

## **Councillors Report Summer 2024**

### **Healthy People : Healthy Economy : Healthy Environment : Healthy Organisation**

Following the call for the General Election our usual monthly reports were withdrawn and we now update you on current topics being undertaken by Council which may be of interest; though there may be some 'old news'. Our next report will be late September as little new business is undertaken in August, however if there are things to report we will do.

1. Following a consultation period where in-excess of 17000 responses have been received Cabinet have agreed to introduce a charge for the collection of Green Waste of £56 per month per bin to start on the 1<sup>st</sup> October.
2. On good news we can report none of the Household Waste sites will close. Instead, they will each close one day a week and an online booking system (which can also be accessed by phone) will be set up. This will allow major efficiencies for the contractor and data collection understanding where the waste is from and what type of waste is being received; and when.
3. The financial outturn of the Council for the last financial year ending March24 has been completed within the due date of 31<sup>st</sup> May - unlike many Councils. The outturn shows an overspend of circa £7million which represents around 1% of Gross budget and 2% of the Net budget - many Councils would welcome such a result in the current climate. Taking this into account this our general reserve balance is circa £8 million almost £6 million better than identified in Q3. £30 million was added on the 1<sup>st</sup> April. So the Council's reserves stand at £38 million for the current challenges in this 2024/25 financial year. This has also been delivered while achieving £42 million of reduced revenue spend across the whole of Council. Our thanks goes out to all the staff in achieving this reduction.
4. The Council has passed a strategy redesigning the future shape of the Council - known as the TOM (Target Operating Model). This will reshape the Council into a leaner more modern and efficient Council taking in new technology - whilst also shrinking the Council to enable financial survival in the current climate. Within this there is a £27million reduction in staff costs proposed, this roughly equates to 540 staff FTE at £50,000 per person cost. This will be achieved in a variety of ways. The first round has seen 77 staff leave under the first round of voluntary redundancy. The second round will open shortly. Please note The Council will only allow staff to leave who will no longer be needed in the new strategic model of the Council.  
There has been a restructure of senior managers seeing a reduction in Assistant Directors with 20% taking redundancy. A further reduction in the senior team is expected post April 2025.  
The Council always holds a small percentage of budgeted FTE as vacancies, circa 3-5%, these will be taken out of the budget.  
The existing use of Agency Staff is being looked out with conversion to full time staff being made - which creates a saving of around a third of the cost of each position.  
Finally, as the Council evolves we may have to make compulsory redundancies if the number and savings are not reached. We will do as much as we can to avoid this including retraining to posts that are needed where we can.
5. We have been advised that the Place Plans on the Council's website are up to date. They can be viewed here [Place plans | Shropshire Council](#). We strongly recommend that the

Town and Parish Councils review their plans and advise us if there are omissions, etc. Remember access to CIL monies is dependent on the 'project' being recorded on the Place Plan.

6. Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) has now been brought into force.

[Information about new dog constraints Public Spaces Protection Order - Shropshire Council Newsroom](#)

In Summary:

The PSPO will enable Shropshire Council and the police to issue fixed penalty notices of £100 – or £50 if paid within 10 days – to owners who allow their animal to foul pavements and public amenity spaces without clearing up afterwards.

Dogs will also be excluded from fenced play and sports areas.

Dogs will be required to wear a lead on the highway.

Officers will also have the power to ask for a dog to be put on a lead in public areas where they are not under control of their owner or are acting aggressively.

7. Consultation on Homelessness Strategy Homelessness and specifically rough sleeping, in our view, should simply be a thing of the past in the world's 6<sup>th</sup> largest economy – though, of course it is a complex issue.

The Council's vision is that "All homes are well designed decent homes of high quality, which will protect Shropshire's unique urban and rural environments and ensure it is a great place to live. That all Shropshire residents have access to the 'right home in the right place' to support and promote their health and wellbeing throughout their lives"

A strategy paper has been prepared that reviews the Council's approach to homelessness and sets out how it will continue to address this societal issue: [draft-preventing-homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-strategy-2024-2029 .pdf \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](#)

8. Work on the Local Plan continues as the Council seeks to address the various issues (technical?) raised by the Examiners. For easy reference the section relating to our Division is S6.1. Development Strategy: Cleobury Mortimer Key Centre.

In many ways perhaps the most contentious issue is any attempt to reduce the land that is currently designated as 'green belt' – we hope this link goes some way to explain what is proposed: [updated-green-belt-topic-paper.pdf \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](#)

9. One of the services that the Council is looking to 'cut' in order to meet 2024/25 Budget savings is the Empty Houses team. It is estimated that in 2020 there were more than 1,700 empty properties in Shropshire and of these, approximately 600 had been empty for at least 2 years. As at the end of March 2024, the overall number of empty properties has increased to 2,004; but the number empty for at least 2 years has reduced to 550.

The legislation and powers used by the Empty Homes Officers are not unique to their role. There are other services across the Council including Building Control, Council Tax, Environmental Protection, Housing Enforcement, Planning and Private Sector Housing that can use these and other powers, to respond to the most serious community impacts that may arise as a result of medium to long-term empty homes. The Council will continue to look for ways to reduce the number of empty homes in the County.

In addition, the increased Empty Homes council tax premium adopted by Shropshire from April 2024 will hopefully discourage owners from leaving properties unoccupied and unfurnished for more than one year

10. The Council has committed to net zero by 2030 for its own operations. A progress report was submitted to Full Council on 18Jul24 – and we would be happy to forward it, so please contact one of us if you would like to see it.

The last five year's emissions have been compiled using the same methodology in order to make a fair comparison across this timeframe. Disappointingly there has been an increase in net emissions (by 12% from FY21/22) which is primarily due to increased scope 3 emissions, but also reduced negative emissions due to lower levels of domestic waste recycling.

11. Highway Maintenance. The network continues to present significant challenges, in particular during the winter period. This is not unique to Shropshire, almost all highway authorities are struggling to keep on top of defects with numbers significantly rising year on year, which has been exacerbated by the very wet winter. Surveys of Shropshire's roads show that 13.6% (or 431 miles) of the highway network in Shropshire is considered to be in need of significant repair which is obviously a major concern. The latest published national average (source ALARM survey March 2023) for roads in England across all highway authorities which showed that 18% (or 36,918 miles) of roads maintained by local authorities are considered to be in in need of significant repair – though this offers little comfort. Despite the challenges, the performance figures have improved against last year including reducing per unit cost, as the statistics below highlight:

- 50% of potholes are fixed in 5 days.
- On average it takes 20 days to fix a pothole.
- 92% of the repair are “right first time repairs”.

Cllrs Gwilym Butler and Simon Harris