

Shropshire Council and Shropshire Association of Local Councils

Town and Parish Council Forum (Working Group)

Thursday 21st July 2016

4.30pm – 6.00pm

Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury

Meeting notes and actions

Cllr Cecilia Motley, Portfolio Holder for Rural Services and Communities, Shropshire Council welcomed everyone to the meeting, recognising that people are busy and stressing that councils are at different stages in the development of ideas and proposals for the future of local services.

Those attending the meeting, which included clerks and councillors from town and parish councillors, representatives of the voluntary and community sector and Shropshire Association of Local Councils, Shropshire Councillors and officers involved with the future of local services work introduced themselves. (Attendance list attached)

Purpose of the Forum

It was proposed that the purpose of the Forum should be *'to share learning and find solutions to common strategic issues to enable Town and Parish Councils to prepare plans by September 2017 to take on service delivery from Shropshire Council from April 2018'*. This was agreed with the understanding that specific local issues would be dealt with locally by lead officers and Community Enablement Officers, and the strategic issues should be brought to these meetings.

It was stressed that the meetings of the Forum are for local councils who want to get involved in the future delivery or funding of local services. Councils who do not feel able to take on or fund the local services that their residents are using, should let Shropshire Council know as soon as possible to enable other options to be worked on.

Initial feedback on progress with the work undertaken so far -

There needs to be better communication by Shropshire Council on what services are in scope for potential transfer or funding locally.

There needs to be a greater awareness of the proposed wider savings that are potentially being made by Shropshire Council that could/will have a knock-on effect on communities, e.g. within ASC and CYPS, prevention services and housing support.

Communication by Shropshire Council needs to be improved – “feels like them and us” and not like a partnership, particularly when information is first seen in the media.

Areas that the Forum should focus on, e.g. the common strategic issues relating to local councils taking on services and assets and the challenges associated with this.

Timeline for decision and implementation: was felt to be too short and has now been extended by 12 months in response to the feedback from local councils

The capacity of local councils and communities: local councils would need to ensure that they have the time and the resources to take on services and also to work with their community who would be able to help them, e.g. managing volunteers. Any additional discussions and work created by these processes will require time and resource.

The skills needed to manage and deliver services: how can Shropshire Council support others to build the skills and confidence needed to take on, deliver and develop services.

The financial implications of moving services into new management arrangements:

this includes the cost to local councils of supporting services and also the potential 'claw back' of external funding if local assets or services should close.

The legalities of local councils taking on or funding services: NALC has been providing guidance on specific points, which is being sent out through SALC.

The issue of fairness in the local funding of some services: there are services that are based within communities but serve an area beyond the local council borders. How would these services be locally funded?

In addition –

Local councils have concerns of about increasing their precept to support services and how this is perceived both by central government and locally by residents.

Clarity needed on whether Shropshire Council's assets can be transferred on a freehold basis where this is preferred over a 125 year leasehold arrangement.

What will the impact of the May 2017 elections be on this work and levels of general power of competence within the town and parish council sector.

Key points raised in the group discussion -

These meetings could inform and create the FAQs that are circulated to all councils along with the questions and answers that are emerging through specific activity, e.g. the discussions in Shrewsbury.

SALC organises a training programme for local councils. Could Shropshire Council work with SALC to provide training opportunities that will reflect the skills that council clerks and members could need in the future.

There are concerns that some Shropshire Council staff are not aware of potential changes, and that some parts of services are working in ways that don't take into account potential changes within another part. There needs to be better communication and things being joined up.

A really difficult issue is how people living in rural areas access services within towns – how should town councils ask their surrounding rural parishes to support these? There were mixed views on whether town councils should bother asking rural councils for contributions or whether town and parish councils should be taking a clustering approach and talking about sharing the cost of providing services.

Can Shropshire Council take steps to protect assets by making them sustainable, e.g. putting buildings into trusts?

The proposed engagement work with local councils to inform the design of the post-Ringway highways and street scene maintenance contracts will be of really interest to local councils and will be a good opportunity to have a wider discussion on councils working together. The sooner information is known about this engagement work, the better.

Can local councils have a role to play at an early stage in any proposed service redesign? e.g. changes to opening hours of local services.

Through a process of due diligence on proposals coming forward Shropshire Council may decide that the responsibilities for the delivery of some local services have high levels of risk associated with them, e.g. health and safety issues, and therefore are non-delegable.

What does Shropshire Council want to see in the business plans and proposals that local councils work up? What will Shropshire Council's due diligence be when looking at these

proposals and business plans when they are put forward by local councils and expectation in the business plan?

Design of future meetings

As the potential attendance at meetings could be large, it was agreed that the meetings should be organised as a Forum that people could choose to attend, or not, depending on the relevance of the agenda items.

It was agreed that the Forum meetings will be particularly useful to all council clerks due to the nature of the issues being raised, and that town and parish councillors should attend to represent their council as they wish. The meetings will also be open to representatives of the voluntary and community sector and Shropshire Association of Local Councils

It was agreed that Forum meetings would be held at Shirehall as this was the most central location for most people attending.

It was agreed that the agenda items for future meetings would be based on the actions of previous meetings along with any other suggested items that people would like to discuss. (Table of actions below)

Future meeting dates -

Thursday 29th September at 2.30pm – Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury

Tuesday 1st November at 2.30pm – The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HR

The regularity of meetings will then be reviewed.

ACTIONS

ACTION	BY WHOM	BY WHEN
Existing FAQs to be updated using feedback from general and local discussions	KG to co-ordinate and edit	19 th August
Spreadsheet figures will be updated and include proposed savings for locally delivered ASC and CYPS services, so a wider potential impact on localities can be seen	KG	19 th August
Description of the design of business plans and proposals and the due diligence process they will go through – provide drafts for discussion	KG and Tom Dodds	Agenda item for September meeting
Update on the Outdoor Partnerships Enterprise Plan to be sent out	Outdoor Partnerships	With minutes
Suggestions for future meeting agenda items to be sent to Kate Garner – kate.garner@shropshire.gov.uk	All attending the Forum meetings	2 weeks before next meeting date

Town and Parish Council Working Group 21 July 2016: Attendance

Council	Attending	✓	Signature
Alberbury and Cardeston	Richard Groome	✓	
Albrighton	Michael Ward	✓	
Astley Abbots; Cardington; Ditton Priors; Easthope Group; PCs	Jayne Madeley	✓	
Baschurch	Anne Howles	✓	
Bayston Hill	Caroline Higgins	✓	
Bridgnorth	Anne Wilson	✓	
Clunbury	Cllr Pat Harding	✓	
Ludlow	Gina Wilding	✓	
Lydbury North	Andy Boak	✓	
Munslow, Eaton & Hope Bowdler, Diddlebury PCs	Jean de Rusett	✓	
Oswestry	David Preston	✓	
Oswestry Rural	Carole Warner	✓	
Shrewsbury	Helen Ball	✓	
St Martins	Edward Davies	✓	
Stanton Lacey	Heather Coonick	✓	
Wem (and Knockin)	Penny O'Hagan	✓	
Whittington	Sue Cowley	✓	
		✓	
Shropshire Council	Cllr Cecilia Motley	✓	
	Clive Wright	✓	
	George Candler	✓	
	Chris Edwards		
	Kate Garner	✓	
	Steve Cunningham	✓	
	Nicola Fisher	✓	
SALC	David Beechey	✓	
	Dianne Dorrell	✓	
VCSA	Nicola MacPherson	✓	
Shropshire Councillors	Cllr Roger Evans	✓	
	Cllr Ted Clarke	✓	