

Unitary Councillors Update Agenda Item 9

We have received the following reports from Unitary Councillors:

Clr Julia Buckley, Shropshire Councillor for Bridgnorth West & Tasley Report to Bridgnorth Town Council, July 2021

Since becoming elected to Shropshire Council, I have been allocated the following committees: -

- “Performance Management” Scrutiny Overview Committee
- Southern Planning Committee (substitute member)
- Health & Social Care Scrutiny Overview Committee & Joint HOSC (substitute member).
- Local Engagement Board (Covid-19 responses)
- STAR housing board
- I have also been elected as Deputy Leader of the Shropshire Labour Group

Residents’ concerns are very much focused on highways issues, in particular the severity and widespread number of potholes; and the misery caused by insufficient parking provision.

Updates from Shropshire Council as follows:

1. On-Street Parking Permit System Review

Bridgnorth members were briefed on progress to update the parking system since 2019. Revisions include reducing parking allocations for non-residents within the zones, and re-calibrating the number of permits per household. Draft maps for consultation are being finalised to go out to residents in the next few months. There are staffing shortages in the department and we recommended engaging temporary staff to complete the task due to the delays already experienced. This review covers all areas of Bridgnorth, and members agreed on the mapped zones proposed.

2. Dangerous Parking, Underhill Street

Clr Winwood and I agreed that the short-term parking by visitors on the road and pavement at Underhill Street / New Road junction is incredibly dangerous. We called out the traffic engineers within the week to prioritise this stretch of road for additional double yellow lines. They have been measured and draft maps are prepared to go to public consultation later this month, with a view to restricting all parking from the entrance of Lasyard House to the Highley Road junction. Dialogue and mediation with affected businesses is hoping to encourage alternative solutions.

Other areas affected by dangerous and inconsiderate parking are awaiting review, but the budget allocation for the whole South Shropshire area is reduced to £20,000. Officers have agreed to review the full list and engage in a triage exercise, and accompany me on a tour of Bridgnorth to prioritise schemes for progression, and those for alternative funding sources (e.g. all the schools are eligible for speed calming measures through separate funds).

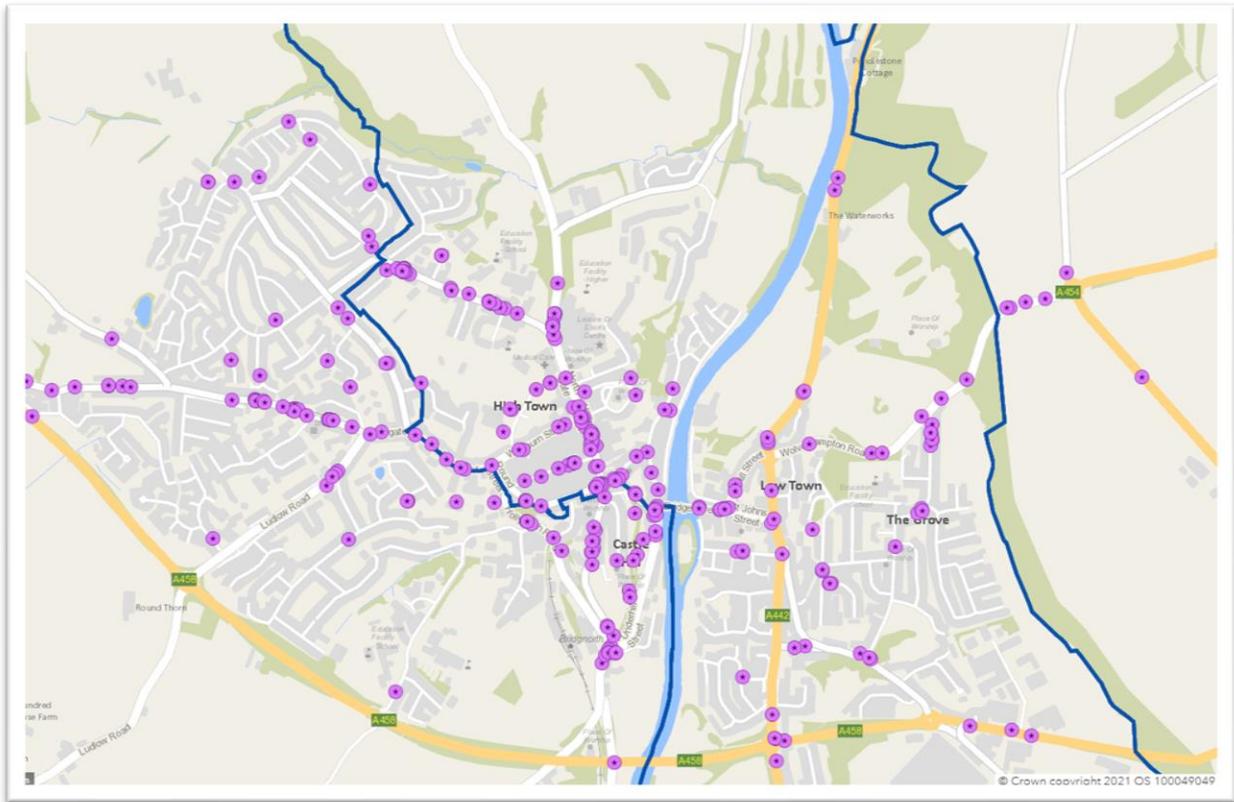
3. Bridgnorth Highways Area Assessment & Public Consultation

Following the successful application of 3 Shropshire bids (from Shrewsbury, Oswestry & Craven Arms) into the Central Government's "Levelling Up" Fund 2021, the strategic highways team are keen to work with Bridgnorth to identify any potential schemes for investment in round 2 Levelling Up (2022). This will see a public consultation process from end July – mid September with residents and businesses in the town, to seek their views on a set of proposals for projects to improve Bridgnorth's public car parking provision with a new Multi Storey; public realm (widening footpaths in the High Street); Electric Vehicle Park & Ride shuttle buses and schemes to animate the Riverside and improve tourist interpretation signage.

These proposals do not come with funding attached – the idea is to seek public opinion as to which ideas could progress to full endorsement by Shropshire Council, then form a bid to the Central Government "Levelling Up" Fund for 2022.

4. Potholes

I have attended several briefings on the highways pothole programme. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that there is a planned, rolling programme of full repairs and resurfacing that will concentrate on each Market Town for several weeks until all outstanding works are completed. I was less pleased to learn that "our turn" is 11th out of 17 areas to dealt with. The map below shows the current outstanding works logged and waiting for that re-surfacing team visit. I am encouraging residents to log as many additional issues as possible whilst we are waiting for our turn, for maximum impact.



5. Planning

The deadline for public submissions to the planning portal for the Smithfield Care Home application was extended until 14th June. There are currently over 200 comments logged. I requested that this application be considered by full committee, and there is already a request to reject by BTC. The determination deadline is 19th July.

At Full Council on 15th July we will be asked to vote on the Shropshire Local Plan Review documents (2016-2038). The planning inspectors report is expected in May 2022, with adoption in July 2022.

6. Cabinet Meeting, 1st July

Cabinet will consider the **Shropshire Council Winter Service Policy** – report of the Place Overview Committee working group which looks at road gritting, grit boxes and flood responses (sand bags and gully clearance). Members may remember we contributed comments to the (short notice) survey. It is noted that the South of the county currently receives less service and the review will now be based on severity levels, and more local joint working to support provision.

Financial Outturn – Despite achieving an underspend (due in large part to significant Covid grants and service lockdowns) the report does note areas of significant budget pressure due to Covid increasing demand for services, such as **specialist education provision for children and young people** suffering anxiety and behavioural issues following Covid lockdowns.

7. Other news

I invited the estates and assets team to visit Bridgnorth with a view to exploring the Town Council's facilities for a potential hot desking hub for Shropshire Council staff (to complement Cantreyn Brook now that staff are returning to office based work and meetings for part of the week). The Town Clerk and I are meeting the team in early July for an exploratory discussion. I have emphasised the strong feeling in the town about the loss of Westgate offices, and the symbolism of such a move.

Contact

My new contact details are: Julia.buckley@Shropshire.gov.uk and tel. 07890 055158.

My first Councillor surgery was held on Saturday 19th June at Bridgnorth Library with town Councillor Rachel Connolly for West ward.

My next surgery will be held on Saturday 17th July from 11am – 12.30pm at Bridgnorth Library with town Councillor Charlotte Round for Morfe ward.

Cllr Julia Buckley. 28 June 2021.

Report from Councillor K Hurst-Knight – Shropshire Councillor for Bridgnorth East and Astley Abbots

After successfully being elected to represent Bridgnorth East and Astley Abbots in the recent Shropshire Council elections time has flown by.

I have been appointed to Cabinet and I am the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education and as you can imagine, have daily meetings and forums to attend.

I am on the Health and Wellbeing Board and we have had our first workshop highlighting areas of need coming out of Covid.

I am also Deputy Armed Forces Ambassador and had the honour to attend a re-signing of the Armed Forces Covenant at Shirehall to which this county has been given a gold award and I attended several events last week for Armed Forces Week 2021.

Bridgnorth related; I have attended several meetings regarding the Local Plan, Place Plan, Neighbourhood Plan, Area Assessment, Economic Growth, Welcome Back Fund Review and parish council meetings and met with our MP Philip Dunne.

With that in mind, I have invited Shropshire Council officers input to collectively present / discuss many of the above topics to Bridgnorth Town Council and I know they are contacting the Town Council to move this forward and hope as many of you can attend as possible.

I have discussed flooding with Cllr Ian Nellins, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Natural Assets & The Green Economy, who will have a site visit upon the information we receive from the EA regarding recommendations and I know the TC and Mayor are awaiting that report, due at any time.

The Leader of Shropshire Council Cllr Lezley Picton has already had her visit to our lovely town and more visits are planned.