

Bridgnorth Town Council  
Meeting: Council  
Date: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2023  
Agenda item: 18.

## **Report from Counc. D Cooper, Town Council representative on the SALC Bridgnorth & Shifnal Area Committee**

### Introduction

Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC) area committees provide a forum for local Town and Parish Councils to exchange information about matters of mutual interest and to raise awareness of activities which town and parish councils are (or may wish to be) involved in. The Bridgnorth & Shifnal Area Committee covers the South East Shropshire Area. It generally meets 3 times a year, and councillors and clerks are welcome to attend any meeting. Each member council appoints 2 representatives who are able to vote on formal business. The Area Committee appoints 2 members to the SALC Executive Committee and may appoint 2 substitute members.

This report covers the meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and subsequent action arising from that meeting, and the meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

### Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023

The minutes of the meeting are attached. The meeting appointed the officers for the coming year; I volunteered to be a substitute member of the SALC Executive Committee, a role which I previously fulfilled between 2018 and 2021.

Neenton Parish Meeting raised the issue of long diversions and vague signage when works are carried out on rural roads. There was a concern that signage gave the impression that a long stretch of road may be closed even when works are only taking place at a point on it, and that diversions which are signposted for all road users, including HGV's, may be unnecessarily long for light or local traffic. It was agreed that SALC be asked to look at this in conjunction with Shropshire Council, and the issue was subsequently discussed at the SALC/ Shropshire Council Joint Working Group meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> September, which I attended. Shropshire Council indicated that they were working on improving information and possibly introducing light traffic diversion routes on works which they undertake. However, where utilities carry out work (often sub-contracted) and are responsible for signing closures and diversions this is more difficult to achieve. Signage has to conform to the Department for Transport's Traffic Signs Manual.

There was some discussion about Place Plans and the process for updating them. In principle these are updated at least annually and Town and Parish Councils are able to identify projects for inclusion. In practice, these were last updated prior to the Covid pandemic and thus councillors who were elected for the first time in 2021 would have no previous experience of the process. A briefing was subsequently arranged for the 4<sup>th</sup> September meeting.

#### Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023

The main item on the agenda was a briefing from Eddie West, Planning Policy Manager for Shropshire Council, on Place Plans and the Local Plan.

Mr West explained that the Place Plans are key documents identifying the infrastructure improvements needed to facilitate or mitigate the effects of development. These may then be considered for funding from monies contributed by developers through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), public utilities' capital programs, direct developer provision, central government grants etc. Although the Place Plans are Shropshire Council documents and are approved by Shropshire Council's Cabinet, they are prepared in collaboration with utility providers, the Department for Transport, the NHS Integrated Care System, etc. Town and parish council identified projects are a significant contribution. It is anticipated that the updated Place Plans will go to Shropshire Council's Cabinet for approval in November 2023.

The draft Local Plan to 2038 is has been undergoing independent examination of its soundness and legal compliance for the past 2 years. After the first stage, which covered county-wide issues, the Inspectors raised a number of concerns and Shropshire Council responded with information about how it proposed to address those in July 2023. Subsequently, there has been a threat to subject the examination to Judicial Review, and the Inspectors have indicated that they still have some concerns about the Plan's soundness (but have not yet provided the details). This is likely to further delay adoption of the plan. When updating the Place Plan, we should assume that development proceeds as proposed in the draft Local Plan.

#### Future events which may be of interest to members:

- **Restoring Shropshire's Verges** are holding a day long conference on the themes of Verges, Hedges and Watercourses on Friday 13th October.
- The **SALC AGM** will be on 3rd November 2023. Disabled Adventurer, Author, and Motivational Speaker Darren Edwards will be the guest speaker on the topic of "Strength Through Adversity"
- **Emergency Planning:** A series of 4 weekly events between 10th November and 1st December around the role of local communities.
- **Bridgnorth & Shifnal Area Committee:** 4th December 2023 focussed on Planning.