

July 2023 Report

1. A new round of business grants will be launched on the 3rd of July . This is for small businesses wishing to grow for a range of purposes:

- expanding and growing existing businesses
- inward investment
- developing new market opportunities
- innovation, including new product development
- capital investment
- an increase in the productive capacity of new and existing premises through new property builds, refurbishment and extensions.

Grants have to be match funded and are between £5000-£100,000. Any business needing help with this please take a look at the Marches Growth Hub on Marchesgrowthhub.co.uk or contact either Simon or Gwilym for help.

2. Shropshire Council has completed its outturn financial report for the last financial year Mar22-Apr23 - within the Government timetable of 31st May unlike many other local authorities. The Council had an overspend of £8 million against a budget of circa £600 million. When the budget was formulated and agreed in February 2022 we did not have a war in Ukraine and inflation was predicted at 2-3% for the year. Since then we have 12% inflation, a fuel cost crisis and considerable increases in demand for care for both Adults and Children . Although an over spend is disappointing we believe that this is a good outcome in very challenging times. In fact the overspend was expected to be approx. £2 million more!

3. The road between Cleobury and Six Ashes on the B4363 will be closed between the 31st July and 2nd August as Severn Trent Water will be investigating the long standing water leak there.

4. The car park behind the Talbot. For far too long the lighting in this car park has not worked properly. We requested the National Grid to install a connection to ensure that the lighting works and is in no way dependent on a connection via infrastructure on private property. We are aware that the new EV charging points in the car park are in the process of being installed, and as they too will need a connection from the National Grid, we have requested that both the lighting connection and the charging point connections are installed at the same time.

5. The Manor House on the High Street is a listed building and as we are concerned that after the winter it's structural condition may have deteriorated we requested the Council's conservation team to take a look. They have reported back that they will be approaching the owner to further check the building's condition and ensure that it is maintained in accordance with its listed status. The conservation team is also ensuring that other listed buildings are being correctly restored / managed.

6. Broadband. Since 2013 Shropshire Council has been working with broadband suppliers such as Openreach and, latterly, Airband to ensure that there is internet connectivity at the superfast level ie 30mbps. We understand that now 98% of properties in Shropshire have access to the internet at this speed. This roll out closed at the end of Mar2023.

The Council's 'connecting Shropshire' team has now moved its focus to the central government's Project Gigabit – which aims to provide access to gigabit (1000mbps) connectivity to 85% of the country's premises by 2025. Although the gigabit speed providers have focussed on north and mid Shropshire it may still be possible, via a voucher scheme, for premises (and communities) in south Shropshire to get access to these ultra high speeds. We remain concerned there are still premises that do not have access to even basic or superfast broadband – and we understand that solutions are still available. Please contact Gwilym or Simon if you know of anyone that needs help.

Gwilym Butler and Simon Harris

Shropshire Councillors for the Cleobury Mortimer Division.