take for the NWRR to be net zero?
 - c) Is the NWRR in line with the UK government's legally-binding 2050 net zero target?

A full and minuted reply to both questions was given by Councillor Ian Nellins, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport that can be supplied to any who would like them. In conclusion, he said, Shropshire Council will consider the delivery of the NWRR, and its carbon legacy and management holistically as part of its wider activities and carbon accounting approach. As such, Shropshire Council will continue to ensure that its activities are fully aligned with both its local, and national, carbon guidance and targets as required.

The followed **a series of reports for the Council to receive.** These were on:

- Report of Returning Officer - Bridgnorth West & Tasley to say that Rachel Elizabeth Connolly (Labour) had been elected to represent this division following the By Election there.
- Setting the Council Tax Taxbase for 2023/24 - Agreed
- Treasury Strategy 2022/23 – Mid Year Review – Agreed following discussion when points were made about the NWRR adding extra costs as will need more borrowing and the £143m in SC's Bank account should have been invested as doesn't make monetary sense!
- Annual Scrutiny Report - Agreed
- Broseley Neighbourhood Development Plan – Adopted
- Shropshire Economic Partnership Board – This came from formalising the Shropshire Economic Partnership into a Board to help deliver the Economic Growth Strategy....likened to a Shropshire Version of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. An Amendment was put to request that Board membership be more inclusive by the inclusion of **'representatives from across the county's business sectors, public sector organisations, geographies, the voluntary sector, communities, and the chairs of other local stakeholder groups such as the climate action and nature recovery partnerships in the county. The board should also aim for gender balance'**. However the Portfolio holder (Cllr Dean Carroll) said Board Membership is there to bring value to the debate and these suggested amendments would not add any value just because they are a stakeholder group. He said we don't need quotas for age or gender, etc. Members should be there only on merit. The amendment fell and this report was then agreed.
- Recruitment of Co-opted Independent Members for the Audit Committee. This is a non-political committee and has always operated well, but this is Government policy to have such members and came to us via the recent LGA Peer Review. These members would not have voting rights and is really an enabling report which we shall hear more of at the Annual Council in May 2023. - Agreed
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman report - Finding of Fault with Injustice - Agreed
- Allocation of Committee Seats and Appointments, as a result of the changes in Party Numbers – An amendment was put by the Labour Group to increase their number of committee seats by 1 and reduce the Conservative Group allocation by 1 to **'achieve political proportionality across the Council on aggregate committees'** because they felt they continue to be under-represented. This amendment fell and the report was then agreed by Council.

Motions – Four motions were debated:

Motion 1 - Vision Zero – It was requested that the only justifiable target should be that in the longer term no one is killed or seriously injured on the roads in Shropshire and that SC should adopt a Vision Zero “Safe System” approach to road danger that incorporates four key principles:

- (a) Safety: Road traffic systems should take account of the fact that people make mistakes and should minimise both the opportunity for error and the harm done when they do occur.
- (b) Ethics: Human life and health have highest priority.
- (c) Responsibility: We must all be ready to change to achieve a safe environment on our roads and there is a particular responsibility for change and reduction of danger amongst those whose modes of travel create the highest levels of risk.
- (d) Active travel: A Vision Zero approach must enable healthy, clean forms of transport such as cycling and walking.

It then went on to give some specific targets that SC should agree to in order to achieve/embed these things. Two additional amendments were suggested but these both in turn fell following discussion and a vote. The Leader Cllr Lezley Piction said that she didn't want this motion to succeed because it would have a financial impact on the Council at this difficult time and SC was looking into this matter anyway. A vote was then taken on the motion as it stood and it was rejected.

Motion 2 - Just Stop Oil Motion. This was about Shropshire Council resolving to:

1. Publicly condemn all illegal protests organised by Just Stop Oil or similar groups.
2. Demand the permanent cessation of all illegal protests and request these groups work constructively with both local and national government to achieve our mutually desired Net Zero Targets.

After amendments being debated and being rejected by a vote, this was agreed by Council.

Motion 3 – BBC Radio Shropshire Cuts to their service.....to conclude at 2pm rather than 7pm as at present. This was adjusted to become a cross-part motion calling on the Government to fund the BBC so that it can deliver a full schedule. It was passed unanimously

Motion 4 – Shrewsbury Ambulance Hub Move and Road Safety. Cllr Dean Carroll (Cabinet Member) said a dialogue had already begun between West Midlands Ambulance Service and Shropshire Council to find a new location for the hub, and so the original motion was amended to say:

1. Work with WMAS to bring forward a new Ambulance Hub site.
2. Work with WMAS to investigate site alternatives within the council's assets and through the One Public Estate programme which Shropshire Council leads.
3. Encourage WMAS to incorporate a local Shropshire Ambulance Control within the new Hub.
4. Utilise the Council's Communication Channels to assist WMAS with public information on driving safely around blue light vehicles.
5. Upon vacation of the new Ambulance Hub install agreed road safety improvements on Longden Road.

This motion was then passed unanimously.

Questions from Members: Four were asked,

1. **Request for SC updates about the economically important Pant-Llanymynech bypass AND the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road?**
2. **Given that energy bills are a continuing challenge for small businesses and households a series of energy saving related questions were asked about the Darwin Shopping Centre to fulfil the SC's commitment to achieve carbon neutral status by 2030 on its own estate.**
3. **Following the tragic death of Awaab Ishak and the coroner's ruling that the toddler died due to a respiratory condition caused by mould growing in his family's home Cllr Dean Carroll was asked to tell Council what steps he and his department are taking to ensure that a similar situation does not arise in any property of which Shropshire Council is ultimately landlord.**
4. **Since May 2021 it was asked how many miles of road have been resurfaced in Shropshire, How many miles of footpath have been resurfaced in Shropshire and How many miles of cycle path have been resurfaced in Shropshire?** The answers were 229 miles of road resurfaced, 14 miles of footway resurfaced and no cycleways have been resurfaced in that period (however 3/4 mile of cycle lane resurfaced on Abbey Foregate as part of a carriageway scheme).

Full and minuted answers to these questions were supplied by the various Portfolio holders and can be sent to any who would like them.

Finally, Council went into 'closed session' to discuss and agree some Planning Enforcement Works that are in Default in Whitchurch and Infrastructure Options at Oswestry Innovation Park.

Shropshire Climate and Carbon Advisory Board:

ET serves as a member of this Board. There have been no further meetings of this Board took place on 20th October, so our notes in last month's report are the current state of play in these matters.

Shropshire Local Plan Member Group:

ET attends these meetings of this revived Cross-Party group held via Teams. The **draft of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site SPD or Supplementary Planning Document [IGWHS SPD]** (that we are seeking to jointly agreed with Telford & Wrekin Officers) has now had Cabinet approval in December. The Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site is internationally recognised and the protection of its Outstanding Universal Value is important to both Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council.

The next stage is a joint public consultation on this draft between **Monday 9th January and Monday 20th February**. The draft provides practical planning guidance to residents and businesses seeking to bring forward sustainable development within the World Heritage Site. A dedicated consultation page has been created and will go live on Monday 9th January. Press releases and other social media communications will be published at the same time and Parish and Town Councils made aware. A public drop in event in Broseley is being planned for early February and more information on this will be available shortly.

The other matters relating to the emerging SAMDEV 2025-2035 Plan for Shropshire were just touched on.

Matters are still discussing Stage 1 of the process with the Planning Inspectorate, specifically related to nine questions that the Inspector has asked our Planning Officers about related to 'how SC engages with its neighbours'. Written responses are being prepared by officers. Only when this Stage 1 of the Review by the Inspectorate has been completed satisfactorily in their opinion will Stage 2 of the Review that looks into the recommended Site Allocations for development across the County (that is of more direct interest locally to ourselves) be started. It is expected that if all goes to plan that this part of the review will take up a good proportion of 2023.

Shropshire Council Briefing/'Drop In' Sessions:

Community Performance Indicators Workshop organised by SC Overview and Scrutiny Officers on 25th November at Shirehall

– ET took part in this. A crucial element of 'overview and scrutiny' is to reflect and act upon community concern. For scrutiny to be able to do this, it needs to understand local priorities and prioritise those issues. Quite often, our priorities as a council are not necessarily the priorities of communities and their residents. What can seem trivial to us can be vitally important to the Shropshire people that we serve. So, this drop-in session provided us with an opportunity to

- learn more about the performance indicators we use to measure how well the council is doing
- identify those indicators that together measure how the council meets the day-to-day needs of people in Shropshire
- help to build a basket of indicators that will help us to scrutinise council performance.

We now await the outcome of all this data gathering.

Registered Provider briefing for Councillors:

Housing has never been a more important priority in Shropshire, with the need for households to secure safe, warm and well-managed homes being critical to manage the pressures of the cost of living crisis. The majority of the affordable housing stock in Shropshire, both rented and low-cost home ownership, is provided by Registered Providers.

We were invited to this briefing session on 8th December to find out more about who your local Registered Providers are, the kind of homes they provide, the work they do in your communities, and their future plans in the context of current pressures. PB attended this briefing so if anyone would like to know about these matters he'll be able to give you more information.

Cross Party Group to help advise on Draft Submissions to the Boundary Commission:

There have been no further meetings of this group, so our notes in November's report are the current state of play in these matters.

River Water Quality Task and Finish Group:

It is felt that Shropshire Council's Place Scrutiny Committee could play a vital role in overseeing this process by calling together a range of agencies, including Severn Trent Water and Welsh Water, to follow key lines of enquiry.

Both ET and PB have been selected to join this new T and F Group that met for first time to 'set things in motion' on 14th November on Teams. Joyce Barrow was elected Chair and the terms of reference were agreed as were the following key lines of enquiry:

- To better understand the reasons for sewage discharges and farm-related discharges
- To understand the nature of the infrastructure improvements that would be necessary, to ask water companies to provide timescales for mitigating the effects of sewage and other pollutants being discharged into our rivers, and to discuss the funding of capital schemes and possible access to additional funding.
- To better understand the monitoring of these discharges, ensuring that there is comprehensive coverage

across Shropshire and that the reporting of any results is easily available, open and transparent.

- To identify and prioritise those rivers in Shropshire that would benefit from Bathing Water status and then produce a plan on how to achieve and maintain that status.
- Through the planning process, hold developers and the water companies to account so as to provide and fund adequate sewerage provision for the large increase in housing proposed in the draft Shropshire Plan.

The next (2nd) meeting of this new group that PB and ET have been invited to attend was set to be on 8th February 2023. However our Committee Officer has just told us that he is now leaving Shropshire Council in February so with the Chair's agreement this Task and Finish Group is being suspended until such time that another officer is in post to continue this work. Therefore the agreed site visits will no longer go ahead this next month. We had secured the enthusiastic participation of Severn Trent Water for this group and a company director was planned to come to meet with us as well as arrange a visit to a water treatment plant and a combined sewage overflow. Officers have also been working to secure additional participation from Welsh Water, Ofwat and the Environment Agency which we hope will be picked up when new appointments have been made and the Group continues its work.

Helicopter Noise Liaison Group:

This is a group that PB and ET have been asked to sit on, along with representatives of many parishes across Shropshire who are under the flight paths for Helicopter Training that is conducted out of RAF Shawbury. It meets twice a year the latest of which was on 14/11/2022.

The meeting received a powerpoint presentation and update on noise complaints by the Station Commander at Shawbury followed by discussion of them. Then there was an update on complaints received by Shropshire Council, of which there were none in the last 6 months. There were also no Planning Application issues to report that might affect flight training programmes either. The meeting concluded with a presentation about the Gliding Club by the Officer Commanding that has now transferred from Cosford to Shawbury some 2 years ago. These are being launched by very quiet powered gliders from runways. Flight paths in and around Shawbury were discussed for the benefit of immediately local parish councils who were represented at the meeting. The next meeting of this group is scheduled for March 2023.

Public Transport Working Group:

The latest meeting of this group took place on Thursday 27th November for this Cross-Party Group (of which ET is part) under the Chairmanship of Cllr Ian Nellins. Items discussed at this meeting were:

- County views on the Department of Transport proposed £2 cap on fares
- Commercial Bus Services – performances and pressures
- The financial support Local Bus Operators are currently receiving will end in March 2023 and their services are still not operating at pre-pandemic levels and so will need a form of support to continue. Plans are being made to provide reassurance to passengers that services will continue beyond April 2023.
- Service updates for 3 Bus Services around the South, East and West of the county, but these do not affect our Northern area.

The next meeting for this group will be on Thursday 2nd February. ET will circulate the single-sided Newsletter produced from this November meeting to report on the above discussions in a little more detail for those who would like a copy.

Shropshire Council Committees:

The **November Northern Planning Committee took place in Shirehall on 08/11/22 for ET** when, following a site visit to a farm outside Oswestry on a very wet morning, planning applications were considered at committee in the afternoon. These were for:

- **Installation of 6 large BT hubs that incorporated 75" LCD advertising screens on a number of pavements around Shrewsbury Town Centre.** These were extensively discussed and in the end, all refused largely because of their size and impact upon the historic town centre.
- **Construction of a new intensive dairy complex,** (to include means of access off the adjacent public highway, and wider area surface water drainage and landscaping) at the farm near Oswestry that we had visited that morning. This too was agreed unanimously by all those present who were able to vote.
- **Demolition of existing disused Oakland County Primary School, Glebe Road, Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury and the erection of 23 residential dwellings,** formation of access, footpaths/cycleways and public open space. This was also agreed unanimously.
- **Erect and display three sponsorship signs in one location and five in another on two different roundabouts around Market Drayton By-Pass** on the the A53/Shrewsbury Road. These too were passed unanimously.

In addition, Appeals and Appeal Decisions were looked at.

The **December Northern Planning Committee took place in Shirehall on 06/12/22 for ET.** The applications that came before the committee were:

- **Rowleys House, Barker Street, Shrewsbury.** A conservation application which was approved unanimously

- **1A Castle Gates, Shrewsbury.** Another conservation application which was approved unanimously
- **Oswald House, 13 Oswald Road, Oswestry.** An application for a large central town house to be turned into multiple occupation that was refused unanimously as being unsuitable for this.
- **Site of former Oakland County Primary School, Glebe Road, Bayston Hill.** The larger grant from the developer to assist in sports provision in the area had been agreed so this application was approved unanimously.
- **5 Porthill Gardens, Shrewsbury.** Despite some serious local representation against, this application was approved as acceptable once all facts were evident.
- **Installation of a large BT hub that incorporated 75" LCD advertising screens on the Town Centre pavement outside 17 Willow Street, Oswestry.** This application (like similar ones for Shrewsbury at last month's meeting) were extensively discussed and ultimately refused because of its size and insensitive impact upon the conservation area in town centre.
- **12 Oak Street, Shrewsbury, Shropshire.** This was another difficult application to consider for a large extension for several reasons, not least the impact on the neighbouring property. When it came to the vote it was narrowly rejected by 6 votes against and 5 for.
- **Station Yard, Pipe Gate, Market Drayton.** This was for a phase 2 residential scheme on a brownfield site returning to this committee at the request of the Parish Council, as there was a potential judicial review against Shropshire Council. After serious discussion we again voted unanimously for it to be agreed, in line with Planning Officers recommendations.

In addition, Appeals and Appeal Decisions were looked at. The date of the next Planning Committee is on Tuesday 10th January 2023.

Standards Sub Committee in Shirehall on 12th December for ET when a panel was selected from the Standards Committee to look at a specific allegation and adjudicate on it.

Health and Audit Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Shirehall on the 31st October for PB when the following agenda items were discussed:

- Update from the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)
- Joint HOSC Membership - Appointment of Co-optees
- Update on the Shrewsbury Health and Wellbeing Hub
- Work Programme for this committee

Health and Audit Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Shirehall on 12th December for ET acting as a substitute for Cllr David Minnery (Independent Group) when the following agenda items were discussed:

1. Update from the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC)
2. Updates from Previous Meeting – Shrewsbury Health and Wellbeing Hub
3. Prevention, Primary Care, Urgent and Emergency Care, and Discharge Task and Finish Group Report (already referred to in Ambulance Task and Finish Group report) The Chair of the Task and Finish Group, Cllr Claire Wild, gave this report.
4. Adult Social Care Reforms: Market Position Statement sharing the role and purpose of the Market Position with an outline of the emerging intentions. This was given by Laura Tyler, Head of Housing, Resettlement & Independent Living and Deborah Webster, Service Manager for Commissioning and Governance
5. Future Work Programme matters for this committee were then put forward and there were a lot! – shows the importance of this committee's work on behalf of the public where there is a lot of concern at present in this area.

Ambulance Task and Finish Group

ET is part of this Group as the representative of the Independent Grouping which has been meeting to look at how the wider system needs to contribute to enable Ambulance response times to improve. The report is about **'The Prevention, Primary Care, Urgent and Emergency Care, and Discharge of Patients'**. It's work is now largely completed and the report (such as it is!) is now being presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet prior to Full Council. However, we have not had some important data from some Health bodies, despite being requested on several occasions, so a mandatory route is now being taken to gain this data, which explains this delay. Only then can final conclusions and recommendations be revised/checked and the report published.

Shropshire Council Training/Development Sessions:

Solar Farm Training on Wednesday 14th December has been arranged for councillors such as ET who are involved in the Shropshire North and Shropshire South Planning Committees. It was a very long virtual training session around the key planning issues associated with solar farms covering areas such as:

- The urgent need to decarbonise energy supply and deliver energy security / targets for renewable energy
- Impact on agricultural land / food production / grid connection availability
- Community Benefit Funds (cannot be a material planning consideration)
- Consultee responses

It brought together the officers at Shirehall involved in Climate Emergency initiatives now being taken since SC declared a Climate Emergency in May 2019 and Shropshire Planning Officers who are dealing with these applications as they come in. There is expected to be a surge in applications with the increasing demand for electrical energy now being seen (for cars, equipment, switching from other carbon-based fuels, etc). South Shropshire has had 3 land applications with another 10 now in the pipeline. North Shropshire had a small one on a small farm some two or so months ago in the area beyond Oswestry under Offas Dyke....so they're coming! It proved a very helpful session for many reasons as we try and build a consistent/fair approach across the county and beyond. If anyone wants further details about this there was a slide presentation that I can try and get hold of for them.

Regarding Whixall Parish, our activity this last TWO months, has been focussed on:

- Monitoring and, where needed, giving advice and support for planning/pre-planning applications and single plot eligibility for local young people and
- Monitoring an on-going social care need involving a number of agencies made more difficult to resolve because of our rurality.
- Working to help a local family in Holliswood to get some longstanding serious flooding issues involving sewerage resolved that are not only unpleasant but hazardous to health.

Regarding other matters that concern that we are either involved in:

Wem Area Climate Action Forum – The group has not met for business since their November meeting – reported last Month but they have held a Christmas social evening on 6th December in the Senior Club to welcome new members.

The next meeting is on Monday 9th January, venue provisionally to be Wem Conservative Club....but get in touch if you'd like to come and we'll confirm this with you.

Discussion about the future of Wem Economic Forum – We have had a further meeting with SC officers on on Wednesday 14/12/22 at 10.30am in Roden Suite at Edinburgh House. On this occasion matters discussed were:

- **A High Street Survey.** Wem is being used as a pilot project and we are awaiting a document from our new Place Plan Officer
- **The Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) visit to Oswestry** by Cllrs Broomhall, Soul (Mayor of Wem) and Towers to see how they had been successful in obtaining and then using grant funding for shop fronts, alleyway projects and the like to help regenerate the town centre....so that we can learn from their experiences.
- **Investment Plans** - We had a presentation on how these could work for Wem by a Senior Officer for Place Shaping in Economic Growth at SC. This was followed by a discussion that showed there was a need to identify some key themes for Wem that could be built on as a part of a project for the Shared Prosperity Fund Application as well as investment planning around improving Wem's connectivity, sustainability and image. Engaging the use of consultants to undertake research amongst the business and wider community was considered important as well as finding the contact details of companies who had helped Oswestry and Shrewsbury move forward in this way. Officers are now helping us find these details.
- **A Business Networking Event is being planned for 28th February at Soultion Hall** organised by Shropshire Council Officers. It will be an opportunity to launch the Shared Prosperity Fund to those present as well as for companies to discuss funding and give opportunity for attendees to put forward their ideas for the town. Promotional material is being designed and the Wem Town Council and nearby Rural Parish Councils are to be asked to help with this event. Established and newer local business speakers are now being invited to come and share their experiences/ideas for improving the local economy.

The next meeting of this joint WEF/SC group to further progress matters is planned for Wednesday 8th February 2023 at Edinburgh House.

Hopefully this brings you all up to speed with 'all our doings'but do say if we need to clarify anything or there are other matters you need to draw to our attention.

Kindest regards,

Peter Broomhall and Edward Towers

Shropshire County Councillors for the Wem, Wem Rural & Whixall Division

Date: 6th January 2023