Transparency through consultation as the motion suggests is key. Now there are many many examples of Telford and Wrekin consulting with residents on loads of issues. In fact the Council spends a lot of time, effort and money on consultation exercises. True, many of them are statutory and it is part of the process for example planning. However consultation is pointless and meaningless if the results of the consultation are not acted upon.

 Planning consultations are taken into account when a planning application is considered which may result in amendments. Similarly the recent residents survey will help to guide policy and decisions. However it is impractical to consult on every issue which is one of the reasons we have elected members. We as members of the council have the mandate from our electors to take decisions on their behalf and represent their interests.

In opposition my group therefore have a mandate to represent our electors and be consulted. We can only do that if we have the information to monitor and call to account the decisions taken by the administration. We do this by receiving briefings from Council officers who can give us the information requested without prejudice and political slant. This is why I requested shadow cabinet briefings from officers to resume. So that we could make suggestions, better understand and challenge Council policies and decisions.

I was therefore disappointed that my request was rejected by the administration and once again request that opposition briefings are reinstated so that we can perform the duties required of us as opposition councillors.

It is a brave administration that ignores the will of the electorate yet this one seems to make a habit of it. As has been mentioned the closure of a narrow single car gap in Hortonwood has caused a significant amount of anger to residents who now face a long detour to access their properties in the villages from Horton to Kynnersley and beyond. This was done over the Xmas and New Year period with minimum consultation to satisfy the legal requirements. The closure will benefit a very small number of residents and disadvantage a huge number. Emergency vehicles will have a 10 minute detour, which could have fatal consequences. Yet this Council has pushed ahead with the closure with scant regard for the effected population.

Without meaningful consultation democracy diminishes.