

Report 13 to Whixall Parish Council by Shropshire Councillors Peter Broomhall + Edward Towers – March 2023

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

We have had our latest **Full Shropshire Council meeting** just three days ago on Thursday 2nd March, as we write, so will be better placed (space-wise!) to give a report on this in our report next month.

Shropshire Climate and Carbon Advisory Board:

The latest meeting of this Board took place on 16th February. Unfortunately, because of a commitment clash ET had to miss this cross-party meeting but has been in touch with Adrian Cooper who co-ordinates this SC Board as [Climate Change Task Force Leader](#). Minutes will be produced and if any would like to view them, he can send them on to you. Key agenda items at this latest meeting were:

1. Project Headlines and key priorities for 2023
2. Funding opportunities
3. Low carbon energy generation and distribution
4. Forward programme for future meetings

The plan for this new Board is to meet on a quarterly basis.

Shropshire Local Plan Member Group:

ET has attended these meetings of this revived Cross-Party group held via Teams. The public consultation on 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 concluded. It aimed to provide practical planning guidance to residents and businesses seeking to bring forward sustainable development within the World Heritage Site. 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 **other matters relating to the emerging SAMDEV 2025-2035 Plan for Shropshire are still progressing**. On Wed 15th February SC Officers received the 'Interim Findings' of the Planning Inspectors on the Local Plan following the Stage 1 hearing sessions last July and January. These have been uploaded to the website and be accessed here [id28-inspectors-interim-findings-letter-15-feb-2023.pdf \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](#)

The positive news is that the Inspectors have concluded the Council has met it legal Duty to Cooperate with adjoining authorities. As many of you will be aware from following the hearing sessions, this was a major source of objection from a small number of well-resourced objectors, and it is therefore a very important hurdle to have overcome.

The key take away from this is the Council will be able to proceed to Stage 2 hearing sessions and continue to work towards the adoption of the Plan. As is common in these circumstances, the Inspectors have highlighted a number of areas where further work is required before we can confidently set out the timeframe for the Stage 2 sessions. Whilst officers assess the Inspectors requirements in detail and set a timeframe for a response, the Examination will be on 'pause'. Once officers have responded, we will be given a clear timeframe for the Stage 2 Hearing Sessions that will look into the recommended Site Allocations for development across the County (that is of more direct interest locally to ourselves) be started. As we said last month 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 Cabinet:

ET was asked to be present in his role as Deputy Leader for the Independent Group and sit with the SC Cabinet on Wednesday 15th February, as the leader (David Minnery) was unavailable on this occasion. The agenda items began with a mix of financial reports, fees and charges, approving the Final details for SC's Financial Strategy 2023/24 - 2027/28 and school admission arrangements for 2024-25 and funding formula for 2023-24. Towards the end of the meeting the ICT and Digital Strategy were outlined, Shropshire Plan updates were given and the proposal for the Church Stretton Neighbourhood Area Development Plan was given permission to proceed to the next stage.

Shropshire Council Briefing/'Drop In' Sessions:

a) Local Plan Member Group - NPPF Consultation Reform

ET attended this briefing on 15th February which was at the invitation of the Cross-Party Local Plan Member Group meeting to further discuss the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and to feed into the draft Council response to the ongoing consultation on these proposed changes. Those unable to attend were invited to submit any thoughts on this consultation so that the Local Plan Member Group (ET is a group member) could give them due consideration when finalising the draft Council response.

b) 'Calling for an Ambulance' Report Briefing from HealthWatch Shropshire on 21st February

which ET attended. This was an opportunity for Members to hear from HealthWatch Shropshire (HWS) about their report into research about people's experiences of calling for an ambulance. The press release that HWS published when they launched the report is attached for information. We can also send you a powerpoint of this presentation upon request.



HWS Press release -
calling for an ambul

c) Adult Social Care Team Briefing – Focus on Hospital Discharge and Reablement on 1st

March for Members. This was led by Tanya Miles (Executive Director for People Services) and Natalie McFall (Assistant Director-Adult Social Care and Housing) who gave us a presentation explaining:

- how the Integrated Discharge Team (IDT) operates
- the Referral and Assessment process works
- How NCTR (No Criteria To Reside) works compared with 'Ready to go'
- what the average day looks like in doing this
- that there has not only been increased hospital activity but increased discharge rates and that a Pathway 0 has been developed by SC that means that adults who have no extra needs when leaving hospital can do so more quickly – so freeing up the system a little – something being adopted elsewhere in the country!
- current challenges
- the new ways of working that are being developed in Shropshire...such as how things are being monitored by ourselves as well as the 4 national Key Performance Indicators (KPI's).

Questions/Points being made then followed.....asking about such things as:

- saying there is a real need for residents to get early appointments with doctors to then prevent the need for them to attend A+E's in the first place and helping cause the above issues involving discharges. Intervention should be in the community and this is part of SC's local care problem!
- Asking if the recent HealthWatch report (see above) was feeding its information through to the Adult Social Care Team to save repetition and reinforce their findings/ease their workload.

For those who would like a copy of this powerpoint presentation, then please do ask us.

Shropshire's Submission to the Boundary Commission:

This was sent at the end of January. The two key points are:

- that SC were asking for single member Divisions (since we became a Unitary Authority we are a two member one here in Wem). The proposed boundary plan that we have seen shows Wem being divided into East and West along Mill Street, High Street and New Street and then out into rest of Wem Rural and Whixall. Wem East would then include part of the Prees Parish! The question here is do we wish to see Wem divided in this way which is along similar lines to the way we have our two Wards in Wem Town Council (that we tend to ignore and just see ourselves as Wem Town Councillors!), or is this a more critical division when it comes to County matters?
- to have an increase of 1 Shropshire Councillor to make 75 (not 76, as originally was being discussed!) to help cover the added representation needed for the increase in housing in the east of Shropshire....ie Shifnal, Bridgnorth, Tasley and Highley areas. The suggestion coming from the Boundary Commission is that we stay at 74, as now.

However if there were strong alternative views/feelings at a Parish Level in this County-wide submission we have been told Parishes and/or individuals should also now send these views direct to the Boundary Commission. They can also be sent to tom.rutherford@lgbce.org.uk headed to 'Submission from ?? for Shropshire Review being conducted by the Boundary Commission'.

The Boundary Commission will then produce some draft proposals by 25th April 2023. A further consultation then follows until 3rd July 2023, so we will get a further opportunity to give our opinion, but as it's not at such an early stage the ideas coming forward are more likely to be firming up!

Public Transport Working Group:

The latest meeting of this group took place on Thursday 2nd February for this Cross-Party Group (of which ET is part) under the Chairmanship of Cllr Ian Nellins – Deputy Leader of Shropshire Council. This meeting dealt with various updates mainly relating to the failure of what we all thought was an excellent LUF2 (Levelling Up Fund) Bid that had had a lot of work done on it and really addressed bus service improvement across the county. [Bid £17.9 m for Rural Connect and £19.3m for Shrewsbury Connect]. It was 4 times oversubscribed! The people responsible for funding allocation are going to come and talk to SC as we prepare to make a new/third submission for the next round of Levelling Up funding that is coming along.

We also discussed continuing support for local bus operators from March 2023 until 1/8/23 and the purchase of four new vehicles expected to start operation in August 2023 powered in a more environmentally way as well as have Wifi, air conditioning and non-slip surfaces...amongst other improvements, as part of a DRT (Demand Responsive Transport) pilot in Zone 1 of Shropshire (to the west of Shrewsbury!). The Newsletter 'meeting notes' will be available shortly and we can send these to you if you'd like a copy.

A press release about this continuing support for local bus services has been put out by Cllr Nellins in the last week of February to give you more details about this. We've attached this separately to the email sending this report. The next meeting for this group is still being sorted.

River Water Quality Task and Finish Group:

The next (2nd) meeting of this new group that PB and ET had been invited to attend has still not met again following the Committee Officer's resignation from Shropshire Council during February. This Task and Finish Group is suspended until such time that another officer is in post to continue this work.

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Shropshire Council Committees:

The **February Northern Planning Committee on 7/2/23 for ET was cancelled!**....the next one is in the diary for 7th March at Shirehall.

Licensing Sub Committees in Shirehall. There have been three of these this month - **two each for PB and ET** including one where we sat together on the three person panel...(so Wem was very well represented on this one for an application for South Shropshire!)

People Overview Committee on 8/2/23 for PB. This dealt with two key agenda items which were:

- Criminal Exploitation
Scrutiny of arrangements to tackle child exploitation in Shropshire were looked into following recent presentations to the committee.
- Preparing for Adulthood
This was to follow-up scrutiny of projects presented to the committee in 2021. Please find attached to this report two pdf's giving details of reports that were presented to the committee.



Criminal
Exploitation.pdf



Preparing for
Adulthood.pdf

Ambulance Task and Finish Group

ET is part of this Group as the representative of the Independent Grouping. There is nothing to add to that reported in the December report this month, except that members were given a full and detailed briefing from HealthWatch Shropshire (HWS) on 21st February about their report into research about people's experiences of calling for an ambulance (see 'Briefing' section of this report).

Shropshire Council Training/Development Sessions:

There have been none arranged since our December report.

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

- 1. Wem Area Climate Action Forum –** An on-line meeting took place for this group on Wednesday 15th February, which ET was unfortunately unable to attend because of a double-commitment. Minutes will become available shortly which we can send you upon request. Some of the topics covered were:
 - the progress being made with the application for Charity Status and Trustees matters and opening a Bank Account.
 - How to help the Incredible Edibles/Community Allotment group in Wem
 - Whitchurch Road Cemetery as they explore ways to follow up some environmental suggestions for the cemetery from a recent meeting with God's Acre down at the cemetery.
 - Further planning for holding a 1st ever 'Green Day' in Wem on July 15th 2023.
- 2. Discussion matters regarding the pilot project between Shropshire Council and Wem Economic Forum/Town Council**

There have been no further meetings of this group since 14th December 2022 meeting when two matters were specifically discussed that we reported on in January's report, namely:

- **Investment Plans** – We discussed 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. We felt that 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. As a result, a joint 'feasibility application' was put into the Shropshire UKSPF (£150,000 on offer) with Oswestry Town Council for £10,000. On Wednesday 22/2/23 the Wem Town Clerk reported to us that this application had been successful. This was to improve the market offer in both our market towns, so now the work to be done in this area can be planned/delivered in the coming weeks up until mid-May.

In addition a second application was submitted to the UK Prosperity Fund so that consultations can take place with the community about the future of Wem regarding making it a better place to LIVE, WORK and VISIT to help drive the business side of our projects on the theme of Work in Wem....to help make it easier, relocate businesses to Wem and help sustain and grow businesses. This was unfortunately unsuccessful as the fund was heavily oversubscribed with applications totalling over £600,000. It was felt by the panel distributing this money that other applications were better able to demonstrate a greater potential impact on the targets/objectives of Shropshire's UKSPF Investment Plan and Economic Growth Strategy. However, there is to be another round of this feasibility fund after April 2023 and the Shropshire Team will contact us further for discussions about this in due course as a reapplication would be welcomed from ourselves.

- **The Business Networking Event/Breakfast taking place on 28th February at Saulton Hall** organised by Shropshire Council Officers.

UPDATE: This meeting took place today (as we write) and 50 + individuals came together for this occasion. It began with a full English Breakfast and was followed by a welcome to all for this first occasion of its kind here in Wem by Cllr Dean Carroll (Portfolio Holder for Growth, Regeneration and Housing). This was followed by Tracy Woods (Senior Key Accounts and Investment Officer in the SC Economic Growth Team) sharing with all present the outline details of the Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) that comes as part of HM Government's 'Levelling Up' agenda.

Two speakers were then introduced from local businesses. They explained why they were doing operating their business here and highlighted some of the issues they have come across as they play their part in improving the local economy. The first was Callum McCarthy from Wem's 'Warbling Tit' a hospitality business he recently set up in the town building on his role as Licensee of the Dickin Arms in Noble Street. He is very optimistic about trading here and currently planning for a third business in the town. The second speaker was Elwyn Griffiths from Oakland Farm Eggs, a long established and very large and successful agricultural business in Wem Rural. His topic was 'Future-proofing your business', building on the successful start made by his father, he shared the challenges they face in wanting to remain local as the firm has grown.

Then followed a lively discussion chaired by Tracy Woods involving Cllr Carroll hearing the views/experiences and ideas from other businesses who had come along. Ways forward to build on this successful morning's initiative for the benefit of all in our local area brought the time together to a close. To this end:

1. the meeting between the four Shropshire Councillor Officers, Wem Rural Parish and Wem Town Councils under the auspices of Wem Economic Forum must continue.
 2. There should be another employers event like this (sometime in June?) to keep the momentum going with Shropshire Council staff helping organise it.
- 3. The Wemian** – Whilst this is still in abeyance there has been some movement here as a possible new Lead/Editor may be emerging!! However, new supporting team members are still being sought. It would be really good, for so many reasons, if the immediate future of this long running and valued local publication can be secured for the benefit of all in our community. If you know of suitable volunteers, as stated previously, do let us/Wem Mayor (Geoff Soul) know.
- 4. Broadband and 5G transmissions in Wem** – As a result of broadband issues and health concerns about 5G raised by a resident we convened a meeting on Friday 3rd February for the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Whixall Parish Council and the Chairman of Wem Rural Parish Council with Chris Taylor, Shropshire Council's Broadband Manager in Wem. This was to discuss 5G and Broadband in both Wem Rural and Whixall Parishes. We know that this is a topic that regularly causes much discussion and concern in these two parishes and so it was helpful to have Chris come and speak to us about where everything is as regards 'roll out' of this technology in our part of North Shropshire, as well as answer the questions that we all have. He has since sent us notes to support all the information he gave us as well as some details being sent out by Ofcom to give information about the science underlying 5G technology. If you'd like copies of these, then we'll forward them to you.

Regarding Whixall Parish, our activity this last month has largely been trying to progress the matters mentioned in our January report. Matters are much as they were then. We are still waiting to hear back from the Drainage team as to what was found regard the flooding of road and some properties in Hollinswood. The Head of Drainage wrote to us on

16/2/23 saying he had asked for '***an update from the in-house team so will let you know more soon. I believe more works are planned so its generally positive***'. We are still waiting to receive this and are chasing things up in the meantime.

So, life is never dull here in the Wem Division! As usual if you need more information or wish to draw our attention to something then do see us.

Kindest regards,

Peter Broomhall and Edward Towers

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

Date: 4th March 2023