

BICTON PARISH COUNCIL REPORT – OCTOBER 2020

Once again, I am sending you my report in advance, so you have time to read it and ask any questions which arise. (Very happy for you to email me any questions before the meeting if you think I may need to seek further information from elsewhere Lezley.picton@shropshire.gov.uk).

COVID-19 UPDATE

As cases of Covid-19 continue to rise across Shropshire and the UK, Shropshire Council has launched a campaign to reinforce the previous messages about keeping ourselves and others safe and to prevent further spread of the virus.

The Council's Community Reassurance Teams are working hard to help those who need it and for local advice and support during the pandemic (especially if you are self-isolating), call Shropshire Council's COVID-19 Helpline on 0345 678 9028 (lines open on the weekend on Saturday from 9am-4pm and Sunday 9am-12pm) or visit the website at www.shropshire.gov.uk/coronavirus

The STEP-UP messages are simple:

How you can 'Step Up' to help Shropshire:

- Work from home if you can
- Limit contact with other people
- Keep your distance from people not in your household bubble (2 metres apart where possible)
- Stick to a maximum group of 6 people when meeting socially – indoors or outdoors
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If you are unable to wash hands and they are visibly clean, use hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol content
- Do not leave home if you or anyone in your household has symptoms
- Wear a face covering in indoor settings where social distancing may be difficult, and where you will meet people you do not normally meet.
- Anyone who has any symptoms should book a test and not leave home for at least 10 days. Those living in households should self-isolate for 14 days if they or any members of the household receive a positive test.

PARK & RIDE

By the time our meeting takes place the report regarding the remodelling of Park & Ride will have gone before Cabinet. To the best of my knowledge this is the first time that a possible change to the current Oxon site has been formally mentioned although it has been mooted for a while.

The report on the 5th October seeks approval to begin the remodelling, preparation and assessment works so, as yet, no formal decisions have been made. This work will include a review of the existing Park and Ride sites and the identification of possible alternative locations that would provide passengers with new, modern, interchange facilities. Service frequency, the fare structure, use of electric buses and the cost of any changes will also be considered, along with opportunities to integrate the wider public transport network into the Park and Ride service.

Formal discussions will be held with partners and stakeholders, and work carried out to understand how the coronavirus pandemic has impacted the transport industry – and how passenger and stakeholder requirements may have changed as a result.

Subject to the outcome of a formal consultation it is hoped that the phased introduction of the Shrewsbury Connect transport model would start in 2021, along with a modernisation of the existing sites and the introduction of electronic buses into the operation.

I urge you to have a look at this report in readiness for the consultations that will take place later this year and early next year.

ELECTRIC CHARGING INITIATIVE

I am delighted to say that Shropshire Council is part of a consortium that has secured major funding from the Department of Energy, Business and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for an innovative new project although I am unsure how much impact it will have on rural areas such as ours. However, always useful if you do have an electric vehicle to have an increased number of charging options.

Agile Streets will see the installation of smart charging points for electric vehicles right across the Shropshire Council area.

Agile Streets will focus on providing on-street charging in residential areas across the Shropshire Council area for local EV drivers who do not have driveways. The council is working hard to identify the most suitable locations in the county and installations will be funded by this grant.

Smart charging will help improve the customer experience by allowing Shropshire drivers to charge their cars using renewable energy during off-peak hours when prices are typically lower.

This project will build on the infrastructure already put in place by Shropshire Council, which includes the installation of two new EV charging points in March 2020. Since installation, these charging points have saved over 2.5 tonnes of carbon – the equivalent of 6,203 driven by an average vehicle – and charged 187 vehicles.

The council is committed to installing further charging points across the county in addition to this scheme.

COMMUNITY TREE SCHEME

Another project which has my full support is that of the Community Tree Scheme. At a meeting of Full Council, we resolved to plant a tree for every resident in the County. In order to do this the Council is bringing back the Community Tree Scheme.

The council will work with a Shropshire-based tree nursery to provide young trees to successful applicants to the scheme. The trees distributed by the scheme will be transplants up to two years old which, once established, will grow quickly in their new environment.

Due to the short timescale before the coming planting season, the reintroduced scheme will be more streamlined than previously, by offering pre-mixed packages of trees for collection from the nursery.

Through this year's scheme it is hoped that up to 12,500 new trees will be planted across the county, building on the success of previous schemes that have seen over 130,000 trees planted throughout Shropshire.

The focus of the scheme will be to plant copses and small areas of native woodland and enrich existing hedgerows, to enhance the landscape and for wildlife value.

As the trees mature, they will become more effective at storing carbon and along with other initiatives, contribute to the wider target of the county reaching net zero carbon by 2030.

The planting must be fully visible to the public, if not directly accessible, and support the objectives of enhancing landscape and wildlife values.

Residents will also have the option of planting small amounts of native hedgerow, either to 'gap up' existing hedgerows or to create short lengths of new ones, where this improves habitat continuity or connectivity.

The planted trees and hedges will also 'lock up' carbon and provide other environmental benefits as they grow and mature, contributing in their own small way towards our ambition of making Shropshire net zero carbon by 2030.

All planting stock will be sourced and grown within the UK.

You can apply to join the scheme by clicking [here](#) or by visiting

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/TreeScheme2020>

CULTURAL STRATEGY CONSULTATION

“Unprecedented. Not a word that’s usually banded around much but 2020, after all, was an ‘unprecedented’ year. In February 2020, Shropshire was hit with the worst flooding in 20 years, with residents and businesses evacuated from Shrewsbury and Ironbridge following two severe danger-to-life flood warnings. Then came the Coronavirus lockdown. From 23rd March 2020, all non-essential organisations were closed, including cultural venues, leisure, hospitality and retail.

After that, the world changed for all of us.

This Cultural Strategy for Shropshire therefore comes at a challenging time. Culture has been, more than ever, accessed online and through the TV and outdoor spaces have become a lifeline for many. There are also unprecedented opportunities. With the lockdown, we have had the time to reflect on what happens next, as individuals and cultural providers. We have set out unprecedented aspirations for the development of culture in Shropshire - for residents and visitors to the county. This follows extensive consultation with a broad range of people involved in culture across Shropshire and beyond and has been developed in partnership with organisations from across the sector”.

The text above is taken directly from my opening comments within the new Cultural Strategy. A huge amount of work has gone into bringing this document to fruition and speaking as the Cabinet Member responsible for Culture for I am really pleased with the document that we and our partners have created. Without a Cultural Strategy funding from the major bodies such as the Arts Council, Sport England, the Heritage Lottery Fund are very difficult to access. In fact, without a current strategy some funders simply refuse applications. However, this document isn’t just a document to get funding, it’s a celebration of Shropshire’s rich cultural heritage and statement of intent for Shropshire Council and its many partners. It will go before Cabinet on the 5th October and will then go out for public consultation. I would be very grateful if you as a Parish Council and/or as individuals would take the time to have a look at the strategy and feedback your thoughts. I should add that it’s a bit different to the “normal” council report 😊

LOCAL MATTERS

I understand that the Grange Bank vegetation has been cut back by one farmer/landowner, but we await the other part to be cut. Our local Highway Technician has told me that she has placed an order to “side out” the footpath and that this work is due to be done in the first half of October.

Work to Severn Way -One of our officers has been out this week to speak to the landowner and to also see if there is anything else that can be done. Hopefully I will have further feedback for you at the meeting.

Planning matters:

- a) I have asked the case officer if there is a committee date for the Welshpool Road Development but there has been no further movement on this application, so we still await a date.
- b) I note that the application for the mixed-use garage/restaurant etc has now been made and is on the agenda for this meeting.
- c) Brethren Enforcement: I asked that the Case Officer write to the Clerk and I understand the letter has been sent.

River Severn Partnership:

- a) Cllr Ed Potter and I continue to put pressure on officers to communicate directly with those potentially affected by the plans that appeared in the September Cabinet Report although I should add we have been assured by both officers and Cabinet Members that there is no preferred option and that all solutions are being investigated.
- b) The parties affected have formed themselves into a Save Our Severn Group and Ed & I are in regular communication with them.

I am pushing more and more information out through my Councillor Facebook Page and Twitter feed, it's a really good way of getting out information to residents quickly. If possible, can you publicise the links on your website and/or village magazine.

The links are

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Lezley4Tern>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/lezley4tern>

Always happy to answer any questions.

Stay safe,

Lezley Picton

7th October 2020