

Annual Parish Report for Acton Burnell, Frodesley, Pitchford, Ruckley and Langley Parish Council from Cllr Daniel Morris

Fix My Street

Fix my street was launched around a few weeks ago now and is currently undergoing soft testing to iron out any bugs. The Fix My Street app now links through to our highways systems and seems to be running well with almost all customer services reps now using the new system. There have been a few issues around the co-branded website and changing links away from My Shropshire portal to the new website but these should hopefully be resolved within the coming weeks. We are aiming for a hard launch (Marketing) around May once we are all happy the system is fully functional and bug free. For those who have not used it yet here is a link

<https://www.fixmystreet.com/reports/Shropshire?zoom=9&lat=52.6537&lon=-2.73422>

Smart Shropshire

Work is underway to bring forward an integrated 'Smart Shropshire' strategy early in the New Year supported by a cross sector working group of representatives from leading digital / technology business and academia. The strategy will draw together key projects in terms of broadband, 5G, big data, transport technologies, tele-healthcare, the digital economy etc into a framework that will give us greater focus and secure better outcomes.

Digital Economy

We have all heard that the post pandemic economic recovery will be a digital and green one. This theme was explored as part of a recent workshop seminar at Shrewsbury Town Football Club aimed at developing our new Economic Strategy. The event attracted over 100 business representatives and other stakeholders and the whole digital, data and automation agenda was recognised as a key theme in that strategy. As part of that work is commencing to look at developing proposals for such things as

- A Digital Innovation Centre, possibly in partnership with University Centre Shrewsbury
- Development of a specific skills/adult skills programme to create an enhanced base of skills across our young people, existing workforce, and wider community.
- Digital by Default

As part of our plans for future service improvements and efficiencies we are moving forward with an approach that pro-motes access to council services via apps or the internet in the first instance, secondly via the call centre and only then directly to services as part of ongoing discussions or follow up to service requests. This involves reviewing and updating our web site but also includes such things as the roll out of Fix My Street for all highway related requests.

Communities and Place

The Cross Party Working Group on the Community Governance Review (CGR) will get underway and complete as many applications for parish/town council boundary reviews as possible before October 2022 when this Review will stop and move on to the Local Government Unitary Authority Boundaries Review. The CGR conclusions will all feed into the Local Government Boundary Review and could influence the shape of the divisional boundaries.

There have had very few applications for boundary changes in so far so it would be really helpful parish councils could consult their residents on potential boundary changes and pass their recommendations

either to me. There are instances where parish boundary lines drawn up sometimes a hundred years are no longer fit for purpose with the way parishes operate now.

In Westminster, national parliamentary constituency boundary changes will continue their path through parliament, and it is likely that our council ward of Burnell will form part of South Shropshire Constituency at the next General election (the seat that MP Philip Dunne currently holds) and not Shrewsbury and Atcham (the seat that MP Daniel Kawczynski currently holds).

Culture, Leisure, Tourism, Museums, Libraries

There has been a recently announced libraries strategy. There are plans to make savings in the service but these will not affect frontline library service. Shropshire Council want to extend the rollout of Shropshire Local to more libraries and install self-service machines to free up staff time to develop other services within the libraries.

The big issue at present is future arrangements for the running of Acton Scott Historic Working Farm. This was originally the inspiration of Tom Acton of Acton Scott estate, south of Church Stretton, who had the idea of showcasing farming methods at the turn of the C19/20 before the invention of the internal combustion engine. The Historic Working Farm was set up by Shropshire County Council in the 1970s and became part of the Museums Service, demonstrating traditional farming methods. The enterprise thrived for a while, reaching peak visitor numbers as a result of 'The Victorian Farm' tv series in 2009/10. Since then numbers and income have steadily declined and now the Council is subsidising the farm to the tune of £168k per annum (which equates to £8.40 subsidy on each ticket). It is also heavy on staffing, with 14 Museum staff members and some 15 active volunteers. In 2008 the lease was extended for 30 years as a condition of a large grant from Heritage Lottery supported by the ERDF, to put up new barns and refurbish the old school house as a café. We have 17 years of a tightly written lease to go.

There is much interest in and affection for the farm both from local people and further afield, and the council has had a number of ideas for its future use.

To capture these and examine options we are carrying out a survey (both online and paper copies in our libraries) together with focus groups for people who have shown interest in proposing new ideas, to discuss the farm's future. This has gone live, please see the link:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/acton-scott-historic-working-farm-survey-2022/>

Please encourage interested residents to complete the survey. However, Shropshire council is a tenants of the Estate and it is up to the Acton family to decide the way forward.

Leisure

Work on scoping the swimming pools in Shrewsbury and Whitchurch is continuing. Of the two Shrewsbury proposals the Quarry is by far the more complex due to the constrictions of the site, so will take longer to deliver and the Council plan to build out the competition pool at the Sundorne Sports Village first.

With regards to Whitchurch, architects have developed the spatial analysis a feasibility paper will go to Cabinet on 23rd March.

The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) has been funded, and City Science have produced the initial plan. They have started with surveys and will continue with the surveys through

until late March. This is a long-term project which will see safe cycling and walking routes between Market Towns and their nearby villages/parishes (out to a 10KM radius) from the Market Town.

Climate Change and Carbon efficiency

There has been a great start to the year for the council with regards to Climate Change commitments. Full Council on 13 Jan 22, unanimously approved the Council's Carbon Performance Monitoring Report, the 3rd Bin for mixed recycling and the doubling in size of the Maesbury Rd (Oswestry), Solar Farm. Cabinet and Directors also completed the final modules of Carbon Literacy Training (CLT).

The following is a summary of SCs Carbon Performance Report

- Shropshire Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019 and in December 2020 adopted a Climate Strategy and Action Plan, which establishes the objective of achieving net-zero carbon performance for Shropshire Council by 2030 and aims for an annual carbon reduction of 10% per year.
- During 2021, the efforts of the Climate team have been directed towards embedding climate change as a key consideration in the Council's corporate governance and developing a range of projects and initiatives to help the Council improve its own performance and to help foster similar action across the wider economy and communities in Shropshire.
- Best available information suggests that Shropshire Council's direct carbon emissions (Scopes 1 & 2) have fallen significantly from around 5,000 tonnes CO₂e in the financial year (FY) 2020 to around 1,900 tonnes in FY 2021, due primarily to the adoption of a 100% renewable power supply.
- The Council's indirect emissions have increased slightly to 32,000 tonnes CO₂e, reflecting the impact of increased spending on commissioned services across several service areas where carbon emissions are still being estimated using spend, rather than actual measurement.
- Shropshire Council is currently one of only a few Councils to report the full extent of its carbon emissions, including an estimate of indirect emissions.
- Overall Gross carbon emissions have fallen by around 3% from 35,000 tonnes to around 34,000 tonnes. Whilst this is welcome, it amounts to only a 3% reduction against our annual target reduction of 10%.
- High levels of municipal waste recycling and the management of Council-owned land generate carbon savings which help to offset our gross carbon emissions and this activity has improved by 1,200 tonnes from around minus 34,000 tonnes CO₂e in 2019 to around minus 37,000 tonnes CO₂e in 2020.
- Overall net carbon emissions have therefore fallen from 1,665 tonnes to a net-negative performance of -4,296 tonnes. However, whilst this means that the Council's footprint is technically already net-zero, it is crucial that the Council continues to focus on significantly reducing its gross corporate emissions from the current 34,000 tonnes.
- Whilst our corporate emissions represent less than 1% of all emissions for Shropshire, through its regulatory role and procurement decisions and through support for local community organisations, Shropshire Council can influence at least 33% of emissions and is therefore in a strong position to help the wider Shropshire community make a positive transition to a low carbon future.
- A wide range of actions, projects and initiatives have been completed, are currently in progress or are planned for future years and these are summarised in the report and the accompanying appendix. Some of these projects and initiatives are designed to improve

Shropshire Council's corporate carbon performance, whilst others are designed to help Shropshire businesses and communities make the transition to a low carbon approach.

Waste and Recycling

Along with our partners (Veolia), the council has continued to maintain an efficient waste service and a high level of recycling. The service has been well maintained throughout the period despite the challenges of Covid isolation and, potential poaching of drivers.

The provision of a 3rd bin for mixed recycling was passed at Full Council on 13 Jan. This has proved to be very popular with residents. The comms plan was initiated immediately after the proposal was passed and over 7000 households had registered within the following 4 hours. To date there has been 47500 households registered. Leaflets, explaining how to register, will also be distributed under bin lids over the next few weeks. The roll out will begin in May, starting in South Shropshire, and is likely to take up to 3 months to complete. It is anticipated that the 3rd bin will result in a greater percentage of recycling. Recycling has been the main contributor to our carbon reduction during the past year.

Electric Vehicle Chargers

Current installation of 50 chargers is underway, and another 180 chargers planned by March 2022. A detailed travel analysis has been commissioned to support further installations. Phase 1 saw the first 24 Public Charging points go live on 17 Dec 21 at the following locations:

1. Oswestry x 6 – Oak Street car park
2. Whitchurch x 6 - Brownlow Street car park
3. Shrewsbury x 6 - Abbey foregate car park
4. Bridgnorth x 6 - Severn car park

The following locations will EV Chargers operational in Feb 22:

1. Shrewsbury x 3 - Frankwell Quay
2. Bridgnorth x 4 - Listley South Street car park
3. Ellesmere x 4 – Cross Street car park
4. Bishops Castle x 4 - Harley Jenkins Street car park
5. Ludlow x 4 – Mill Street
6. Market Drayton x 6 – Towers Lawn car park.

Future Towns for consideration for phase 2 are:

1. Much Wenlock, Falcons Court Car Park – x 2
2. Cleobury Mortimer – x 4 Childe Road West car park
3. Wem x 4 – Mill Street car park or Co-Op car park)
4. Shifnal – Aston Street car park (TC already looking to development allotment area for overspill car park with EVCP under CIL funding.
5. Broseley – Town Hall/Library x 2

6. Gobowen Rail Station x 4+2
7. Ludlow Castle Street car park. Bank of x 4 - 6

Flooding

Flooding remains a major concern across the Severn Valley catchment and is likely to have a major effect on many areas across the county. Recent floods in Shropshire in late February perfectly highlight this. The highways and drainage teams have conducted drain clearance at many of the vulnerable flooding locations to help limit the extent of flooding. Long-term planning by the River Severn Partnership along with the National Trust will develop opportunities to create additional water catchment on National Trust estates to help slow the flow.

Built Housing

Cornovii Developments Ltd currently has work underway at The Frith development in Shrewsbury and has planning permission for developments in Upton Lane in St Martins and at The Wharf in Ellesmere. The first occupants have now moved into the Frith Development.

Shropshire Towns & Rural Housing (STAR Housing) recently held their AGM and are in a very healthy financial position managing the Council's retained housing stock. They are continuing to deliver new sites for affordable housing around the county including Shifnal, Albrighton and Weston Rhyn. They have also taken great strides in seeking to match the Council's ambition for reaching net zero by retrofitting their most energy inefficient stock to bring it up to a higher standard.

Budget Plans

The council had expected to receive a three-year budget settlement from the Government but instead has been given only one year's funding, which does nothing to solve the council's longer-term budget issues, and leaves it facing a £60 million budget deficit by 2027.

Next financial year 2022/3 the council's day-to-day revenue budget will balance, but only because the Government funding assumes that Shropshire will raise council tax by 3.99% (of which 2% is a precept for adult social care), and it must raise charges, reduce spending and divert almost £12m of funds to balance its budget.

From 2023 to 2027 the council faces an annual budget deficit of almost £60 million, and is looking at ways that it can make more savings from its budget.

The longer-term financial position is made worse because Shropshire is one of England's largest and most sparsely populated areas, and the current Government funding formulae do nothing to address Shropshire's rural nature, which makes running many Council services cost much more.

SC must, for example, maintain 5,200km of roads, one of the biggest networks in the country; while its population is ageing faster than the national average. Despite talk of 'Fair Funding' to replace the existing Government funding formula, this has been delayed year after year.

The one-year budget settlement also means the council cannot accurately conduct longer term financial planning while pushing an even greater cost burden onto local council tax payers. The Government-assumed increase would see an extra £1.11 a week added to the council's average Band D council tax bill.

Capital Spending

The £271 million capital investment programme to 2027 includes:-

- An extra £59 million to boost our drive to improve our roads, tackle potholes and problems caused by years of underfunding in the county's roads. This is on top of an extra £48 million invested in our roads this year.
- £28 million to help fund the council's proportion of Shrewsbury North West Relief Road's costs, most of which is being met by funding from the Government and Marches Local Enterprise Partnership.
- An extra £16 million to support the council's 'Swimming in Shrewsbury' programme and put in a new swimming pool in Whitchurch.
- An extra £11.7 million to expand schools' capacity.
- £11 million for Oswestry Innovation Park.
- £4.5 million to improve the centre of Bridgnorth, including a possible multi-storey car park.
- £3.2 million to fund the rollout of the council's optional mixed recycling purple top bin in the early part of 2022.

Shrewsbury's redevelopment plans

Major ambitions to transform Shrewsbury's town centre for generations have been unveiled by Shropshire Council. The council bids to create a truly 21st century destination and experience, taking the town to the water to create a stunning riverside attraction. The plan basically reconnects Shrewsbury to the River Severn, transforming how we work, how we spend our leisure time and what the town has to offer. The river has always been central to Shrewsbury and this plan will bring that full circle to create a new focal point and a fresh addition to a historic town centre, in tune with a fast-changing world, and open up to one of Shrewsbury's greatest assets – River Severn.

This will be a game-changing mixed-use development combining new leisure attractions, vibrant hospitality and public space, a new quayside and hotels to support the town's existing retail, while bringing new workspace that can attract high quality jobs into the town. Shrewsbury will:

- Be a place where you arrive by a brand-new eco-friendly bus, on your bicycle or somewhere you can park – and charge – your electric vehicle
- Be a place where you can work in a zero carbon office and enjoy a vibrant mix of shops, restaurants and bars – all next to the new quayside fronting onto River Severn
- Have a development that will create almost 2,000 jobs, see a modern, friendly Multi-Agency Hub and offices open with 500 spaces for workers, allowing the public to access what they need, where and when they need it
- Be somewhere with a brand new bus facility, a high-quality transport hub kitted out for modern vehicles with more charge points, better lighting and bigger spaces.

The ambition of this plan is to create a destination that will see 270 new homes built, offering the chance to live, work and relax in the middle of a green, modern town centre. It is envisaged that this transformation should help Shrewsbury attract 750,000 new visits a year, and substantially increase investment and footfall for the benefit of existing businesses across the county as part of a wider £800 million investment in the town under the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan.

This plan is chance for Shrewsbury to transform and thrive in a changing world, and offer everyone using this part of the town a unique experience and the chance for the town to continue to evolve and open a new chapter in its long and vibrant history.

For much more detailed information, please see the following link on the Shropshire Council Website:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committeeservices/documents/s29518/Shrewsbury%20Redevelopment%20Programme.pdf>

Covid

As we appear to be moving into the recovery phase of the Covid pandemic, it is a pleasure to have my annual report not be dominated by the latest figures and statistics. At the time of writing fresh round of discretionary business grant funding worth almost £700,000 has been expanded by Shropshire Council in a bid to support the local economy. The £667,500 pot is providing grants to businesses across the county who have been hit hardest by the pandemic. The new discretionary scheme supports those in the hospitality trade but who are not the rate payer; event caterers who can show they have lost business across the winter period; and travel agents and tour operators.

Highways

The North West Relief Road continues to go through its long process and we now expect this to go before planning committee in the summer.

The annual resurfacing programme is put together based on regular inspections and annual surveys of the county's roads, plus reports from residents, councillors, parish councils and community groups. I am pleased to note that there will be some re-surfacing in Pitchford at the start of May this year!!

Potholes and road conditions continue to be cause for concern, but I do believe that the Council Officers have been better in responding to Parish council enquiries. There is always room for improvement however.

And finally...

As ever my thanks to Parish Councillors in Acton Burnell, Pitchford, Frodesley, Ruckley and Langley. You work tirelessly for your communities and I really do appreciate your support and input. As ever if you have any questions, or any other matters you think I can help on, please do get in touch by email (dan.morris@shropshire.gov.uk), on twitter (@dan4burnell), on Facebook (dan4burnell) or by phone (07902408400).