

CABINET**Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2025**

**In the The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.30 am – 11.50 am**

Responsible Officer: Ashley Kendrick
Email: amanda.holyoak Tel: 01743 257714

Cabinet Members Present:

Councillors Heather Kidd, Bernie Bentick, Roger Evans, Andy Hall, Ruth Houghton, James Owen, David Vasmer, Alex Wagner, David Walker and Rob Wilson

Group Leaders Present: Councillors Rosemary Dartnall, Julian Dean, Dawn Husemann and Dan Thomas

17 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

At the outset of the meeting the Leader congratulated Children's Services for their excellent work in enabling looked after children to be cared for in Shropshire and in improving quality of care. Three homes Pebble House, Chelmaren and Berwyn Cottage had been judged by Ofsted to be outstanding and Havenbrook, Caer Bryn and Devonian judged as good. This was a fantastic achievement.

18 Disclosable Interests

None were declared

19 Statement Regarding the North West Relief Road

Cllr Heather Kidd, Leader, made a statement regarding the recently announced pause of work on the North West Relief Road.

She explained that the controversial project faced significant funding challenges, and at a meeting with the Department for Transport on 23 June 2025, it had been confirmed that the funding offer was only ever for two-thirds of the original scheme, at most £54.4 million. This left Shropshire Council to manage what would now be an estimated unaffordable £215 million cost and a minimum £155 million borrowing requirement, the repayment of which would impact on services for residents for decades.

Work on the road had therefore been paused pending discussions with the Minister, Lillian Greenwood MP. Relief would be sought on the £39 million already spent amid concerns over the council's fragile finances. The Leader also referred to contested traffic impact evidence regarding the need for the NWRR. Alternative traffic solutions for areas such as

Battlefield Enterprise roundabout, Dobbies Island, and Welshpool road were under consideration.

As soon as any outcome following further discussion with the Minister was known, members and residents would be informed.

20 Minutes

An amendment was made to section 5 of the minutes of the last meeting. The following text was removed:

“Cllr Kate Halliday – has specialist legal advice been sought on this matter and insurers advised of possible claims in relation to discrimination. The Leader endeavoured to respond to Cllr Halliday outside of the meeting and provide all details of up to date guidance and action taken”

And replaced with the following:

“Cllr Kate Halliday – has specialist legal advice been sought on this matter and insurers advised of possible claims in relation to discrimination. The Leader confirmed that no specialist advice had yet been sought or insurers notified but endeavoured to respond to Cllr Halliday outside of the meeting and provide all details of up to date guidance once received, and of any action taken.”

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2025 were then confirmed as a correct record.

21 Public Question Time

Public Questions were received from the following:

Graham Betts – in relation to Red Deer Road in Shrewsbury

John Palmer – in relation to CCTV in Shrewsbury town centre

The full questions and responses provided can be found using this link: [public and member questions](#)

22 Member Question Time

Member questions were received from:

Cllr Rosemary Dartnall –

in relation to the Weir Hill development, and progress on associated planned improvements to Belvidere Bridge and a footpath/cycle route from the estate to London Road. In response to her supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder for Highways confirmed that he would re-engage with Network Rail and seek support from the local MP in relation to the bridge. He asked Cllr Dartnall to contact him outside of the meeting so that he could give her a full briefing in relation to Weir Hill access issues.

Cllr Kate Halliday –
in relation to parking on residential streets in Belle Vue and Coleham

The full questions and answers provided to them are available here: [public and member questions](#)

23 Scrutiny Items

There were no scrutiny items.

24 Annual Treasury Report 2024/25

Cllr Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance, presented the report and invited questions. He explained that it would also be considered by Full Council at its meeting on 17 July 2025.

RESOLVED:

- 3.1. To approve the actual 2024/25 prudential and treasury indicators in this report.
- 3.2. To note the annual treasury management report for 2024/25.

25 Annual Customer Feedback (complaints) Report

Cllr Alex Wagner, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Communities introduced the Annual Customer feedback report 2024 – 2025. The report highlighted an increase in customer feedback cases, with a notable rise in complex cases, particularly at stage two and involving Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs). The average response time for stage one complaints has improved to 23 days, but 28% of these responses were overdue, with variability in handling cases across different services.

The report also covered the Ombudsman's complaint handling code, which would be used to assess complaints and recommendations from April 2026. This code would require significant changes in the council's ways of working, including logging stage one complaints within five days and responding within 10 days, with extensions allowed for another 10 days if necessary. There would be no associated additional resource to implement the new code, and the focus would need to be on demand mitigation and better responses to service requests to prevent complaints from arising in the first place.

The report set out recommendations focusing on developing new guidance and remedies, improving customer experience, addressing the increase in complex cases, and supporting staff in handling these cases. A separate report would be presented to a future meeting to assess compliance with the Ombudsman's code and outline the council's response to the new requirements. The importance of scrutiny work and preventing complaints was also highlighted, and the Deputy Leader welcomed a suggestion that scrutiny chairs be involved in reviewing relevant sections of the report.

RESOLVED:

3.1 to consider the recommendations and actions in the Annual Customer Feedback Report (pages 30 and 31) to support and improve customer feedback performance within Shropshire Council.

3.2 to note that a paper on the adoption of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code will be prepared for a future Cabinet Meeting (September 2025).

26 Financial Monitoring Period 2

Cllr Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the period 2 report which highlighted an exceptionally challenging financial position for the Council with a forecasted overspend of £13.174 million by 31 March 2026. This would result in a significant reduction of the General fund Balance if no further action was taken. Reasons included insufficient savings realization, higher-than-budgeted demand in social care, and potential unforeseen budget pressures.

Responding to questions, he reported on the aim to improve the level of general reserves to ensure the council could meet unexpected calls on service, and reported that a new Budget Forum would be set up where all group leaders would be invited to attend to maximise transparency and collaboration when it came to making difficult budget decisions.

The Portfolio Holder for Social Care reiterated the commitment to keeping residents of Shropshire safe, secure and supported appropriately and reported on hard work underway to deliver preventative services which would result in longer term savings.

The Leader referred to the challenges of delivering services in a rural county, particularly one with an aging demographic. The cancellation of the Rural Services Delivery Grant had further increased financial pressure. She reported that the forthcoming Corporate Peer Challenge would have financial sustainability within its remit and that robust representation would be made to government on the additional costs of delivering services over a large rural area.

RESOLVED:

3.1. To ensure necessary action is taken to improve Period 2 forecast (31st May 2025), by year end in terms of the indicative level of savings delivery of £31.438m (53%), resulting in a projected spend over budget of £13.174m for 2025/26.

3.2. To note the projected General Fund Balance would be £0.606m if no further action were taken.

3.3. To formally acknowledge that the current information indicates the need for urgent corrective action, and to request that the Council's senior team undertakes that urgently

27 Shropshire SEND and AP Strategy

Cllr Andy Hall, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education, presented the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy, which had been co-produced by the SEND and AP Partnership Board to support the best outcomes for children, young people, and their families. The Shropshire Parent and Care Council had contributed to the strategy in developing targets.

Further work would be undertaken on development and identification of more precise outcome measures to maximise accountability and provide a coherent and consistent direction for practitioners, providers and those supporting children.

It was noted that an update was recommended for 6 months time and a suggestion was made that a scrutiny committee be involved in a review of progress made.

RESOLVED:

3.1 To consider the final draft SEND and AP Strategy 2025 – 2029 and recommend their adoption to full Council in September.

3.2 To consider the draft Outcomes Framework and recommend their adoption to full Council in September as a 'live working document', noting the ambitions to focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

3.3 To receive an update in 6 months on the development of the implementation plans and refinement of the multi-agency workstreams to deliver the strategy. This should also include a progress update with respect to the development of measurable outcomes and further refinement of the Outcomes Framework.

28 National Planning Reform Consultations - Proposed Council Response

Cllr David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning, introduced the response to four government consultations on reforming the planning system. Whilst generally supportive of measures to increase speed up of build out and improve transparency, the response emphasised the need for local responsiveness and maintenance of robust planning requirements, particularly regarding affordable housing and biodiversity. Concerns were raised about loss of local democratic oversight and reduction of the role of local councils in decision-making. The proposed response opposed a national scheme of delegation, advocating for local approaches that recognise community contexts and supported town and parish councils.

RESOLVED:

3.1 To approve the submission of the Council's response to Government's national planning reform consultations (Planning Reform Working Paper: Speeding Up Build Out; Technical Consultation on Implementing Measures to Improve Build Out Transparency; Planning Reform Working Paper: Reforming Site Thresholds; and Reform of Planning Committees: Technical Consultation), as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

3.2. That authority be given to the Service Director - Legal and Governance in consultation

with the Portfolio Holder for Planning to agree any additional changes to the Council's response to Government's national planning reform consultations, ahead of their submission to Government.

29 Transfer of Coroner's Officers to Shropshire Council

Councillor Bernie Bentick, Portfolio Holder for Health, presented the report seeking approval for transferring six coroner's officers from West Mercia Police to Shropshire council by October 2025, due to West Mercia Police ceasing support for this function. It was noted that the Council had the ultimate statutory responsibility to support the coroner and that officers would remain based at the Guildhall and be integrated into existing services.

RESOLVED:

3.1 To authorise the transfer of the management of the six (5 FTE) Coroners Officers from West Mercia Police to Shropshire Council with the transfer of funding agreed on a tapering basis as set out in the Table at paragraph 5.3.

3.2 To authorise the Service Director – Legal and Governance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Public Protection, to agree the detail of the transfer of staff and their functions with a target date of 1st October 2025

30 Date of Next Meeting

Signed (Chairman)

Date: