

## Report 10 to Whixall Parish Council by Shropshire Councillors Peter Broomhall + Edward Towers – November 2022

*Dear All* – Please find below our tenth written report as your County Councillors:

**We have not had another Full Shropshire Council meeting** since Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022, so nothing to report this month. The next one is in the diary for 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

### Shropshire Climate Change Stakeholder Group:

ET serves as a member of this group that has been endorsed by SC at its September Full Council meeting. **Its title has now been adjusted to Climate and Carbon Advisory Board.** A further meeting of this Board took place on 20<sup>th</sup> October when we were notified that the Government has awarded SC one of the largest grants in the country for electric vehicle charging in SC Car Parks (almost £1m). This means that SC can raise the number of charging points across the county from 50 to 270. The locations being proposed are the result of detailed modelling amid the propensity to move to electric vehicles. Two charging areas are being suggested for Wem....in the main car park and the one in Mill Street. They will take 18 – 24 months to install because electrical supplies must be installed as well. We were informed that Car Clubs are being investigated as well.... where individuals cannot afford a charger of their own. Further headline areas mentioned were:

- Electric Refuse Collection vehicles have now been demonstrated in Shrewsbury, but there is still some way to go with these. They currently have a range of 100miles, have 300kW battery power and operate very quietly!
- Local Transport Plan with reference to Public Transport is very high on this agenda. The aspiration is there, but the delivery is still the area of concern.
- Carbon Capture and Storage is being considered at Highway depots and SC are asking for the money for a pilot here to deal the brittle fallen trees for Ash Die-Back along SC Highways. A pyrolysis plant to produce Biochar (powdered charcoal) is being investigated. This material would have then have the benefit of being used to clean up water boost soil performance by helping retain moisture be a binder for concrete and tarmac, etc. Shropshire is in the forefront of looking into this technology.
- There is a detailed study going on in how to use waste heat from Battlefield recycling centre. Various nearby buildings to this plant are being considered here.
- There is an SC solar farm being seriously considered in the Oswestry area which can then be added to by using other low-grade land in SC's ownership. This would then bring into the Council needed revenue.
- A hydrogen plant is being discussed in the Shrewsbury area, but at this stage this is not being classed as 'green' because some of the gas is from non-renewable sources at this stage.
- Financial opportunities for SC were discussed in addition to those already mentioned above, such as Social Housing 'Green' schemes.....that would provide an action plan for our buildings....but these were described as not being 'shovel ready' to share. The matter of Carbon Reduction in SC's entire supply chain (including ICS) was seen as very important in leading the way, but gathering the data ascribing carbon performance, to then enable us to select the ones that have the best effect in Carbon reduction, is a very big 'piece of work' needing a big data company's help. It was emphasised that this is not all about examining 'what SC do' but also 'what SC buy in'. Some of the footprints for these sources may in fact be outside UK control....so presenting some difficult challenges to overcome in this aspiration.
- Finally, environmental performance of new developments was considered. This relates to the work being done on the new SAMDEV 2035 documents. At the moment the process is being examined by the independent Inspector, but an examination of Site Allocations follows this. What is being raised by some of us is the need to embed energy conservation considerations, building materials, active transport as part of the material planning policies when designing and bringing to committee future planning. At present these are just 'add-ons' that may or may not be discussed. There is a call for supplementary planning documents (SPD's) that mean there will be a greater interaction with building regulation systems. Policy documents are described as not very 'agile' in sign-posting a direction of policy, so guidance is needed on how to implement a direction. It will be interesting to see how this call is taken up by others in SC!

### Shropshire Local Plan Member Group:

ET attends these meetings of this revived Cross-Party group held via Teams. The latest was on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November when the **agenda was to discuss latest draft of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site SPD or Supplementary Planning Document** (that we are seeking to jointly agreed with Telford & Wrekin Officers) was finally agreed by the group. This means that this document can now go to our SC Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> December with a recommendation that it go out to a formal six week public consultation. If Cabinet approves this (and this is also agreed by similar process going on concurrently in Telford and Wrekin) this consultation could now begin in January 2023. You will remember that we wanted to make sure it reflected Shropshire's concerns about the old power station site/developments at Buildwas on land (partly in Shropshire Council's area and part within Telford and Wrekin's) were on equal footing with those of Telford and Wrekin.

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 Session:**

None have been held this last month.

### **Cross Party Group to help advise on Draft Submissions to the Boundary Commission.**

This is still as reported to you last month. The Cross-Party Group (of which ET is part) has completed and submitted its work. It proposed that there should be no change to a Cabinet style of leadership and that a rise of two members of SC to 76 are needed to help us function efficiently in representing residents where there has been a large increase in population due to demographic changes caused by new house building and employment patterns. We are now awaiting the decisions of the Boundary Commission.

### **Shropshire Council Training/Development Sessions:**

There was a Planning Training Evening meeting for SC Officers, Planning Committee members and substitute members on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> October. It was an intense 2 hour session on 'Environmental Impact Assessments' led by Nina Pindham from 'No 5 Barristers Chambers'. It dealt with the General Position about EIA's....when and where they can be used, before going on to look at the 8 Key Issues regarding Areas Legal Risk. Then followed a look at the Habitats Directive and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive before concluding with information about the Environment Act/Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. I think you can see from the terminology the lawyers are using these are complex matters, so if any of you would like a copy of more detailed notes from Nina here, then do ask me for these and/or her powerpoint slides.

### **Public Transport Working Group:**

The latest meeting of this group took place on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October for this Cross-Party Group (of which ET is part) under the Chairmanship of the new Portfolio Holder for Transport, Cllr Ian Nellins who has replaced Cllr Cecilia Motley. Following an introduction and welcome from Ian we then were briefed and discussed a whole range of transport issues that affect us in the county. These were:

- Meeting between Shropshire Council Officers & Department for Transport related to our Levelling Up Funding second round competitive bid that totals some £126m that incorporates the first round Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for Shropshire. We are currently waiting for news about this from the DfT to know if we have been successful this time around, but there has been a very positive reception to the idea we are putting forward...the meeting with DfT running over by 40 or more minutes!
- South Shrewsbury Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) – Zone 1 Update. This is a pilot scheme for this new way of operating a bus service from within SC itself.
- Shrewsbury Connect – Scope & Plans. This relates to the planning that needs to go on in the light of the LUF2 Bid reported to you last month.
- Central Government £2.00 Fare Cap – Proposals that have been made by central government for a 3 month trial of this new scheme in 2023 for commercial operators to use to attract passengers back on to buses were discussed ...regarding its possible success or otherwise!
- Arriva's current performance & pressures as a commercial operator were discussed. This is in the light of service changes that have been noted by the public on social media, etc It was agreed that an invitation to Arriva Midlands to attend in person the next Members Working Group session. We have been asked to collate questions to Arriva representatives and share with fellow colleagues as to whether there is anything they would like to ask on their behalf.

Dates are now being agreed for the next meeting in early December.

### **Ambulance Task and Finish Group**

ET is representing the Independent members as part of this group. We have had several meetings to look at it's objectives which are:

- To consider how the wider system needs to contribute to enable Ambulance response times to improve
- To look at this through three areas of focus:
  - Primary Care and preventing A&E attendance
  - A&E Attendance and admission to Hospital
  - Preparing for discharge from hospital and discharge from hospital
- and then to make evidence-based recommendations so that its work is completed by the end of October '22

At our latest meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October we reviewed the findings from earlier sessions and refined developing conclusions and recommendations. At our next (final?) meeting we hope to review the draft report (including the conclusions and recommendations) and confirm that the report is ready for publication at Council.

## **Shropshire Council Committees:**

The **October Northern Planning Committee took place in Shirehall on 11/10/22 for ET** when planning applications for:

- a small solar park in a remote spot near Offa's Dyke
- a retrospective erection of a tool/storage building near Oswestry
- SC Advertising to be erected on 3 roundabouts around Whitchurch

were all considered. The first and third were unanimously accepted and the second unanimously refused.

In addition, Appeals and Appeal Decisions were looked at. The date of the next Planning Committee is on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> November.

**The Strategic Licensing Committee in Shirehall on the 5<sup>th</sup> October for both ET and PB** when the following agenda items were discussed and approved:

- Licensing Fees and Charges 2023 – 24
- Review of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy 2023 to 2027
- Revision of Hackney Carriage Table of Fares
- Proposed Variation of the Designation of Licenced Streets
- Responsibilities of Premises Licence Holders under the Licensing Act 2003
- Exercise of Delegated Powers

**Regarding Whixall Parish, our activity this last month, as in September!, 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
- an on-going social care need involving a number of agencies made more difficult to resolve because of our rurality. We also discussed, at your October Parish Council meeting, the fear and rising concern over BT's proposal to switch personal alarms from using copper-based phone lines to broadband (with all its dead spots and unreliability in the sparsely populated Whixall parish) in the near future....and we all need to put our minds to solutions about this. It could be that using satellite connectivity and other emerging technologies may be one way forward, but our residents will need guidance and help from a variety of agencies adapting to this as....and when!... they become available.

We have also been asked by 'John of Whixall' to help publicise the new Whixall Social Centre Cuppa Club that is being held every Tuesday from 10.00am – 1.00pm. Here, beside keeping warm and making contact with others from across the parish, you can play cards, dominoes and have great brews and biscuits....all for a £1. He says he would be happy to take any villagers who would like to attend in his small bus. There is no fare but contributions can be made for running costs. He can be contacted on 01948 880037. This is another great 'self-help' initiative from within the parish, so do support and help publicise it.

**Regarding other Wem Area matters that concern that we are either involved in or notified about:**

**Discussion about the future of Wem Economic Forum** – There has been a further meeting, this time attended by 5 SC officers on the 19<sup>th</sup> October at Edinburgh House. This was a positive and encouraging meeting that largely looked at how to improve our High Street, help encourage our traders and attract new ones. It will be reported on at our next Town Council meeting under agenda item 13.

**Wem Area Climate Action Forum** – The group held a meeting on 3rd October to discuss preparation for a stall to attract new members and share what the group is doing in the town at the Wem Volunteers Fair held in the Town Hall on 11<sup>th</sup> October.

They also held their monthly meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October in Wem Youth Club. The recent topics of applying for Charity Status/Biodiversity Project/Wildflower Planting and Trees/Buildings and the Environment/Footpaths/Level Crossing Signage/Concern over Group Numbers were all reviewed and steps to ensure continued progress in each of these areas. The next meeting is on 7<sup>th</sup> November, venue likely to be Wem Baptist Church Hall....but get in touch if you'd like to come and we'll confirm this with you.

**The Wemian – We hesitate to mention but....** still looking for a new Editor and team members to help ensure this long running and valued local publication is able to continue to flourish, adapt and serve our community. As noted last month, Cllr Geoff Soul (Wem Town Council and Mayor of Wem) is its Treasurer and can be a point of contact for any who may want further details.

## Useful Upcoming Wem Diary Date that we have been informed about!

**Wem Christmas festival and Lights Switch-on** (or 'Late Night Shopping'!) – Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022

As always, if there are other matters you wish to bring to attention, or you need further explanation on the above, then let us know.

Kindest regards,

*Peter Broomhall and Edward Towers*

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

**Date: 4th November 2022**