

**Committee and Date**

Cabinet

4 December 2024

CABINET**Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2024****In the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND
10.30 am****Responsible Officer:** Ashley Kendrick

Email: ashley.kendrick@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 250893

Present

Councillor Lezley Picton (Chairman)

Councillors Ian Nellins, Robert Macey, Gwilym Butler, Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Mark Jones, Dan Morris and Chris Schofield

215 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Dean Carroll and Cecilia Motley.

216 Disclosable Interests

No declarations were received.

217 Minutes**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

218 Public Question Time

Public questions were received from:

David Andrew, in relation to green waste collections.

Frank Oldaker, in relation to flooding.

The full questions and response provided can be found on [Responses to Public Questions - Cabinet 20 November 2024.pdf](#)**219 Member Question Time**

Councillor Tom Biggins, in relation to the Mini Roundabout at the Junction of Claypit Street and London Road, Whitchurch – 22/09212/ENF.

Councillor David Vasmer (read out by Councillor Roger Evans) in relation to a commemorative plaque in the Market Square. In response to a supplementary question,

the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would be happy to co-ordinate a meeting with interested parties to investigate options. He would make contact with Councillor Vasmer outside the meeting.

The full questions and responses provided can be found on [Responses to Member Questions - Cabinet 20 November 2024.pdf](#)

220 Scrutiny Items

There were no scrutiny items.

221 Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities introduced the report which provided a detailed review of the Council's financial position as at 30 September 2024. He highlighted a slight improvement in the projected overspend, from £38.5m to £35.1m. He gave reassurance that spending boards were in place to monitor spending, and savings were being achieved. Members noted that as the year progressed, a greater proportion of the Council's spending and income becomes certain, and the risks associated with the diminishing remainder of the financial year also diminishes. Furthermore, estimates from earlier in the year can be revisited and reworked, strengthening the robustness of financial projections.

A query was received regarding the percentage of the Council's total spend on third-party contracts and the percentage of spending reductions achieved in that area. The Executive Director for Resources advised that the overall gross budget was £709 million and the cost of third-party spend was approximately £400 million, but would provide detailed figures after the meeting.

Members inquired about the progress of the sale and leaseback scheme mentioned in the report and the budget overspend in the Place Directorate.

The Executive Director for Resources explained that multiple options for the sale and leaseback scheme were being considered, with confidence that one would be delivered by the end of the financial year.

The Executive Director for Place addressed the Place Directorate's overspend, attributing it to the Veolia contract, property-related issues, and capitalisation.

Members thanked the Executive Management Team and officers for their hard work.

RESOLVED:

that:

- A. Cabinet Members continue to work closely with the Chief Executive and senior officers to urgently take the necessary actions to improve further the Quarter 2 forecast of a projected spend over budget of £35.095m (30th September 2024), by year end, predominantly focussing on remaining savings or mitigating actions to be delivered in 2024/25.

- B. Cabinet Members discussed the impact of the projected expenditure forecast on the General Fund Balance and note the risk of further service pressures (savings required) in next year if financial performance in the current year is not improved.

222 Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital presented the performance monitoring report for quarter two, noting improvements in key performance indicators, such as the percentage of educational healthcare plans issued within 20 weeks. He also acknowledged areas needing attention, like the rate of deaths by suicide in Shropshire and advised that targeted work continued through the multi-agency Suicide Prevention Action Group to address this issue.

Members recognised the significant progress in the issuance of educational healthcare plans and expressed gratitude for the efforts of officers involved.

In response to a query regarding renewable energy, the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport advised members that areas for wind turbines had been mapped out, pending government stance on onshore wind turbines.

Concerns were raised regarding the average number of days lost to sickness absence, which was approximately 10% above target. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities advised that the detailed health and safety report would address this further, emphasising the importance of staff well-being.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- Reviewed and considered performance dashboard information alongside this exception report.
- Noted progress to date in achieving the outcomes of The Shropshire Plan (TSP) and commented as appropriate.
- Confirmed that the KPIs currently agreed remain the same for 2024/2025 and agreed to individual Portfolio Holders reviewing the targets for the agreed KPIs with the relevant Executive Director.

223 Annual H&S Performance Report 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the Health and Safety performance for 2023-2024, which detailed the key Health and Safety data for the Council, progress on last year's Annual Report and identified key priorities for 2024-2025.

Members inquired about the specific measures being taken to support staff well-being and reduce sickness absence. The Portfolio Holder reiterated the importance of staff well-being and mentioned regular communication and availability of well-being initiatives and counselling support. He also highlighted the role of the health and safety team in leading these efforts.

Members noted that the health and safety team is working towards more digitalised processes, including e-learning modules for staff training and the development of a Power BI screen to monitor health and safety performance regularly.

The Leader shared positive feedback from a staff member about the mental health first aiders initiative, highlighting its impact on staff well-being.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet Members considered the contents of the report and noted that:

- A. Progress has been maintained during 2023-2024 on managing health safety and wellbeing across the Council.
- B. Agreed actions for 2024/25 are included in section 7.

224 Draft Strategic Equality Objectives Action Plan for 2024-2028

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the report which sought Cabinet approval in order to enable compliance with specific duties under the Equality Act 2010. Approval would also facilitate demonstration of good practice in regard to equality.

Members were advised that the key actions from 2020-2024 included increasing understanding among officers and elected members about the challenges faced by people with protected characteristics and those at risk of social exclusion. Efforts included promoting positive community initiatives, marking commemorations and celebrations, and signing the Safe Ageing No Discrimination (SAND) covenant.

Members noted the new strategic equality action areas for 2024-2028.

Members emphasized the importance of the SAND covenant and its role in encouraging other organisations to sign up, promoting broader equality efforts.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet agreed to the publication of Shropshire Council's Equality Objectives Action Plan for 2024 to 2028, (as set out in Appendix A) in order to meet legal requirements for compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty placed upon the Council through the Equality Act 2010.

225 Request for approval to consult on the draft Oswestry Shop Front Design Guide (Standing Pre-Application Advice Note)

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services presented the report which sought approval to undertake a public consultation on the draft Oswestry Shop Front Design Guide, which aimed to ensure that future shop front designs in Oswestry are in keeping with the town's historic character while supporting modern businesses.

Members welcomed the report and questioned how the guide would help with enforcement against shops not complying with conservation area standards. The Portfolio Holder explained that the guide would provide a baseline for enforcement and help ensure that new shop fronts are in keeping with the historic character of the area.

Members queried the impact of the guide on the decline of the High Street and how it could be applied to other communities. Members noted that the guide would help reverse the decline of the High Street by ensuring that shop fronts are attractive and in keeping with the town's character. It could also serve as a template for other market towns in Shropshire.

The Portfolio Holder emphasised the importance of community input during the consultation process.

Members praised the joint working between Shropshire Council, the Town Council, the BID community, and Heritage England. Particular thanks were given to the historic environment team for their work on the guide.

RESOLVED:

- To approve an eight week public consultation on the Draft Oswestry Shop Front Design Guide: Standing Pre-Application Advice Note – see Appendix 1.
- That authority is given to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services, to agree any additional minor-changes to the Draft Oswestry Shop Front Design Guide: Standing Pre-Application Advice Note ahead of this consultation.

226 Highways Term Maintenance Contract - Proposed 1 Year Extension

The Portfolio Holder for Highways introduced the report which recommended a one-year extension of the Highways Term Maintenance Contract with Kier Transportation, highlighting significant service improvements and cost efficiencies. The extension would ensure service continuity and allow time to develop a future operating model.

Members noted that:

- This financial year had seen an increase in productive output on repairs of 46% (50% of which were carried out within five days) with no budget increase.
- The average cost to the council of repairing a pothole has fallen by 66% in the past four years and is now below the national average.
- The percentage of the right first-time, permanent repairs, was now at 96%. This is the highest level ever as a unitary council.
- The mixed economy model has been beneficial, with spending on the contract 50% below previous levels while maintaining economies of scale for larger purchases like tarmac.
- The new 'hybrid' model has received industry recognition for being at the leading edge of national best practice, with Shropshire winning both "Team of the Year"

and also the “Collaborate Partnership Award” at the Department for Transport Special Recognition awards in October this year.

Members raised concerns about the contract's performance and queried whether alternatives to the current contract had been considered. Criticism was also expressed regarding insurance claims issues and the fixed overhead payments. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the challenges with insurance claims and overhead costs but emphasised that the overhead figure was the lowest in the country for Kier contracts.

Members sought clarification on the mixed economy model, the use of direct labour, and the incentive payments structure. The Assistant Director for Highways and Transport explained that the mixed economy model includes direct labour through agency arrangements and contracts with other contractors. He mentioned that the incentive payments were linked to key performance indicators (KPIs) to drive performance and that these payments would be phased out in the extension.

Praise was given for the flexibility and control provided by the mixed economy model, highlighting its positive impact on road safety and cross-portfolio work.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approved the recommended amendments to the conditions of the contract and the commercial arrangements as set out in Section 7.5 of this report.
2. Authorised the implementation of the amendments via a deed of variation to the current contract between the Council and the Contractor for a period of 12 months from 1st April 2025.
3. Give delegated authority for the Executive Director of Place to explore and agreed further contract amendments, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport.

227 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with the provisions of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4 [3] of the Council's Access to Information Rules, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items.

228 SUE West Options Appraisal

RESOLVED:

To approve the recommendations as set out in the exempt report.

229 Chief Officer Pay Report

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet considered the options contained within the exempt report and approved the recommendation.

230 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 4 December 2024.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: