

**Joint Working Group**  
**Thursday 7 Sept 2023 at 9:30 via Zoom**  
**Meeting Notes**

Present: Cllrs: R Abbiss, M Bennett, J Cobb, D Cooper, R Evans, C Green, Cllr G Hickman, C Motley, D Spicer, B Welch, R Wickson, and A Wilson.

Clerks: H Ball.

Officers: M Barrow, A Cooper, D Dorrell, G Power, J Tretheway, and A Wilde.

Also Present:

Apologies: A Roberts, Cllr P Goulbourne, and G Spence

	Item
	<b>Cllr R Wickson in the Chair for this meeting.</b>
1	<p><b>Previous Meeting</b>            The notes from the meeting had been circulated. The Chair raised the following outstanding items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Severn Valley Water Management Scheme: DD referred to a short update circulated from Hayley noting a meeting on 20 Sept. MB added that with SC support, the EA were seeking to commence a public engagement process late Autumn with communities north of Shrewsbury up to the Welsh border. Programme to follow.</b></li> <li>• <b>Ash Die Back: DD to seek update from Martin Sutton on the working group that was to be established.</b></li> <li>• <b>Was the flexible on demand bus service up and running yet? RE reported good progress was being made with a pilot starting late October in a parish near Shrewsbury, further rollout would be dependent upon the results.</b></li> <li>• <b>What response was there to the divisional boundary review? CM – expected to hear from the LGBCE on 3 October as responses were requested direct to the Boundary Commission.</b></li> <li>• <b>VAS Policy not received, as promised, MB to follow up, however an on demand programme was being set up, the impact of maintenance on the network was being reviewed, update for the next meeting.</b></li> <li>• <b>Agricultural Reference Group? AW still to take up with the Place Scrutiny Committee with a review of tor required based on what the group was aiming to achieve.</b></li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Place Plan Progress</b>            MB introduced a briefing paper that had been circulated. Resources follow priorities and so it was important to keep Place Plans up to date to establish priorities in the different areas. The Infrastructure Partnership had been formed to share investment plans across Shropshire. Capacity to deliver Cil-related projects was being reviewed to deliver the outstanding 50 plus projects. The next</p>

	<p>steps were set out in the paper. Responding to questions, MB stated that items should carry forward into the new place plans and not be filtered out, making a note of concerns raised. RW also would take this up with the Leader at a meeting later that day.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p><b>UK Sustained Prosperity Funding</b></p> <p>Briefing paper had been circulated. The Chair, as a member of the SEP Board reported there would be a meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> September. He was pleased with progress, bids were strong and based on what the funding was designed for and the outcome he believed would be positive. Bids that did not initially meet the criteria could be revisited and resubmitted. BW asked about the block funding that was intended for towns in both North and South Shropshire based around filling vacant shop premises. BW said that was still the case as from 15 September and other criteria would be included such as support for local business. The Chair made a note for the next meeting of the SEP Board.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p><b>Verge &amp; Nature Recovery</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Janet Cobb, Edgton PM. Janet highlighted the related conference at Montford Village Hall on 13<sup>th</sup> October, details of which SALC had circulated. Following this would be a further conference on 17 November on Nature Recovery. Shropshire Council had been named as the lead agency across Shropshire, Telford &amp; Wrekin for nature recovery. She was encouraging parish and town councils to attend. One of the speakers was the Vice Chair of NALC, Baroness Bennet of the House of Lords.</p> <p>Restoring Shropshire’s Verges Project had been running since 2018 trying to put back the original flowers. Losing these means losing insects that live on them, leading to loss of pollinators and loss ultimately of food. This would save money in cutting and ideally the new contract would reflect cut, collect and restore.</p> <p>AW confirmed that his team had been involved since early days supporting the pilot projects. There were other ambitions as well as the Restoring Verges project. He had been reviewing contract arrangements and much had changed since the current contract was written in 2017 including the ‘team’. The current Streetscene contract had not worked in the way it had been anticipated. Plans were moving forward in terms of contract and team arrangements. The ambitions about restoring flora cut and collect were a part of those plans recognising there were huge benefits. A service briefing note would be shared shortly.</p> <p>MB referred to verges in Oswestry area where verges were being destroyed by heavy agricultural machinery. AW recognised and understood the issue involving farmers diversifying and the use of heavier machinery. The solution was complicated and required working with the NFU and other partners.</p> <p>On a positive note, Janet stated that the Verges project had attracted hundreds of hours of volunteer time and thousands of pounds of additional grant funding. The project is very popular with the public who are supportive and willing to give</p>

	<p>their time and energy and it is therefore one which Shropshire Council could capitalize upon.</p> <p>In summary, from Janet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was just 7 years to achieve the Country’s target of restoring 30% of land back to nature. If Restoring Shropshire’s Verges was taken up, then much of this would be achieved. <a href="https://www.cbd.int/article/cop15-cbd-press-release-final-19dec2022">https://www.cbd.int/article/cop15-cbd-press-release-final-19dec2022</a></li> <li>• It should be made a possibility in the future to give yellow rattle seeds from the existing wildflower meadows in South Shropshire to Shropshire Council. This year £15,000 of yellow rattle seed had been harvested s from the National Trust meadows</li> <li>• The ambition is to help parish councils develop bespoke natural recovery plans which is the objective from the November conference. She would provide a programme for SALC to distribute. <a href="https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/town-parish-councils-conference-17-11-23/">https://middlemarchescommunitylandtrust.org.uk/town-parish-councils-conference-17-11-23/</a></li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Guidance on Temporary Restrictions/Road Closures &amp; Signage</b></p> <p>AW explained that for several years Highways had been locked into a cycle of in year funding which prevented planning a programme of work. The cycle had been broken allowing him to design and prepare for delivery in the following financial year and this, together with the appointment of a community engagement officer was starting to make progress.</p> <p>Questions were being asked of contractors to justify road closures, performance issues and the need for more marker/countdown signs giving information where the closure occurred. There had been 66 surface dressing schemes across Shropshire this year requiring up to 4 separate closures to allow for dressing to be put down, relining, sweeping up and follow up but dedicated traffic management officers were assisting to achieve a consistent approach which was starting to show improvements. The need to put the signs down when the road opens is recognised as often signs were left in place when roads had reopened. It was recognised the work was unpopular, there was more that could be done, and the team was now focussed in achieving those improvements next time round.</p> <p>A discussion arose about issues with other partners/utilities. Legal notices had been served on some, particularly the worst offender and a meeting was coming up to discuss performance. It was often their sub-contactors who were at fault. Enforcement powers were being put in place to ensure service levels and standards were achieved.</p> <p>Arising from discussions, there was no reason why utility companies could not be achieving the same standards with regard to improved signage but delivery on the basics was the priority at present. Whilst legislation was in place to raise standards and performance, dealing with those who contract and sub-contract was fraught with difficulties. Further discussion was around mandating and the length of some diversions where it would be helpful if there were separate diversions for lorries to avoid cars driving 23 miles out of their way whereby discussion with clerks might be helpful with their local knowledge.</p>

<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Future of Oil Boilers</b></p> <p>Adrian Cooper explained that Adderley PC had raised this following a press release from Shropshire Council to assist households with funding for a change of oil boiler to a low carbon alternative and he thought that these schemes, although eligibility criteria differed, were being confused.</p> <p>SC's was about households on low income whereas the Government boiler upgrade scheme was more generally available particularly for those in off grid areas. To be eligible it requires a level of insulation in order that those heat pumps are effective which is a change that Government are considering taking away such as the prerequisite of upgrading insulation. More would therefore be eligible for the £5k for fitting an air source heat pump and £6k for a ground source. The cost of insulation is relatively high and the whole scheme is under review to see if it can be more effective. Interim alternatives could mean a potential for alternatives such as the use of bio-fuel and hydrogenated vegetable oil which would result in a 90% reduction in carbon emissions from convention heating oil.</p> <p>The Chair expressed concern that when fossil fuels are banned, people would be stuck with something they cannot use, or a source they cannot access, and he said more needed to be done to help by lobbying government.</p> <p>Cllr Green widened the discussion by raising another issue at this stage on the sustainability supplementary design planning document and its current status which appeared to be guidance only. Adrian replied that it could not be regarded as policy under current legislation. Plans were afoot to give them more status to provide additional source of information to planning officers, but the local plan first needs to be adopted. MB added that SP4 of the proposed local plan was about strengthening the themes of the SPD.</p>
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Fix My Street</b></p> <p>AW gave some background for the system that had been a place for a while as Phase One and whilst he had received good feedback, the system's report back mechanism was not effective giving misleading feedback to customers regarding the status of the report. Work needed to be undertaken to ensure the systems fed by Fix My Street were in sync. A business case was being worked upon for Phase 2 but it was important to get the basics working.</p> <p>Further comments from Cllrs Bennett and Cooper were noted. There was concern about multiple reporting which damaged the system's credibility which AW wanted to avoid.</p>
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>Agenda items from MB for the next meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on planned digital switch from digital to analogue.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Update on RAAC work being done – just one building to date was noted, Whitchurch Civic Centre. A briefing note would be sent out once analysis had been completed.</li></ul>
<b>9</b>	<b>Next meeting – 23 November 23 at 12 noon.</b>
	The Chair in closing thanked everyone for their time, input, and the information provided for what had been a most productive meeting.