

Councillor's Monthly Report October2021

1.Divest or not to divest – that is a massive question for the Pension Committee that oversees Shropshire Council's £2bn pension fund. As we get closer to COP26 in Glasgow we will see more and more coverage on TV and in social media on the 'climate crisis' and more and more suggestions as to what to do about it – nationally and at the local level ie which will include the response of community leaders such as Parish and Town Councillors.

In Shropshire there are 2 websites that warrant a visit: 1. The Shropshire Climate Action Partnership zerocarbonschropshire.org ; which includes Shropshire Council, and 2. Save Our Shropshire saveourshropshire.org ; which organises carbon literacy courses (a couple of online hours per day over 3 days) specifically designed to help Councillors understand the zero carbon debate and why action needs to be taken. It is worth recalling that Shropshire Council has declared a climate emergency and is working towards zero carbon by 2030.

The Pension Committee needs to decide whether to instruct the pension fund managers whether divest from 'fossil fuel' companies (though exactly which they are is open to debate) OR to instruct the fund managers to develop an investment portfolio that in itself is 'zero carbon' ie balancing the carbon footprints of 'fossil fuel' companies with 'green' companies such as producers of renewable energy. The calculation will be complex! I very much welcome your views.

2.Steve Charmley the Cabinet portfolio holder for Highways has resigned. Steve recently visited the Cleobury Division and a list of priority repairs / resurfacing was prepared and shared with him – he has been asked for a schedule as to when action will be taken. I have now approached his Deputy and have been assured that Steve's resignation will not mean that this action list needs to be prepared again. I wait for the opportunity to share the action plan with you.

3.A petition on the closure of the Highways depot in Bridgnorth was debated at full Council on the 23rd Sep21. The conclusion was that the depot will be temporarily closed on health and safety grounds and that the decision on a permanent closure as part of a highways rationalization programme will be made at full Council ie it will not be just up to the Council Officers working in Highways Dept. We have been assured that the quality of the gritting service over the winter period, and emergency repair work, will not be effected.

4.At full Council a motion was passed to make 'white ribbon' accreditation a goal – this means that the Council will be taking a strategic approach to ending male violence against women by engaging with men and boys, changing cultures and raising awareness. Accreditation will enable the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty under the 2010 Equality Act.

5. Afghan Refugees – I have been advised by ShropshireSupportsRefugees, when I visited their very full warehouse, that it is likely that only 5 Afghan families will be settled in the County. The Council is looking for properties for these families from private sector landlords – one has been identified.

Simon Harris : Councillor Cleobury Mortimer Division 30September2021