

REPORT

I have drafted a brief report broken down into two parts; those identified local issues and those that impact the whole of Shropshire Council.

Local Level –

I have continued to attend the majority of Parish Council meetings in Hodnet, Weston Under Redcastle, Stanton upon Hine Heath and Stoke on Tern in order to understand the local issues, give updates on Council matters and support where the Parish Council feels necessary. The main issues continue to be the same with some planning applications requiring further scrutiny, highways issues including speed within rural communities and Parish residents raising personal issues of concern. I have mentioned a couple in more detail.

The use of the Fix my Street portal has continued to improve and on most occasions the problems identified have been fixed. There are examples when further budget constraints or highways planned maintenance has delayed fixes. The impression I get as a commuter and as a local member is that there is a general improvement in road condition and potholes. I will accept that the issues were considerable and that there is still a great deal of work to do.

Speeding remains on going issues for many of the local village communities and is a regular topic of conversation in many Parish Council meetings. There are a number of Parish Council's looking at schemes to reduce speed including the use of Vehicle activated sign's. I continue to liaise with local police and highways to try to support these requests.

The A41 Safety Group has met twice in the past 12 months. The last meeting held in October 2022 was attended by Shropshire Council Highways Portfolio holder and the Police and Crime Commissioner. There is an ongoing review on how to improve the general safety of a very well used road that includes issues regarding speed and diversions once maintenance or accidents occur.

General

I would like to cover off three main points;

Shropshire Council Budget – As may people will be aware there has been considerable pressure on Council budgets and concern regarding being able to balance that budget. The ongoing impacts of COVID and broader economic conditions, particularly the effects of inflation and rising energy costs, are at the root of the budget challenge facing the council, with inflation alone having a £43 million impact on the council.

The council budget proposals went out for public consultation until 30th January 2023 and were discussed at Full Council on 2nd March 2023.. The public were asked for their views on the budget plans which sought to make more than £50 million of savings from the Council's budget and to bring this into balance. The plan identified that most of the savings proposed would come through a transformation and efficiency programme that would save £50.6 million in the next year, while reducing costs and protecting services as far as possible, particularly those for the most vulnerable.

The Boundary Commission Review - The Electoral Boundary Commission continues it's review of boundaries and has now moved onto a review of Division boundaries. Whilst we already understand that the Hodnet Division as a whole will move to the Wrekin Parliamentary Constituency, the local government seat will still be under Shropshire Council. The current Division review is looking at the make up of Shropshire Council and options and proposals are being considered. Shropshire Council is currently arguing the case for a 75 member council. The Boundary Commission may suggest 74 members. This is a difficult job especially when trying to

keep the numbers and geographical areas to a manageable size. Options include a move to a “single member division” for some and whilst the Boundary Commission may decide that some divisions need to remain as dual member it is better that we are happy with the boundaries. Hodnet should remain unaffected.

The Shropshire Council Draft Local Plan – The Council submitted the Shropshire Council Local Plan last year and we have now received the Interim Findings of the Planning Inspectors following examination of the draft Shropshire Local Plan. This is a vital document for the whole of Shropshire as without it there are significant chances of indiscriminate planning applications with only National Policy framework to guide decisions. Counsel (Mr Hugh Richards of No5 Chambers) has and will continue to support the Planning Policy team during the Local Plan Examination process. There have been further discussions with our Counsel to review the Planning Inspectors Interim Findings during March and the responses will be submitted shortly.

Councillor P Gill
Shropshire Council