

Councillors Report November 2024

Healthy People : Healthy Economy : Healthy Environment : Healthy Organisation

1. Local Democracy – each month we receive the Local Government Association magazine. Each edition provides an update on local government by elections. The Oct24 edition covered 13 by elections and what is striking is the low turn out an average of 24.4%. This has to beg the question as to why there is such a low level of engagement (bearing in mind that our own elections are coming in May25) and what the County, Town and Parishes can (should?) do to change the mind set.

2. Road Improvement Postponements and the Capital Budget – we have been disappointed that several road improvements that have been advised to Parish Councils have been postponed (hopefully only postponed) into the next financial year.

We had always believed that the cost of this work was from the capital budget and, therefore, should not have been affected by the pressures (ie need to cut back on revenue spend) on the revenue budget. So we queried this decision.

It turns out that there is a statutory requirement that a portion of any capital spend is in fact allocated to the revenue budget eg salaries, though there is some discretion as to level of this apportionment. In order to relieve pressure on the revenue budget more ‘discretionary’ spend has been moved to the capital budget – and the consequence has been a reduction in funds available in the capital budget. Hence the need to postpone the road improvements.

3. New Sewage Works Cleobury Mortimer we attended a briefing by STW regarding the new £11.5m treatment works (an over 10% increase on the initial proposal) alongside the river Rea near New Bridge.

We asked if STW will be monitoring the quality of the grey water that is released into the river on a daily basis and if STW will advise the Town Council of the daily data.

We also asked if STW would further monitor the quality of the grey (this time partially processed sewage) water at times when there are emergency releases due to heavy rainfall (which should be fewer as the existing treatment works will be used to increase holding capacity at these times) and, again, whether the results will be forwarded to the Town Council.

The STW team at the meeting had no insight as to the level of monitoring that the new treatment works would install, except to advise that they will be following the Environment Agency guidelines - which is the very least we can expect. It seems that notwithstanding STW's stated desire to ensure that less sewage reaches our waterways the project management has not been engaged when it comes to independently improving the data available to the local community to see what is actually happening on the ground, or should we say in the water. Disappointing.

4. Household Recycling Centres

From the 4th November you will have to book to visit the Household Recycling Centres and this can be done at www.Shropshire.gov.uk/recyclecentrebooking, The system will stop

people from out of county using our facilities and allow the operators to manage the sites more efficiently and reduce costs and do away with excessive queuing.

5. Shire Hall Closure and other buildings

From Friday 1st November we will close Shire hall and staff will work from home or at other centres across the county. This move will save us £100,000 in heating alone this winter. Other buildings such as Cantern Brook Bridgnorth and some in Oswestry will be moth balled. The gradual opening of the Guild Hall in Shrewsbury will commence in November and become the base for the council for the foreseeable future.

6.As winter approaches if you know any pensioners on low income affected by the withdrawal of the Winter fuel payment or others on low income please make them aware of the Councils Welfare support Scheme where help with heating and bills maybe available . More details on the Councils Website. (see below)

7.We have seen the cancellation of some Capital road repair projects as the Council grapples living within its means in this financial year. These will hopefully be delivered in the next financial year. The Council is currently projecting an over spend of £37 million within the financial year and reserves of £38 million, therefore purse strings are being pulled in dramatically to ensure the Councils sustainability. We are hopeful that the situation will improve in the coming months, but tough decisions lie ahead.

8.The Government is about to announce a review of Local Government which will see those Councils who still have Districts and Boroughs will become Unitary Councils and the Smaller Unitary Council like Shropshire will have to become part of a wider area or other Unitary Councils and elect a mayor for the overall control of the area, as the Government devolves powers to larger areas. Where Shropshire fits in within this new arena is still up for debate and conversations are ongoing with neighbouring authorities.



Council and Age UK STW, urge pensioners to check eligibility for pension credit and winter fuel payments



Maria Jones

Comms & Marketing Officer

Shropshire Council and Age UK Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin are urging people over the state pension age to check if they are eligible for pension credit, winter fuel payments and other benefits they may be entitled to.

The call out follows the announcement of the closing date for applications on 21 December 2024.

The payments from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) tops up pension income and can help with day-to-day living costs.

Those over State Pension age, may be eligible to claim Pension Credit, even if they own their home or have savings. They could be eligible for Pension Credit if their weekly income is below £218.15 or, if they have a partner who lives with them, £332.95. Qualifying income level may be higher in some circumstances.

People who claim Pension Credit may also be able to get:

- The Winter Fuel Payment*and other help with heating costs
- Help with rent and Council Tax
- A free TV Licence for those aged 75 or over
- Help with the cost of NHS services, such as NHS dental treatment, glasses, and transport costs for hospital appointments.

It is estimated that up to a third of pensioners (880,000) could be missing out on Pension Credit worth on average up to £3,900 per year.

Councillor Gwilym Butler, Cabinet Member for finance, corporate resources and communities said:

“We are committed to ensuring that our elderly residents receive the support they deserve. Pension Credit and Winter Fuel Payments can make a significant difference.

“Saturday 21 December is the last possible date to make a successful backdated claim to receive the Winter Fuel Payment, which is worth up to £300 per household.

“Some pensioners think because they’ve got savings or own their home, they would not get any Pension Credit. Reaching these people is not always easy, but they may be more open to listening to people they trust, like family members or friends.

“We also understand that there are people of pension age who may not have online access, so we encourage them to ask a family member or friend to help them. You can use the [Pension Credit calculator](#) to find out how much Pension Credit someone may be entitled to – without giving any personal details. Or telephone The Pension Service: 0800 99 1234.

“We urge everyone to check their eligibility and apply before the deadline.”

Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin, based at Bellstone, Shrewsbury, added:

“If you claim Pension Credit after you reach State Pension age, the very last day you could claim and guarantee that you will get three months backdating to bring you within the qualifying week to also get a Winter Fuel payment would be December 21, 2024.

“Following the Chancellor’s announcement in July, older people will only receive a Winter Fuel Payment this year if they were born before 23 September 1958 and claim Pension Credit or other qualifying benefits by the qualifying date.”

Rob Smith, Information and Advice Manager at the charity, said:

“With energy bills set to rise by 10%, Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin is urging older people living on a low income to check if they’re entitled to any financial help to pay their household bills and stay warm at home.

“Pension Credit is known as the ‘gateway’ benefit for pensioners as it opens the doors to a wide range of additional support. A successful claim for Pension Credit also means extra help with energy bills and other essential living costs.”

If you’re applying to get a Winter Fuel Payment

Check that you meet the [eligibility criteria for Winter Fuel Payments](#) before applying for Pension Credit.

How to apply for Pension Credit

Pension Credit can be claimed by phone or post.

- On the [How to Claim page](#)
- Over the phone by calling 0800 99 1234 (Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm)
- By printing out and filling in a paper application form
- For more information visit the Pension Credit [GOV.UK](#) page.

You must apply for Pension Credit by 21 December 2024 to qualify for the 2024 to 2025 Winter Fuel Payment.

For additional cost of living advice and support visit the council’s Cost of Living help webpages here: [Cost of living help | Shropshire Council](#)

Further information

A quick guide to entitlement

There are 4 main questions when considering whether a pensioner may get Pension Credit:

1. How old are they?
2. If they have a partner who lives with them, how old is their partner?
3. What is their weekly income? Is it less than £218.15 if they are single or £332.95 if they are a couple?
4. Do they have any savings? Have they got less than £10,000?

People who have more income or savings than this may still qualify for Pension Credit. But these questions are a good basic indication of who is likely to qualify.

If they are over 65 and reached their State Pension age before 6 April 2016, they could still qualify for Pension Credit if their weekly income is less than:

- £260.68 if they are single
- £380.55 if they are a couple

Cllrs Gwilym Butler and Simon Harris

Cleobury Mortimer Division