

February Report 2024

Healthy People : Healthy Economy : Healthy Environment : Healthy Organisation

1.The Task and Finish group on School Transport : The Council has established a working group on the cost of school transport, not so much the busses that the schools provide but rather the cost of bus passes. The objective is to ensure that parents can afford to send their children to school, this is particularly relevant when the child has to travel on busses belonging to 2 bus companies ie each company requires payment; thereby conceivably doubling the cost! Please let us know if any of your constituents are struggling with these costs and we can then feed the data into the working group.

2.Disposable Vapes : Shropshire Council (as well as the Local Government Assoc) has petitioned the Government to ban disposable vapes – this is for environmental reasons and because these single use vapes appear to be targeted at children. We have asked as to the progress being made with a ban. While there is clear recognition that vaping is damaging to children’s physical development, there is the counter argument that, for adults trying to quit smoking, vaping is beneficial – so an outright ban maybe counterproductive. It would appear that the debate is likely to run for awhile yet. However, the Government is adamant that selling vapes to children (and that is under 18) is illegal and any retailer doing so is subject to ‘trading standards’ sanction. If you believe that a retailer is selling vapes to under 18s then please report them to Trading Standards www.shropshire.gov.uk/trading-standards/ – the Local Government Ombudsman recommends that they investigate in no longer than 12weeks.

3. OFSTED – children’s social care services : Ofsted published a ‘focused visit’ report in November 2023; following up on the February 2022 inspection. This inspection rated the service as “good overall”.

The report highlighted one specific area where performance needed to improve - the experience of children who need help and progression. Specifically this relates to the Case Management Team ie the child protection and court team. The Council was already well aware that this Team was not having its desired outcomes – basically due to the difficulties recruiting social workers. The Council is working on stabilising this Team and looking to recruit 20 new social care staff so as to ensure that families receive the support they need.

It is worth pointing out that Ofsted noted that children are being taken into care at the right time. Ofsted also noted good practice such as Stepping Stones; the Together Reducing and Ending Exploitation in Shropshire (TREES) service, which tackles exploitation in all its forms; and the work of the Early Help model and parenting hubs. Overall the Council remains rated ‘good.’

4. The budget consultation closes on the 28th January and in February the Budget proposals for the next financial year will go to Cabinet and Council. The Council is seeing a huge demand in Social care and Children services along with large inflation pressures which will be a significant challenge next year and moving forward without being able to raise Council Tax further than 4.99% or receiving further regular grant from Central Government. We are lobbying our MPs and they are talking to the Treasury and are gaining traction of a group of MPs with a view to Rebel against The Local Government Finance Bill due mid February which sets our grant. We are estimating our pressures will be a further £50 million next year and any further reduction in budgets to meet this will result in the reduction of services currently given to residents and an increase in fees and charges.

5.The Drainage team have been on our patch clearing the drains ,in particular the Drains in Pinkham have been cleared which will hopefully help stop any repeat flooding of the properties down at Pinkham Mill. Drains easily get clogged up and blocked if you see one that needs attention please report on Fix my Street.

6.The Council will soon be launching a Joint Needs Assessment on our Area. This is to look at everything that effects peoples health and well fair. There will be an online individual survey for everyone to complete to really get under the skin on what it is like to live in this area, peoples health and access to services etc . The purpose of this is to enable the Council to plan and use its resources in a more targeted manor around care, health and well being. If you see the link please complete and if you cannot online it will be available in the Library.

7. The A4117 will be closed between 0900-1600 on the 5th and 6th February between Holly waste and Hopton bank for lining , please avoid wherever possible.

Simon Harris and Gwilym Butler Cllrs Cleobury Mortimer Division