

Cllr Nigel Hartin – SC report September 2022

Quiet time during holiday season, but some things are still going on:

Local Plan Update

The much-heralded replacement Local Plan continues to make its slow laborious way. This plan contains the policies for how Shropshire Council will determine future planning applications for the next 14 years. This work started of course over 4 years ago and due to various resource issues has been much delayed.

The Government requires councils to update their plans identifying land which could be developed every 5 years, (The present plan was rolled out in 2016). The plan identifies areas which are Shropshire Councils (SC) preferred sites, where extra houses and new employment sites to meet government plans should be located & includes some sites carried forward from the old plan (such as the Woodyard site here in Bucknell & new sites such as the site adjacent to Redlake Meadow 008a). The overall plan being proposed by SC identifies Bucknell Village as what is called a 'Hub'. This means that in their opinion, some additional future new housing should be built in the village between now and 2036.

As recently reported in the media, Government Planning Inspectors visited Shropshire in July for two weeks and held an initial examination of the proposals. After this ended, and in answer to some legal challenges, the Inspectors decided that they would return in early October, hear some final submissions, and then rule on whether the proposed plan complied with Government legislation. If they determine it does not comply then the whole plan will be rejected, and SC will have to start the process all over again. If they agree the legal process has been carried out correctly then Stage 2 of the planning enquiry will need to be held next year. At that meeting, expected to last a number of weeks, individual sites (Including Bucknell 008a) will be examined to see if they each comply in general terms with the various new policies being put forward by SC and Bucknell PC is one of the organisations able to make personal representations at that enquiry as a result of the Section 19 consultation response Jonathan Kemp submitted when he chaired the PC.

Other news from Shropshire Council.

Last week, SC published the financial monitoring report for the first three months of the year. It shows the impacts of the cost of living and inflation on our budget, with inflation estimated to add an extra £5m in costs and more demand for our services, another £7 million!, some of which is linked to the support we are rightly giving

residents with the cost of living. At present these pressures mean SC is looking at a forecasted overspend on its budget of at least £4.1 million, however the best estimate of the overspend, with no additional action being taken is estimated to be around £9.37m but could be as high as £17.56M Details of any amendments to the budget to reduce this sum are still to be announced. This came after the Council denied there was a problem, however a report agreed by the Shropshire Council Cabinet has stated there is a need to re-examine this year's current budget!

- After a long time and a spend of over £500k work on making the lower 3 floors of the Shirehall safe for staff to work in is nearing completion. There is now a prohibition of use issued for the upper 3 floors and these therefore cannot be used nor accessed by staff.
- The spend on the Northwest Relief Road is now approaching £20m with still no planning application or business plan published.

More than 30 companies have signed up to take part in 'Shropshire Goes Green', Shropshire Council's first sustainability festival being held outside at Shrewsbury Town FC on Sunday 25 September 2022 - and apparently the list is still growing.

Building on the success of November 2021's Shropshire Goes Electric event, which put the spotlight on sustainable transport and encouraged the use of electric vehicles, Shropshire Goes Green is focusing on all aspects of sustainability. SC has a sponsor, a company called 'AceOn', who will be demonstrating the latest in energy storage and technologies, and there is a varied list of exhibitors for the 'Home Zone', including electric vehicle charging point providers, agricultural experts and companies providing green energy solutions for households".

Councillors & staff are being asked make sure the electoral register is up to date and accurate by completing the annual canvass. Residents across the county are currently receiving communications from SC and voters are being asked to complete their registration process. Many people will receive this request, including a unique **two-part security code, via email, and others by post. You can update your details online, or via other routes such as text or phone.**

Shropshire Council's Free Tree Scheme is now open - applications are invited to plant trees and short sections of hedging, and to create small areas of woodland in Shropshire. This year the scheme can also supply (free of charge) some larger, feathered trees (1-1.5m tall, bare root), suitable for locations such as wide road verges or village greens. Further information at Shropshire Council Community Tree Scheme 2022/23 | Shropshire Council

Other things – not necessarily SC related include:

Government have just published proposals that it will give grants to Councils which will enable them to limit fares on all single local bus journeys from 1st January for 3 months to a maximum of £2.00. How this will be put in place has yet to be announced. Information on what will happen to bus subsidies by Shropshire Council have also still to be announced.

Council apprenticeship levy transfer funding pot opens for Small and medium sized enterprises - Shropshire Council is offering small to medium-sized businesses and other, non-levy paying organisations in the county a chance to apply for free training through apprenticeships. The council has approximately £140,000 available to businesses that are not currently subject to the Government's Apprenticeship Levy. **These include:** Small and medium-sized enterprises, Voluntary, community and social enterprises and Voluntary aided and foundation schools. The scheme is open to applications from Thursday 1 September 2022 until Friday 23 December 2022. Full details of the levy transfer scheme, including how to apply can be found by visiting the Upskill Shropshire pages of Shropshire Council's website. For further information please email apprenticeshiplevy@shropshire.gov.uk or ring **01743 258521**.

Two of our libraries are supporting local people by opening up access to digital training and banking advice provided by Barclays Bank.

In a new initiative the bank will lease space in Bridgnorth and Ludlow where customers can seek digital support, financial advice and help managing their accounts. The non-cash banking service will be available in a private area in Bridgnorth Library on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and in Ludlow on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. SC says - "the service is welcome and demonstrates how our libraries service can work with partner organisations to promote health and well being, improve people's understanding of, and access to, digital services, become a hub for communities, and support enterprise and businesses".

Grant Funding opportunity – Veolia and Shropshire Council are offering grants of up to **£1000 to Community groups for local projects in Shropshire**. Details are in **this link** [Veolia's EnviroGrant Shropshire](#) | Veolia Shropshire **closing date for applications is 31 October**.

Further Grant Funding opportunity - The Prince's Countryside Fund (PCF)
Supporting Rural Communities grants programme is open for applications. The Fund is inviting applications for grants of up to £25,000 from community projects across the UK, with up to £250,000 available. The PCF is interested in projects that

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will make a difference in rural communities across the UK and clearly demonstrate the need within the community. Further information at Rural Communities - The Prince's Countryside Fund (princescountrysidefund.org.uk)

Covid Vaccination update - The autumn COVID-19 booster campaign officially launches in Shropshire this month.

It will be offered to everyone aged 50 and over as well as those who are at highest risk from serious illness such as pregnant women and people with long-term health conditions, as well as frontline health and social care workers. As with previous vaccination phases, the oldest and most vulnerable will be called forward first, starting with people in care homes from 5 September. Over 75s and the clinically extremely vulnerable will be eligible from 12 September. The offer will then be opened to the remaining eligible groups. The NHS will invite people when it is their time, so people need to wait to be contacted.

Community Grant opportunity - The KFC Foundation Community Grants | Applications Now Open **Grants are available up to £2k for community groups and organisations supporting young people up to age 25. Closing date of September 25th.**

Nigel