

Introduction

OPM facilitated six two hour workshops (three for members, three for officers) over the course of two days. These were attended by over 300 Members and Officers from across Shropshire's authorities.

The purpose of the workshops was to start the journey towards developing the vision and values for the new council and give as many Members and Officers as possible the opportunity to be involved. Over two days, working in Member and Officer groups participants were able to use a variety of words, images and statistical information to help them define both vision and values. They were given the freedom to pursue the issues they felt were most relevant.

The workshops highlighted the main vision and values that officers and members think are important, along with the tensions and challenges inherent within them.

Next Steps-

- A session with the Implementation Executive (IE) and the Joint Implementation team (JIT) to distil and prioritise the key points contained herein on 21st May starting at 4.00pm with refreshments.
- Consultation on the draft vision and values will take place with Members, staff, the public and stakeholders/ partners. Consultation plan is at appendix 1 of this report.
- 1st extra session in June 08 – 2 days –all members and self nominated officers on separate days. Office for Public Management (OPM) to deliver.
 - Outcome - to consider and contribute to prioritised information and expand joint working attitudes. Report to JIT & IE, circulated to all Members & Staff.
- 2nd extra session in the Autumn 08- 2 days –all members and self nominated officers on separate days. Office for Public Management (OPM) to deliver.
 - Outcome – incorporate work done by JIT & IE & feedback from session 1, initiating development of draft Vision & Values statements. Report to JIT & IE with initial draft Vision & Values statements in November /December 08
- 3rd extra session in December / January 09 – 1 day IE & JIT. IDeA to deliver 'COMPASS.' A simulation exercise to experience the challenges to be faced in transfer to a new council and challenging the draft Vision and Values in action.
- Event for new Political Leadership and Managerial Executive presenting draft Vision & Values to be endorsed.

This report summarises the key points that emerged from the workshops. At the end of this report is a summary of participants' feedback about the events themselves.

Member and Officer Vision

There was a high level of consistency between the component parts of the officers' vision and of the members' vision. Over all, the discussions reflected **three key areas of challenge** that the new council will face:

- **The challenge of balancing the need for growth with preservation of the natural, historic and rural environment**
 - o in particular relating to the need to encourage a younger population
 - o in particular meeting the need for more affordable housing, increased business and job opportunities and improved transport links
 - o in particular to preserve what makes Shropshire 'special'
- **The challenge of delivering services effectively to the public**
 - o in particular being able to deliver services to a 'super-sparse' population
 - o in particular that services are the best they can be and deliver value and 'quality' for money
 - o in particular ensuring that people are involved in decision-making and feel listened to
- **The challenge of balancing centre with locality**
 - o in particular realising the benefits of working as a bigger unit whilst delivering as locally as possible
 - o in particular creating a 'whole county' approach (in terms of how sites and departments interact, and how services are delivered) whilst acknowledging the diversity of the county's constituent parts

The table below summarises the main aspects of the vision discussed, listed under the key themes (**in bold**) that emerged. In the great majority of cases, these were points made in both officers' and members' discussions. Where an issue was predominantly raised by one or the other, this is stated in the right hand column. The first four key themes (housing, young people, economic growth and public transport) appear to have been the most discussed topics overall.

VISION	Predominantly Officer or Member comment?
Housing	
<p><i>Need to address the shortage of housing, affordable housing in particular</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enabling young people to stay living locally - Providing choice (in terms of type and locality) - The council being an effective manager of the housing stock it inherits and building strong relationships with social housing landlords - On the one hand: Concentrating development in proximity of employment and services, which in turn will reduce commuting - On the other hand: Providing in rural communities, not only towns 	<p>Both Members and Officers</p> <p>The most commonly raised issue overall, addressing this challenge was a key aspect of the vision for all groups. Most discussed affordable housing specifically, though some also felt it was important to think about housing and planning more broadly.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bringing empty properties back into use - Diverse housing for a diverse population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o establish what greatest need is (young single occupants, elderly single occupants, families etc) o enabling vulnerable young people to maintain independence 	<p>Both, but predominantly Officers</p>
<p>Young people</p>	
<p><i>Need to retain and attract the young / redress age imbalance and create 'lifetime communities':</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supply of affordable housing particularly important for young - create job opportunities for young people - maximise higher education opportunities - increase skills of young people 	<p>Both Members and Officers</p> <p>The importance of creating a 'younger' Shropshire was at the centre of many groups' visions, as it was felt that Shropshire would benefit economically and socially by improving its generational balance.</p>
<p><i>Need to improve access to leisure facilities and activities, especially for young people</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - e.g. through improved public transport for rural areas - engage with young people about their needs and wants at local level 	<p>Both Members and Officers, particularly members</p>
<p><i>Need to maintain access to schools</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintain good network of primary schools that take account of natural barriers to travel e.g. Wenlock Edge, Longmynd etc. 	<p>Member group comment</p>
<p>Business and the economy</p>	
<p><i>Need to balance economic needs with preservation of the environment and traditional assets (i.e. rurality, historic character etc.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support creativity and innovation and focus on new technologies (e.g. high tech corridor) and 'green industries' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o create infrastructure for a home working environment e.g. broadband access, shared office services o create business involvement hubs (e.g. increasing links with skills and training in certain sectors) - Use Shropshire's environment effectively and maximising its assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o e.g. tourism and leisure o e.g. support for agriculture and niche food production - Grow and support small businesses more widely, encourage people to shop locally etc - Ensure job opportunities are county-wide 	<p>Both Members and Officers</p> <p>There was minimal difference between officer and member discussions, although members were slightly more likely to talk about the need to support agriculture and develop jobs in the 'spirit' of Shropshire.</p> <p>Officer groups were slightly more likely to focus on 'growing the knowledge economy' and avoiding over-reliance on lower wage sectors</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understand how Shropshire connects to the global economy - Grow the knowledge economy, not a low wage economy 	
Public transport and infrastructure	
<p><i>Need to improve provision, reliability and popularity of public transport</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review current provision and need, especially outside large towns - Improve public transport frequency in rural areas to reduce isolation and improve access to local towns and thus services - Work to increase take-up - Manage challenge of high demand from a small population - Improve communication and transport links cross-boundary - Improve infrastructure to enable rural areas to have as many advantages as urban ones 	Both Members and Officers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A minority argued that public transport ultimately cannot deliver, so it is necessary to accept high levels of car dependency and ensure roads etc. can cope with this 	Members group comment
All areas working together to strengthen council performance (see VALUES also)	
<p><i>Need to build a consistent and cohesive organisation that performs efficiently and effectively across sites</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliver joined up services - Ensure 'seamless' communication between all services, sites and partner agencies to target local resources - Provide enhanced value for money - Take the best from around each district and build this into a new unit working together for the common cause - Ensure this is treated as a new organisation, not the county council with extra arms bolted on - Maintain current positive performance, and improve where there is negative performance, raising all to the level of the best and delivering a consistent level of services for all - Retain local knowledge - Keep council tax affordable / as low as is possible 	Both Members and Officers
Public engagement and connectivity between centre and localities	
<p><i>Need to establish engaged and empowered communities so that people are involved in decision-making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen to and act on feedback - Provide ease of access for all and keeping services local - Encourage local people to work on local issues through good citizen involvement with the council - Build people's trust that they will be listened to 	Both members and officers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the council is an accessible organisation from the public's perspective - Encourage two-way communication between council and people 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Councillors to work with local communities to bridge the gap between citizen expectations and what the council can deliver <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o value the contribution that elected members make: it is their role that makes local government unlike any other business 	Officers group comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage a more representative mix of people to become councillors (e.g. young people) and make involvement easier - Encourage day to day interest and involvement in the council, not just set-piece events – in particular fostered by councillors' relationships with their wards 	Members group comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish / expand the area committees to support engagement with the public - Tap into parish and town councils to aid problem-solving and decision-making, engagement and 'intelligence gathering' about local areas 	Predominantly a Members group comment
Sustainability and the environment	
<p><i>Need to retain Shropshire's unique local environment (e.g. AONBs) and act in a more environmentally conscious way</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protect Shropshire's rural character - Reduce CO2 emissions and increase use of alternative transport (e.g. cycling, public transport) - Increase recycling - Ensure new buildings follow sustainability principles - Encourage more environmentally sensitive transport use 	<p>Both Members and Officers</p> <p>There was little difference of emphasis between officer and member sessions, though overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members were slightly more likely to emphasise preservation of the local environment, landscape etc - Officers were slightly more likely to emphasise sustainable environmental practices
Health and social care	
<p><i>Need to improve community based health care (especially for the elderly)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Don't just focus on 'rebalancing' the population by encouraging more young people into the County; the issue has to be addressed as it stands – i.e. there IS an ageing population and those older people must be catered for 	<p>Both Members and Officers, but a minority in each case</p> <p>In both Officer and Members sessions, most focused their vision on rebalancing the demographic, rather than managing an older demographic</p>

Crime and community safety	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address problems of substance misuse, particularly amongst young people - Address fears about crime 	<p>Both Members and Officers, but a minority in each case. This issue was to some extent implicit in conversations about youth provision and opportunity, but crime and anti-social behaviour as distinctive issues did not emerge as priority areas of discussion</p>
Diversity, fairness and identity	
<p><i>Understand diversity in the county and help increase equality between its residents</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acknowledge the diversity within Shropshire (this referred mainly to diversity of geographic area, though also cultural diversity) - Treat everyone equally throughout the new authority – the right people in the right job for the right reasons - Treat service users fairly / equally 	<p>Both Members and Officers highlighted the need to acknowledge the diversity within the county, and treat people fairly – inside the council and outside when dealing with the public (see VALUES)</p> <p>Offices were more likely to talk about the council's role in raising equality locally</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forge a strong identity based on the Shropshire 'brand' - Encourage engaged and empowered communities that feel part of a 'distinctive whole' of Shropshire 	<p>A minority, predominantly members, talked about their desire to forge a stronger 'whole-county identity' amongst citizens</p>

Member and Officer Values

As in the case of vision, there was strong consistency between the values suggested by members and those suggested by officers, though overall members focused less on the more 'corporate' issues around staff and working environment (i.e. category 1 below).

It was acknowledged that developing shared values will be meaningless unless officers and members can see what they 'look like' in real terms. Establishing the day to day behaviours that need to underpin these values will also be an issue for the new council to address, and was something that some groups sought to tackle during the workshops.

Broadly speaking, the values / behaviours produced can be divided into two main categories:

1. Those relating to the ways that staff and members work and interact, the approaches they take and the atmosphere they create, and the way they are treated by the organisation as a whole.
2. Those relating to the delivery of services and the immediate experience of citizens, such as how accessible and visible the council is, ensuring value for money, quality of service experience and the importance of public engagement

Whilst the subdivisions above are useful in summarising the content of the discussions, participants tended to emphasise the importance of all values being consistent between the internal and external environment, and the need for all ultimately to be evident in the way that council services were delivered.

VALUES	Predominantly Officer or Member comment?
Within the organisation: officers, members, partners and approaches	
An organisation that is good at working in partnership and team working <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - internally cross-department, cross hierarchy and cross-locality - externally with other agencies (health, police etc.) - externally with local voluntary groups and town / parish councils - internally between officers and members 	Both Members and Officers Members were more likely to emphasise the importance of parish councils as locally accountable bodies
An organisation that values and encourages learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in terms of developing staff - in terms of sharing learning and knowledge between staff / departments / localities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o particularly as some will have to become familiar with new service contexts (e.g. council owned housing stock in some areas) - in terms of being receptive to new ideas from staff and elsewhere 	Both Members and Officers
A culture of trust and taking responsibility, rather than a 'blame culture'	Both Members and Officers

Being innovative, creative, open to change and able to cope with change	Both Members and Officers
Celebrating and recognising success - internally in terms of staff performance - internally and externally in terms of council successes	Both, but predominantly Officers
An organisation that promotes equality and diversity amongst staff	Both, but predominantly Officers
Work – life balance and a happy workforce	Both, but predominantly Officers
Being a supportive and caring organisation	Both, but predominantly Officers
Being an exciting, energising and ambitious place to work	Officers
Engendering a sense of common ownership and pride in the organisation	Officers
An organisation where staff feel that it is 'safe' to have a voice as citizens outside of work, not only as employees. Importance of recognising that tensions may exist between personal values and Corporate Policy/priorities	Officers
Being able to have political disagreements without undermining the council as a body	Members
Service: customers / citizens etc.	
An organisation focused on delivering value for money, efficiency and effectiveness - where staff are committed to their work - an organisation committed to improvement - an organisation that takes the best from its composite parts	Both Members and Officers
Being an open, honest and transparent organisation - honest with partners and the public - honest with colleagues	Both Members and Officers
- maintaining standards to engender trust in the organisation	Members group comment
Being customer focused and putting people first - some discussion of whether they should be citizens, customers, service users or simply 'people' - not allowing rules and processes to act as barriers to delivering services	Both Members and Officers
Treating citizens / service users fairly and equally	Both Members and Officers
Valuing the diversity of Shropshire's constituent parts and not shoe-horning services into one format	Both Members and Officers
Being good at communication (internally and externally) - communicating 'down' to local people and 'up' to	Both Members and Officers

<p>government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being flexible in styles and mechanisms of communication, using plain language 	
<p>Being an accessible council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - easy to contact and get information from - services it provides are accessible 	Both, but predominantly Members
<p>Being a visible council that is close to communities, and that engages with and consults stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - listening and being responsive - know your communities and not 'living in an ivory tower' - local service delivery based on community needs and aspirations - local points of contact - capacity building at parish level to support this 	Both, but predominantly Members

Participant feedback ¹

Feedback from Officers

Feedback category	No.	Summary of feedback	Example comments
Event was effective and valuable	34 (18%)	Stated that they found the workshop approach helpful for thinking through vision and values. It was felt that the workshops were well-structured but informal, making them inclusive and engaging.	"[I] found it a very valuable exercise, inclusive and engaging which are excellent values going forward."
Valuable to meet colleagues from other councils and service areas	29 (15%)	Felt that the workshops' success was due to the collaborative focus of the events, bringing together officers from a wide range of functions and enabling colleagues from the county and district councils to work together on common objectives.	"There was great value in meeting colleagues from other services in other councils. I learnt a great deal from them. Long may that continue!"
Positive to see how much consensus there is	25 (13%)	Found the commonality of thought amongst colleagues encouraging. Whilst groups found it difficult to refine a set of agreed visions and values, these participants were reassured that everyone is working towards shared goals.	"There was much food for thought and very similar threads running throughout all groups, which prove we all can't be wrong"
Ensure ideas forward	20 (11%)	Expectation that the ideas generated during the sessions are carried forward to form part of the vision and values strategy. There was a keen interest in the session producing tangible outcomes, several	"Did we achieve our purpose? Lots of ideas. The 'achievement' will show if our ideas are listened to, put into

¹ Officers gave feedback on post-it notes at the end of the workshops, whilst member participants were invited to submit feedback retrospectively by member champions.

		comments arising from scepticism over whether the ideas from the session would be meaningfully translated into action.	practice, and if we are all kept informed.”
A good start	18 (9%)	Thought that the event was an effective way to start the process of becoming one council. Many added that they wanted to see this positive momentum maintained.	“Good way to start the journey. Good for the councils to mix before the merger.”
Valued the opportunity to be heard	17 (9%)	Appreciated being given the opportunity to put forward their ideas, noting in particular that it was positive to work with a diverse group of people. They thought the event enabled good open and honest communication, which helps them to be informed.	“Thank you for asking us! First time I’ve felt that my opinion and thoughts will be listened to and that I could have a genuine input into the new organization.”
Objectives achieved: an enjoyable / useful session	17 (9%)	Stated that the workshops were enjoyable and interesting, and that the event was worthwhile. Several commented that the workshop achieved its objectives, and remarked that they had a sense of satisfaction at the end of the event.	“Really useful session, lots of good ideas and enthusiasm.”
Ensure that we continue to be involved	11 (6%)	Welcomed the workshops as a means to contribute to the visions and values of the new council, following which they would welcome further opportunities for input into the resulting statement. Suggestions include circulating draft versions to attendees and bringing them together in a follow-up session.	“Would like a joint follow-up session with elected members. Important we air and share views together.”
There were things that could have worked better	7 (4%)	Comments on possible areas for improvement included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger facilitation to stay ‘on topic’ • Seating service areas together at such events • Allocating more time to the exercise 	“We found it difficult to separate visions from values. The task of adding implementation detail was a bit daunting.”
Future recommendations	6 (3%)	Suggested that the workshops are followed by a longer, in-depth session to add detail to the statement. Officers want to continue to be involved in the drafting process.	“Went well – may need a longer session to get to the level of detail that may be required.”
Negative comments	6 (3%)	Felt that: the event did not produce anything new that could be added to existing streams of thought / it was difficult to choose between visions and values / that groups were sometimes too large.	“It’s been ok, not sure I’ve learnt anything or that anything exciting came up. Good turn out.”

Feedback from Members

Feedback category	No.	Summary of feedback	Example comments
Positive exchange of views	7	Members felt that the workshops were both interesting and worthwhile, stimulating debate and enabling participants to think about what the new council should achieve. They welcomed the chance to mix with members from other areas with different experiences.	"This meeting allowed an exchange of views of other members from other councils which I found very useful."
Purpose of event	5	The majority of comments suggest that the workshops were enjoyable. Some however felt that there was a gap between the strategic overview encouraged in this exercise and knowledge around operational issues of working as a one authority.	"Enjoyed the session and felt there was an opportunity to have input so long as notice is taken."
Practical problems	4	A small number remarked on practical issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate parking was appreciated • Size of venue made it difficult to hear • Handouts would have been useful 	"Venue – it was difficult to hear subject for discussion during the working group."
Format	3	Again, a small number commented on the format and structure, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enjoyed working with colleagues across the county • The topics were too narrow • There were too many discussion aids (i.e. words/ pictures) 	"The content was somewhat restrictive and the innovative ideas did not get sufficient exposure."
Feedback	3	Members would like to see the finished statement and they would welcome the opportunity to offer feedback.	"Hope we get feedback and further opportunity for input later."