

July 2021

Monthly Report

1. The Local plan went through Council on the 15th July. This will now be submitted to the National Inspector for planning for review and if approved should be adopted by the Council next summer. During this time Town and Parish Councils and everyone else can make further representation should they wish to. Some parts of the plan were seen as controversial and with pressure being put on Shropshire to take housing allocation from The Black Country and Birmingham it may well lead to a Judicial review if so challenged. To date we have flatly refused any further allocation.

The government constantly expects us to have a 5 year land supply for housing, at present we have around 6 years, if the plan is not approved and adopted by next summer and we fall below a 5 year supply as land allocations has not been agreed, it then opens up the door for development anywhere around most Market towns, Hubs and Clusters and we just hope this does not happen as it did around 2012 which saw the overdevelopment of Shifnal as one example of no adopted plan.

2. Council also improved the first tranche of extra funding for Highways, £8 million in this financial year with a detailed business plan for future funding being drawn up. Locally I am led to believe the A4117 is going to be repaired around Doddington and Hopton bank and the stretch from Mawley to Far forest in August under a convoy situation.

I am also pleased to advise that the B4363 Kinlet bank is due to be repaired in September with day time closures.

3. New wheelie bins for recycling have been approved by council and should be rolled out over the next 12 months across the county. They are not compulsory and if you prefer the box that is fine also.

4. We are undertaking a review of our Capital Programme with the emphasis being on Highways. This is along with The New Shropshire plan which should be out for consultation in the late Autumn, this will incorporate the Rural and Community strategy, Economic Development strategy and the Leisure Culture and Arts strategy and how they become the delivery tool for the Shropshire Plan.

5. I have now been made a director of WME (West Midlands Employers) which is a body which oversees all staffing arrangements for those in Local Government across the region. This is about being an organisation that can assist Local Government in difficult times, appraisals, Tribunals and sharing best practice and enabling Local Government to have access to the right staff at the right time. For example creating pools of Social workers to drive down expensive Agency fees. We have noted there is a severe lack in the market of specialist Child Protection Solicitors and at present they can name their price to Local authorities and this is an example of how working across the region could drive down costs to Councils for work they have to deliver.

6. I am booked in for many training courses taking up my role with Finance and Resources and have secured a course at Warwick University funded by the Local Government Association and no cost to Shropshire to which I am really pleased, will report back in due course.

7. The Council has to undertake a Quarterly Treasury report which looks at its financial holdings. Currently our officer are performing above average in our returns against a bank interest rate of 0.1%. We have approximately £148million in the general fund for paying invoices, staff, Social care, receiving income from Council tax, Central Government, Business rates etc it is noted in the report that it expects interest rates to stay low until at least 2024 and there maybe charges issued on customers keeping substantial holdings in the Banks.

8. It is sad news that the new nursing home in Cleobury will have to be demolished and rebuilt due to building defect. It is unfortunate, and I have contacted the owner to see if a small working group can be set up whilst the work continues so we all know what is going on and what disruption is going to be caused if any. I will keep you updated in due course.

Have a good summer break

Best regards

Gwilym