

Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Guildhall,
Frankwell Quay,
Shrewsbury
SY3 8HQ

Date: Tuesday, 1 July 2025

Committee:
Cabinet

Date: Wednesday, 9 July 2025

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ

You are requested to attend the above meeting. The Agenda is attached

There will be some access to the meeting room for members of the press and public, but this will be limited. *If you wish to attend the meeting please email democracy@shropshire.gov.uk to check that a seat will be available for you.*

Please click [here](#) to view the livestream of the meeting on the date and time stated on the agenda

The recording of the event will also be made available shortly after the meeting on the Shropshire Council Youtube Channel [Here](#)

Tim Collard Service Director - Legal and Governance

Members of Cabinet

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

Your Committee Officer is:

Amanda Holyoak Democratic Services Team Leader - Committee

Tel: 01743 257714

Email: amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Disclosable Interests

Members are reminded that they must declare their disclosable pecuniary interests and other registrable or non-registrable interests in any matter being considered at the meeting as set out in Appendix B of the Members' Code of Conduct and consider if they should leave the room prior to the item being considered. Further advice can be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

3 Minutes (Pages 1 - 8)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2025.

4 Public Question Time

To receive any questions from members of the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. Deadline for notification is not later than 12 noon on Thursday 3 July 2025.

5 Member Question Time

To receive any questions from Members of the Council. Deadline for notification is not later than 12 noon on Thursday 3 July 2025.

6 Scrutiny Items

7 Statement Regarding the North West Relief Road

Lead Member – Councillor Heather Kidd, Leader

8 Annual Treasury Management Report (Pages 9 – 20)

Lead Member – Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Lead Officer – James Walton, Executive Director of Resources

9 Annual Customer Feedback (complaints) Report (Pages 21 - 62)

Lead Member – Councillor Alex Wagner, Deputy Leader and Communities

Lead Officer – Tim Collard, Service Director - Legal and Governance

10 Financial Monitoring Period 2 (Pages 63 - 80)

Lead Member – Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance

Lead Officer – James Walton, Executive Director of Resources

11 Shropshire SEND and AP Strategy (Pages 81 - 134)

Lead Member – Councillor Andy Hall, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

Lead Officer – David Shaw, Director of Children's Services

12 National Planning Reform Consultations - Proposed Council Response (Pages 135 - 174)

Lead Member – Councillor David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning

Lead Officer – Tim Collard, Service Director for Legal and Governance

13 Transfer of Coroner's Officers to Shropshire Council (Pages 175 - 182)

Lead Member – Councillor Bernie Bentick, Portfolio Holder for Health

Lead Officer – Tim Collard, Service Director Legal and Governance

14 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 10 September 2025.

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Committee and Date

Cabinet

9 July 2025

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2025
In the Council Chamber, Guildhall, Shrewsbury
10.30 am – 12:02 pm

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak
Email: amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 250893

Cabinet Members Present:

Councillors: Heather Kidd – Leader, Bernie Bentick – Portfolio Holder for Health, Roger Evans – Portfolio Holder for Finance, Ruth Houghton – Portfolio Holder for Social Care, Andy Hall – Portfolio Holder for Children and Education, James Owen – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure, Alex Wagner – Deputy Leader & Communities, David Walker – Portfolio Holder for Planning, Rob Wilson – Portfolio Holder for Transport & Economic Growth

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor David Vasmer, Portfolio Holder for Highways and Environment.

2 Disclosable Interests

None were declared.

3 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

4 Public Question Time

Public questions were received from the following:

Mike Streetly with regard to the North West Relief Road

Graham Betts with regard to planning consents for Darwin's Walk and Bowbrook

John Palmer with regard to costs around continued ownership of the Shirehall

The full questions and responses provided can be found using this link: [Questions and Responses Cabinet 11 June 2025](#)

5 Member Question Time

Member questions were received from :

Cllr Kate Halliday, regarding the recent ruling of the Supreme Court and the Equality Act

Cllr Julian Dean, regarding the timescale for implementation of the 20 mph Scheme for Copthorne and Porthill

Cllr Duncan Kerr, regarding a Waste Minimisation Strategy

Cllr Rosemary Dartnall, regarding

Cllr Andy Boddington regarding use of ANPR to prevent driving offences

The full questions and responses provided can be found using this link: [Questions and Responses Cabinet 11 June 2025](#)

The following members asked supplementary questions after receiving the response to their original question:

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.

Cllr Julian Dean – was there a timescale around implementation of the speed limit change. Cllr Wilson Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth said he would find out from the Assistant Director Infrastructure and report to Cllr Dean. He expressed his intention to increase transparency around the Infrastructure Board and use of CIL funding going forwards.

Cllr Rosemary Dartnall – would the end of June targets be met. The Leader said she would be asking for an update on targets and would share this information.

Cllr Andy Boddington – given concerns around road safety and number of deaths in the county in 2024 and 2025 to date, could road safety be prioritised with Vision Zero set as an ambition and lower speed limits implemented where there was local agreement.

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth referred to a motion he had proposed at a Full Council meeting in relation to Vision Zero. He also reported that he was considering with officers the establishment of a Road Danger Reduction Forum and had written to the Police and Crime Commissioner asking him to revisit road safety data and measures in depth.

The full questions and responses provided can be found using this link: [Questions and Responses Cabinet 11 June 2025](#)

6 Scrutiny Items

There were no scrutiny items

7 Financial Outturn 2024/25

Cllr Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance reported that the budget, agreed upon by Full Council in February 2024, showed an overspend of £34.23 million, 52% of the required savings. Reasons set out in the report included increased costs in the People's Directorate (14.4% overspend) and the Place Directorate (28% overspend) The Council had managed these overspends by using various reserves, but this had reduced the general reserves to £4.8 million and earmarked reserves to £18.8 million, levels considered well below what was appropriate given local circumstances.

The Audit Committee would also examine the report later in the year, along with the Council's Statement of Accounts, which would contain more detailed financial information.

Discussion covered the challenges of managing financial pressures while maintaining essential services, particularly in social care, and the need for realistic budget planning in the context of the need for better funding, particularly for rural authorities. The Portfolio Holder for Social Care emphasised the commitment of the Cabinet and officers to meeting the challenges of supporting and caring appropriately for an ageing population over a large rural area within the context of underfunding and the intention to campaign widely for a better settlement.

The Deputy Leader referred to work underway with Town and Parish Councils to identify services which might be better delivered more locally.

The Leader reiterated the intention of the Cabinet to lobby government hard for fairer funding, as it would not be possible to wait for the 2028 review of social care. She thanked staff for all their hard work to date in delivering services in challenging circumstances.

RESOLVED:

To agree recommendations A – L set out in the report at 3.2:

In respect of the revenue budget:

- a) Note that the outturn for overall variance in the year is £34.230m above budget.
- b) Note that the consequent level of the General Fund Balance is £4.823m.
- c) Note the use of £7.726m of Earmarked Reserves and Provisions and the resulting level of earmarked reserves of £25.455m (£18.762m if the balances held by schools are excluded).
- d) Note the £47.194m savings delivery achieved over the year
- e) Note that the combination of earmarked and un-earmarked (General) reserves of £33.275m is below a level that would be regarded as appropriate, taking into account local circumstances. The MTFS sets out an agreed plan to restore these balances to safer levels.

In respect of ringfenced funding:

- f) Note the performance of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - £3.124m (13%) surplus outturn for 2024/25 on £23.054m turnover, and the resulting level of the HRA reserve of £14.861m.
- g) Note the outturn for the DSG and the consequent level of the DSG reserve.
- h) Note that the level of school balances has decreased by £0.647m, from £7.340m in 2023/24 to £6.693m, in the financial year.

In respect of the capital programme:

- i) Approve the net budget variations of £1.946m to the 2024/25 capital programme (in Appendix 9) and the re-profiled 2024/25 capital budget of £112.640m.
- j) Approve the re-profiled capital budgets of £152.574m for 2025/26, including slippage of £4.819m from 2024/25, £72.350m for 2026/27 and £45.212m for 2027/28 as detailed in Appendix 13.
- k) Accept the outturn expenditure set out in Appendices 10 and 11 of £107.820m representing 95.7% of the revised capital budget for 2024/25.
- l) Approve retaining a balance of capital receipts set aside of £24.432m as at 31st March 2025 to generate a one-off Minimum Revenue Provision saving of £0.222m in 2025/26.

8 Treasury Management Update Quarter 4 2024/25

Cllr Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the largely technical update report for Quarter 4. A report covering the whole year would be presented at the 9 July Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED:

- a) To note that new borrowing of £101.9m for the General Fund and £19.2m for the HRA has been taken out during quarter 4, in line with the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25. This is part of the replacement of internal borrowing (using internal balances) with external borrowing (as internal balances reduce).
- b) To note the summary of the wider economic environment and the Council's borrowings and investments set out in Appendix A
- c) To note the performance within prudential indicators for quarter 4, 2024/25 (Appendix B)

9 Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 4 2024/25

The Leader introduced the report which evaluated Shropshire's performance against its strategic objectives for the fourth quarter of the financial year 2024-2025. It highlighted the use of the interactive performance dashboard, updated quarterly and including details of key performance indicators (KPIs), trends, and benchmarking against other councils. The report notes that 54 measures were updated, with 53.7% of the 41 newly reported KPIs meeting or exceeding their targets.

Positive outcomes include increased community service support for adults, lower youth unemployment compared to the West Midlands, and greater renewable energy

generation. However, there were significant concerns highlighted, such as underperformance in processing educational healthcare plans within the required timeframe and a decline in recycling rates following the introduction of garden waste charges. The report also emphasised the importance of staff morale and the need to address high turnover and sickness absence rates as changes were implemented to address ongoing financial challenges.

The Portfolio Holder for Social Care answered questions about permanency planning for children who are looked after.

The Leader reported that she had asked that all members be offered training on accessing and using the interactive performance dashboard and that this would be arranged shortly.

RESOLVED:

To note progress to date in achieving the outcomes of The Shropshire Plan (TSP).

To confirm that the KPIs currently agreed remain the same for 2025/2026 until aligned to the refresh of The Shropshire Plan in 2025/26.

10 Financial Monitoring Period 1

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report of the first four weeks of the financial year, which provided an early view of the financial position the Council would be managing in the year ahead. More would become known as the Period 2 and 3 reports became available. He referred to the recent budget reallocation alongside a significant reorganisation and the enormous challenge of delivering in year savings of £60m in the face of increasing demand. All Cabinet Members and budget holders would be asked to scrutinise budgets with urgent steps needed to reduce overspend and improve reserves.

RESOLVED:

3.1. To note that the position set out in the report reflects the best information available after the first 4 weeks of the year and hence considerable uncertainty in these early estimates.

3.2. To note that at the end of Period 1 (30th April 2024), the indicative level of savings delivery is £24.974m (42%), resulting in a projected spend over budget of £13.884m for 2025/26.

3.3. To note the control corridor that the Council will be working to for 2025/26 is as follows: Adverse £39.700m overspend Central £13.884m overspend Favourable £1.422m overspend

3.4. To note the projected General Fund Balance of £0.393m for 31 March 2026 if the projected spend over budget is realised

11 Telecare Charging Consultation

The Portfolio Holder for Social Care introduced the proposal to implement a charge for telecare services, designed to help individuals live independently in their own homes. Shropshire Council had previously provided this service free of charge including to self-funders, this made it an outlier compared to other authorities. With demand increasing the Council needed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the service.

A financial assessment would determine ability to pay for services and as part of this, support would be provided for individuals to access all eligible benefits. The proposed weekly charge was a subsidised fee of £3.45 with a subsidised installation charge of £35.00 for new users eligible to pay.

Group Leaders raised concerns including potential loss of subscribers to the service once the charge was implemented, and impact on vulnerable individuals. Some Group Leaders expressed the view that the proposal should have been presented for pre-decision scrutiny at an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was suggested that it should still be considered by a Scrutiny Committee before a decision was made to provide further opportunity to consider impact on groups with protected characteristics and ways to mitigate the impacts of charging for a key preventative service.

The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the importance pre-decision scrutiny but drew attention to the Equality Impact Assessment and full public consultation already undertaken, and the need to implement the charge quickly in the light of financial position the Council was in. Shropshire Council was an outlier in that it did not charge already, and signposting to benefits, advice, support and reassessment would be prioritised. If helpful, an implementation plan could be drawn up and shared with all members.

RESOLVED

3.1 To approve the introduction of charging for telecare services as outlined in this report with effect from 1st October 2025 on the basis that any financial contribution will be determined by reference to the Council's Adult Social Care Charging and Financial Assessment Policy for Non-residential Care 2024-25 and;

3.2 To approve that, aligned with good practice, individuals will be supported to maximise income and to access eligible benefits in order to mitigate any adverse financial impact; and;

3.3 To delegate responsibility for implementing the charging structure for telecare services provided by the Council to the Executive Director (DAS) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Social Care.

12 Pyrolysis Second Site Increase in Budget

It was noted that this item had been withdrawn and would be considered by Council 17 July 2025

13 Application by Bayston Hill Parish Council for Bayston Hill Parish to be considered as a Neighbourhood Area

The Portfolio Holder for Planning presented the report seeking approval for the application by Bayston Hill Parish Council to be considered as a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

RESOLVED:

To agree the designation of the proposed Neighbourhood Area identified on the map in Appendix B, covering the Parish of Bayston Hill as an appropriate basis for the development of a Neighbourhood Development Plan and notifies Bayston Hill Parish Council accordingly.

14 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 item.

15 Exempt Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record.

Signed (Chairman)

Date:

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Committee and Date

Cabinet
9th July 2025

Audit Committee
16th July 2025

Council
17th July 2025

Item

Public



Annual Treasury Report 2024/25

Responsible Officer:	James Walton		
email:	james.walton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258951
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder - Finance		

1. Synopsis

During 2024/25 the Council achieved all required targets for managing its financing arrangements, including day to day cashflow, short term investments and longer-term borrowings. Investment income of £1.956m was secured.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. During 2024/25, the Council complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements. The key actual prudential and treasury indicators detailing the impact of capital expenditure activities during the year, with comparison to the target set in the Treasury Strategy, are detailed in Appendix C.
- 2.2. The returns on investment were marginally short of the benchmark (-0.03%), achieving a return of 4.87%. This was partly due to the need to borrow short term cash for cash flow purposes during the year from other authorities. Also, as cash balances held are lower than in previous years, the Council needs to ensure cash balances are highly liquid, resulting in lower interest rates on short term deals. Whilst returns on investment are important, as we strive to achieve the best investment we can, the Council's priority is always to ensure security of funds and ensure we hold sufficient liquid balances. This will often mean that we cannot secure the higher rate investments as these are offered to longer term deals.
- 2.3. Treasury activities during the year have been within approved prudential and treasury indicators set and have complied with the Treasury Strategy.

3. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- 3.1. Approve the actual 2024/25 prudential and treasury indicators in this report.
- 3.2. Note the annual treasury management report for 2024/25

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. Compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the Council's Treasury Policy Statement and Treasury Management Practices and the Prudential Code for Capital Finance together with the rigorous internal controls will enable the Council to manage the risk associated with Treasury Management activities and the potential for financial loss.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands as budgeted for within the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 27 February 2025 and subsequent updates. It is also addressed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has and continues to be undertaken to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve
 - scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope,
 - delaying implementation, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2. The Council makes assumptions about the levels of borrowing and investment income over the financial year. Reduced borrowing because of capital receipt generation or delays in delivery of the capital programme will both have a positive impact of the council's cash position. Similarly, higher than benchmarked returns on available cash will also help the Council's financial position. For monitoring purposes, assumptions are made early in year about borrowing and returns based on the strategies agreed by Council in the preceding February. Performance outside of these assumptions results in increased or reduced income for the Council.
- 5.3. The 2024/25 performance is marginally below the benchmark for the reasons outlined in paragraph 2.2 of this report and has delivered income of £1.956 million which has been reflected in the Financial Outturn report for 2024/25.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. The Council's Financial Strategy includes proposals to deliver a reduced carbon footprint for the Council therefore the Treasury Team is working with the Council to achieve this. There are no climate change impacts arising from this report. Shropshire Council's investment portfolio has no level 1, 2 or 3 emissions. It comprises of straightforward cash deposits with financial institutions and other Local Authorities.

7. Background

- 7.1. The Council is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2024/25. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, (the Code), and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, (the Prudential Code).
- 7.2. During 2024/25 the minimum reporting requirements were that the full Council should receive the following reports:
- an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year
 - a mid-year treasury update report
 - an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy, (this report)
- 7.3. In addition, Cabinet has received quarterly treasury management update reports during the year.
- 7.4. The regulatory environment places responsibility on members for the review and scrutiny of treasury management policy and activities. This report is, therefore, important in that respect, as it provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Council's policies previously approved by members.
- 7.5. The Council has complied with the requirement under the Code to give prior scrutiny to all of the above treasury management reports by Cabinet before they were reported to the full Council.
- 7.6. The Council's treasury management debt and investment position is organised by the finance team to ensure adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security for investments and to manage risks within all treasury management activities. Procedures and controls to achieve these objectives are well established both through member reporting detailed in the summary, and through officer activity detailed in the Council's Treasury Management Practices. Assurance on liquidity is taken from detailed cashflow planning which is amended day by day and reviewed to identify issues and address them. Cash flow plans extend out 24 months. Day to day cash flow plans inform short term investment and borrowing planning, as well as supporting the planning for longer term investments and borrowings.

8. Borrowing Strategy and Outturn for 2024/25

- 8.1. The Council's Borrowing Strategy and Outturn position for 2024/25 can be found in Appendix A.

9. Investment Strategy and Outturn for 2024/25

- 9.1. The Council's Investment Strategy and Outturn position for 2024/25 can be found in Appendix B.

10. Compliance with Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators

- 10.1. Compliance with the Council's Treasury Limits and Prudential Indicators can be found in Appendix C.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Treasury Strategy 2024/25 – Council, 29 February 2024

Treasury Management Update Quarter 1 2024/25 – Cabinet, 11 September 2024

Treasury Management Update Quarter 2 2024/25 – Cabinet, 4 December 2024

Treasury Strategy 2024/25 Mid-Year Review – Cabinet, 4th December 2024

Treasury Management Update Quarter 3 2024/25 – Cabinet, 12 February 2025

Treasury Management Update Quarter 4 2024/25 – Cabinet, 11 June 2025

Local Member: All

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

Appendix A - Borrowing Strategy and Outturn 2024/25

Appendix B - Investment Strategy and Outturn 2024/25

Appendix C – Prudential Indicators 2024/25

APPENDIX A - BORROWING STRATEGY AND OUTTURN 2024/25

Borrowing Strategy for 2024/25

During 2024/25, the Council maintained an under-borrowed position. This meant that the capital borrowing need, (the Capital Financing Requirement), was not fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow was used as an interim measure. This strategy was prudent as although near-term investment rates were equal to, and sometimes higher than, long-term borrowing costs, the latter are expected to fall back through 2025 and 2026 in the light of economic growth concerns and the eventual dampening of inflation. The Authority has sought to minimise the taking on of long-term borrowing at elevated levels (>5%) and has focused on a policy of internal and temporary borrowing, supplemented by short-dated borrowing (<5 years) as appropriate.

The Council's borrowing requirement identified within the capital programme 2024/25 to 2026/27 was self-financing prudential borrowing of £68.7m and the need to borrow externally was considered against the Council's current under borrowed position and the level of cash balances held within the authority.

The Council had not undertaken any new borrowing for a number of years, and has been utilising cash balances to internally "borrow" for prudential borrowing schemes. This has enabled the Council to benefit from saving on interest costs compared to the returns that could be generated on the cash balances. This approach has been effective during a period where the Council has held significant cash balances.

Cash balances have now reduced as a result of reduced levels of reserves being held and loans continuing to reach their maturity dates. Therefore it has been necessary to secure additional borrowing to reduce the under-borrowed position.

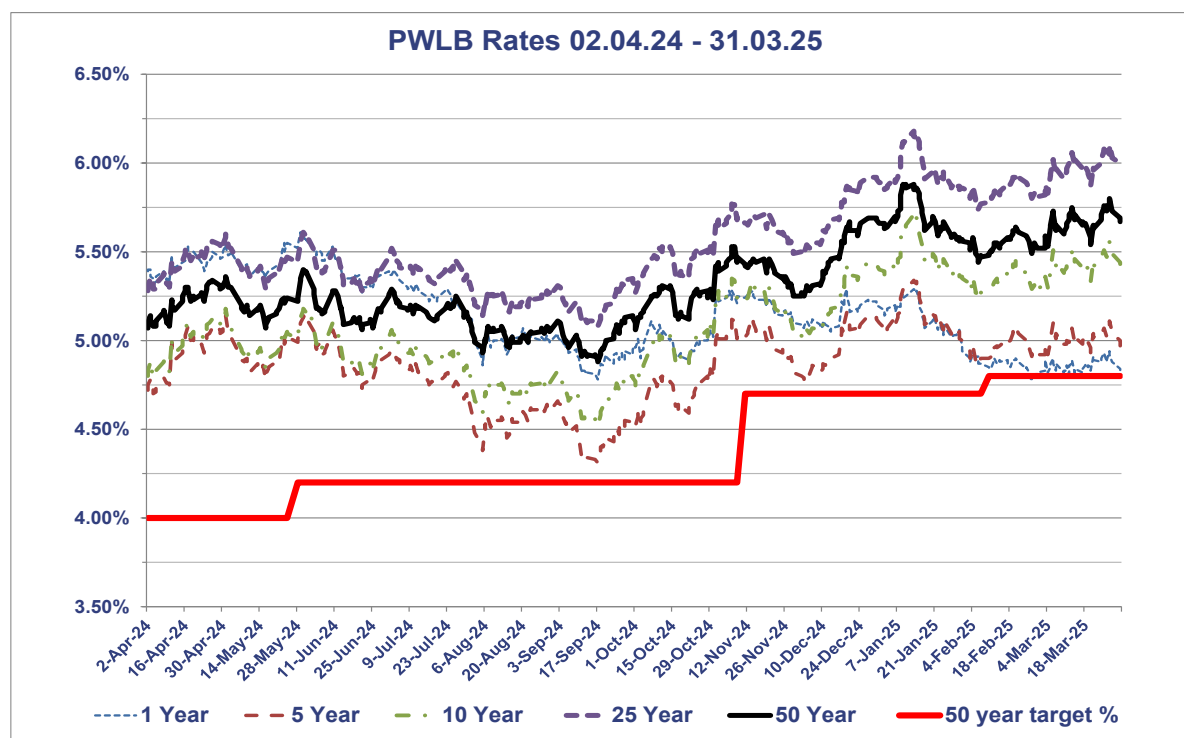
Interest rate forecasts initially suggested gradual reductions in short, medium and longer-term fixed borrowing rates during 2024/25. Bank Rate did peak at 5.25% as anticipated, but the initial expectation of significant rate reductions did not transpire, primarily because inflation concerns remained elevated. Forecasts were too optimistic from a rate reduction perspective, but more recently the forecasts, updated from November 2024 onwards, look more realistic.

At the start of April 2025, following the introduction of President Trump's trade tariffs policies, the market now expects Bank Rate to fall to 3.75% by the end of December 2025, pulling down the 5- and 10-year parts of the curve too.

This should provide an opportunity for greater certainty to be added to the debt portfolio, although a significant fall in inflation will be required to underpin any material movement lower in the longer part of the curve.

Borrowing Outturn for 2024/25

The Finance Team take advice from its external treasury advisor, MUFG Corporate Markets, on the most opportune time to borrow. Movements in rates during 2024/25 are shown in the graph below.



The table below shows PWLB borrowing rates for a selection of maturity periods. The table also shows the high and low points in rates during the year, average rates during the year and individual rates at the start and the end of the financial year.

	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
Low	4.77%	4.31%	4.52%	5.08%	4.88%
Date	26/02/2025	17/09/2024	17/09/2024	17/09/2024	17/09/2024
High	5.61%	5.34%	5.71%	6.18%	5.88%
Date	29/05/2024	13/01/2025	13/01/2025	13/01/2025	09/01/2025
Average	5.14%	4.86%	5.07%	5.56%	5.32%
Spread	0.84%	1.03%	1.19%	1.10%	1.00%

PWLB rates are based on gilt (UK Government bonds) yields through HM Treasury determining a specified margin to add to gilt yields. The main influences on gilt yields are Bank Rate, inflation expectations and movements in US treasury yields. Inflation targeting by the major central banks has been successful over the last 30 years in lowering inflation and the real equilibrium rate for central rates has fallen considerably due to the high level of borrowing by consumers: this means that central banks do not need to raise rates as much now to have a major impact on consumer spending, inflation, etc. This has pulled down the overall level of interest rates and bond yields in financial markets over the last 30 years.

Gilt yields have been volatile through 2024/25. Indeed, the low point for the financial year for many periods was reached in September 2024. Thereafter, and especially following the Autumn Statement, PWLB Certainty rates have remained elevated at between c5% - 6% with the exception of the slightly cheaper shorter dates.

At the close of 31 March 2025, the 1-year PWLB Certainty rate was 4.82% whilst the 25-year rate was 5.98% and the 50-year rate was 5.67%.

There is likely to be a fall in gilt yields and PWLB rates across the whole curve over the next one to two years as Bank Rate falls and inflation (on the Consumer Price Index measure) moves lower.

Loans that have been drawn during 2024/25 are as follows:

General Fund

Lender	Principal	Type	Interest Rate	Maturity
PWLB	£25m	Fixed interest rate	5.24%	18 months
PWLB	£35m	Fixed interest rate	4.89%	12 months
PWLB	£20m	Fixed interest rate	4.83%	12 months
PWLB	£15m	Fixed interest rate	4.85%	22 months
PWLB	£5m	Fixed interest rate	4.87%	26 months
PWLB	£12m	Fixed interest rate	4.90%	25 months
PWLB	£14.9m	Fixed interest rate	4.90%	25 months

Housing Revenue Account

Lender	Principal	Type	Interest Rate	Maturity
PWLB	£19.187m	Fixed interest rate	4.63%	18 months

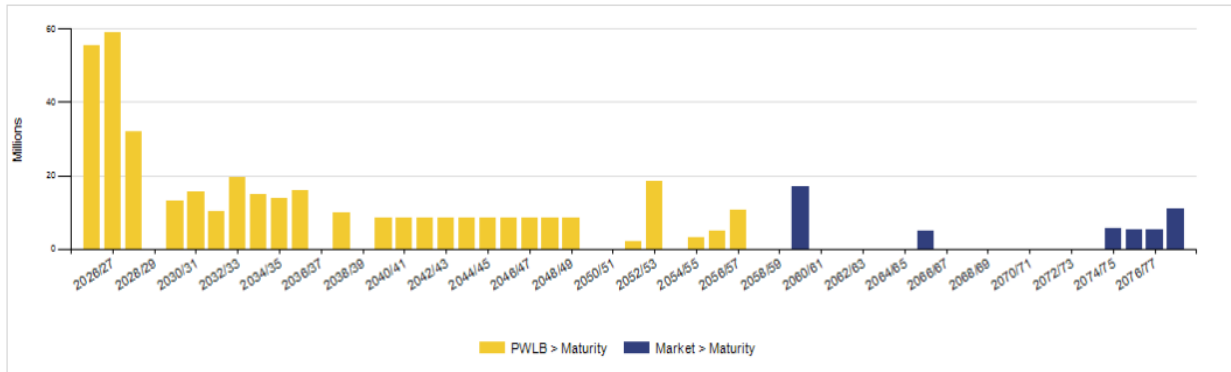
The Authority has not borrowed more than, or in advance of its needs, purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed.

The maturity profile of the debt is evenly spread to avoid large repayments in any one financial year. As highlighted above, there has been a tendency over the last 12 months to secure short term borrowing as interest rates are anticipated to reduce over the next 2 years. The total debt portfolio has a maturity range from 1 year to 53 years.

The Treasury Strategy allows up to 15% of the total outstanding debt to mature in any one year. It is prudent to have the Council's debt maturing over many years so

as to minimise the risk of having to refinance when interest rates may be high. The actual debt maturity profile is within these limits

Debt Summary for Shropshire Council



Debt Rescheduling

Debt rescheduling opportunities have increased over the course of the past six months and will be considered if giving rise to long-term savings.

The Council was provided with an opportunity to renegotiate two of the Market Loans held. This involved a reduction in the maturity date of the loans, but also a lower interest rate was negotiated. This has delivered a benefit in 2024/25 of £0.977m.

Debt rescheduling is only be undertaken:

- to generate cash savings at minimum risk.
- to help fulfil the treasury strategy.
- to enhance the balance of the long term portfolio by amending the maturity profile and/or volatility of the portfolio.

APPENDIX B - INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND OUTTURN 2024/25

Investment Strategy 2024/25

When the Treasury Strategy was approved in March 2024, our treasury advisor had predicted that the Bank rate would decrease during 2024/25 as the inflation rate reduced in the economy. The below forecast table was included in the Treasury Strategy report 2024/25.

UK Interest Rate Forecast

Link Group Interest Rate View 08.01.24													
	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27
BANK RATE	5.25	5.25	4.75	4.25	3.75	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.30	4.80	4.30	3.80	3.30	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
6 month ave earnings	5.20	5.10	4.60	4.10	3.70	3.30	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10
12 month ave earnings	5.00	4.90	4.40	3.90	3.60	3.20	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.10	3.20	3.20
5 yr PWLB	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.50
10 yr PWLB	4.70	4.50	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.70	3.70	3.70
25 yr PWLB	5.20	5.10	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.10
50 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.60	4.40	4.20	4.10	4.00	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90

In 2024/25 investment of surplus cash continued to be managed by the finance team. The investment priorities are the security of capital and the liquidity of its investments. The Council also aims to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. Investments are made in line with the Council's policy on creditworthiness which was approved in the Annual Investment Strategy.

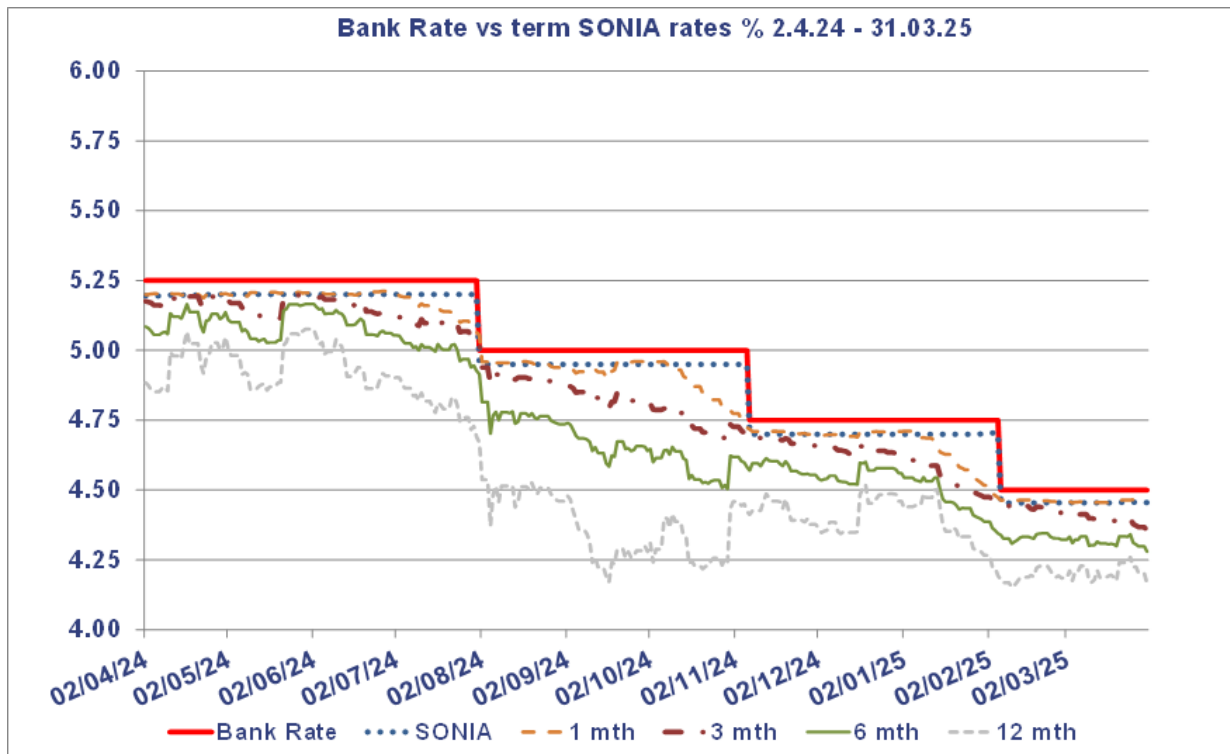
Investment Outturn 2024/25

Investment returns remained robust throughout 2024/25 with Bank Rate reducing steadily through the course of the financial year (three 0.25% rate cuts in total), and even at the end of March the yield curve was still relatively flat, which might be considered unusual as further Bank Rate cuts were expected in 2025/26.

Bank Rate reductions of 0.25% occurred in August, November and February, bringing the headline rate down from 5.25% to 4.5%. Each of the Bank Rate cuts occurred in the same month as the Bank of England publishes its Quarterly Monetary Policy Report, therein providing a clarity over the timing of potential future rate cuts.

As of early April 2025, market sentiment has been heavily influenced of late by President Trump's wide-ranging trade tariffs policy. Commentators anticipate a growing risk of a US recession, whilst UK GDP is projected by the Office for Budget Responsibility to remain tepid, perhaps achieving 1% GDP growth in 2025/26.

Movements in short term rates through the year are shown in the graph below.



At 31 March 2025 the allocation of the cash portfolio was as follows:

Maturity Date	£m
Under 1 month	50.6
1-3 months	0
3-6 months	0
6-9 months	0
9-12 months	0
TOTAL	50.6

The average return on cash investments for the internal treasury team during the year was a return of 4.87%. Recognising the need to manage short term cash flow requirements, the target for the internal team is the Overnight SONIA rate (4.90%). Therefore, the internal finance team are marginally short of the benchmark by 0.03%, which reflects the fact that during the year, the team had to secure short term cash from other local authorities to manage cashflow.

APPENDIX C – PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2024/25

The Prudential Code requires the Council to set Prudential Indicators in the Treasury Strategy and report performance against those indicators in the Annual Treasury Report.

As can be seen from the table below, all of the actual indicators are below the targeted level that was set out in the Treasury Strategy for 2024/25. Some variations may appear in sub categories such as in Prudential Indicator 1. This refers to the capital expenditure anticipated during the year, and as can be seen from the indicator, non-HRA capital expenditure has exceeded the original target which may be due to additional funding becoming available during the year. HRA expenditure is lower than the revised indicator and so total capital expenditure still lies within the targeted level.

Prudential Indicators	2024/25 Revised Indicator	2024/25 Actual
1. Capital Expenditure Non-HRA HRA (applies only to housing authorities) TOTAL Financing of capital expenditure Capital receipts Capital grants Other contributions Major Repairs Allowance Revenue Net financing need for the year	£88.2m £29.3m £117.5m £9.8m £57.2m £5.5m £4.8m £0.2m £40.0m	£90.5m £17.4m £107.8m (£0.8m) £61.6m £17.5m £8.6m £0.8m £20.1m
2. Net Borrowing & Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) Non – HRA HRA TOTAL CFR Movement in CFR Gross Borrowing (including HRA) Borrowing to replace previous Internal Borrowing Investments Net Borrowing	£345m £111m £456m £33m £285m £152m £50m £387m	£346m £101m £447m £32m £420m £51m £369m
3. Authorised Limit for External Debt Borrowing Other long term liabilities (PFI) TOTAL	£612m £86m £698m	£420m £111m £531m
4. External Debt – Operational Boundary Borrowing Other long term liabilities (PFI) TOTAL	£546m £86m £632m	£420m £111m £531m

5. Borrowing Limits	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	£273m	£546m	£420m
Variable Interest Rate Exposure	£0m	£273m	£0m
6. Investment Limits	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
Fixed Interest Rate Exposure	£250m	£250m	£51m
Variable Interest Exposure	£0m	£0m	0
7. Maturity Structure of Fixed/Variable Rate Borrowing During 2023/24	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	
Under 12 mths	0%	15%	13%
12 mths & within 24 mths	0%	15%	14%
24 mths & within 5 years	0%	45%	11%
5 years & within 10 years	0%	75%	18%
10 years & within 20 years	0%	100%	18%
20 years & within 30 years	0%	100%	18%
30 years & within 40 years	0%	100%	4%
40 years & within 50 years	0%	100%	1%
50 years and above	0%	100%	4%
8. Investment Limits			
Upper Limits for Total Principal Sums Invested for over 365 days:			
Externally managed	£50m		£0m
Internally Managed	£70m		£0m



Committee and Date

Cabinet
9th July

Item

11

Public



Annual Customer Feedback Report 2024/25

Responsible Officer:	Tim Collard		
email:	Tim.Collard@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 252756
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr Alex Wagner		

1. Synopsis

The report summarises the annual customer feedback for 2024/25. In 2024/25, 3,079 cases of feedback (comments, compliments and complaints) were received, with 952 complaints progressing to investigation and 144 complaints considered beyond stage 1. There has been some improvement in average response times, but challenges remain linked to increasing complexity and growing customer demand.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Formal feedback and complaints provide valuable information related to the health of the organisation and as such fit within the Healthy Organisation priority within the Shropshire Plan. The Strategic objective of most relevance is: 'We will put our resources in the right place using accurate data, insights and evidence to support the delivery of the organisation's priorities and balance the books'.
- 2.2 This report gives an overview of formal customer feedback received and recorded by Shropshire Council in 2024/25, covering complaints, compliments and comments. Ombudsman's annual data is also included alongside information on the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code ("the Code") (which is due to be fully implemented in April 2026) and a self-assessment. In total, the council received 3,079 cases of formal feedback, including 2,386 complaint cases resulting in 952 complaint investigations, 245 comments and 448 compliments.
- 2.3 While the long-term trend is of increasing numbers of cases received, up by 55% since 2016/17, year on year the volume of complaint investigations has stabilised.

There is a concern that this could be linked to resourcing of the process rather than any improvement in customer satisfaction or early action to remedy cases prior to investigation.

- 2.4 A key benchmark in measuring how the council handles complaints is the average time taken to respond to a complaint. The council currently has a corporate standard of responding to complaints at stage 1 within 30 working days. This had increased significantly in previous years, but this year's data shows that focus on this area has seen the average response time reduce to 23 days. Despite this average improvement 28% of stage 1 responses were overdue.
- 2.5 The number of complaints progressing beyond Stage 1 through either the council's own processes or to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) has increased. 15% of all complaint investigations are now stage 2 or beyond (double the proportion 2 years ago).
- 2.6 In total 79 complaints were referred to the LGSCO in 2024/25. Of these, 31 cases were decided and 15 investigated. 9 cases were upheld. Appendix 2 of the Annual Report details the actions required when fault was identified.
- 2.7 As part of annual reporting, local authorities are asked to complete a self-assessment to demonstrate compliance with the Code. Organisations should also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Members are asked 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. Members are asked 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).

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. Effective monitoring and follow-up of complaints provides the opportunity to minimise risks through the identification of themes, areas of concern and opportunities for remedial actions, learning and improvements.
- 4.2. The complaints process plays an important part in capturing residents' opinion of Shropshire Council's services, where there may be shortcomings and how these can be rectified. Having an effective and open comment, complaint and feedback process is commonly referred to within external assessment and inspection processes including Ofsted, CQC, Corporate Peer Reviews and the recent Best Value Guidance.

4.3. Risk table:

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
Reporting customer feedback and complaints performance can lead to the risk of misinterpretation, particularly since benchmarking data is not available for comparison with other local authorities (only Ombudsman cases can be compared).	Steps have been taken to provide context and explanation within the full report such as the inclusion of performance over the last few years for context.
Implementing improvement recommendations may be challenging in a context of growing service pressures.	This report and the next annual report will show progress and comments against planned actions. This means any implementation challenges can be explained.
Shropshire Council is currently embedding a new structure and operating model. This may lead to a changing picture of customer feedback during the coming year. This may also hamper some service's ability to prioritise complaint responses and some response may take longer than usual	Quarterly reporting is in place internally (with other reports also provided where needed). This allows changes to be identified early and any action taken to address changes in performance. Regular monitoring of response times will also help to identify any problem areas.
The report highlights that more complaints are progressing beyond stage 1. This presents the risk that complaints are taking longer to address and action/budget to remedy issues is becoming more challenging.	Performance measures are in place to monitor impact of changes. Plans are in place to design system changes to help monitor actions resulting from complaints.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial pressures as detailed within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved by Council on 27 February 2025 and subsequent updates. It is also addressed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has and continues to be undertaken to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve
- scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope,
 - delaying implementation, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2. This report presents information to support decision making and does not itself carry any direct financial implications. However, investment is required to enable Shropshire Council to implement and comply with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. This will be covered within a future report. The self-assessment identifies some of the main actions required but detailed guidance produced by the Ombudsman highlights further suggested action.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

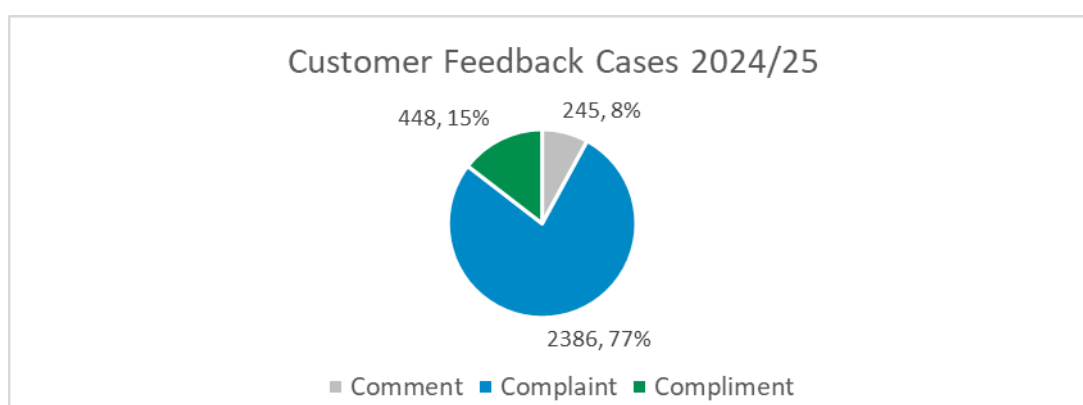
- 6.1. There are no direct effects on the council's climate change agenda. Complaints processes are predominantly carried out through electronic communications with limited environmental impact.

7. Background

- 7.1. The Customer Feedback Annual Report is prepared by the Council's Feedback and Insight Team who handle the corporate and statutory processes for recording and responding to formal comments, compliments and complaints (the Complaints Monitoring Officer leads corporate stage 2 complaints and takes on the role as the Ombudsman link officer). Processes for adult and children's social care complaints are statutory and are set nationally. These processes are not impacted by the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.
- 7.2. Annual reports are prepared and presented to Members to provide an overview of customer feedback performance for the year. A new requirement by the Ombudsman means that annual reports must now also include a self-assessment against implementation of the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (the September 2025 report will cover this in more detail).

8. Annual Performance

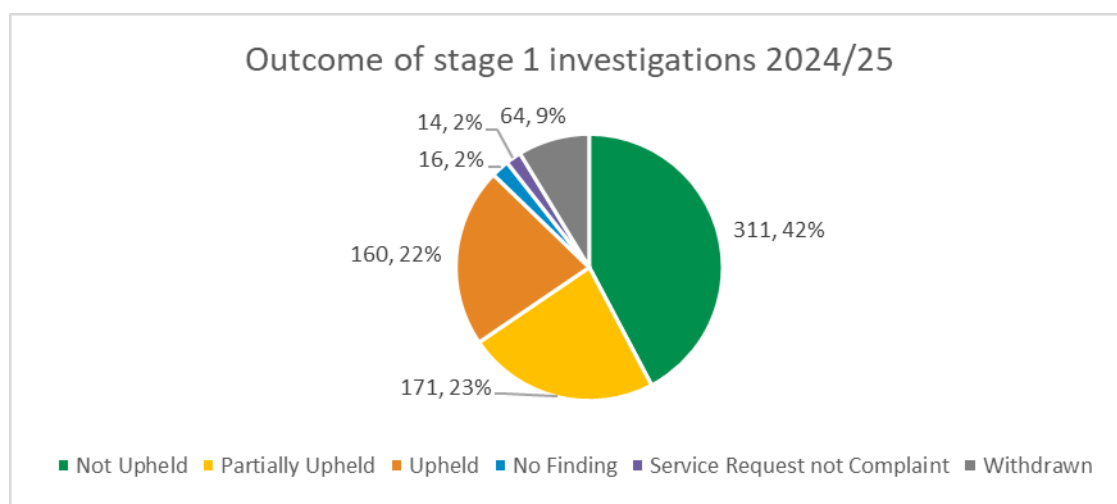
- 8.1 Shropshire Council received 3,079 cases of formal feedback in 2024/25, a 17% increase on the previous year. The breakdown of the feedback by type is as follows:



- 8.2 At investigation stage there were 749 corporate complaints, 162 Adult Services statutory complaints (including provider complaints and multi-agency complaints) and 41 Children's Services statutory complaints. Statutory complaints are considered in more detail within other reports to ensure statutory reporting requirements are fulfilled.
- 8.3 The initial 2,386 complaints at case level resulted in 952 complaint investigations in total (as described in 8.2 above), similar to the previous year. Not every complaint received requires investigation as some may be resolved early without the need for

a full investigation, for example because the complaint is withdrawn or is recorded as a request for a service. However, the volume of cases identified as complaints and then early closed has increased and now seems disproportionate, suggesting problems in the customer journey. Of the early closures, 397 cases (55%) had to be early closed because the complainant chose not to provide contact details (anonymous complaints cannot be investigated). 13% were outside of the council's jurisdiction and 8% were insurance claims. Analysis by the Feedback and Insight Team suggested 42% of complaints raised at case level should have been considered as service requests and not directed to the complaint processes. This is a significant figure requiring further consideration and action.

- 8.4 It should be noted that customer feedback data for 2024/25 does not reflect the recent council re-structure as part of the new operating model and work is required to bring reporting and systems in line with it. Considering complaints by service area, the Place Directorate (as was), which had most of the Council's public facing services (such as Highways and Transport, Waste and Leisure), received 33% of the Council's complaints. Resources and the Office of the Chief Executive received 24% of complaints followed by Adult Services 22% and Children's Services on 21%. Children's Services has seen a significant increase in the last 2 years.
- 8.5 The most complained about services are Highways, Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care and Waste. A closer look at upheld complaints (a better measure for performance) shows that 21% were with Highways and Transport (a significant improvement compared to 2021/22 at 32% but more than the 17% in 2023/24). 18% were for Special Educational Needs and Disability within Learning and Skills, 14% Adult Social Care Operations - Community and 9% were with Waste Management.
- 8.6 During 2024/25 Shropshire Council took an average of 23 working days to respond to stage 1 complaints (against the 30 working day timescale). This has been the dominant performance issue over the last 2 years. The Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code requires corporate complaints to be responded to within 10 working days in future (with a 10-day extension for the most complex cases). Although Shropshire Council's average has reduced, suggesting some improvement, this is due to very short response times within some service areas. There are still too many cases exceeding the timescales, this may be due to reduced officer capacity within a service or the result of cases that are difficult to resolve or require significant time to resolve. Additional analysis shows that of the 565 stage 1 corporate closed complaints, 156 were late and 409 (72%) were on time.
- 8.7 In 2024/25 at the end of Stage 1, 42% of complaints were not upheld, 22% were upheld, 23% were partly upheld (often where a complaint might have multiple points within it). 2% had no finding and 11% were withdrawn or were a service request rather than a complaint. Slightly more complaints are resulting in some finding of fault, but this should not be viewed too negatively, and very low upheld rates can be considered as a sign of poor complaint handling and lack of acceptance of fault and learning.



- 8.8 Effective Stage 1 complaints handling reduces the number of complaints escalating to Stage 2 or beyond. Over the last few years there has been a steady increase in escalations. In 2024/25 144 cases progressed beyond Stage 1, either to Stage Two, Stage 3 (children's statutory) or going to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) (significantly more than the 95 in 2023/24 and 126 in 2023/24).

9. Ombudsman's Annual Report

- 9.1 In May 2025, the Council received its [annual feedback report from the LGSCO](#). In total 79 complaints were referred to the LGSCO in 2024/25 and of those, 31 cases were decided and 15 investigated. 9 cases were upheld. Appendix 2 of the Annual Report details the actions required when fault was identified.
- 9.2 The Ombudsman reports Shropshire Council's upheld rate at 60%. The LGO upheld rate for similar local authorities is reported as 80%.
- 9.3 Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations was 100% in 2024/25. The rate of complaints per 100,000 population is 2.7% for Shropshire Council in 2024/25 against an average of 5.3% for all authorities.
- 9.4 The Complaint Handling Code ('the Code'), sets out a process for organisations that will allow them to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. The purpose of the Code is to enable organisations to resolve complaints raised by individuals promptly, and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It will also help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and individuals. A report will be brought to Cabinet on the adoption of the Complaint Handling Code.

9. Self-Assessment

- 10.1 The Complaints Handling Code includes a requirement for local authorities to undertake a self-assessment against the Code and to report progress within an annual report. A self-assessment is included within the annual report on pages 24 to 29. The Code states *'The annual complaints performance and service improvement report should be reported through the organisation's governance arrangements and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The response to the report from the relevant governance arrangement should be published alongside this'*.
- 10.2 The self-assessment, carried out by the Feedback and Insight Team Leader concludes compliance with that 27 elements of the code (green colour coded), 23 elements are considered partly in place (yellow) and it is considered that Shropshire Council is not complying with 16 elements (orange). There is significant work required before Shropshire Council could report compliance with all areas of the Code. There is additional work required to implement 7 guidance documents published alongside the Code (including commissioned services complaint handling, effective scrutiny of complaints, oversight of complaints systems and adult social care complaints and appeals).

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 The customer feedback data for 2024/25 highlights a number of challenges for the year ahead, particularly in relation to the significant performance improvements that will be required under the Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code. Over the year, the monthly average was 257 customer feedback cases (more than the previous year at 219). This is also reflected in quarterly totals and in 2024/25 each quarter saw an increase in the number of customer feedback cases being raised. There has been a 55% increase in customer feedback from 2016/17 whilst the level of resources available to manage the complaints process has remained the same.
- 11.2 The recommendations in the Annual Report highlight areas of focus designed to improve customer feedback handling and performance. Key areas of focus arising from the 2024/25 annual report include:
- A. The need to develop new guidance on remedies and reasonable adjustments (the latter ensuring application of the Equality Act 2010).
 - B. The need to review and consider complaint handling by third-party providers.
 - C. The importance of improving customer experience and reducing the number of customer feedback cases being raised as complaints when customers are requesting a service or action to resolve a concern.
 - D. More work to address increases in the number of cases progressing to stage 2 and beyond of the complaints processes. A focus on improved quality of response at stage 1 should help to reverse this trend.

- E. Support for staff in dealing with increasingly complex complaint cases and cases where customer behaviours can be challenging or abusive (including application of the unreasonably persistent and vexatious customers procedure).
- F. A focus on learning and actions so that service improvement may be generated. It is important for senior managers to ensure their staff understand the importance and value of the complaints processes and effective complaint handling to help prevent failure demand through inadequate complaint responses and a lack of action to remedy and resolve concerns.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: All

Appendices

Shropshire Council's Customer Feedback Annual Report 2024/25

Customer Feedback Annual Report

Shropshire Council

2024/25

Feedback and Insight Team, Shropshire Council
June 2025



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1. Introduction

Shropshire Council's annual customer feedback report presents an overview of the formal feedback received, and responded to, by Shropshire Council between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. The report includes performance data for complaints, compliments and comments. The annual customer feedback report is made available to members of the public, councillors and council staff. The report complements the quarterly reporting and regular service-based monitoring reporting that takes place during the year. This more regular reporting is used to gain an understanding of customer experiences and the identification of any patterns in feedback. It supports the work that takes place to identify learning and actions designed to prevent further complaints and generate improvement.

This report also covers additional reporting requirements set out by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman within the Complaints Handling Code published in 2024. The Complaint Handling Code ('the Code'), sets out guidance for a process for organisations that will allow them to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. The purpose of the Code is to enable organisations to resolve complaints raised by individuals promptly, and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements. The Ombudsman also hopes the Code will help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and individuals. The Code does not replace any existing statutory complaint processes such as The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 or Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009. The Ombudsman has issued the Code as "advice and guidance" for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. Local compliance will be assessed in Ombudsman findings from April 2026.

Complaints containing an element of social care fall under the statutory guidelines. These are classed as statutory complaints for either adult or children's services and are handled in line with the national statutory complaint procedures. The remainder of complaints are corporate complaints. Corporate complaints relate to administration or other types of services that do not provide social care. These are handled under the Council's corporate complaints procedure, set locally. You can find out more on Shropshire Council's website.

This report provides a council-wide view of formal customer feedback. Annual reports are also prepared for Adult Services and Children's Services allowing for a more detailed consideration of feedback for those service areas. Those reports are also published on Shropshire Council's website and are used to support key performance and inspection processes.

Definitions

Complaint: A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals. Family members and advocates may make a complaint on behalf of one of our customers. We will ask for consent to ensure that the complaint is not being made against the customer's wishes.

Service request: A request that the organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision.

Compliment: Many people get in touch with a compliment when the information or support they have received has exceeded their expectations. It is helpful to learn when a service has been provided well or when a member of staff has done a great job. We record unsolicited compliments (we don't formally record positive feedback generated through feedback forms or between staff).

2. The Corporate Complaints Process

Feedback Received

Shropshire Council encourages users of our services, their family members and carers to highlight any concerns so that they may be addressed. If problems cannot be resolved and the customer wishes to make a complaint, staff members can offer advice on how to make a complaint. Support is also available from complaints officers based within Shropshire Council's Feedback and Insight Team.

Telephone: 0345 678 9000

Email: customer.feedback@shropshire.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/feedback/>

Online: Log into the My Shropshire portal



Acknowledgment

Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of being received and we let the complainant know how their complaint will be handled.



STAGE 1

An appropriate Investigating Officer will be allocated to the case and asked to investigate the complaint. This is usually a manager within the service area the complaint relates to. The complainant will be provided with a written response within approximately 30 working days. (The timescale under the new Complaint Handling Code is 10 working days). In some complex cases it may take longer but we let the customer know if this extra time is needed and why (extensions must be agreed). The Investigating Officer will write to explain the outcome of their investigation, any learning or actions and information outlining how to progress the complaint if the customer is not satisfied with the outcome.



STAGE 2 - Review

The complaint will be reviewed by a more senior manager, commissioner, or in most cases, the Complaints Monitoring Officer. They will review the Stage 1 complaint and decide if there is more the service can do to address the concerns raised. If the reviewing officer believes the service has done all they can reasonably do, the customer will be written to and advised of this. They will also be given information about the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.



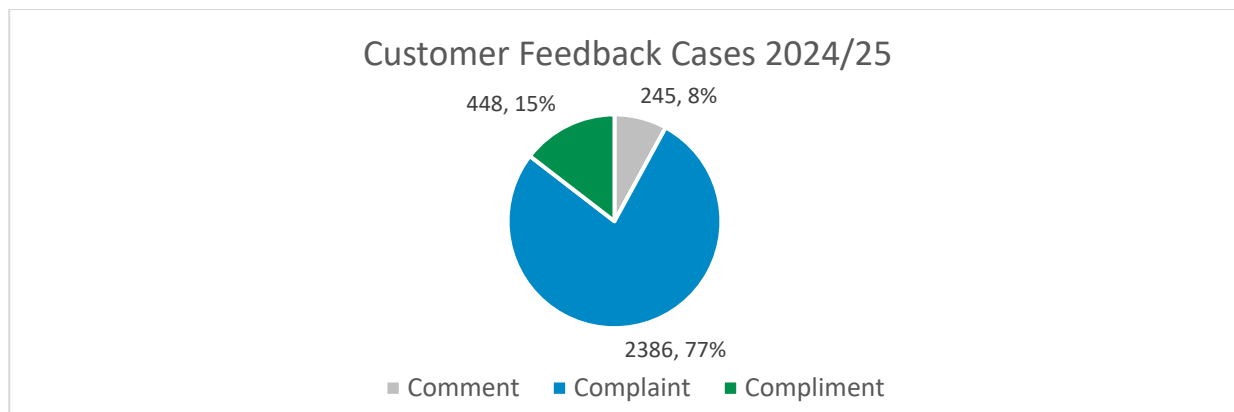
Ombudsman If a complaint cannot be resolved locally it can be investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO). Responses are often complex, lengthy and require a large volume of appendices to be collated, catalogued and returned to the LGO. Complainants can request to go to the Ombudsman without a review if they choose to although they may be referred back to complete the local complaint process.

The Feedback and Insight Team coordinates the complaints process, recording and allocating complaints for investigation, monitoring response dates and overseeing performance. We cannot promise to get the result complainants want, but we do work to ensure that complaints are dealt with in line with the complaints procedures. We aim to keep customers informed of what is happening and the progress being made.

3. Customer Feedback 2024/25

Within the year 2024/25 Shropshire Council received and recorded 3,079 cases of formal feedback. There were:

- 2,386 initial complaint cases
- 245 comments
- 448 compliments

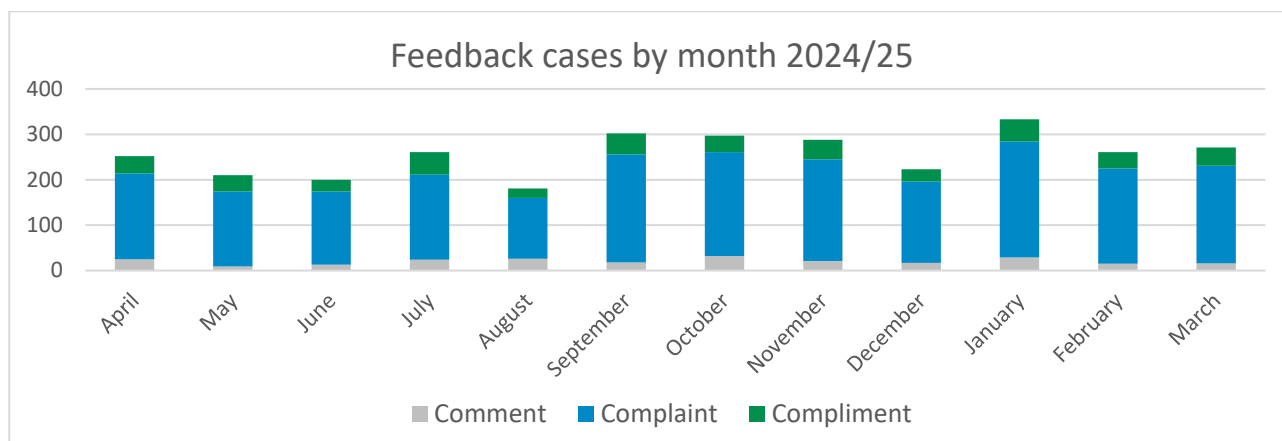


Comments and other enquiries formed 8.0% of all feedback cases and 14.6% of all customer feedback cases were compliments. The 2,386 complaint cases formed 77.5% of all formal feedback and resulted in 952 complaint investigations. Not all complaints cases will result in an investigation. There are a wide range of reasons a complaint may be closed before investigation such as it was a service request, anonymous, outside of the Council's jurisdiction, redirected to another process such as an appeal or claim, withdrawn or early resolved.

The 952 complaint investigations were handled under the different statutory and corporate complaints processes. There were:

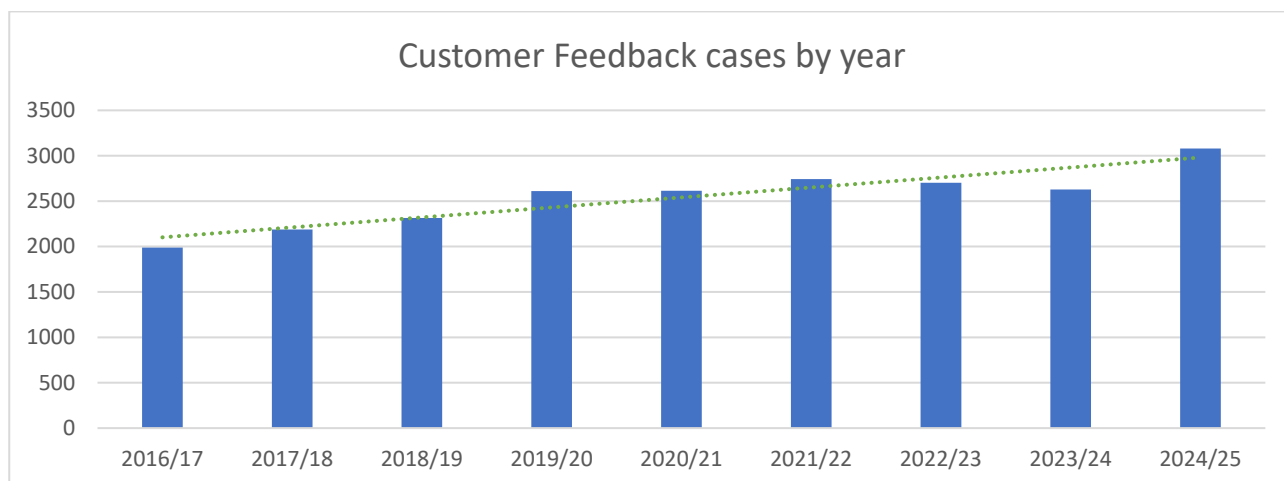
- 749 Corporate complaints
- 162 Adult Services statutory complaints (including provider complaints and multi-agency complaints)
- 41 Children's Services statutory complaints

Feedback levels can vary over the year with slight fluctuations influenced by changes in weather conditions (e.g. heavy rain causing flooding, snow and ice impacting highways) or other factors. Overall, unlike some past years, 2024/25 didn't see any dramatic increases or fluctuations due to severe weather conditions. There were some peaks in complaints as a result of public consultation and service changes made as part of Shropshire Council's response to budget pressures.



Over the year, the monthly average was 257 customer feedback cases (more than the previous year at 219). Customer feedback cases were relatively steady across the year with slight decreases in June and August. January (333), September (302) and October (297) saw the greatest number of feedback cases, marking very different patterns to the previous year. Looking across the years, September is often a busy month. There were 223 customer feedback cases in December, and this is commonly the month with the fewest cases, although in 2024/25 August saw the least feedback.

Performance data is considered by quarter. In 2024/25 quarter 1 (April to the end of June) saw the smallest quarter total with a steady increase through the year to 865 in quarter 4. The pattern is very different to the previous year making forecasting difficult. It suggests a steady upward trend unless there is change in 2025/26. Overall customer feedback case volumes have increased over recent years. The 2023/24 financial year suggested a plateauing with numbers relatively stable for the previous 3 years but 2024/25 has again seen another increase. There has been a 55% increase in customer feedback from 2016/17 and the chart below shows the upward trend line for customer feedback. There has been a 17% increase in all cases from 2023/24 to 2024/25. Due to budget pressures the resources allocated to manage customer feedback have not increased in line with growing demand. Research with 8 other similar local authorities highlights that team sizes were generally much larger. Shropshire Council's complaints officers have average caseloads of 282 complaints compared to an average of 118 among those surveyed.

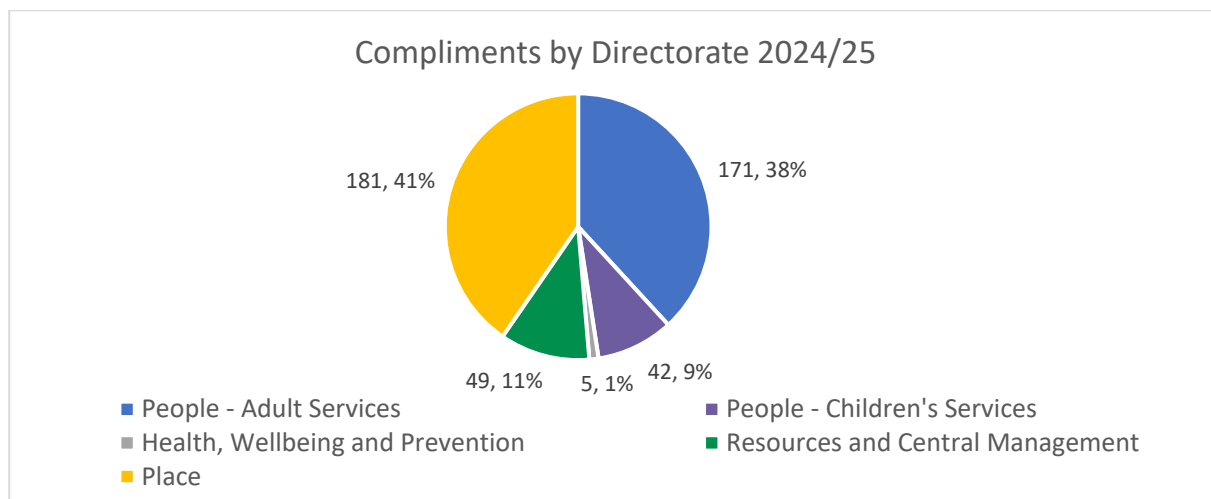


Work takes place to monitor the proportion of complaints within annual customer feedback totals. Over previous years there had not been any dramatic change and the proportion fluctuated slightly between 40% and 44%. However, this last year has seen dramatic change. In 2024/25 77% of all customer feedback cases raised were complaints.

Towards the end of the financial year the council implemented a significant restructure. Due to the timing of that restructure the data in this report is more reflective of previous structures. Efforts will be made in 2025 to bring reporting in line with new structures (see recommendations).

A closer look at compliments shows that the Place directorate (now split across Infrastructure, Strategy, Legal and Governance, and Communities & Customer) received the largest number of compliments (181 compliments, 40.4%) followed by People Adult Services (171, 38.2%). Due to the restructure this is the last year that change over time can be reported at a directorate or unit level.

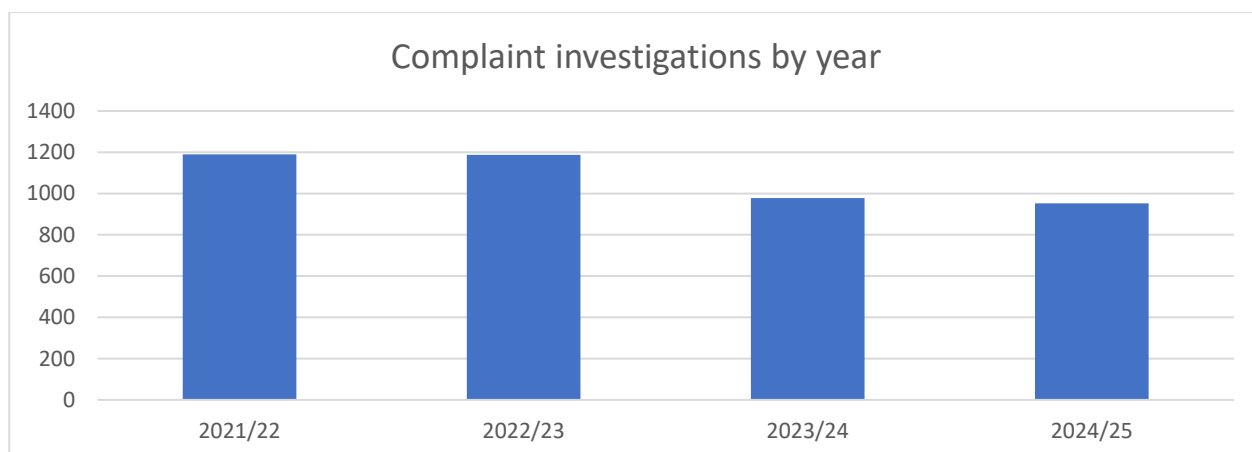
Adult Services and Children's Services data is presented separately rather than as the People Directorate (as was in 2024/25) due to the different complaint procedures for statutory cases and national reporting requirements.



Complaints (and some comments) are explored at greater depth than other types of feedback and may result in investigations. There may be multiple investigations for each complaint case, or a complaint case may be closed before it reaches investigation stage (for example it may be outside of the council's jurisdiction, or the complainant may decide to withdraw their complaint because they have received a response/service). A complaint may refer to the services provided by more than one council department, in which case there will be more than one investigation. Investigations are led by officers (usually team or service managers) with a detailed knowledge of the service area. In 2024/25 there were 2,386 complaints cases and 952 complaint investigations.

Complaint investigations do not always result in a complete investigation and outcome. Once a complaint case is explored in more detail, it is possible that a different course of action is required (e.g. an insurance claim or appeals process), or once the complaint is more fully understood it may be concluded that the complainant is merely asking for a simple remedial action to resolve a concern rather than wishing to proceed through a formal complaint investigation (a request for a service). Of the 2,386 complaints cases, many had an early closure reason allocated to indicate that the complaint did not result in a full investigation. Reasons for early closure may be that the complainant did not want to provide contact details or details to allow an investigation to proceed, the issue may not have been concerning a council or a commissioned service, or a more appropriate process may have been available (such as an appeal). Of the early closures, 397 cases (55%) had to be early closed because the complainant chose not to provide contact details (anonymous complaints cannot be investigated). 13% were outside of the council's jurisdiction and 8% were insurance claims. Complaint outcomes are explored in more detail later in the report and this is picked up within the report recommendations.

The following paragraphs are based on complaints investigations against which more detailed information is captured. The performance measures Shropshire Council uses to monitor complaints are largely based on complaints investigations.



Within the last few years considerable effort has been made to assess and 'triage' feedback prior to implementing the complaints process (where the process of incoming feedback makes that possible e.g. it is not possible through the portal online customer recording). This has avoided certain issues becoming complaints when they are a request for a service or can be remedied quickly, such as a request to cut back foliage or replace a streetlight. The Ombudsman uses guidance to emphasise that local authorities should provide a clear distinction between service requests and formal complaints (see definitions on page 3).

Complaints should be made when there are concerns about the quality of service or other action taken by the council and not before services have had the opportunity to respond, particularly if they have not previously been aware of an issue. An effective complaints process requires support across the organisation to manage incoming issues and enquiries effectively.

Action is required to improve this work within Shropshire Council due to the high volumes of enquiries being raised as complaints when they do not meet the definition of a complaint. There will always be a need to early close some complaints at case level but in 2024/25 42% of complaints raised at case level should have been considered as service requests and not directed to the complaint processes.

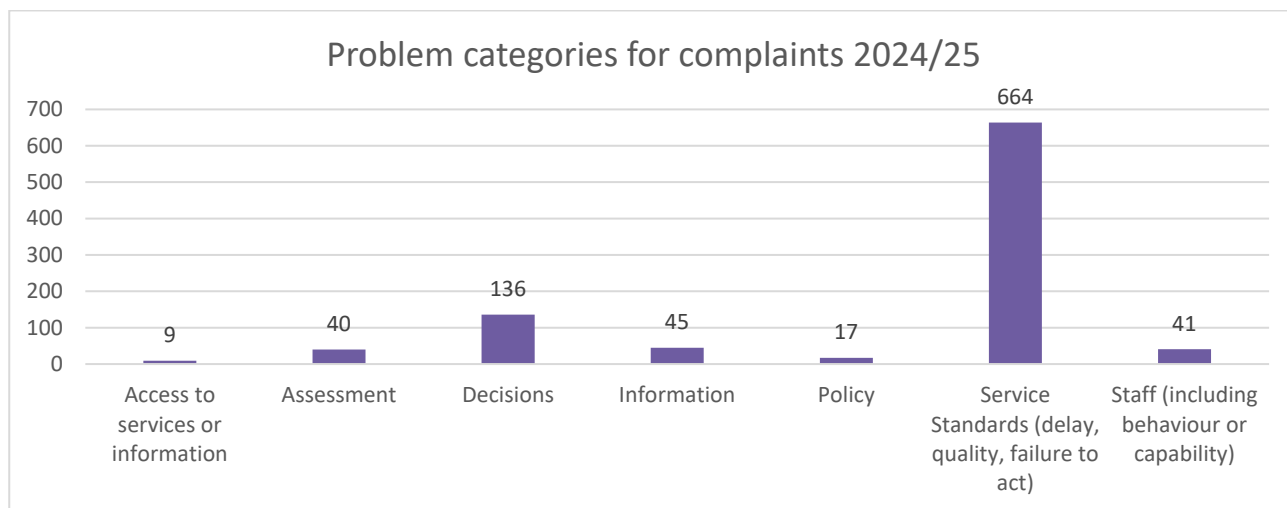
There is a requirement by the Ombudsman that annual reports should include a summary of the types of complaints the organisation has refused to accept. The table below provides a summary.

Cases not accepted as formal complaints for investigation

Early Closure Reason	Count	%
Immediate Resolution	66	9.1
No Further Action Required	10	1.4
Anonymous Case/ insufficient detail to investigate	398	54.9
Call Abandoned	2	0.3
Customer withdrew complaint/ Customer didn't respond	22	3.0
Failed to Provide Consent	10	1.4
Outside Jurisdiction	94	13.0
Other Organisation to respond	2	0.3
Logged In Error	3	0.4
Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures	10	1.4
Housing Benefit Appeal	1	0.1
Insurance Claim	59	8.1
Licensing Decision Appeal	3	0.4
Penalty Charge Notice	4	0.6
Planning Enforcement Appeal	1	0.1
Planning Permission Appeal	4	0.6
Special Educational Needs (SEN) Tribunals	1	0.1
Police Investigation - Criminal	1	0.1
Outside Timeframe/Old (12 months)	9	1.2
Service request/ premature/ created in error	25	3.4
Total	725	100

The complaint investigation data collected highlights the reasons for complaints. 'Service standards' was the main category under which complaints were made in 2024/25 (70%). Within 'service standards' there are a number of sub-categories and analysis highlights that 'service standards – failure to provide a service/take action', 'service standards – inappropriate/incorrect

action' and 'service standards – poor quality of work/service' were the dominant sub-categories. 'Decisions' was the second main category under which complaints were recorded (14%). Complaints under the category decisions are usually made because someone is dissatisfied with a decision made (only 5 complaints related to a decision not taken). Complaints related to decisions seem to have been growing over the last few years, across multiple departments and this could be linked to public sector budget challenges.



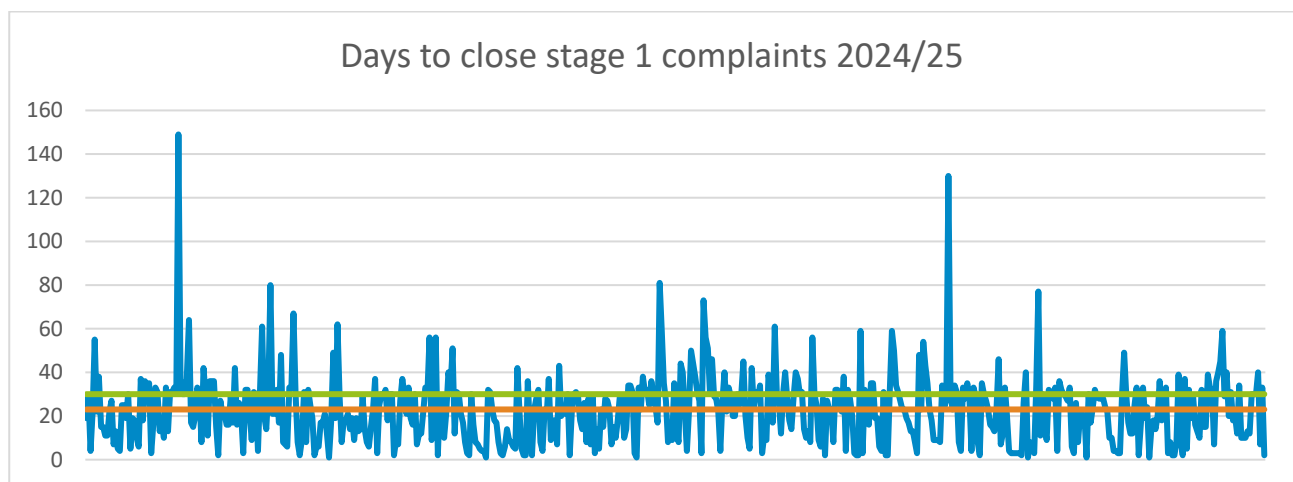
During 2024/25 Shropshire Council took an average of 23 working days to respond to stage 1 complaints (against the 30 working day timescale). This has been the dominant performance issue over the last 2 years. Although the average has reduced, suggesting some improvement, this is due to very short response times within some service areas, there are still too many cases exceeding the timescales. Quarterly performance reporting has been focusing on the average time taken to respond to stage 1 complaints. The trend has been for longer response times over the last few years, but continued focus has shown a stabilising of average performance. The Council currently has 60 working days in total to respond to corporate complaints, 30 working days for each stage (stage 1 and stage 2). Additional analysis shows that of the 565 stage 1 corporate closed complaints, 156 were late and 409 (72%) were on time. Days to close will remain a key measure within ongoing performance monitoring.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has implemented a new complaint handling code for corporate complaints (excluding adult and children's social care statutory complaints). The Ombudsman has issued the Code as "advice and guidance" for all local councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. The Code is currently being piloted and there is an expectation that local authorities will adopt the Code by March 2026. The Ombudsman intends to start considering the Code as part of processes (including case findings and reporting) from April 2026.

Under the Code, stage 1 complaint investigations must be completed and a response provided within 10 working days. An additional 10 working days may be applied as an extension if there are robust and recorded reasons why more time is required and this is communicated to the complainant. Feedback and Insight Team officers report increasing complexity within complaints cases. Unfortunately, complexity is not something that can be easily measured or reported on with currently available data.

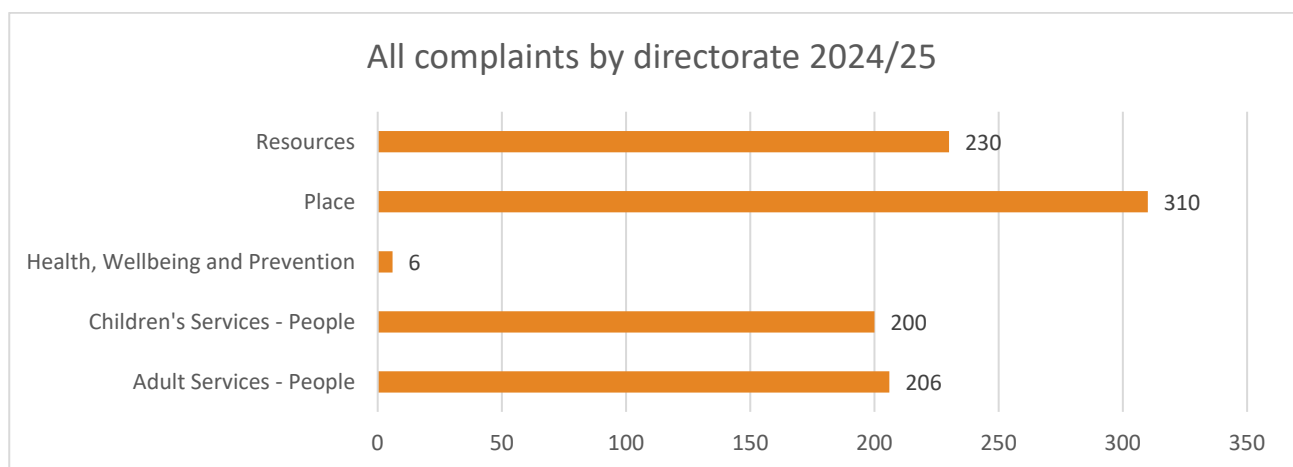
One indicator of complexity that can be reported is the number of investigations raised for each complainant during the year (complaints may be added to over time or additional new complaints made as a complaint is responded to). The data shows that, in 2024/25 there were 156 customers with 2 or 3 complaint investigations within the year (22% of customers). 18 customers made 4 or more complaints within the year (2.6%). There has also been a significant increase in use of the Unreasonably Persistent and Vexatious Customers' Register. In 2023/24 9 customers were

contacted under the procedure and in 2024/25 that increased to 26, often as a result of abusive, threatening and unreasonable contact with members of staff.



Green line = days to close timescale, Orange line = average days to close performance

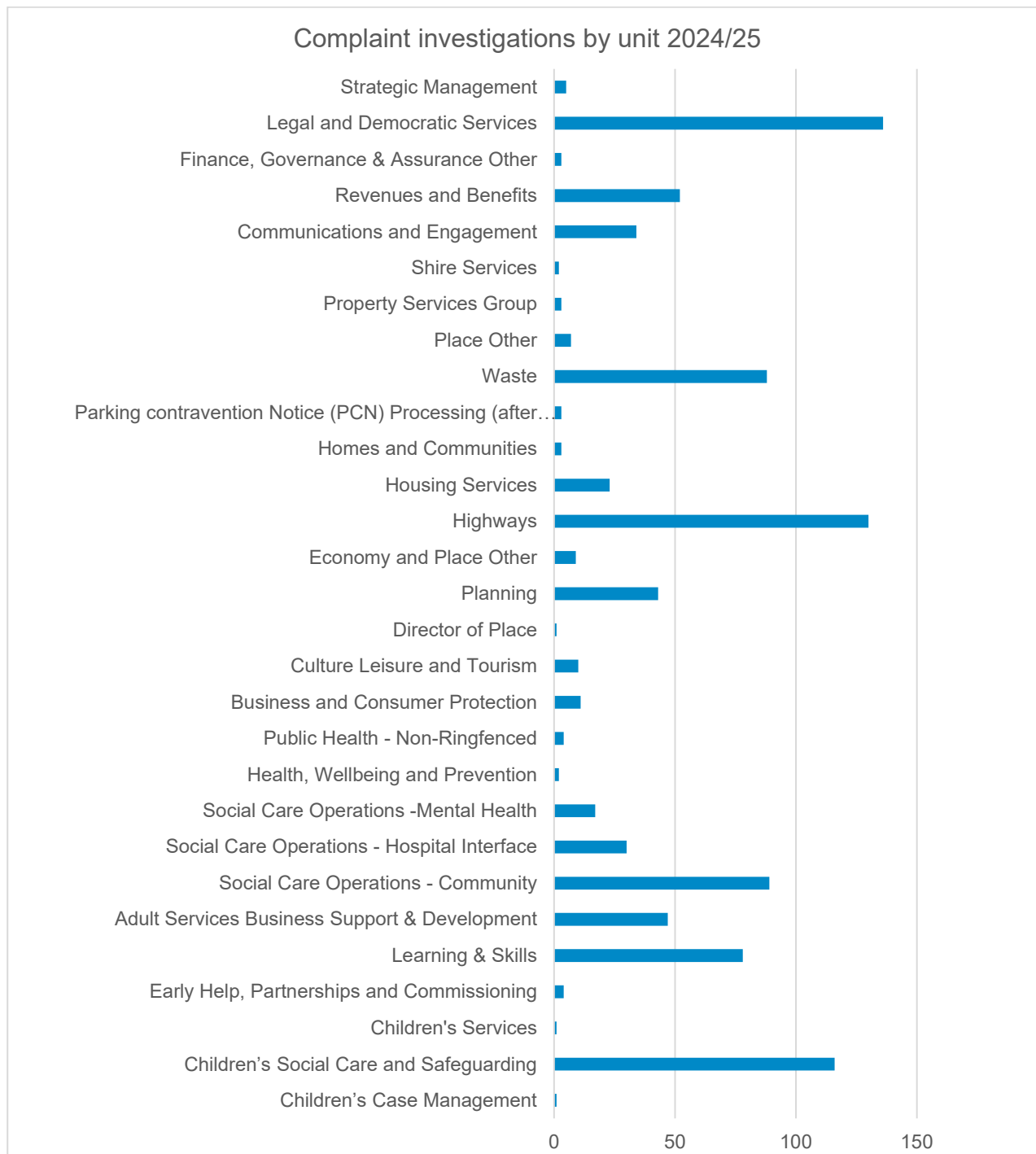
Some types of service are more likely to result in complaints than others and the chart below highlights complaints by directorate. Shropshire Council's Place Directorate (as was in 2024/25) handled the largest proportion of complaints compared to other directorates within Shropshire Council (33% of all complaints) followed by Resources and the Office of the Chief Executive combined (24%) and Adult Services (22%). Children's Services shows an increase and now has 21% of complaints. Health, Wellbeing and Prevention reported only 6 complaints for the year. Data for Adult Services and Children's services is explored in more detail throughout the year and within the annual reports for these services.



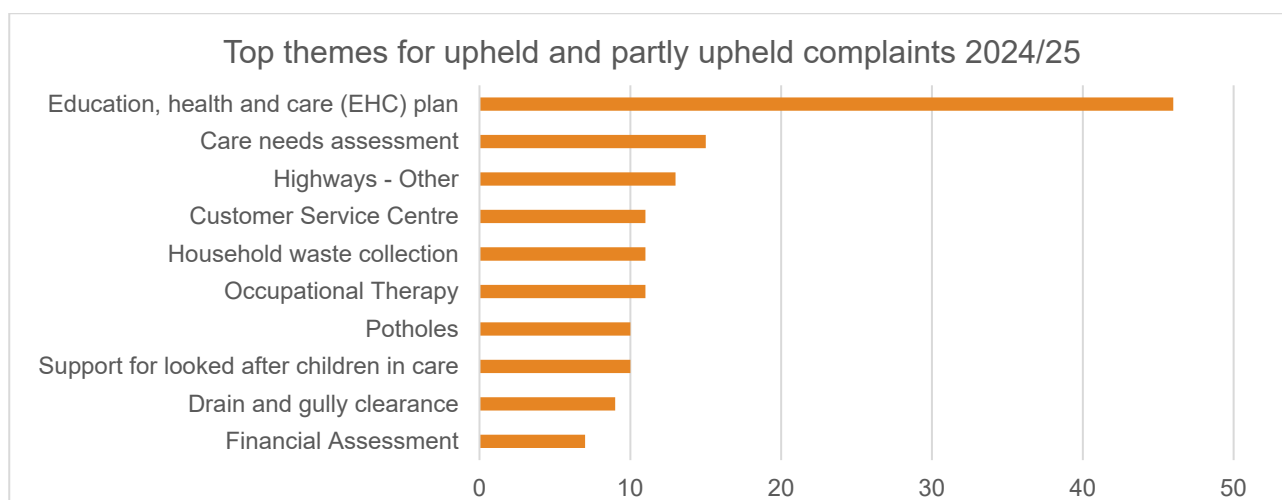
Highways and Transport complaints traditionally form a large proportion of all complaints and in 2024/25 formed 14% of all Shropshire Council's complaints (an increase from 12% in 2023/24 but an improvement on the 19% in 2022/23 and 27% in 2021/22). Waste services complaints have also fluctuated slightly from 14% in 2022/23 to 6% in 2023/24 and 9% in 2024/25. These are services used by all residents. Revenues and Benefits received a significant proportion of complaints at 5% similar to the last year. Planning Services complaints formed 5% (the same proportion as the previous year).

The Resources directorate, as was, included a smaller number of customer-facing services (many providing services to other council departments). A significant proportion of the complaints allocated to Resources are not related to its own services but to those of other departments. Legal and governance services was allocated 136 complaints, 14% of all complaints but this is due to the fact that stage 2 corporate complaints have increased in volume (the complaints are not complaints about the services delivered by Legal Services).

Considering detailed data by service it is worth noting that some service areas with slightly higher volumes of complaints reflect the national picture across other local authorities. Children's social work case management, SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and adult social care complaints are among areas of service nationally where there are growing demands and pressures leading to complaints. Some of the reasons for this are linked to national economic and social changes and cost of living pressures. The chart below displays numbers of complaints by unit (services are grouped into these areas for ease of reporting). Comparison will not be possible in 2025/26 due to the significant council restructure.

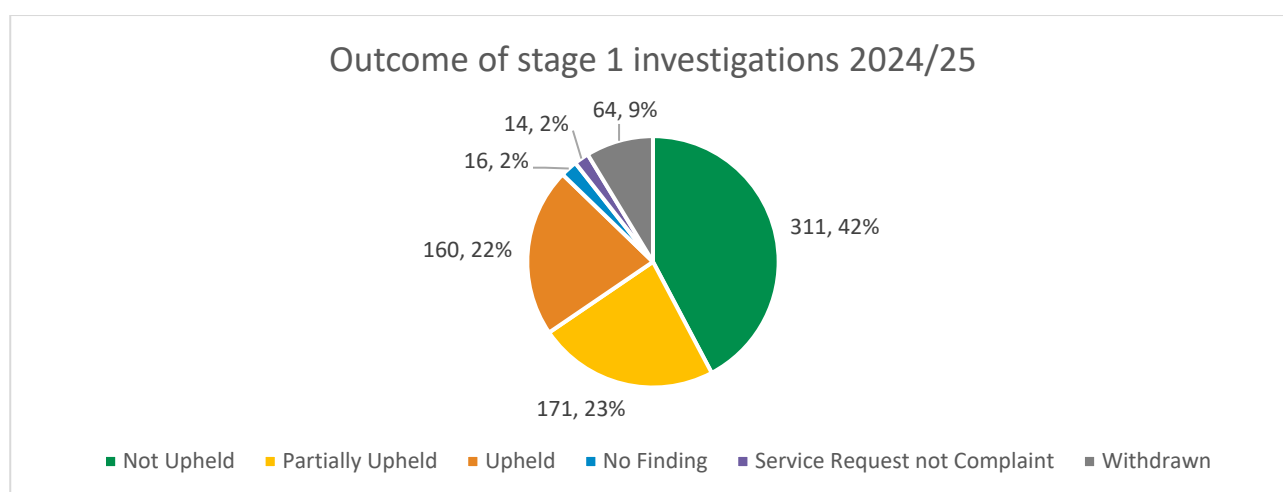


The top themes for upheld and partly upheld complaints are shown in the following chart and show that complaints relating to Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, care needs assessment, highways and customer services are more frequently leading to findings of some fault.



When considering complaints performance, the outcome is very important. The data for 2024/25 shows that:

- At the end of the 12-months 2024/25, 736 were complaints opened and closed at stage 1.
- Of the closed stage 1 complaints 22% were upheld (160 complaints), 23% were partially upheld and 42% were not upheld.
- Considering the complaints that were upheld (all stages closed within the year), 21% were with Highways and Transport (a significant improvement compared to 2021/22 at 32% but more than the 17% in 2023/24). 18% were for Special Educational Needs and Disability within Learning and Skills, 14% Adult Social Care Operations - Community and 9% were with Waste Management.
- Although in smaller numbers, there were also a higher proportion of upheld cases for Adult Services Business Support (linked to charges for care (7%) and Customer Services (5%)).
- The three dominant problem categories within upheld complaints are 'Service standards – failure to provide a service/take action', 'Service standards – delays', and 'Service standards – inappropriate/incorrect action'. Work by the Feedback and Insight Team is undertaken to keep complainants informed of any delays and progress, but often concerns cannot be addressed without more detailed and specialist knowledge from service areas.
- 2% of stage 1 complaints investigations resulted in no finding. A complaints investigator may find that not enough evidence or information is available to draw a conclusion, or they may be unable to obtain enough information from the complainant to fully complete the investigation. Occasionally it may be a sign of failure to investigate. The proportion of 'no finding' outcomes was previously a problem, but this has now been addressed and performance has improved and been consistent for the last two years.



The next section of the report considers the progression of complaints beyond stage 1.

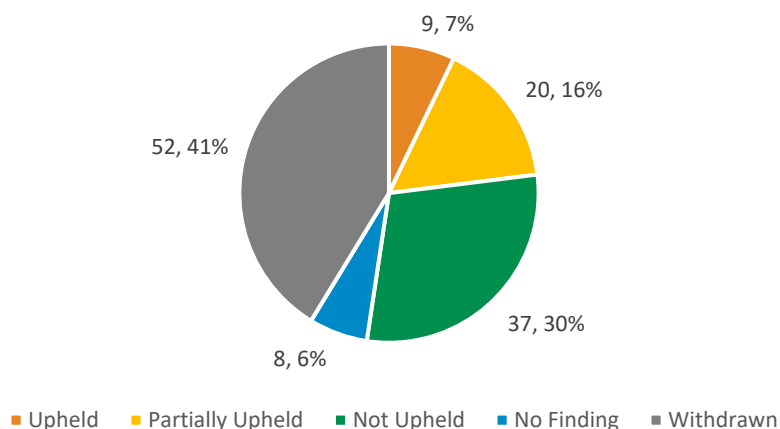
4. Progression of Complaints

Effective stage 1 complaint handling can reduce the number of stage 2 complaints. It is important to understand how many complaints progress beyond stage 1 and this is a measure included within regular performance reporting. During 2021/22 only a small proportion of all the complaints Shropshire Council received progressed beyond stage 1. Since then the number of cases progressing beyond stage 1 has increased. In 2021/22 99 cases progressed beyond stage 1; in 2022/23 the number was similar at 95 but in 2023/24 129 cases progressed and in 2024/25 this rose again to 143.

Occasionally some complaints may progress prematurely to the Ombudsman without a stage 2 investigation and these will be referred back where appropriate. The table below shows the number of complaints investigations beyond stage 1 and the chart below highlights the outcome of those complaints (18 of the cases remain open so do not yet have a finding). Numbers will differ from the Ombudsman data later in the report due to the difference in the dates reported to each organisation. For the first time in 2024/25 it is now also possible that insufficient staffing and excessive caseloads have impacted reporting. Some cases may not have been up to date at the time of the annual data extract.

Stage 2	Stage 3 (children's statutory)	Ombudsman	Total investigations beyond stage 1
82	1	61	144

Outcome of stage 2 and Ombudsman investigations 2024/25



The Shropshire annual report from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman highlighted that 79 complaints were received by the Ombudsman for Shropshire Council in 2024/25 and 31 cases were considered/decided (15 of those with an outcome). This total will include complaints received by Shropshire Council in previous financial years, so the data is not comparable with local data covered in this report (looking at cases received within the financial year).

Of the 15 cases investigated with outcomes, 9 were upheld, 6 were not upheld. Many of the total 79 considered resulted in other actions such as referring back for local resolution, offering advice, or closure after initial enquiries. The Ombudsman reports Shropshire Council's upheld rate at 60%. The LGO upheld rate for similar local authorities is reported as 80%. Available data from the

Ombudsman is used within a separate, performance report to track annual performance over the years and for benchmarking with the local authority family group.

Ombudsman Complaints – Received and Upheld

Category	Number received	Number upheld
Adult Care Services	16	3
Benefits & Tax	6	0
Corporate & Other Services	4	0
Education & Children's Services	16	4
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	8	0
Highways & Transport	7	1
Housing	5	0
Planning & Development	16	1
Other	1	0
Grand Total	79	9

Outcome of Decisions Made

				Investigation Outcomes			Grand Total
Advice given	Closed after initial enquiries	Incomplete/Invalid	Referred back for local resolution	Not Upheld	Upheld	Upheld rate (%)	
2	31	3	28	6	9	60	79

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations was 100% in 2024/25. The rate of complaints per 100,000 population is 2.7% for Shropshire Council in 2024/25 against an average of 5.3% for all authorities.

Ombudsman is currently considering the introduction of a new standard set of performance measures for local authorities to enable improved information and benchmarking beyond the Ombudsman level data available currently. These measures have been suggested within recent Ombudsman training on the new Complaint Handling Code (see recommendations).

Appendix 1 displays the current Ombudsman performance measures. Appendix 2 highlights findings and recommendations made by the Ombudsman for upheld cases. All recommendations are monitored and actioned by the Shropshire Council service area responsible for the complaint, and in many cases overseen by the service area's Service Director.

5. Annual Comparisons

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number of compliments – average The number of compliments in 2024/25 has fallen very slightly since the previous year but remains in line with average figures.	436	475	448
	Performance is in line with expected numbers with.		
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Complaints investigations – lower than expected The number of complaint investigations recorded by Shropshire Council totalled 952 in 2024/25, 978 in 2023/24, 1,187 in 2022/23 and 1,190 in 2021/22. Overall, the reduction is against the upward trend of complaints at case level. Work has been taking place to triage cases and ensure service requests are not taken forward as complaints prematurely, but the Ombudsman warns that a fall in complaint numbers can be a sign of poor performance. The lack of resources to raise and manage investigations should be considered a possible factor with caseloads significantly exceeding other local authority averages.	1,187	978	952
	Complaint investigations have reduced in number, but this is not necessarily a sign of improved performance and should be considered alongside other data.		
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Days to close – Average days to close reduced The average number of working days taken to respond to a stage 1 complaint was 32 working days in 2023/24 but performance has since improved with the 2024/25 average standing at 23 working days. Despite this average improvement too many complaints investigations are exceeding the 30 working days total for stage 1 corporate complaints (28% were overdue). Complaints investigators increasingly report concerns about their ability to meet complaint timescales as a result of workload and other pressures.	26 working days	31 working days	23 working days
	Average performance has improved but there are still too many complaints investigations exceeding timescales.		
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Outcome at stage 1 – Reduction in proportion upheld When considering the proportion of complaints upheld, performance overall was relatively steady until the last few years when a trend towards more upheld complaints began. It would be a concern if performance monitoring highlighted too few cases being upheld (it is important that Shropshire Council accepts where things have gone wrong and strives for improvement). As highlighted earlier in the report, there are some services experiencing pressure and seeing increased findings of fault.	16%	27%	22%
	Some improvement since 2023/24.		
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Complaints progressing beyond Stage 1 – Increased In 2019/20 2.7% of cases progressed to stage 2 or the Local Government Ombudsman (47) and this has increased considerably over recent years with 19.6% cases escalating beyond stage 1 in 2024/25. That doesn't include cases where an additional stage 1 response is required. The Ombudsman upheld rate was 80% in 2022/23 and remained stable in 2023/24 at 79%. There has been an improvement in 2024/25 to 60%.	8.7%	15.0%	19.6%
	Complaints cases have become increasingly complex and time consuming and the data for escalated cases helps illustrate this increase.		

6. Example Compliments

Shropshire Council received 448 compliments during 2024/25. Examples are included below. Receiving a compliment can make a big difference to a member of staff working hard to provide support for others or deliver services as effectively as possible. Although compliments are not given the same attention as complaints, they are used within the Council to understand where things are working well and to recognise the additional efforts made by individual members of staff.

Compliment for Revenues and Benefits Officer: "[name removed] at Sales Ledger is fantastic, very polite and cheery. I rang to ask if a direct debit had been set up and she was very patient with me she explained in lots of detail what was happening and even liaised with Debt Recovery (he's great too) for me about another issue I have. She was fantastic, everyone needs a [Name removed] at their council! Thank you."

Compliment for Housing Options and Homelessness: "I wanted to say thank you for the help you have given me. I know it won't be easy but with your, and your colleagues, support I know I can do what's the best for me and my children. I am incredibly grateful. Thank you once again."

Compliment for Rights of Way, Outdoor Partnerships: "Thank you for all your help with this footpath diversion. It has been a pleasure and I wish all local authorities were as proactive, communicative and helpful as you have been. I am sure our paths will cross again soon."

Compliment for Planning Officer: "I just thought I'd let you know that we have secured funding from Veolia to go forward with our new clubhouse. I wanted to thank you for your help it. I don't suppose you get too many thanks, so I thought I'd let you know that your support was crucial and much appreciated."

Compliment for Public Protection Officer, Blue Badge Scheme: "I have just tried to call you to give a more personal thank you for looking at my case and making the application process so clear and easy but I think you may be 'mega busy' and so the switchboard couldn't get through. It's bitter-sweet in some ways - not wanting to have a disablement but at the same time so very grateful for the extra support you have been able to offer. I really do appreciate you...Keep doing what you do; you have certainly made my day. Thanks again."

Compliment for Waste Client Team: "I just want to say thank you to the refuse collectors who come to Bucknell each week. They always seem to go above and beyond. I'm really thankful. I left a huge box out today, and I did not expect it to be taken; but it has been. They grab my garden waste bin if I decide not to put it out or forget. I just hope they see this message as I imagine it's quite a thankless job at times. I'm very grateful and feel lucky to have such a service."

Compliment for Occupational Health and Housing Options: "The major Adaptations to our property have now been completed and we are so very grateful for the massive difference that this has made to our lives. The specialist toilet is so helpful in managing our condition and the walk-in level access shower is also a huge blessing. We appreciate everyone who has been involved with it all from start to finish."

"Compliment for a Compass Help and Support Team: "...I don't have enough words to thank him enough for his kindness and his positive support that he brings to every visit. My kids are always so comfortable and open when he is around. I would like to compliment his support and hard work for my family."



7. Example Complaints

Shropshire Council received 2,386 complaints during the year 2024/25 and carried out 952 investigations. Some example complaints have been included below to highlight the type of feedback Shropshire Council receives. These examples were not all upheld. Some complaints arise from a lack of understanding of the service Shropshire Council can provide. Where necessary wording within the examples has been removed within to ensure anonymity. The next section of this report looks more closely at learning and the actions taken following complaint investigations.

Complaint relating to Customer Services: *"I wish to raise a formal complaint regarding your telephone line 03456789000. It is hopeless trying to call option 9, one JUST cannot get through, sometimes I have been holding the line for over one hour 10mins the 10 mins will be add to my telephone bill at a PREMIUM RATE, which I am most annoyed about. I have been trying to get through since the 3rd September, to no avail. This is appalling service. The Council is quick to take money from people but are reluctant to provide services that meets the needs of is town and if they do it is always at a high price. Shropshire Council's administration/executives are no longer servants of, and for, the people but rather a self-serving despot corporation acting under the guise of a Council. This cannot continue without some redress."*

Complaint relating to Children's Case Management North West: *"...there has been a lack of contact with her regarding her children's welfare since they were removed from her care earlier in the year. She also states that she has been trying to arrange contact with them, but no one is updating her or arranging it."*

Complaint relating to Revenues and Benefits: *"I'm trying to challenge incorrect business rates. I call day after day and no one answers the phone. I send an email which bounces back informing it is no longer monitored. I try to upload detail on your website and it will not allow me to do it. How do I talk with someone?"*

Complaint relating to Building Control: *"The customer's complaint is with regard to a lack of both communication and action ..The customer has concerns with his neighbour's car port. The customer has had communication with the team and an inspection conducted. However, he feels that communication has been difficult, and his initial requests not acted upon. The customer is waiting for a report from Building Control to enable his solicitor to progress the matter."*

Complaint relating to Community Social Work Team South: *"A meeting was held to seek additional hours for care to be provided to my son...We were told that we could expect a decision within 6-8 weeks, it is now 13 weeks and no decision."*

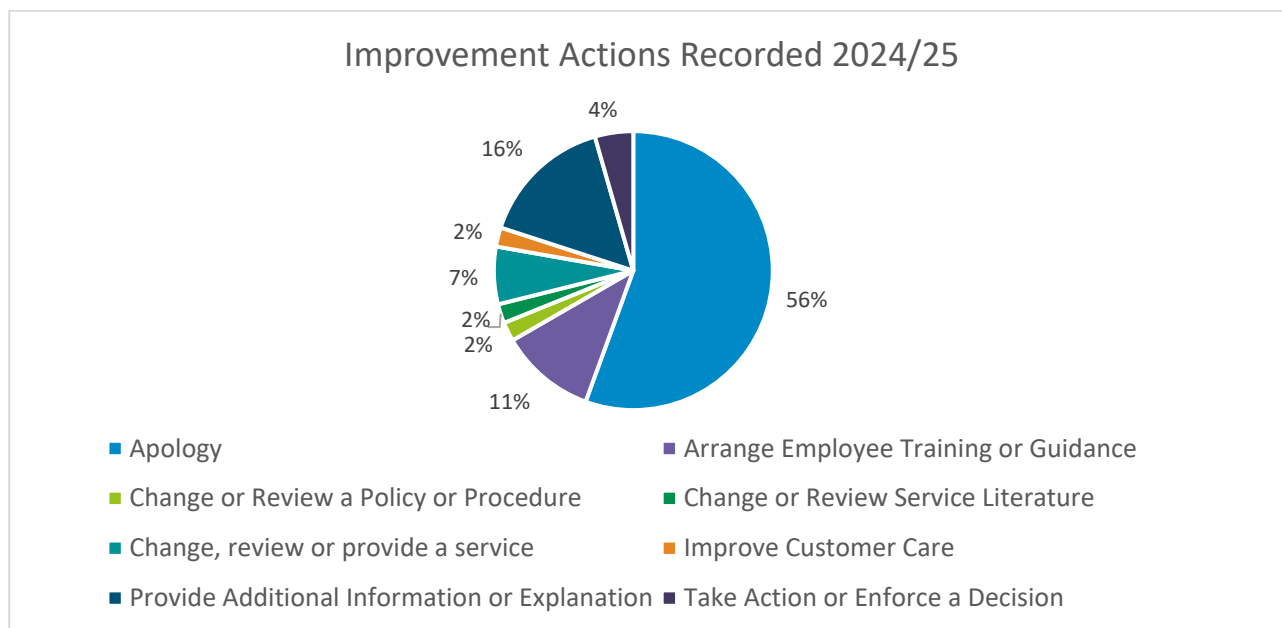
Complaint relating to Housing: *"The complainant states that she cannot access email without support and so has missed the emails meaning her application has been terminated. The complainant states she made the Council aware she could not respond to emails without support and that she requires communication in the post. The complainant feels that reasonable adjustments should have been so that she can access the service. As a consequence of this, she is now going through the application process again from the beginning and has lost the initial date of her application as the backdated date."*

Complaint relating to Waste Management: *"The customer ordered a bulky Collection for 2 items to be collected and paid £48. Phoned in to cancel as she had given the items to some children for a den. I advised unfortunately would not be able to have a refund due to terms and conditions. Customer feels this is not fair as she tried to contact just after 5.00pm on Friday but we were closed then it was weekend then a Bank Holiday feels she is being punished as she can't have a refund. She would like to complain about this and have it looked into."*

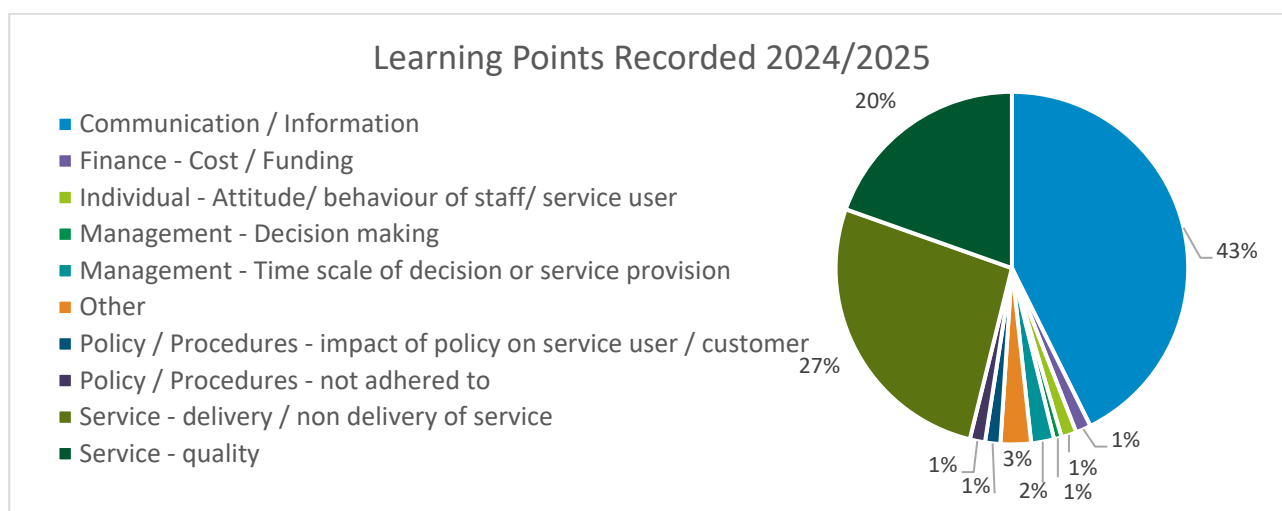


8. Learning and Actions

Shropshire Council recorded learning, action or outcome notes against 705 complaints in 2024/25 (and 138 of those included detailed actions or lessons). Actions and lessons are usually made when complaints are upheld or partly upheld. If only a small proportion of complaint investigations result in a finding of fault there will be fewer remedial actions or learning. However, this recording of learning and actions should be an area for ongoing improvement (currently around 40% of all partly upheld or upheld closed cases have learning recorded). This is referred to in the recommendations. The charts below highlight the primary action and learning point recorded.



Of the actions that were recorded against complaints closed in 2024/25 56% were to provide an apology. 16% of actions included the provision of additional information or explanation and 11% were actions linked to arranging employee training or guidance.



43% of learning related to communication or provision of information. Communication is consistently a dominant theme within complaints. Complainants often highlight disappointment that they were not contacted, were not communicated with enough, or information was not shared effectively. More effective communication at an earlier stage can lead to a better understanding of the issues or the processes council staff work to and prevent the development of a formal complaint. Non-delivery of a service and service quality were also main categories in 2024/25.

9. Example Learning and Actions

The recording of learning is strongly encouraged following the completion of a complaint investigation. Acknowledging and acting on learning from complaints can avoid any mistakes from being repeated and lead to ongoing improvement. Examples are shown below to highlight the type of learning and actions recorded. This is one element of wider work undertaken to focus on quality, and ensure customers receive a good standard of service. Wording within the examples has been altered slightly for simplicity and to ensure confidentiality.

Following a complaint relating to the lack of suitable alternative education for child: *"[The Council will] issue a reminder to staff that the statutory duty to provide suitable alternative educational provision under Section 19 remains with the Council."*

Complaint about repeated reports on FixMyStreet over two years being ignored: *"I have spoken to the Technician about the apparent lack of activity and communication with you, as the Council's customer, for which I apologise. I have reminded them that they are responsible for maintaining a line of communication with customers about issues that have been raised. There may not always be a consensus, but efforts should be made to keep residents updated and in a timely manner."*

Complaint following a mess left after Waste Collection: *"The supervisor of the depot has reminded the crews of the importance of tidying up any waste they drop on the floor. Whilst sometimes a small amount of mess is unavoidable due to a sack being overfilled, we do request that our collection crews report the larger messes to the depot so that they can send a colleague to tidy the area up."*

Complaint relating to an invoice which is being challenged as the customer does not recognise the amounts: *"All Financial Assessment Officers have been reminded that it is their responsibility to explain the contents of invoices. Further training will be provided to ensure officers are able to answer such queries when required."*

Complaint relating to the responsibility for Housing: *"There was confusion among officers regarding Shropshire Council's duty to support and provide accommodation and some lack of clarity in working with the ICB. This is now recognised and officers made aware of Shropshire Council's duty."*

Complaint relating to the delay in responding to an application for an uplift in care home fees: *"We now have a structured process, with scrutiny and oversight, in place to consider provider uplift queries and applications. This will ensure that current and future uplift requests are responded to in a timely manner and that there is clear communication regarding outcome of application and justification."*

Following a complaint relating to ineffective communication within Children's Social Care: *"There was an element of complaint upheld relating to communication. The social worker had said they would make contact at the end of the week but was then absent from work, so the communication did not happen. There is learning linked to the need to manage communications and expectations."*

Following a complaint relating to the conduct of a Children's social worker: *"A new social worker has been put in place but lessons have been learnt from the practice of the previous social worker and the need for management and oversight. Communication improvements and clarity of information were taken as learning points."*

Complaint relating to non-repayment of care home fees: *"I appreciate that the communication was unclear, and discussions have been held with staff around clear and transparent communication. I apologise for the upset and distress that has been caused. Please accept my sincere apologies that your recent experiences of the Council were not of the high standard that one should expect to receive."*

10. Conclusions

The customer feedback data for 2024/25 highlights a number of challenges for the year ahead, particularly in relation to the significant performance improvements that will be required under the Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code. Over the year, the monthly average was 257 customer feedback cases (more than the previous year at 219). This is also reflected in quarterly totals and in 2024/25 each quarter saw an increase in the number of customer feedback cases being raised. There has been a 55% increase in customer feedback from 2016/17 whilst the level of resources available to manage the complaints process has remained the same.

Analysis suggests that too many complaints are being raised prematurely rather than remedial action being taken to resolve concerns informally at service request stage. In 2024/25 42% of complaints raised at case level should have been considered as service requests and not directed to the complaint processes. Despite this, through use of triage processes complaints investigation numbers have reduced compared to the previous year. This should not necessarily be considered a sign of improvement and may reflect the Council's ability to adequately resource the complaints processes and the increase in inappropriate referrals to the complaints process.

The complexity of complaints has increased (although difficult to demonstrate through the performance measures) and more complaints are progressing beyond stage 1 to stage 2 (for corporate and children's statutory complaints) and to the Ombudsman. There are also more customers making multiple complaints in a year and the council has seen an increase in use of restrictions under the unreasonably persistent and vexatious customers register. Where complaints are upheld this is commonly as a result of failure to provide a service, incorrect action, poor quality of service and delays. The pattern for more complaints relating to decisions has been maintained in 2024/25 (only evident in the last 2-3 years). Generally, complainants are more likely to challenge the decisions taken by Shropshire Council. This is not restricted to some services but can be seen across the local authority.

Complaints for Adult Services and Children's Services have continued to form a larger overall proportion of complaints compared to previous years. Place Directorate complaints have decreased since 2022/23 and over the last 2 years have varied from 31% in 2023/24 to 33% in 2024/25). Adult Services complaints now form 22% of complaint investigations (from 16% in 2022/23) and Children's Services complaints have increased to 21% this year. There are clear areas of more pressure (many reflected nationally) such as in Special Educational Needs and Disability, Revenues and Benefits and finance related complaints. Waste services saw a peak in complaints linked to service changes designed to reduce expenditure, but numbers have since stabilised.

The average number of working days taken to respond to stage 1 complaints has improved but remains a concern due to the number of overdue complaints (averages mean good performance in some areas masks problems in others). However, it is encouraging to see that the average number of working days to respond to stage 1 corporate complaints has reduced from 31 working days in 2023/24 to 23 working days in 2024/25. Late responses can be linked to increases in the proportion of complaints progressing beyond stage 1. Additional analysis shows that of the 565 stage 1 corporate closed complaints in year, 28% were late. This is a concern due to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's new complaints handling code for corporate complaints which includes a 10 working day stage 1 timescale. In 2024/25 only 27% of complaints were responded to within 10 working days at stage 1.

Overall, the Ombudsman investigated 15 complaints relating to Shropshire Council in 2024/25 (with 79 raised and 31 assessed). 9 complaints were upheld with an uphold rate of 60%. Due to the relatively small numbers of cases the upheld rate can fluctuate significantly each year and comparison is difficult, however, performance is better than the average upheld rate for similar local authorities (80%).

11. Progress Update

Key actions and achievements over the last 12 months are summarised against a brief description of the recommendations made last year. Some of the recommendations require ongoing organisational action across services and are beyond the direct influence of the Feedback and Insight Team.

	Action Last Year	Progress Made
1	Improve customer experience: Use the Digital Delivery Unit transformation programme as a means of improving the ease of raising customer feedback reporting and the updates provided to reassure customers that the appropriate action is underway.	??????????????
2	Focus on service request responses: Adopt a focus on resolving requests for services promptly as a way of reducing the number of complaints received by the organisation.	Work to triage cases has resulted in mixed success. In some areas, services have been able to provide a service and resolve an issue to prevent the need for formal investigation. In others there have been additional complaints about delays and poor customer service.
3	Feedback Culture: Foster a positive complaint handling culture among staff and individuals, as envisioned by the Ombudsman's Code, to encourage constructive feedback and learning from complaints.	The Feedback and Insight Team work to promote the value of learning from complaints where possible but there is a need for further action to deliver an organisation-wide change in how complaints are viewed, and learning identified and used for service improvement.
4	Review the potential impact of the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code: Undertake further analysis of the impact of the new Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code and present a report to Cabinet during 2025/26.	The self-assessment included within this report highlights where work is required to move towards delivery of the Ombudsman's Code. An internal report will be presented to the Leadership Board and will set out the resources required to deliver the Code.
5	Clarify exclusions: Ensure customers and members of staff understand the most appropriate way of responding to enquiries and complaint process exclusions. Using the correct processes and clarifying when a complaint cannot be taken.	The Feedback and Insight Team has been identifying the exclusions that will be recommended within the updated Shropshire Council corporate complaints procedure – this is subject to agreement to implement the code and sign off of a new procedure.
6	Improve Response Times: Continue efforts to reduce the average response time for stage 1 complaints, aiming to meet the 30-working day timescale.	This has been a significant focus in the last year and the data highlights improvement with average timescales reducing. It will remain an important priority to reduce numbers of overdue complaints.
7	Service Area Focus: Pay special attention to service areas there are higher upheld rates.	More focused work takes place with some service areas such as more regular reporting of complaints due/overdue and regular caseload meetings.

	Action Last Year	Progress Made
8	Upheld Rates: A greater proportion of complaints are being upheld. This suggests service failure and growing pressures. It may be a difficult issue to address with local authority budgets under pressure.	There has been some improvement in the last 12 months and upheld rates have reduced. There is further work to do and this report highlights those areas in need of attention for the next 12 months.
9	Complaint Progression: A focus should be on trying to reverse the annual increases in the proportion of complaints escalating beyond stage 1.	Numbers of cases progressing have continued to increase. This is featured as a key recommendation for 2025/26.
10	Focus on Response Quality: Without significant change the Feedback and Insight Team is not large enough to quality check all complaints. Work is recommended to find ways of improving quality, perhaps through training, IT system record keeping etc.	The Feedback and Insight Team have been promoting stage 1 complaint quality as a way of reducing follow up requests and progression to stage 2. This work has not yet impacted, and data highlights the increase in stage 2 requests. Work will need to continue with senior management support (see recommendations).
11	Remedies: Shropshire Council will need to respond to the Ombudsman's Code with a new approach to remedies. This may need policy consideration and could also include increased reporting and reporting of actions and integration into performance reporting.	The decision to delay decision making concerning the implementation of the Ombudsman's Code has meant a lack of progress in this area. Additional resources are required to deliver this action (see recommendations).
12	Equalities and Reasonable Adjustments: The Complaint Handling Code sets out new requirements for the way local authorities should consider and record customer needs within the complaints process.	This has been considered within casework, but new council guidance will be required to accompany a new complaints procedure if the agreement to implement the Code is made (following see sections of the report).
13	Changing Customer Behaviours: Abuse towards staff is becoming more common and must be addressed. Work will continue to assist officers in applying the Unreasonably Persistent and Vexatious Customers Procedure and other support to assist where possible.	There has been a significant increase in use of the Unreasonably Persistent and Vexatious Customers Procedure. This has resulted in some successful outcomes but there are some limitations in cases where customers have greater levels of need or complexity. The overall result has been mixed with some positive impact.
14	Third Party Complaints: Consideration of the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code on local arrangements with third party providers.	Additional resources are required to deliver this action (see recommendations).
15	Engagement and Surveys: The Ombudsman has included a request within the Code for local authorities to report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as citizens' panels, staff and relevant committees. It also asks that service feedback surveys provide details of how individuals can complain.	Additional resources are required to deliver this action (see recommendations).

12. Ombudsman Code

In August 2023, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman published proposals for a standardisation of complaints processes for public bodies that are within its remit, including council complaints processes. It should be noted that the proposals do not cover statutory complaints processes for social care (children's statutory complaints process and adult statutory complaints process). The aim of the planned changes will be to create a consistent approach to complaints across councils and housing providers to give the public greater clarity of what to expect when making a complaint. Shropshire Council responded to the consultation along with other bodies, including the Local Government Association.

This has resulted in some revisions to the Code published by the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman has asked councils to start applying the Code as soon as possible but will not use the Code within its assessment of complaints and recommendations until April 2026.

The table below sets out the Code timescales compared with the current council procedure.

Process	Shropshire Council's current corporate complaints timescales	Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales
Stage 1 investigation acknowledgement	5 working days	5 working days
Stage 1 investigation response	30 working days	10 working days
Stage 1 investigation extension	Not applicable – as soon as possible	10 working days
Stage 2 review acknowledgement	5 working days	5 working days
Stage 2 review response	30 working days	20 working days
Stage 2 review extension	Not applicable – as soon as possible	20 working days

Main requirements:

- An annual report (to include a list of content including the annual letter from the Ombudsman).
- Completion of an annual self-assessment against the Code. This should set out how well the organisation is performing against the Code (e.g. timescales), information of improvements implemented, records of quality checks, exclusions and feedback from staff. If the failure to meet an expectation only relates to one service area or department this should be made clear.
- Changes to corporate complaints procedure to use the definitions of complaints and service requests set out within the Code. Clear exclusions must also be explained (where other processes should be used rather than a corporate complaint).
- Communication about the complaints process and choice of channels to make a complaint (e.g. online form, telephone, letter).
- Demonstration of reasonable adjustments and complaint remedies action.
- An appropriately resourced complaints process with central responsibility and senior officer leadership and governance. All relevant staff should be suitable trained in the importance of complaint handling.
- A culture of learning from complaints with access to all levels to allow resolution of disputes promptly and fairly.
- An Elected Member with responsibility for complaints with reporting to Scrutiny.
- Robust performance reporting.

The Ombudsman has published a series of guidance documents to support the implementation of the Code, available here: [Complaint Handling Code - LGSCO](#)

13. Code Self-Assessment

Shropshire Council has not yet implemented the new Complaints Handling Code outlined in section 13. A decision was taken by the previous administration to delay decision making until 2025 due to organisational pressures and other priorities. The new administration (Cabinet) will consider the requirement to implement the Code alongside this report. A step towards implementation includes the publication of an annual self-assessment to demonstrate compliance. This self-assessment acts as a baseline, pre-implementation with progress expected to be reported in 12 months' time.

Code section	Compliance?	Comments
1. Definition of a service request and complaint		
1.1 Adopt a shared understanding of what constitutes a service request and what constitutes a complaint. (1.2 to 1.4 set out definitions). This should be set out within the complaints policy.	Not yet	The complaints procedure will need to be updated.
1.5 A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative should still be handled in line with the organisation's complaints policy.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
1.6 Organisations should recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint. This should be set out in their complaints policy.	Partly	Differences included but wording to be updated with Ombudsman's new definitions.
1.7 Organisations should have the opportunity to deal with a service request before a complaint is made. A complaint may be raised when the individual expresses dissatisfaction with the response to their service request, even if the handling of the service request remains ongoing.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
1.8 Service requests should be recorded, monitored and reviewed regularly.	No	This is an organisational issue beyond complaints processes.
2. Exclusions		
2.1 and 2.4 If the organisation decides not to accept a complaint, it should be able to evidence its reasoning and communicate to the complainant. Each complaint should be considered on its own merits.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
2.2 Organisations should accept complaints referred to them within 12 months of the issue occurring, or the individual becoming aware of the issue. Discretion may be applied in some circumstances.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
2.3 Exclusions should be set out within the complaints policy/procedure.	Partly	Some changes are required as the procedure is updated.
2.4 and 2.5 If an organisation decides not to accept a complaint, an explanation should be provided to the individual. Organisations should not take a blanket approach to excluding complaints; they should consider the individual circumstances of each complaint.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
3. Accessibility and awareness		
3.1A Organisations should make it easy for individuals to complain by providing different channels through which they can make a complaint.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
3.1B Organisations must consider their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and anticipate the needs and reasonable adjustments of individuals who may need to access the complaints process.	Partly	This appears to be in line with current practice although clear guidance would be helpful.

Code section	Compliance?	Comments
3.2 Individuals should be able to raise their complaints in any way and with any member of staff. All staff should be aware of the complaints process and be able to pass details of the complaint to the appropriate person within the organisation.	Partly	This is in line with current practice, but staff members may need reminders.
3.3 High volumes of complaints should not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that individuals are unable to complain.	Yes	This is communicated in current performance reporting.
3.4 Organisations should make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format.	Yes	This is in line with current practice although an update is required.
3.5 The policy should include details about the Ombudsman and the Code.	Yes	This is in the current procedure and when updated will remain.
3.6 Organisations should give individuals the opportunity to have a suitable representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the organisation.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
3.7 Organisations should provide individuals with information on their right to access the Ombudsman service.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
3.8 Where an organisation asks for feedback about its services through a survey, it should provide details of how individuals can complain.	No	This is a significant additional requirement and may generate complaints.
4. Complaint handling resources		
4.1 Organisations should have designated, sufficient resource assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling, including liaison with the relevant Ombudsman and ensuring complaints are reported to the governing body (or equivalent).	Unclear	Clarification of the Ombudsman's expectation of 'sufficient' would be helpful.
4.2 Anyone responding to a complaint should have access to staff at all levels to facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints. They should also have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes promptly and fairly.	Yes	Staff at all levels are engaged in the complaint process.
4.3 Organisations are expected to prioritise complaint handling and a culture of learning from complaints. All relevant staff should be suitably trained in the importance of complaint handling. It is important that complaints are seen as a core service and resourced accordingly	No	A training programme will need to be implemented.
5. The complaint handling process		
5.1 Organisations should have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code.	Yes	This is current practice although the existing policy will need updating.
5.2 Organisations should not have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'informal complaint') as this causes unnecessary confusion.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
5.3 When an individual expresses dissatisfaction that could meet the criteria for a complaint as set out in section 1 of the Code, they should be given the opportunity to make a complaint.	Yes	This is in line with current practice, but a review is recommended in line with IT system changes.
5.4 The person responding to the complaint should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify with the individual any aspects of the complaint they are unclear about; 	Yes	This is in line with current good practice but will need to be included in staff training.

Code section	Compliance?	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind; give the individual a fair chance to set out their position; take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and consider all relevant information and evidence carefully. 		
5.5 Where a response to a complaint will fall outside the timescales set out in this Code the organisation should inform the individual of when the response will be provided and the reason(s) for the delay.	Yes	This is in line with current practice, but a review is recommended due to limited staff capacity.
5.6 Organisations should keep a record of any reasonable adjustments agreed. Any agreed reasonable adjustments should be kept under active review.	No	The current IT system does not allow this recording. This is a new requirement.
5.7 Organisations should not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless there are valid reasons to do so. Organisations should clearly set out these reasons, and they should align with the approach to exclusions set out in section 2 of the Code.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
5.8 A full record should be kept of the complaint, and the outcomes at each stage. This should include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the individual, correspondence with other parties, and any relevant supporting documentation such as reports. This should be retained in line with the organisation's data retention policies.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
5.9 and 6.10 Organisations should have systems in place to ensure that a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process. Individuals should not have to escalate a complaint in order to get an appropriate remedy.	Partly	Recommended for review.
5.10 and 5.11 Organisations should have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from individuals and/or their representatives. Organisations should be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and should keep an individual's restrictions under regular review. Restrictions should be proportionate and have regard for the Equalities Act 2010.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
6. Complaints stages		
6.1 Organisations should have processes in place to consider which complaints can be responded to as early as possible, and which require further consideration. Organisations should consider factors such as the complexity of the complaint and whether the individual is vulnerable or at risk. Most stage 1 complaints can be resolved promptly, and an explanation, apology or resolution provided to the individual.	Partly	The challenge is achieving any resolution or prioritisation consistently across service areas.
6.2 Complaints should be acknowledged and logged at stage 1 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the complaint being received.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.

Code section	Compliance?	Comments
6.3 Organisations should provide a full response to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	No	This is a new requirement and significant timescale change.
6.4 and 6.5 Any extension should be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) should be clearly explained to the individual. When an organisation informs an individual about an extension to these timescales, they should be provided with the details of the relevant Ombudsman.	No	This is a new requirement.
6.6 A complaint response should be provided to the individual when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. Outstanding actions should still be tracked and actioned promptly, with appropriate updates provided to the individual.	Partly	Responses are provided when the answer is known but the central team do not have the level of resources required track and report all actions.
6.7 Organisations should address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate. Organisations should be clear which aspects of the complaint they are, and are not, responsible for and clarify any areas where this is not clear.	Partly	Complaint investigators do not always reference relevant policies within responses and do not always make responsibilities clear.
6.8 At the conclusion of stage 1 organisations should provide details of how to escalate the matter to stage 2 if the individual is not satisfied with the response.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
6.9 Where individuals raise additional complaints during stage 1, these should be incorporated into the stage 1 response if they are related, and the stage 1 response has not been provided. Where the stage 1 response has been provided, the new issues are unrelated to the issues already being considered, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the new issues should be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
6.11 If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the individual's satisfaction at stage 1, it should be progressed to stage 2 of the organisation's procedure. Stage 2 is the organisation's final response.	Yes	The current way of working is largely in line with this but this could lead to increases in stage 2 requests.
6.12 Requests for stage 2 should be acknowledged and logged at stage 2 of the complaints procedure within five working days of the escalation request being received.	Yes	This is in line with current practice although demand is currently exceeding staff capacity and delays are occurring as a result.
6.13 Individuals should not be required to explain their reasons for requesting a stage 2 consideration. Organisations should make reasonable efforts to understand why an individual remains unhappy as part of its stage 2 response.	No	This is a new requirement.
6.14 The person considering the complaint at stage 2 should not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage 1.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
6.15 Organisations should issue a final response to the stage 2 within 20 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.	No	This is a new requirement.

Code section	Compliance?	Comments
6.16 Any extension should be no more than 20 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) should be clearly explained to the individual.	No	This is a new requirement although stage 2 responses would not usually exceed 40 days.
6.18 and 6.19 Organisations should confirm the following in writing to the individual at the completion of stage 2 in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the complaint stage; the organisation's understanding of the complaint; the decision on the complaint; the reasons for any decisions made; details of any remedy offered to put things right; details of any outstanding actions; and details of how to escalate the matter to the Ombudsman if the individual remains dissatisfied. Stage 2 should be the organisation's final response and should involve all suitable staff members needed to issue such a response.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
6.21 Where an organisation's complaint response is handled by a third party (e.g. a contractor) or independent adjudicator at any stage, it should form part of the two stage complaints process set out in this Code. Individuals should not be expected to go through two complaints processes.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
6.22 Organisations are responsible for ensuring that any third parties handle complaints in line with the Code.	No	Activity will be required to communicate new expectations and monitor compliance.
7. Putting things right		
7.1 Where something has gone wrong an organisation should acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right.	Yes	This is in line with current practice.
7.2 and 7.3 Any remedy offered should reflect the impact on the individual as a result of any fault identified. The remedy offer should clearly set out what will happen and by when and be followed through to completion.	No	This is a new requirement and require significant change including IT system changes.
7.4 and 7.5 If a proposed remedy cannot be delivered the individual should be informed of the reasons for this, provided with details of any alternative remedy and reminded of their right to complain to the Ombudsman. Organisations should take account of the good practice guides when deciding on appropriate remedies.	No	Shropshire Council will need to undertake work to develop a local policy/procedure in relation to remedies and develop resources to assist complaints investigators in identifying remedies.
8. Performance reporting and self-assessment		
8.1 Organisations should produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny.	Yes	Changes to the annual report have been incorporated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an annual self-assessment against this Code to ensure its complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements. 	Yes	This self-assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the organisation's complaint handling performance. This should also include a summary of the types of complaints the organisation has refused to accept; 	Yes	Included within this report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any findings of non-compliance with this Code; 	Partly	

Code section	Compliance?	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints; 	No	Limited examples only.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the annual letter about the organisation's performance from the Ombudsman; 	Yes	Included as Appendix 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the organisation. 	Yes	Not applicable – no reports from the Ombudsman.
8.2 The annual complaints performance and service improvement report should be reported through the organisation's governance arrangements and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The response to the report from the relevant governance arrangement should be published alongside this.	Yes	This is in line with current practice other than publishing the response to the report within the report on the complaints webpages.
8.3 Organisations should also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures.	Partly	The self-assessment is produced but significant work is required.
9. Scrutiny & oversight: continuous learning and improvement		
9.1 Organisations should look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether service improvements can be made as a result of any learning from the complaint.	Mixed	This is hard to assess for the whole organisation and varies service to service.
9.2 A positive complaint handling culture is important to the effectiveness with which organisations resolve disputes. Organisations should use complaints as a source of intelligence to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.	No	The complaints handling culture is not positive at present and requires improvement.
9.3 Organisations should report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as citizens' panels, staff and relevant committees.	No	Complaints reports were previously shared with the Making it Real Board but there are no current arrangements.
9.4 The organisation should appoint a suitably senior person to oversee its complaint handling performance. This person should assess any themes or trends to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks, or policies and procedures that require revision.	Yes	The Complaints Monitoring Officer is a senior role. The Complaints Manager role may need review following organisational changes.
9.5, 9.6 and 9.7 The 'Member responsible for complaints' should receive regular information on complaints performance (including the annual report) and have access to staff. As a minimum, the Member should receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> regular updates on the volume, categories, and outcomes of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling; and the annual complaints performance and service improvement report. 	Yes	Reporting to the lead member is in place and quarterly reports have been/will be provided.
9.8 Organisations should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties (includes taking responsibility, collaboration across departments and acting within professional standards).	Partly	Complaint handling is referred to within job description templates for managers referred to within model contracts for third party providers.

14. Recommendations

The following recommendations for the year ahead are designed to allow for ongoing improvement in the application of Shropshire Council's complaints procedures and in the work of Shropshire Council to obtain and respond to customer feedback. The recommendations also cover work towards implementation of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's complaint handling code although a more detailed implementation plan will be required should Cabinet decide to meet all recommendations for April 2026. It should be noted that recommendations will require resourcing and cannot be delivered within the existing level of resources allocated to complaints handling.

1. **Provide a more detailed report covering the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code:** Due to the resource implications of the new Code, a more detailed report and action plan may need to be presented to Shropshire Council's Leadership Board (delivery dependent on a Cabinet decision in July 2025). This should include information on the current pressures and challenges facing the Feedback and Insight Team.
2. **Review Shropshire Council's corporate complaints procedure:** Regardless of the Ombudsman Code decision there is a need to review Shropshire Council's corporate complaints procedure to strengthen the sections on exclusions, remedies and reasonable adjustments.
3. **Develop guidance on remedies:** There is a growing expectation by the Local Government and Social care Ombudsman that more complaints should be remedied at the local level and that all local authorities should have a local remedies policy in line with the national document provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
4. **Develop guidance on reasonable adjustments:** Complaints work in 2024/25 has highlighted that there is a need to remind all staff of their responsibilities to offer reasonable adjustments. Recording and reporting of the reasonable adjustments offered as part of the complaints process will also be required.
5. **Third Party Complaints:** As part of Shropshire Council's response to the Ombudsman's Code, consideration will need to be given concerning complaint handling arrangements with third party providers and how additional training and actions could be resourced. 'Managing complaints in contracted and commissioned services: a good practice guide' has been produced by the Ombudsman for local implementation.
6. **Staff Training and Feedback Culture:** Foster a positive complaint handling culture among staff and individuals, as envisioned by the Ombudsman's Code, to encourage constructive feedback and learning from complaints. Implement staff training and remind staff to also report formal feedback centrally so that Shropshire Council has a view of both positive feedback and complaints.
7. **Engagement and Surveys:** The Ombudsman has included a request within the Code for local authorities to report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as citizens' panels, staff and relevant committees. It also asks that service feedback surveys provide details of how individuals can complain. Shropshire Council will need to consider how these new requirements may be resourced and implemented.
8. **Focus on service request responses:** Too many cases are being raised as complaints rather than addressed as service requests. Shropshire Council needs to adopt a focus on resolving requests for services promptly as a way of reducing the number of complaints received by the organisation. It should also be noted that the Ombudsman's Code recommends new reporting of service request data. Input of Customer Services will be required.

9. **Focus on Response Quality:** Without significant change the Feedback and Insight Team is not large enough to quality check all complaints and checks should not be required if all complaints investigators are committed to producing good quality stage 1 responses. Work is recommended to find ways of improving quality. Investigators will need to be reminded of the importance of referring to policies, law, good practice and ensuring clear communication relating to responsibilities.
10. **Continue to Focus on Response Times:** Continue efforts to reduce the average response time for stage 1 complaints and significantly reduce the number of complaints being responded to out of timescale (this will be more challenging if a decision is made to implement the shorter timescales set out within the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code).
11. **Complaint Progression:** A focus should be on trying to reverse the annual increases in the proportion of complaints escalating beyond stage 1. Stage 2 complaints have increased significantly in the last year. This focus will link to quality and remedies.
12. **Complaint Prioritisation:** Currently there is little evidence that complaints are prioritised against other cases or against each other depending on complexity, urgency and impact. All service areas are asked to consider the suggestion by the Ombudsman that prioritisation is necessary and design a system appropriate to the service (a blanket council-wide approach would be exceptionally challenging due to the significant differences in requirements, statutory functions, pressures and levels of resources across the organisation).
13. **Learning and actions:** The evidencing of learning and actions within complaint responses has reduced. This is only in part due to a reduction in upheld complaints in the last 12 months and as a whole it remains a concern, particularly because it leads to a lack of data to demonstrate how learning from complaints is used to deliver improvement and prevent repeated customer dissatisfaction. From 2026 annual reports should clearly identify the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints.
14. **Implementation of new national performance measures:** Regardless of the decision taken concerning the implementation of the Complaint Handling Code it is recommended that the Ombudsman's proposed complaint performance measures should be implemented. This does not require significant additional resource allocation and will allow improved benchmarking with other local authorities (previously only possible for the Ombudsman stage of the complaints process).
15. **New structures:** Shropshire Council's complaints system does not currently allow reporting against new council structures. Significant work is required to ensure quarterly data and 2025/26 annual data is aligned to new structures and enables appropriate team and service area reporting.
16. **Changing Customer Behaviours:** Although use of the Unreasonably Persistent and Vexatious Customers Procedure has increased, this in itself, does not resolve the growing trend of customer harassment and abuse towards members of staff and its impact. A more strategic cross-council approach is recommended to review and respond to this growing issue.

Appendix 1 Ombudsman Letter 2024/25

21 May 2025

By email

Mr Begley
Chief Executive
Shropshire Council

Local Government &
Social Care
OMBUDSMAN

Dear Mr Begley

Annual Review letter 2024-25

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2025. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. We have listened to your feedback, and I am pleased to be able to share your annual statistics earlier in the year to better fit with local reporting cycles. I hope this proves helpful to you.

[Your annual statistics are available here.](#)

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

In a change to our approach, we will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about an organisation's complaint handling. Not all organisations will get a letter. If you do receive a letter it will be sent in advance of its publication on our website on 16 July 2025, alongside our annual Review of Local Government Complaints.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February we published [good practice guides](#) to support councils to adopt our [Complaint Handling Code](#). The guides were developed in consultation with councils that have been piloting the Code and are based on the real-life, front-line experience of people handling complaints day-to-day, including their experience of reporting to senior leaders and elected members. The guides were issued alongside free [training resources](#) organisations can use to make sure front-line staff understand what to do when someone raises a complaint. We will be applying the Code in our casework from April 2026 and we know a large number of councils have already adopted it into their local policies with positive results.

This year we relaunched our popular [complaint handling training](#) programme. The training is now more interactive than ever, providing delegates with an opportunity to consider a complaint from receipt to resolution. Early feedback has been extremely positive with delegates reporting an increase in confidence in handling complaints after completing the training. To find out more contact training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Amerdeep Somal
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Complaint overview

2024 / 2025

Between 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, we dealt with 79 complaints. Of these, 33 were not for us or not ready for us to investigate. We assessed and closed 31 complaints. We investigated 15 complaints.

More about this data



Complaints dealt with



Not for us

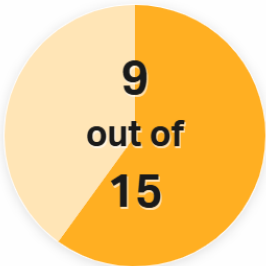


Assessed and closed



Investigated

Complaints upheld



We investigated 15 complaints and upheld 9.

60% of complaints we investigated were upheld.

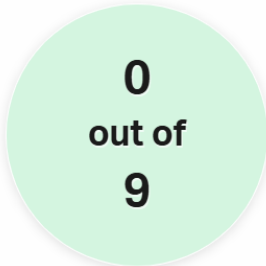
This compares to an average of 80% in similar authorities.

Adjusted for Shropshire Council's population, this is 2.7% upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

The average for authorities of this type is 5.3% upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

View upheld decisions

Satisfactory remedies provided by the Council



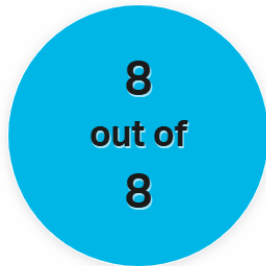
In 0 out of 9 upheld cases we found the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

0% satisfactory remedy rate.

This compares to an average of 10% in similar authorities.

View satisfactory remedy decisions

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



We recorded compliance outcomes in 8 cases. In 8 cases we were satisfied with the actions taken.

100% compliance rate with recommendations.

This compares to an average of 100% in similar authorities.

Appendix 2 Ombudsman Recommendations 2024/25

This table covers complaints that were **upheld** by the Ombudsman during 2024/25.

Category	Decided date	Ombudsman recommendation	Agreed action	Completed date
Education & Children's Services	06/08/2024	Apology, Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble, Financial redress: Loss of service	An apology was provided for the delay in completing the EHCP annual review and a failure to provide suitable education and speech and language therapy. A payment was made with the apology and the council also agreed to backdate the child's personal budget to cover the cost of lost speech and language therapy support.	15/10/2024
Adult Care Services	21/06/2024	Apology	An apology was provided as a result of fault in the information provided in relation to the provision of personal care. Action had already been taken to remedy the injustice in advance of the Ombudsman concluding its investigation.	27/06/2024
Planning & Development	07/11/2024	Apology	The Ombudsman found that there was fault in council process and that a complaint should have been progressed rather than an ongoing planning enforcement case. An apology was issued.	19/11/2024
Education & Children's Services	15/08/2024	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble, Financial redress: Loss of service, Provide training and/or guidance	Actions included an apology with payment for time and trouble, a payment for the loss of education provision and the issuing of a reminder to staff that the statutory duty to provide suitable alternative educational provision under Section 19 remains with the council regardless of arrangements with third parties.	03/10/2024
Highways & Transport	19/07/2024	Apology	The Ombudsman found that Shropshire Council had already remedied the delay in responding to a request for local parking restrictions through an apology. No further action was required.	19/07/2024
Education & Children's Services	17/12/2024	Apology, New appeal/review or reconsidered decision	An apology and payment were issued due to delays in arranging respite care and use of the wrong complaint procedure. A review of support was put in place and the complaint remedied.	02/04/2025
Adult Care Services	27/03/2025	Apology	There were failings in the domiciliary care provided, which the care agency acknowledged and dealt with through an apology. The Ombudsman was satisfied that an apology had been made and no further action was required.	27/03/2025
Adult Care Services	10/01/2025	Apology, Financial Redress: Quantifiable Loss	A mistake was made in the financial calculations. The Ombudsman found this had not led to any significant personal injustice. An apology was made with a small payment adjustment to correct the error.	16/01/2025
Education & Children's Services	20/02/2025	Apology, Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble, Provide services to person affected	An apology was made for the delay in the council's response to an independent stage 2 statutory children's complaint. A payment was made for time and trouble.	27/03/2025



Committee and Date

Cabinet
9th July 2025

Item

Public



Financial Monitoring Period 2 2025/26

Responsible Officer:	James Walton		
email:	James.walton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258951
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder - Finance		

1. Synopsis

The Period 2 monitoring report shows an exceptionally challenging financial position for the Council. Demand pressures and only partial savings delivery need to be urgently addressed in the remainder of the year.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report is the second monthly report presented to Cabinet. It remains early in the year, and the data upon which the forecast is prepared is more accurate than last month, but the estimated position through the remaining months of the year is not yet certain. Importantly, sufficient time remains to enable management action to be put in place to materially improve the forecast. This is an urgent requirement.
- 2.2. The financial position of the council remains highly challenging. The key overall indicator of financial health for the Council is the General Fund Balance. However, a wide range of factors impact on that value. As such, the overall financial position has been analysed into seven separate areas that underpin the strategic risk "Inability to Contain overall committed Expenditure within the Current Available Resources within this Financial Year":
 - a) Sufficient savings not being realised in-year
 - b) Demand in social care is higher than budgeted
 - c) Other unforeseen unbudgeted financial pressures arise

- d) Capital receipts are not sufficient to cover redundancy and transformation costs or other capital programme requirements
- e) External factors leading to increased cost pressures (e.g. health partners; reviews by Ofsted, CQC, DfE (SEND) review; unanticipated geo-political events renew inflationary pressures; a further epidemic)
- f) Project risks (e.g. capital projects impacting on revenue, including write-off and payback of grants)
- g) Cashflow – inadequate liquidity leading to treasury management implications

2.3. The key issues highlighted by this report are:

- a) A forecast outturn position as at 31 March 2026 of £13.174m overspend which significantly reduces the General Fund Balance, thus limiting the ability of the Council to sustain unforeseen financial pressures which may arise before the end of the financial year.
- b) This situation is driven by projected under-delivery of in-year savings by £28.439m (projected delivery of £31.428m, which is 53% of the £59.876m target). At period 2 this is still driven by a high-level, top-down estimate of spending which needs validation through a detailed bottom-up forecast, to be undertaken in period 3 and reported to Cabinet as the Quarter 1 Monitoring Report.
- c) The central budget forecast as at Period 1 was a £13.884m budget pressure and the period 2 forecast has improved slightly by £0.710m. This change is partly due to better information providing a more robust, if still exceptionally early, view of the financial position, particularly around potential savings delivery.
- d) An initial General Fund Balance of £34.280m indicates that the projected variance can be accommodated. Nevertheless, significant action must be taken to move the Council's position from financial survival to financial sustainability.
- e) The £13.174m spend over budget represents the Central Projection within the control corridor for the 2025/26 budget. A favourable and adverse projection included in the Period 1 report has not been updated due to insufficient information but will be incorporated in the Quarter 1 monitor.

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet Members:

- 3.1. 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. Note the projected General Fund Balance would be £0.606m if no further action were taken.
- 3.3. 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.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. A more regular review of the emerging financial position for the year is an essential part of the risk management approach of the council during the coming year.
- 4.2. The level of savings delivery and financial pressures in the current year are a recognised risk for the 2025/26 budget, and continued focus and action are being put in place to address this.
- 4.3. Risk table

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
That management actions required to bring the budget into balance do not yield the results being targeted, leading to a larger pressure on the general fund balance.	To deepen engagement and action planning through Directorate Management and Chief Officer teams.
Insufficient reserves to cover projected overspending or other deficits	Improved budget preparation process with more analysis of current and future activity trends. Modelling of current and future reserves levels, including both earmarked and unearmarked, against likely levels of pressure and impact on securing the desirable level of unearmarked (general) reserves. Review of ways in which further funds can be brought into unallocated general fund balances and reserves to support balance sheet repair and reserves improvement with the aim to retain a General Fund Balance within the range of £15m to £30m.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands as budgeted for within the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 27 February 2025 and subsequent updates. It is also addressed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has and continues to be undertaken to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve
- scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope,
 - delaying implementation, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2. This report sets out the financial projections for the Council in the 2025/26 Financial Year as at Period 2. A summary of the key elements for managing the Council's budget are detailed elsewhere in this report.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. The Council's Financial Strategy supports its strategies for Climate Change and Carbon Reduction in several ways. A specific climate change revenue budget is held. The climate change schemes involving the Council's assets or infrastructure are included within the capital programme. These two areas of expenditure are anticipated to have a positive contribution towards climate change outcomes.
- 6.2. Securing a robust and sustainable financial base will help the Council meet the challenges of climate change – this is not separate to our budget management, but integral to it, as set out in the objectives of The Shropshire Plan and our aim to secure a Healthy Environment.

7. Forecast Outturn and Implied General Fund Balance

- 7.1. In overview, the current position indicates a potential spend over budget of £13.174m. This is not acceptable or sustainable and requires urgent management intervention in all portfolio areas to secure corrections. While it is inevitable that not all savings can be delivered exactly to the value planned, there are several areas where further work to improve the forecast can be progressed. Overall, every effort needs to be made to secure robust forecasts in all areas, based on clear operational plans, which remain within, or close to, budgeted funding limits. (This is also set out in more detail in the Financial Procedure Rules, in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution.)
- 7.2. In terms of the risk areas set out above at para 2.2, the table below provides a summary of current position.

Risk Area	P2 - Current Position
1. Sufficient savings not realised in-year	The current savings projection for 2025/26 (including savings brought forward from 2024/25 to be delivered) is £31.438m which represents around 53% of the total savings to be delivered. This indicates non delivery of £28.439m. Further work is required to ensure all indicative savings plans are delivered in full and further work to identify how the savings targets can be delivered in 2025/26. The General Fund included £11.5m of contingency in case of non-delivery of savings based on previous years delivery rates. Given the current estimate of £28.438m non-delivery, this £11.5m would be insufficient.
2. Demand in social care is higher than budgeted	Adult Social care are projecting purchasing pressures of £19.866m, and Children's Social Care are projecting external residential placement pressures of £8.635m. This provides a total social care demand pressure of £28.501m. Work is progressing to mitigate this demand pressure where possible to prevent an ongoing budget pressure, however it is anticipated that the £9m identified within the General Fund as a high risk area, will be needed to be released in 2025/26.
3. Other unforeseen budget pressures arise	No other significant pressures have been identified as at P2, although an assessment will be undertaken each month and reported accordingly.
4. Capital receipts must be sufficient to fund requirements	The capital strategy identified that the Council had £32.4m of commitments against capital receipts in 2025/26. This included £16.5m of

Risk Area	P2 - Current Position
	transformation costs. It was anticipated that the Council would require a further £19m of capital receipts to be delivered in 2025/26. An assessment of the position for capital receipts will be included within the Period 3 monitor but any shortfall in transformational spending compared to capital receipts funding would directly increase the value of the overspend currently being reported.
5. External factors leading to increased cost pressures	No additional cost pressures are currently expected.
6. Project risks (e.g. capital projects impacting on revenue, including payback of grants)	Under ongoing review, no clear risks identified at present. An assessment will be undertaken each month and included from the Period 3 monitor. The MTFs reported that the cancellation of the NWRR project could result in write off costs of up to £38.9m which could increase the overspend currently reported by that value. Progression of the project is, however, subject to identification of adequate funding and the proposal to utilise Local Transport Fund grant of £136.4m does not appear viable with the recent announcement of a new replacement Local Transport Grant that amounts to only £48m.
7. Cashflow - stalled liquidity	No issues – full year cashflow plan in place and ongoing review to secure liquidity. An assessment will be undertaken each month.

Directorate performance

- 7.3. Table 1 below summarises the position by directorate (see also Appendix 1), including latest projections on funding.
- 7.4. Directorate spend is shown gross of any savings and these savings are instead applied, in aggregate and at an organisational level lower down the table. This is an approach taken for Period 2 only, while spend is still shown at the level of former Directorates, and savings will be allocated to new functional areas in future, ideally from Period 3.
- 7.5. Total net expenditure of £65.112m has been reduced by applying the total projected savings to be delivered in 25/26 and the application of the general fund balance already allocated and committed. This presents a total overspend position of £13.174m.

Table 1: Projected Outturn by Directorate *

Directorate*	Revised Budget (£'000)	Projected Outturn (£'000)	(Under)/Overspend (£'000)	RAGY Classification
Health & Wellbeing	8,867	7,730	(1,137)	Y
People	253,376	293,029	39,653	R
Place	55,436	73,889	18,453	R
Resources	4,771	7,520	2,749	R
Strategic Management Board	811	223	(588)	Y
Service Delivery Budgets	323,262	382,392	59,130	
Corporate	(34,676)	(28,694)	5,982	R
Net Expenditure	288,586	353,698	65,112	
Total Savings Delivery		(31,438)	(31,438)	

General Fund Balance Allocated and Committed to known pressures		(20,500)	(20,500)	
Total Overspend			13,174	
Council Tax	(219,283)	(219,283)	0	G
Business Rates	(46,683)	(46,683)	0	G
Top Up Grant	(11,025)	(11,025)	0	G
Revenue Support Grant	(8,668)	(8,668)	0	G
Collection Fund (Surplus)/Deficit	(2,927)	(2,927)	0	G
Funding	(288,586)	(288,586)	0	G
Total	0	13,174	13,174	

* The financial position is currently shown by Directorates, as shown in the 2025/26 budget book. It is intended that the financial position will be recategorised into the new Council structure following completion of the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts, therefore this should be reflected in the Q1 report.

- 7.6. Detail by service area is shown in appendix 1. This also shows the P2 projected overall variance and the level of 'red' (not yet planned) savings. It can be clearly seen that the majority of all variations to budget are driven by the projected level of achievement of savings. This is analysed further in the following paragraphs.
- 7.7. The £13.174m detailed above represents the central assumption for the projected outturn. The Council is looking at specific areas where they can reduce cost projections further and these will be brought forward in Period 3 and beyond.

Savings performance

- 7.8. The current summary position on savings delivery is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Savings Delivery in 2025/26

	Savings Target £'000	Projected Delivery £'000	Indicative Plans Identified £'000	Not Yet Planned £'000
25/26 MTFS savings including Demand Mitigations	18,710	12,082	2,727	5,137
24/25 Savings carried forward for delivery in 25/26	41,166	10,452	6,177	30,714
Total	59,876	22,534	8,904	35,851

- 7.9. The savings forecast necessarily includes a range of estimates relating to delivery of spending reduction through the course of the financial year. These are being progressively refined as the year develops. Current forecast savings include expected service-led and organisational pay savings as a result of a resizing exercise. Detailed work to confirm the details of these plans at service level will be undertaken in P3 monitoring and included in the Q1 report.

General Fund Balance

- 7.10. The 2025/26 budget includes a £29.455m contribution to the General Fund Balance. In the Adequacy of Reserves assessment within the Financial Strategy

approved by Council in February 2025, the Council identified potential high risk areas that the General Fund may need to contribute to in 2025/26. £9m of this related to Social Care, and the current P2 position has highlighted a projected pressure in this area, therefore it is anticipated that this will need to be released. Also £11.5m was earmarked for potential non delivery of savings based on historical levels of non-achievement. Given the projected position on savings, this balance is anticipated to be required for 2025/26. Table 2 details the projected General Fund Balance following this budgeted contribution, but also includes the impact on the Balance should the current spend over budget estimate of £13.174m materialise. This shows that a small balance would remain for the General Fund Balance for 2025/26 and therefore it is imperative that the Council takes urgent action to secure further delivery on savings, and ensure no further cost pressures arise.

Table 2: General Fund Projection

General Fund Balance	£'000
Balance brought forward 1 April 2025	4,825
Budgeted Contribution 2025/26	29,455
Budgeted 2025/26 General Fund Balance	34,280
Release of GF to fund high risk cost pressures	(20,500)
202/26 estimated spend above budget (as projected at P2)	(13,174)
Balance as at 31 March 2026	606

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2029/30, Council 27th February 2025

Financial Monitoring Period 1, Cabinet 11th June 2025

Financial Rules

Local Member: All

Appendices

Appendix 1 - 2025/26 Projected Revenue Outturn by Service

Appendix 2 – 2025/26 Savings Delivery

APPENDIX 1

2025/26 PROJECTED REVENUE OUTTURN BY SERVICE

Directorate	Service Area	Forecast Variance @ P2	Analysis of Variance to Budget
Corporate Budgets			
	Corporate Budgets	5,982	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £7.487m unachieved Corporate MTFS savings • £0.596m Interest payable as a result of loans issued in previous years and capitalisation directive • £0.055m Interest receivable reduced • £0.043m Additional Audit fees • (£0.222m) MRP savings • (£2.000m) Capital Reserve released
Corporate Budgets Total		5,982	
Health and Wellbeing			
	Integration & Healthy People - Non-Ringfenced	(1,137)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (£1.200m) reversal of savings showing in assumed savings delivery outside of the system.
	Integration & Healthy People - Ringfenced	(0)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No variance to budget at Period 2
Health and Wellbeing Total		(1,137)	
People			

Directorate	Service Area	Forecast Variance @ P2	Analysis of Variance to Budget
	Adult Social Care	23,649	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing pressures identified in the 2024/25 outturn are continuing into 2025/26 including: • £19.866m spend over budget purchasing made up of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £15.979m SPOT purchasing - £8.919m Residential care due to capital reductions, £6.170m ISF and £4.247m Nursing due to increased complexity and CHC hand backs, an underspend of (£1.124m) in Other Spot purchasing due to care type changing to Supported Living packages (budget to be realigned) offset by (£0.974m) reduction in spend forecast due to DP and ISF clawbacks (£0.306m) decrease in spend under budget on college placements and (£0.174m) decrease in spend under budget on direct payments - £12.803m BLOCK purchasing increase in spend over budget on supported living and supported living ISF due to an increase in complexity of care and provider market challenges around capacity and uplifts - (£8.897m) increase income from client contributions and CHC joint funded packages • £4.281m unachieved efficiency savings relating to rightsizing of the organisation • £0.237m Enable increase in spend over budget to deliver contracts previously held in reserves • £0.160m service specific savings showing unachieved as savings delivery being shown outside of the system • (£0.514m) Hospital Interface Social Work teams decrease in forecast spend due to vacancies. • (£0.276m) Internal Day Services decrease in forecast spend due to vacancies and increased income contributions • (£0.182m) Four Rivers Increase in income through client contributions

Directorate	Service Area	Forecast Variance @ P2	Analysis of Variance to Budget
	Children's & Families	12,050	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing pressures identified in the 2024/25 outturn are continuing into 2025/26 including: • £8.635m spend over budget forecast on External Residential Placements. £3.013m is an increase in External Residential Spot/Framework placements (28% increase between 31/3/24 and 31/3/25) leading to an increase in expenditure in 2025/26. £2.475m relates to the Disabled Children's Team residential expenditure budget where we have had 3 new high-cost placements since January. £2.330m relates to a shortfall in 2025/26 savings in relation to Stepping Stones Project savings (£0.955m) and managing demand through foster carer recruitment (£1.375m). The remaining £0.817m of this £9.379m pressure relates to a shortfall in contributions from other partners towards joint funded social care led residential placements. • £3.803m of service specific savings shown unachieved across Children's & Families, savings delivery being shown outside of the system. • £1.649m spend over budget forecast on staffing budgets across the service. The majority of this relates to Agency Social Workers covering vacancies, but in 2025/26 there is another budget pressure of £0.989m resulting from additional staffing implemented following the Ofsted Staff Improvement plan. • £1.258m forecast spend over budget relates to Disabled Children's budget area with £0.995m of the value explained by DCT prevention and Support payments, and a further £0.278m explained by spend over budget on DCT Short Breaks Contracts • £0.989m relates to forecast unachieved efficiency savings targets across the whole of Children's Social Care not achieved and a further £0.343m unachieved savings are organisational savings relating to rightsizing the organisation, third party spend and efficiency savings across the whole of Early Help • £0.527m forecast spend over budget relates to other non-staffing expenditure budgets such as childcare payments, consultancy, medical and parenting assessments and interpreting fees across the social work teams. • £0.264m forecast spend over budget relates to Adoption Services. There is a £0.234m spend over budget on Adoption Allowances, the remainder relates to the Together4Children permanency hub where the percentage contribution from other another Local Authority has reduced in 2025/26. • £0.108m forecast spend over budget relates to transport costs across the service such as transport hire recharges and taxi costs • (£0.112m) forecast under spend against budget on Youth Support Team due to temporary vacancy management savings • (£0.182m) forecast under spend against budget on Public Law Outline support packages. • (£0.206m) spend under budget against Early Help staffing and non-staffing budgets, as well as the maximisation of grants in this area. • (£0.395m) spend under budget against Internal Residential Children's Homes due to Devonian being temporarily closed until late 2025. • There is a credit of (£1.867m) relating to the capitalisation of posts as a one-off working on transformational projects

Directorate	Service Area	Forecast Variance @ P2	Analysis of Variance to Budget
			<p>(Stepping Stones Project).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (£2.494m) forecast spend under budget relates to Fostering placements budgets (£1.948m External Fostering and £0.546m Internal Fostering) where the expenditure growth has not been as high as budgeted for in the 2025/26 growth modelling

Directorate	Service Area	Forecast Variance @ P2	Analysis of Variance to Budget
	Education & Achievement	224	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £0.228m spend over budget against Home to School Transport. £0.184m of this relates to SEND Transport where there has been a significant increase in the number of children with EHC Plans requiring transport. The remaining variance of £0.028m relates to mainstream transport (£0.012m) and the Children's transport Fleet (£0.032m). • £0.150m of service specific savings are unachieved across Education & Achievement, however all savings delivery is being shown outside of the service and so the £0.229m planned for delivery is not being attributed to Education & Achievement at this stage • £0.131m forecast spend over budget relates to the fully-traded Schools Library Service • (£0.058m) one-off efficiencies across both staffing and non-staffing budgets within Learning & Skills Business Support. • (£0.061m) relating to the capitalisation of a post as a one-off working on transformational projects within Learning & Skills Business Support • (£0.376m) spend under budget forecast within Public Transport resulting from the use of Department for Transport Grants to support Bus Operators
	Shire Services	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No variance to budget at Period 2
	People Directorate Management	3,730	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate MTFS savings targets yet to be realised
People Total		39,652	
Place			
	Growth and Infrastructure	14,778	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £5.901m Corporate MTFS savings targets yet to be realised. • £3.000m Asset rationalisation savings target unachieved • £1.985m shortfall on Parking Income (savings target brought forward and new year savings target) • £1.256m service specific savings showing unachieved across Growth & Infrastructure as savings delivery being shown outside of the system. • £0.970m shortfall of Highways staff capitalisation & Repair Gangs • £0.745m Shirehall (Income shortfall and unachieved savings targets) • £0.350m shortfall in capitalised works in Property Services Group • £0.320m shortfall on Corporate landlord Income (Mardol House Student Accommodation) • £0.240m Overspend Ash Die back • £0.240m Unrealised Income Castle Court Oswestry (Wilko) • £0.175m Additional Kier overheads partly offset by efficiency savings • £0.080m Traffic Engineering (Agency staff) • (£0.297m) savings on Corporate landlord Rates & Utility Costs (Ludlow Resource Centre, Weeping Cross depot & Car

Directorate	Service Area	Forecast Variance @ P2	Analysis of Variance to Budget
			parks) • (£0.187m) Savings on Property & Development (Staffing)
	Homes and Communities	3,616	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £2.359m Corporate MTFS savings targets yet to be realised. £0.600m shortfall on Garden waste Income £0.400m Activity higher than budgeted for in Bed & Breakfasts £0.481m service specific savings showing unachieved across Homes & Communities as savings delivery being shown outside of the system £0.213m shortfall on Pyrolysis Income £0.196m Outdoor Partnerships (Unachieved Savings Targets) £0.108m Leisure centres (Unachieved Savings Targets) offset by reduced Utility charges (£0.476m) additional Income from Theatre Services (£0.234m) Independent Living - additional costs recharged to capital (£0.021m) Other Minor Variances
	Place Directorate Management	60	• Minor variance to budget at Period 2
Place Total		18,453	
Resources			
	Workforce and Improvement	103	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £0.309m Corporate MTFS savings targets yet to be realised. £0.140m net income below budget across Workforce & Improvement (£0.345m) spend under budget relating to vacancy management
	Finance and Technology	1,069	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £2.090m Corporate MTFS savings targets yet to be realised. (£0.518m) net spend under budget against Technology, mostly relating to the restructure being implemented identifying ongoing savings. When fully implemented, these will offset against some of the savings targets. (£0.270m) relating to vacancies in Finance, and other staff underspends which relate to Voluntary Redundancies which will offset some of the savings target above. (£0.212m) net spend under budget relating to vacancy management across Revenues & Benefits

Directorate	Service Area	Forecast Variance @ P2	Analysis of Variance to Budget
	Legal and Governance	(463)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £0.080m spend above budget relating to Electoral Registration • £0.039m spend above budget against legal costs relating to Child Care • (£0.035m) one-off savings identified across Democratic Services in relation to mileage and subsistence • (£0.045m) other vacancy management across Feedback & Insights and Legal Teams • (£0.102m) net income over budget against Registrars and Coroners • (£0.133m) Spend under budget in Procurement Team mostly relating to Vacancy management • (£0.214m) Spend under budget across Audit Services, mostly relating to Vacancy management
	Pensions	(1)	• Minor variance to budget at Period 2
	Resources Directorate Management	2,041	• £2.041m Corporate MTFS savings targets yet to be realised.
Resources Total		2,749	
Strategic Management Board			
	Chief Executive and PAs	(61)	• Minor variance to budget at Period 2
	Programme Management	142	• £0.142m spend over budget at Period 2 relating to staffing costs, this will be reviewed at Period 3 to assess relevant levels of capitalisation.
	Communications and Customer Services	(669)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net Vacancy management efficiencies identified across Customer Services (£0.392m) • (£0.186m) Spend under budget in relation to Vacancy Management across Communications Services • Income above budget in relating to CCTV Service (£0.092m)
Strategic Management Board Total		(588)	
Council Net Spending		65,112	
Total Savings Delivery		(31,438)	
General Fund Balance allocated and committed to known pressures		(20,500)	
Total Overspend		13,174	

APPENDIX 2

2025/26 SAVINGS DELIVERY

2.1 SUMMARY

The savings projections for 2025/26 are being tracked monthly with savings delivery being mapped against projected delivery during the course of the year. The table below summarises the position as at 31st May 2025.

	Savings Target £'000	Projected Delivery £'000	Indicative Plans Identified £'000	Not Yet Planned £'000
25/26 MTFS savings including Demand Mitigations	18,710	12,082	2,727	5,137
24/25 Savings carried forward for delivery in 25/26	41,166	10,452	6,177	30,714
Total	59,876	22,534	8,904	35,851

Projected delivery and indicative plans are in place for 53% of the savings identified. Work continues to progress to ensure that savings proposals delivered can be delivered on an ongoing basis in order to reduce any further savings pressures into 2026/27.

Savings Ref	Saving Proposal	Savings Target £	Projected Delivery £	Indicative Plans £	Not Yet Planned £
25/26 MTFS Savings and Demand Mitigation Savings					
RC004	Capitalisation of reserves as one off for staff and projects relating to transformation work to further increase funding of public health reserves to support preventative initiatives. This is for 2024/25, in addition to 1,000,000 in 23/24. This is being removed in 2025/26.	-1,000,000	-1,000,000	0	0
RC040	Dispose of Shirehall quicker and relocate services	1,300,000	1,005,540	0	294,460
RC074	Anticipated cost reductions in Revenues & Benefits arising from improvement of in-house Temporary Accommodation provision.	1,000,000	0	935,000	65,000
RC094	Waste contract efficiencies across the waste service including review of garden waste collection costs and HRC opening times to be delivered through negotiated changes to the contract.	987,000	700,000	0	287,000
RC087	DSG funding of SEND pressures	500,000	500,000	0	0
RC089	Increased charges for car parking across the County.	500,000	0	0	500,000
RC091	More fixed penalties issued for dog fouling, littering and illegal parking.	300,000	0	300,000	0
RC088	Increased charges for car parking in Shrewsbury and Ludlow but retaining Park and Ride Services.	250,000	250,000	0	0
RC032	Review Library Services to ensure maximum efficiencies including funding reviews and reshaping/reductions of services	220,540	220,540	0	0
RC096	Asking other organisations (commercial companies) to manage our leisure centres for us.	200,000	0	0	200,000
RC097	Management of green spaces and areas of outstanding natural beauty will be passed to town or parish councils, where they choose to take that on.	200,000	200,000	0	0
RC092	Large scale switch off of street lights to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions.	150,000	226,000	0	-76,000
RC026	Review and potential reduction of some leisure provision to achieve cost reductions.	100,000	70,000	0	30,000
RC090	Residents' only parking will be enforced for an annual residents fee.	100,000	0	0	100,000

Savings		Savings Target	Projected Delivery	Indicative Plans	Not Yet Planned
Ref	Saving Proposal	£	£	£	£
RC003	Further increase allocation of the public health grant to support preventative initiatives at the children's, adults and customer front-door.	70,000	70,000	0	0
RC025	Review and resize the Housing Services team	64,000	64,000	0	0
RC030	Review staffing and resize the Outdoor Partnerships team	13,840	13,840	0	0
RC029	Review staffing and resize the Rights of Way team	6,460	6,460	0	0
MD001	Further increase funding of public health reserves to support preventative initiatives at the children's, adults and customer front-door (earliest point of contact). Was included in the 2024/25 budget for one year only and is shown here as being removed.	-200,000	-200,000	0	0
MD019	The council would need to encourage more people to foster across the county (also included in demand mitigation list – now removed but left in here)	1,375,000	1,375,000	0	0
NI004	Expand the Handy Person service to a wider range of customers, including fee payers, supporting independent living	10,000	10,000	0	0
NI006	Increase income from Museums and Archives services	100,000	18,560	0	81,440
NI007	Increase income from an enhanced memorial and ceremony offer at Council sites	10,000	10,000	0	0
NI008	Increase income from an improved range of wedding and partnership ceremony packages	2,000	2,000	0	0
TO001	Explore shared emergency planning resource and resilience with partners.	15,000	15,000	0	0
TO009	Review service synergies to secure cost reductions across Highways, Maintenance, and Outdoors services.	1,000,000	600,000	0	400,000
SC002	Review education transport arrangements - changes to policy and delivery models (mainstream and SEND)	400,000	400,000	0	0
SC008	Review staffing and resize the Empty Homes service	47,010	47,010	0	0
MD020	Stepping Stones	3,758,000	3,758,000	0	0
MD021	Increase in income from care contributions	1,000,000	166,000	834,000	0
MD022	Increase in in-house provider charges	60,000	60,000	0	0
MD023	Partnership working CHC and 117	650,000	650,000	0	0
NI003	ASC Telecare	500,000	127,000	373,000	0
MD016	ASC - nighttime care and support service enabling people	520,000	0	0	520,000
MD026	Shared lives cost avoidance delivered through increase	300,000	15,354	284,646	0
MD027	Supporting independence through Reviews (including L	1,610,000	1,610,000	0	0
MD028	Fee uplift review	1,500,000	0	0	1,500,000
RC011/19	Review and right size business support function	312,500	312,500	0	0
MD029	ASC contracts and performance management	600,000	600,000	0	0
MD030	Home to school transport - academic days	178,900	178,900	0	0
TOTAL 25/26 MTFS SAVINGS AND DEMAND MITIGATION SAVINGS		18,710,250	12,081,704	2,726,646	3,901,900

Savings Ref	Saving Proposal	Savings Target £	Projected Delivery £	Indicative Plans £	Not Yet Planned £
2024/25 SAVINGS C/F					
EFF45	Charge staffing costs to capital budgets where possible and appropriate (capital project support or transformation of revenue services).	1,790,350	0	0	1,790,350
EFF81	New Operating Model - Charge staffing costs delivering transformation to capital budgets where possible and appropriate (Workforce and Improvement).	645,220	0	0	645,220
EFF83	New Operating Model - Charge staffing costs to capital budgets where possible and appropriate (Legal and Democratic).	57,330	0	0	57,330
EFF84	New Operating Model - Charge staffing costs to capital budgets where possible and appropriate (Finance and IT).	20,740	0	0	20,740
MD012	Supported living - Reduce the need for 24 hour provision and increase independence through alternative resources such as technology	873,190	345,794	0	527,396
RC016	Agency Staff - reducing use of agency staff; promote permanent staffing.	85,000	0	0	85,000
RC078	New model for future delivery of the Council's Out of Hours calls triage and Shrewsbury Town Centre CCTV monitoring	47,310	30,000	0	17,310
RC083	Review and secure cost reductions in the pooled training budget	17,270	17,270	0	0
SC013	Rationalise property and buildings to secure revenue savings (e.g. utilities, security, repairs and maintenance etc). Use reductions to secure additional capital receipts.	3,000,000	500,000	0	2,500,000
TO002	Review the use of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to maximise grant funding	60,000	60,000	0	0
TO004	Review funding arrangements and contributions from external sources to higher cost placements	500,000	500,000	0	0
PRR0	Rightsizing	17,229,400	0	4,176,955	13,052,445
PRTPS0	Third Party Sepnd	12,991,240	5,106,876	2,000,000	5,884,364
PRF&C0	Income	3,848,740	3,892,102	0	-43,362
TOTAL 2024/25 SAVINGS CARRIED FORWARD		41,165,790	10,452,042	6,176,955	24,536,793
TOTAL SAVINGS IN 2025/26		59,876,040	22,533,746	8,903,601	28,438,693

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Committee and Date

Item

Public



SEND and AP Strategy 2025 – 2029 and Outcomes Framework

Responsible Officer:	David Shaw		
email:	David.shaw@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 256479
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Andy Hall		

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 The SEND and AP Strategy and the Outcomes Framework, is designed to support children, young people and their families to achieve their best life. It seeks to provide a coherent and consistent direction for practitioners, providers and partners who support children, young people and families. This paper will explain how this will be achieved and seeks the endorsement of Cabinet for this approach.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Shropshire Plan 2022-25 is a strategic plan that sets out how we are working towards a healthy and sustainable Shropshire. Participation across services is at the heart of the agenda and key to its success. It involves communities, businesses, health partners and the public sector all working together to address challenges, propose solutions and make informed choices that drive positive change for the benefit of all.
- 2.2 The SEND and AP (Alternative Provision) Strategy is aimed at supporting the SEND and AP Area Partnership, who are the strategic leaders in Shropshire with

responsibility for SEND and AP through [the SEND and AP Partnership Board](#), to improve and streamline all services for children and young people (0-25) with special educational needs and or disability, including looked after children and young people and care leavers with SEND to age 25. This is an overarching strategy that involves a number of partners working together, from Education, Health and Care services, as well as a range of commissioned providers. This strategy builds upon the previous strategy, national and local developments, plus direct feedback from children, young people, families and professionals.

- 2.3 The outcomes framework aims to take a single, unified approach to improving outcomes for children and young people, including tracking impact across all the services that are part of the SEND and AP Area Partnership. This will ensure that we are aware of the impact of these services on children, young people and their families and care givers.
- 2.4 The strategy and outcomes framework are aimed at improving services and to ensure that services work together effectively to deliver better outcomes. The documents will be underpinned by a clear system wide action plan covering each of the priority areas led by a multi-agency workstream. The action planning approach employed for the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) provides a clear example of this and is available here [Local area SEND inspection | Shropshire Council](#)
- 2.5 The strategy and outcomes framework has been developed with, and is fully endorsed by, the Shropshire Parent and Carer Council (PACC) our parent carer forum, SEND Independent Advice Support Service (SENDIASS), alongside children, young people and families with lived experience, early years settings, schools, colleges, frontline practitioners, elected members, the voluntary and community sector, and the NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care System. These partners are represented on the [SEND and AP Partnership Board](#) and/or have statutory duties to deliver services for children and young people with SEND, including those accessing AP.
- 2.6 The feedback from engagement activities during the development phases and the public consultation was supportive of the Strategy and the overarching outcomes identified in the Outcomes Framework. Once approved, the implementation and delivery plans will be established in conjunction with multi-agency workstreams as outlined in 2.4.
- 2.7 Several respondents felt more information was needed about how the outcomes would be monitored. From this, it was recognised that more work was needed to provide a robust and measurable framework for SEND. This includes clear steps to achieve the outcomes statements, measures that are specific, measurable, and relevant to track progress and reference data sources as per the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been developed and included within the outcomes framework.
- 2.8 Some respondents noted the need to not confuse outcomes for the child and young person with those of the parent carer. This has resulted in changes being made to reflect this.

- 2.9 There is also a commitment to establishing a programme of engagement that delivers the council's co-production strategy and working collaboratively with the partnership. This will encourage and enable everyone to have a voice in feedback and development work.
- 2.10 Several respondents identified that some outcome measures would not lead to measurable outcomes being easily identified (e.g. "I have opportunities to experience joy as a family"). In collaboration with the parent carer council, work has taken place to improve the clarity of this work.
- 2.11 The full Outcomes Framework (appendix 2) has been refined significantly following the feedback from the public consultation with input from PACC, as outlined in 2.7-2.10. This has included streamlining the high levels outcomes from 7 to 6 and refining the wording across each area to reflect questions relating to the expectation on parent carers. Mechanisms to gather the views of parent carers and children and young people at the point of annual review have been developed as part of the outcomes framework. This will enable the SEND and AP Partnership to receive on a termly basis information from key performance indicators. This will significantly strengthen the voice of parent carers and young people in supporting strategic change with respect to SEND and AP.
- 2.12 Following feedback from parent carers, the partnership recognised the need for the Outcomes Framework to be focused on the outcomes for children, young people and their families. Performance indicators for SEND and AP partners would be developed as part of the area SEND and AP implementation plan.
- 2.12 Following the wide range of engagement activity, including with DfE, NHS England and public consultation, the Area SEND and AP Partnership believe it is important to ratify the work completed to date recognising that the Outcomes Framework should always be a 'live working document' as we continually refine our understanding and raise our expectations on 'what good looks like' for children and young people with SEND and those accessing AP, families and partners. As a result, some of the specific measures may be subject to change in the future in order to address where gaps in information are detected or external changes necessitate some amendment. However, the Outcomes Framework as presented will enable the partnership to receive valuable information with respect to the strengths and weaknesses within the current SEND and AP system.
- 2.13 All of the changes, refinements and additions made following the public consultation have been collated and a 'You said, we did' update is being finalised so this can be added to the Local Offer SEND Strategy public website. This will demonstrate that we have listened to feedback and show how we have acted upon the feedback.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Consider the final draft SEND and AP Strategy 2025 – 2029 and recommend their adoption to full Council in September.
- 3.2 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 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.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. Without having an approved SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework, there is a risk that work to strengthen outcomes for children and young people with SEND will not form part of a cohesive approach to improvement and will diminish accountability. This would reflect poorly at the point of Area SEND inspection as all Local Areas are required to demonstrate strategic co-ordination and evaluation of the services provided for children and young people with SEND, and their families. Not having a clear and coherent strategy and clarity on what good looks like through the outcomes framework would lead to less effective outcomes for children and young people and their families.
- 4.2. Without agreeing to further work in line with the Local Authority's co-production strategy, implementation is likely to be less effective.

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
Without having an approved SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework, there is a risk that work to strengthen outcomes for children and young people with SEND will not form part of a cohesive approach to improvement and will diminish accountability. This would reflect poorly at the	<p>Development of the strategy has considered and taken account of a wide range of feedback from children, young people, families and professionals. Local and national best practice has also been considered and included where appropriate.</p> <p>Approval and endorsement of the SEND and AP strategy and outcomes framework is sought from Cabinet and then Council.</p>

point of SEND Area inspection as this would lead to less effective outcomes for children and young people and their families.	
On-going development and implementation is not in line with the Local Authority's co-production strategy, implementation is likely to be less effective.	Agreement to ensure development and implementation of the SEND and AP strategy and outcomes framework is in line with the Co-Production Strategy.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council is currently managing an unprecedented financial position as budgeted for within the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 27th February 2025 and detailed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. This demonstrates that significant management action is required over the remainder of the financial year to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all Cabinet Reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve
- scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope,
 - delaying implementation, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2. Involving partners in the development of support for children and young people with SEND will lead to more effective provision and promote early intervention.
- 5.3. Any costs will be contained within current budgets, whether Council or Grant funded, such as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). It is expected that delivery of the strategy will actively support the deficit recovery programme on the DSG. The DSG is in a deficit position of c.£17.6m at the end of the 2024/25 financial year. Council officers are actively engaged in discussions with the DfE regarding strategies to manage the deficit, however, this is recognised as a national challenge.
- 5.4. The deficit position is excluded from the Council main revenue budget through the "DSG statutory override", which refers to a temporary accounting measure in England that allows local authorities to exclude deficits in their Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from their main revenue budgets. This override was initially implemented to address financial pressures on high needs budgets for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and has very recently been extended until 31st March 2028.

- 5.5. Extending the DSG statutory override will enable the Government to start a “phased transition process” to reform the SEND system, according to a **consultation document from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government**. This will include working with local authorities to manage their dedicated school grant (DSG) deficits.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. Where we are able to use Microsoft Teams for meetings to reduce climate impact, this takes place.
- 6.2. Work is developed digitally to avoid the use of paper.
- 6.3. The strategy directly promotes the development of local provision and increasing independence for children and young people, therefore enabling children and young people to be educated as close to their local area as possible. This will bring positive benefits in reducing the time spent travelling and distances covered, enabling more children and young people to travel independently. This will also bring benefits in relation to climate change and the reduced use of vehicles, including single occupancy vehicles.

7. Background

- 7.1. Ofsted/CQC expect the local area partnership to update and publish its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in the outcomes of the Area SEND Inspection report, national best practice and local factors. This enables local areas to demonstrate they are providing effective strategic partnership working to improve the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The strategy and outcomes framework has been informed by all of these aspects.
- 7.2. The Shropshire SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy 2025-29 builds on previous strategies, such as the [SEND Strategy 2020-2025](#), and incorporates valuable feedback from the Ofsted/CQC area SEND revisit inspection, the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) and the national SEND and AP improvement plan as well as feedback from the SEND Area Partnership’s own self-evaluation. This involved key partners including parent carers from the SEND community.

8. Additional Information

- 8.1 The development of the strategy and Outcomes Framework has followed a wide range of stakeholder engagement activities, culminating in a public consultation from October 2024 – December 2024. This process enabled Local Area leaders to consider

the wide ranging national reforms planned or underway in this area, alongside the key local priorities identified. The development process is outlined on page 9 of the strategy and has been included as an extract below.

How have we developed our strategy and outcomes framework?



August 2023 to January 2024	March 2024	May 2024	June to August 2024	September to December 2024	January to February 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership Local Area Self evaluation (SEF) consultation meetings Review and consideration of over 2000 responses from young people (11-18) around youth services in Shropshire. c.10% of young people who responded identified that they had a disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consideration of national SEND and AP Improvement Plan, including learning from participation in the SEND and AP Change Programme Draft Outcomes Framework V1 presented to Partnership Board Local Area SEF findings feed into development of SEND & AP Strategy and actions prioritised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Local Area SEF presented to Partnership Board and shared with DfE/NHSE Early draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework presented to Partnership Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Area SEF finalised and shared with Partnership Board Draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework revisited with Partner representatives and prepared for public consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework shared with Partnership Board in preparation for public consultation Public Consultation (7th October to 6th December) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update and refinement of the Local Area SEF Engagement work to develop the final SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework based upon findings from consultation, work with education settings, health and care professionals and Parent Carers.

8.2 The draft versions of the documents shared during the public consultation are also available here [SEND Strategy | Shropshire Council](#)

8.3 A 'You said, we did' update is also being developed for the Local Offer that will outline the feedback received through the engagement and public consultation and identify where changes and/or additions to the strategy and Outcomes Framework have been made.

8.4 The full Outcomes Framework will continue to be used as a live working document, with regular updates back to the SEND and AP Partnership Board, to enable a responsive approach to refining and further developing the detailed indicators to be used.

9. Conclusions

9.1. The Shropshire SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework details the shared commitment to ensuring that all children and young people with SEND and those accessing AP in Shropshire are healthy, happy, safe and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: ALL

Appendices

Appendix 1 – SEND and AP Strategy 2025 – 2029

Appendix 2 – Shropshire SEND and AP Outcomes Framework



Shropshire SEND & Alternative Provision (AP) Strategy 2024 - 2029

This strategy sets the direction and commitment from the Shropshire Area SEND and AP Partnership to develop an inclusive system where everyone can thrive. We are committed to improving outcomes for children and young people aged 0-25 in Shropshire with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those accessing alternative provision (AP). It builds upon the SEND Strategy co-produced with children, young people, families and professionals in 2021, incorporates feedback from the Ofsted/CQC Area SEND re-visit inspection from November 2022, the work completed to date through the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP), the national SEND and AP Improvement Plan published March 2023 and the learning from the national SEND and AP Change Programme.

A wide variety of engagement and development sessions during 2023 included Developing Inclusive Practice days, Headteacher Briefing Sessions, Early Help drop-in sessions, direct feedback from children, young people and families to services, 24 hours of self-evaluation focus group activity and a final self-evaluation session with SEND and AP Partnership Board members in January 2024.

We recognise that many children and young people who access AP will have SEND, and we have, therefore, included AP within this strategy. Our commitment is to create a well-integrated, complementary and effective SEND and AP system in Shropshire.

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Children and young people with SEN all have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age. These children and young people may need extra or different help from that given to others.

Alternative Provision (AP)

Alternative provision helps children who need extra help to stay in and enjoy learning at their mainstream school or provides specialist places and support for those who would benefit from spending time away from their mainstream school.

Our Shared Commitment



Cllr Andy Hall
Portfolio Holder
Education and
Children



Cllr Ruth Houghton
Portfolio Holder for
Social Care



Cllr Bernie Bentick
Portfolio Holder for Health
and Public Protection



Rachel Robinson
Executive Director
Health Wellbeing and
Prevention



Tanya Miles
Executive Director (DASS)



David Shaw
Director of Children's
Services



Vanessa Whatley
NHS ICB Executive
Lead for SEND

The SEND and AP Partnership Board have developed this strategy and outcomes framework to support the very best outcomes for children, young people and their families to achieve their best life.

We know that nationally there is the need to improve provision for children and young people with SEND, and those who access AP. This is challenging within a local context. We have made many improvements to the provision for children and young people with SEND, but we recognise the need to strive further to secure the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

This work begins to define the strategic aims for SEND and AP in Shropshire and will be further developed through the identification of more precise outcomes measures. This will provide a coherent and consistent direction for practitioners, providers and those who support children and young people and support accountability.

To develop this strategy, we have sought to build and improve on the previous SEND strategy, acknowledging the changes in the current landscape and the impact that this has on children, young people and their families and practitioners seeking to support them. The current strategy was redrafted and consulted on, providing the wider community with the opportunity to feedback.

The SEND and AP Partnership Board recognise this is the beginning of a process. This strategy and outcomes framework will be the starting point for future work. It provides the foundations for further strengthening partnership working and co-production to enable children and young people and their families to thrive. We will need to create opportunities for honest conversations where improvements are needed and further develop a culture of trust and support where critical and constructive challenge is valued.

The strategy will be supported by the outcomes framework which describes how those working to support children and young people and their families can deliver the very best outcomes. This will need to be periodically reviewed and in order for this to be successful, it will need to be quality assured, updated and improved. This process is ongoing and informed by a regular programme of engagement with partners and the SEND community. Future actions will engage partners in developing a robust and measurable framework for SEND and AP and will set the agenda for future engagement.

To be successful, this strategy will support the full engagement of practitioners, families, children and young people. This will enable children, young people and their families to live their best life in line with the Shropshire Plan.



**Integrated
Care System**
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin



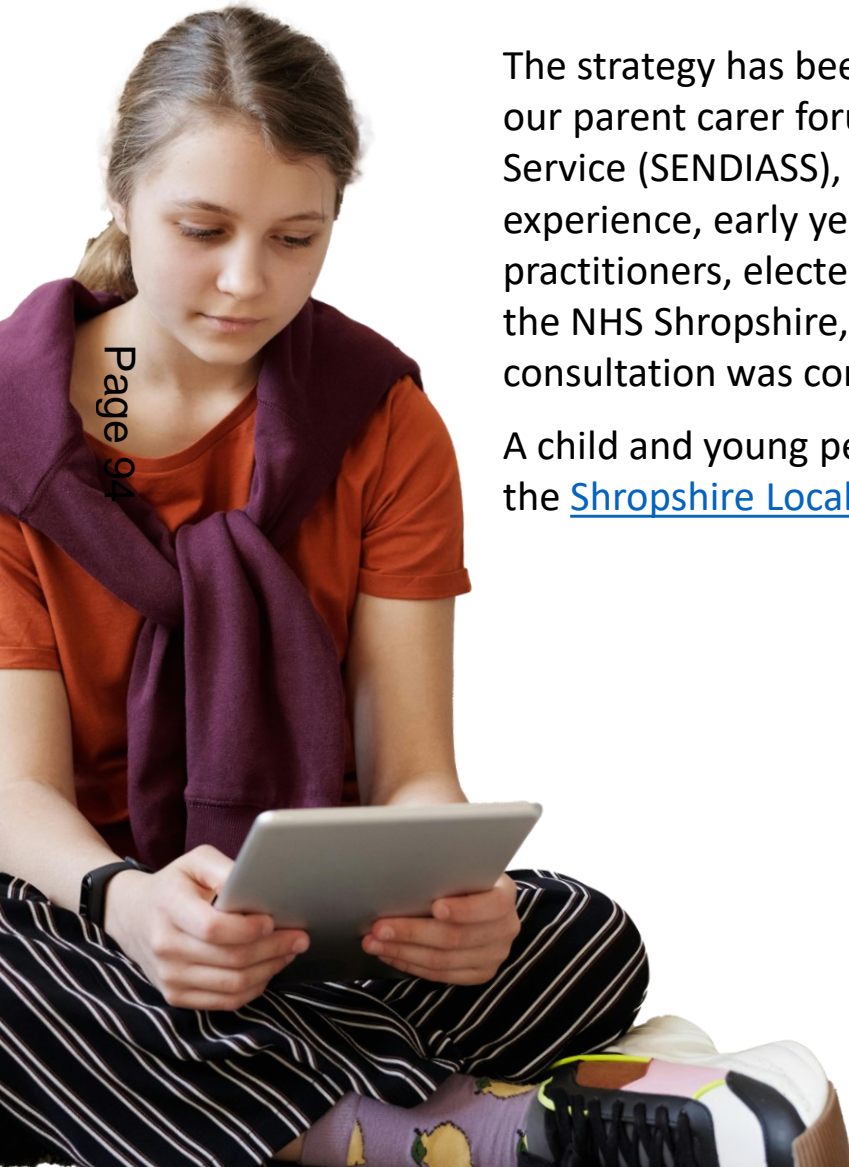
**Shropshire
Council**

Our strategy

How have we developed our strategy and outcomes framework?

The strategy has been developed with the Parent and Carer Council (PACC) our parent carer forum, SEND Independent Advice Support Service (SENDIASS), alongside children, young people and families with lived experience, early years settings, schools, colleges, frontline practitioners, elected members, the voluntary and community sector, and the NHS Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin Integrated Care System. Public consultation was completed between October and December 2024.

A child and young person guide to the strategy can be found on the [Shropshire Local Offer](#) and will be available in an easy read format.

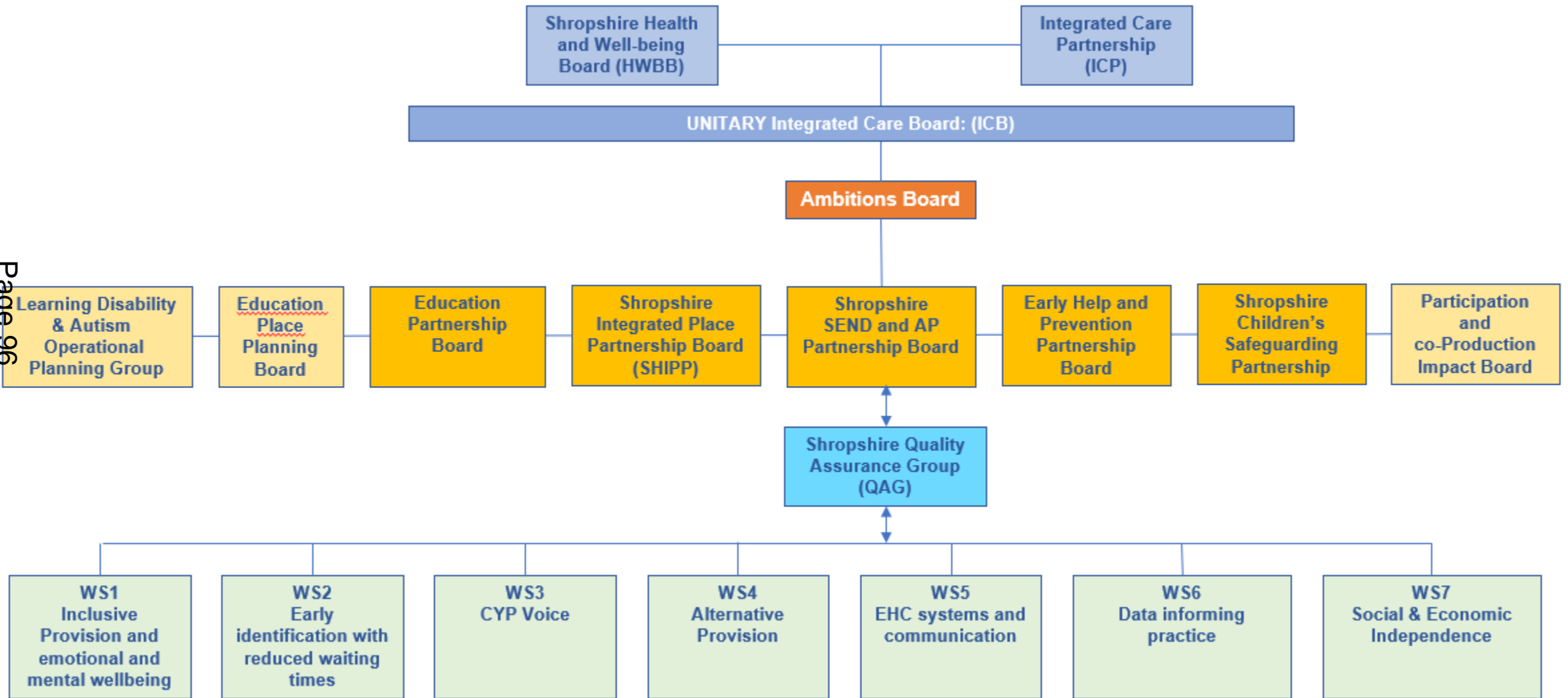


How have we developed our strategy and outcomes framework?

August 2023 to January 2024	March 2024	May 2024	June to August 2024	September to December 2024	January to June 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnership Local Area Self evaluation (SEF) consultation meetings• Review and consideration of over 2000 responses from young people (11-18) around youth services in Shropshire. c.10% of young people who responded identified that they had a disability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consideration of national SEND and AP Improvement Plan, including learning from participation in the SEND and AP Change Programme• Draft Outcomes Framework V1 presented to Partnership Board• Local Area SEF findings feed into development of SEND & AP Strategy and actions prioritised	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft Local Area SEF presented to SEND & AP Partnership Board and shared with DfE/NHSE• Early draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework presented to SEND & AP Partnership Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Area SEF finalised and shared with SEND & AP Partnership Board• Draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework revisited with Partner representatives and prepared for public consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated Draft SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework shared with SEND & AP Partnership Board in preparation for public consultation• Public Consultation (7th October to 6th December)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update and refinement of the Local Area SEF• Engagement work to develop the final SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework based upon findings from consultation, work with education settings, health and care professionals and Parent Carers.

Governance

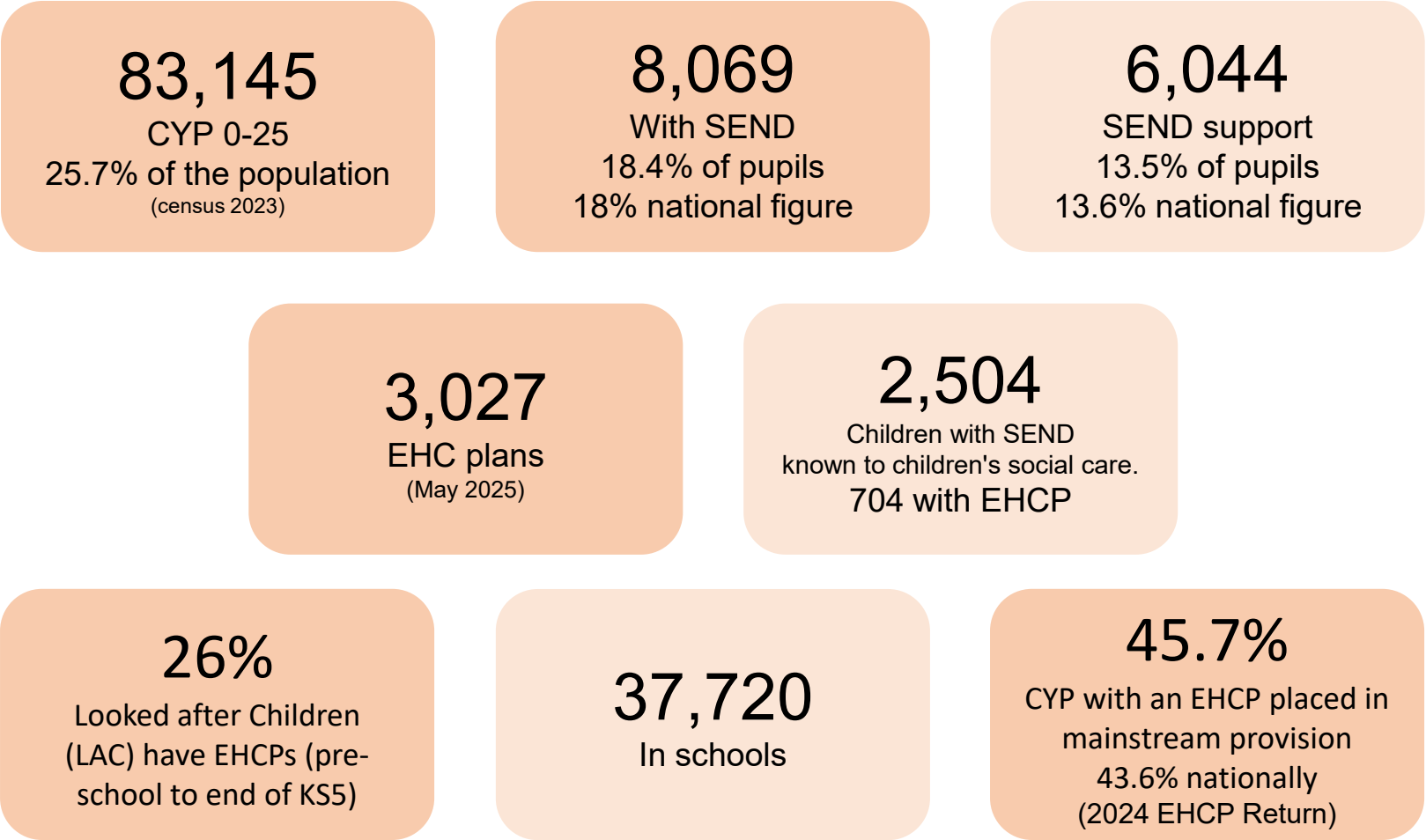
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Local details/national comparison

Shropshire data on school age population with SEND.
Data correct September 2024 unless otherwise stated.

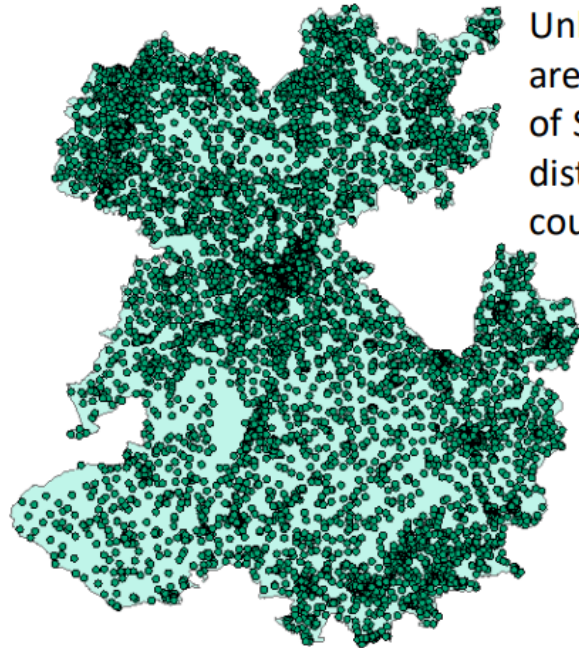
Education health and care plan (**EHCP**)
Special educational needs and disability (**SEND**)
Children and young people (**CYP**)



Challenges of Rurality

Shropshire Residential Postcodes

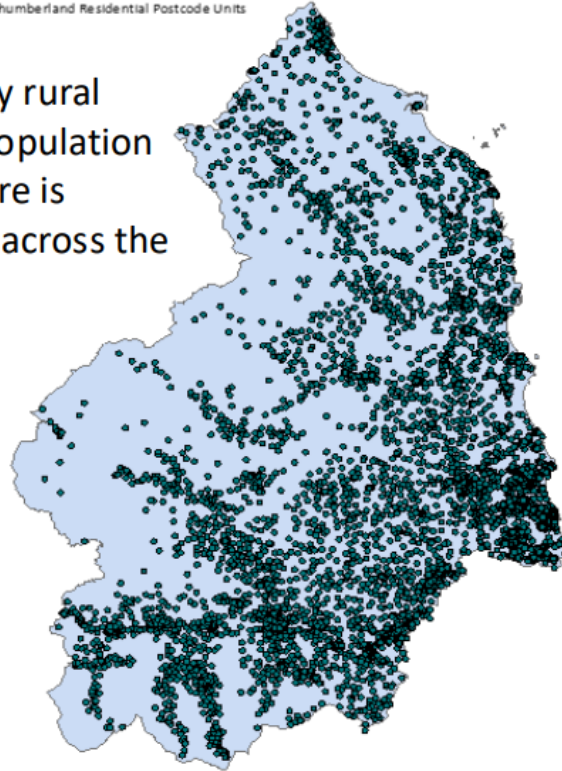
Shropshire Residential Postcode Units



Unlike many rural areas the population of Shropshire is distributed across the county

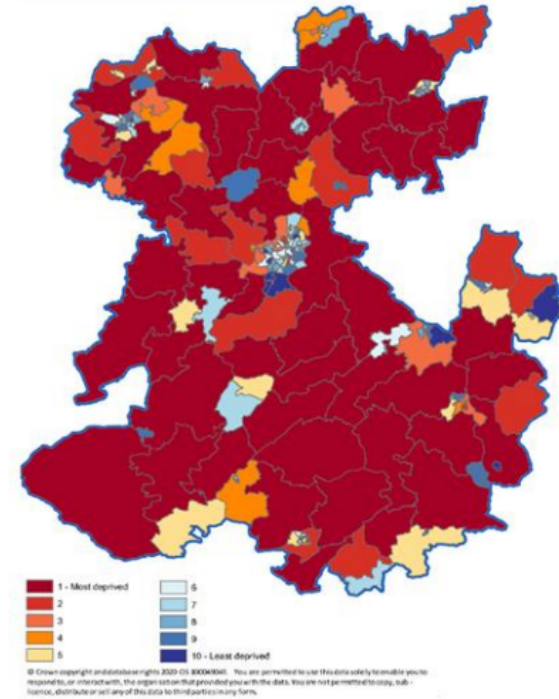
Northumberland Residential Postcodes

Northumberland Residential Postcode Units



Making Shropshire one of the most deprived counties for access to services

IMD - Barriers to Housing & Services - National Decile



6,100 pupils transported to school each day

Using 140 operators

At a cost of £18,000,000 per year



98% of land is rural



3,240 miles of road.
91% rural roads



57.2% live in rural areas



Our shared commitment to the SEND and AP Vision

“Shropshire children and young people with SEND to be healthy, happy and safe, and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life.

We want them to have, and to expect, the same opportunities in life as other children and young people.

We want them to thrive and live their best life.”





**Integrated
Care System**
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin



**Shropshire
Council**

Our priorities

The draft proposed system wide priorities will enable the implementation of our vision and address the themes emerging from our self-evaluation;

1. Develop local, high quality, inclusive provision across the system. Including strengthening the graduated response and Shropshire Inclusive Practice Guidance whilst ensuring consistency and effectiveness of the emotional health and mental wellbeing offer in mainstream education settings, across all phases.
2. Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments.
3. Enable children and young people to communicate confidently, contribute to decisions, and feel visible and valued members of their community.
4. Develop a proactive, supportive and clear alternative provision offer.
5. Develop a system that makes sense and works together, improving co-production, communication and engagement with families and professionals from all services. Including improving the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, annual reviews and transition pathways.
6. Develop a data informed and intelligence rich approach.
7. Enable children and young people to feel visible and valued members of their community, ensuring they are supported to be as socially and economically independent as possible to achieve their next steps in life.

Priority 1

Develop local, high quality, inclusive provision across the system. Including strengthening the graduated response and Shropshire Inclusive Practice Guidance whilst ensuring consistency and effectiveness of the emotional health and mental wellbeing offer in mainstream education settings, across all phases.

Ambition

We will develop a continuum of high-quality local provision in Shropshire across education, health and social care, to better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND and those requiring AP.

Delivery

- We will continue to develop a continuum of provision to integrate skills and knowledge between mainstream and special schools, including further development of SEND hubs in mainstream schools. This will include early years, schools and post 16.
- We will focus on building capacity within provisions to strengthen children and young people's participation in decision making. This will involve a focus on supporting mainstream provision to keep children and young people in their local communities through wrap around health and care support.
- We will maximise outreach and community services, such as those from alternative providers, special schools or community organisations, to strengthen our local provision offer.
- We will develop our social prescribing and other community support offers for families to support early identification, inclusion and participation, building on the development of the Early Help Hubs across Shropshire.
- We will build a thriving market for short break provision and encourage the use of personal budgets to support respite opportunities.
- We will establish a multi-agency forum to share best practice around inclusive education, health and care. This will include high quality professional development for staff.
- We will develop the Shropshire inclusive mainstream provision from early years, schools and Post 16 so that all education professionals and families know what will be universally available for children and young people with SEND, wherever you live in Shropshire. This will enable all education providers to play a key role in ensuring all children and young people with SEND are able to access excellent provision delivering a broad and balanced curriculum.

Impact

- Most children and young people with SEND will successfully and regularly attend mainstream school. There will be further reduction in persistent/severe absence and a reduction in suspensions and exclusions. Children and young people in need of additional support from AP will be supported in mainstream, or return to and be successful in, mainstream provision.
- Fewer children and young people are placed out of Shropshire for their education placement because their education, health and care needs are met locally.
- There will be an increase in the proportion of providers rated outstanding or retaining good judgements from Ofsted.
- We will ensure specialist and alternative provision is in the right locations, high quality and accessible across Shropshire without long journey times.
- More early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers will have a consistent and effective emotional health and mental wellbeing offer, including a trained Senior Mental Health Lead in their senior leadership teams.
- There will be an improvement in attainment and progress outcomes across all phases, as high-quality teaching, curriculum and inclusion enable children and young people's needs to be met whichever mainstream early years, school or post 16 setting they attend in Shropshire.

Priority 2

Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments.

Ambition

We will work in partnership across education, health and care to provide the right help at the right time to prevent challenges escalating.

Delivery

- We will work with early years settings and schools to support the earliest identification of SEND, including supporting them to utilise evidence-based strategies to confidently and effectively meet the presenting needs of children and young people with SEND in mainstream. We will enhance the community and early help offer to complement this work.
- We will work together, guided by our Integration Model, to coordinate our support offers and direct responses with all relevant partner agencies to support children, young people and families. We will work together to deliver the Early Help strategy consistently across Shropshire, so that we are focussed on a 'family approach' to support.
- We will provide access to a high-quality training and professional development offer for our workforce, including early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers.
- We will support a well-integrated local public health and primary care network, including strengthening good health promotion and disease prevention. We will work with early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers to promote a consistent and effective emotional health and mental wellbeing offer, ensuring there is a trained Senior Mental Health Lead in all schools.
- We will work together to ensure children and young people with SEND and those in AP are appropriately protected from safeguarding risks, whilst also building capacity to self-manage/reduce risk to themselves, particularly around exploitation. We will develop the capacity of short break offers with a particular focus on Personal Assistants (PAs) to enable access to a wider range offers.
- We will ensure that our Local Offer website helps children, young people and their families find the local information and support they need, whether online or face to face.

Impact

- Children and young people with SEND will experience equitable opportunities to lead healthy lives. There will be full access to health services and support to maintain good physical and mental health.
- Children and young people with SEND are provided with appropriate personalised support at all stages of need and at key transition points.
- More mainstream early years, school and post 16 settings will be confident that they can meet the presenting needs of children and young people with SEND. Children and young people whose needs do not require an education, health and care plan (EHCP) receive high quality SEND Support whichever early years setting, school or Post 16 provider they attend.
- More families, children and young people with SEND tell us they are able to find and engage with services through better online local offer 'self-support' advice or face to face where necessary.
- There will be fewer admissions into A&E for mental health support. There will be a reduction in referrals to specialist service pathways, e.g. respite/short breaks, therapies especially SALT, ASD/ADHD with their needs being met through early intervention.

Priority 2

Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments.

Shropshire's Integration Model

Strengths based (people and communities).

Initial focus on supporting people to help themselves

Supported by :-

- high quality, integrated, easily understood universal services for people to access when they need it
- high quality, integrated, easily understood specialist services available when they are needed.



Priority 3

Enable children and young people to communicate confidently, contribute to decisions, and feel visible and valued members of their community.

Ambition

We will enable all children and young people to communicate confidently to the very best of their ability, build trust in sharing their lived experiences, encourage innovative ideas from them and their families to shape and improve long term outcomes for children and young people with SEND across Shropshire.

Delivery

- We will ensure that early identification of communication needs will be supported with timely access to evidence informed strategies, interventions and advice to reduce the longer-term impact of communication needs. This will include early years, schools and Post 16 providers. Supporting parents, carers, settings and schools to provide support at the earliest opportunity.
- We will use creative approaches to listen to the voices of children, young people and families so we know whether we are making a difference. Acting on this feedback to plan, develop, redesign and commission services. Utilising the 'you said we did' feature of the local offer.
- We will co-produce, implement and embed a participation strategy to ensure that the views of children and young people are routinely incorporated into the decision-making processes across the SEND Area Partnership.
- Communicate effectively with families via newsletters, social media and ensuring the local offer is up to date.
- We will support all early years settings, education and Post 16 provisions to adopt a total communication approach.

Impact

- Children and young people with SEND will have the skills and opportunities needed to confidently communicate to the very best of their ability and influence decisions on the support they receive as an individual.
- The SEND workforce and providers, including mainstream early years and post 16 settings and schools, will have the skills to co-produce with children, young people and their families so that they influence commissioning and support decisions.
- The views and direct input from children, young people and families are involved in the decision-making processes across the SEND Area Partnership, including strategic, operational and individual co-production. There is even stronger engagement and communication with families, supported by representative groups including PACC and SENDIASS, who routinely participate in strategic activity on behalf of families.
- Evidence and lessons learned from complaints/disagreements will inform feedback and training to the workforce. This will enable a reduction in conflict and tribunal action with families as evidenced through dispute resolution and mediation.
- Feedback from children, young people and families will show improvement in satisfaction rates for our communication, engagement in influencing decision making and quality of our services.

Priority 4

Develop a proactive, supportive, and clear alternative provision offer.

Ambition

We will develop a continuum of support, including targeted support in mainstream schools, local AP and time limited intervention placements, to enable those young people to be successful in mainstream schools or secure a sustained post-16 destination.

Delivery

- We will develop a well-integrated, complementary and effective SEND and AP system, including mainstream education, outreach services, SEND Hubs, specialist provision, early help, social care and local health services. This will form part of the Local Area Inclusion Plan to ensure AP providers are responsive to need Shropshire wide, through the AP Improvement Plan.
- We will work with schools to develop a complementary continuum of AP and/or intervention offers, including increasing the resilience of mainstream schools within the local area to effectively identify and meet SEND need at the earliest opportunity. This will include an expectation that 'targeted support in mainstream' is available and used before placement into AP.
- We will work with early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers to support the development of relational/restorative approaches, including behaviour policies, in addition to high quality teaching, to effectively meet the needs of all children and young people in mainstream provision.
- We will ensure transparent accountability for the outcomes, mobility and destinations of individual pupils, including equitable access to AP, oversight and quality assurance of this provision across Shropshire.

Impact

- Targeted support in mainstream schools will be available across early years, primary and secondary phases, including access to this before AP placement is used. Children and young people accessing AP on time limited placements will successfully return to mainstream school and/or secure a sustained Post-16 destination.
- More children and young people are supported effectively in mainstream provision, achieve well and progress successfully into employment, further education or training.
- There will be a reduction in the rising number of children and young people accessing home education, particularly at secondary.
- Most children and young people with SEND will successfully and regularly attend mainstream school.
- There will be a reduction in persistent/severe absence and a reduction in suspensions and exclusions, particularly at secondary and for those supported through SEND Support.

Priority 5

Develop a system that makes sense and works together, improving co-production, communication and engagement with families and professionals from all services. Including Improving the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, annual reviews, and transition pathways.

Ambition

We want our children, young people and their families to have a positive experience when navigating our services provided by our area SEND and AP partnership.

Delivery

- We will ensure that joint commissioning underpins our work. This includes a robust needs assessment and demonstrates an understanding of how the whole system is working collectively to meet families' needs as early as possible while also supporting the management of long-term conditions.
- We will strengthen our local practice and across services recognising the value of the voluntary and community sector and maximising the opportunity to address contextual safeguarding needs for children and young people with SEND. This means clarifying how to access services and ensuring high quality information and advice is available to all families regardless of whether their child has an emerging or identified need. It means a dedicated support pathway for children and young people that are vulnerable and struggling to access education, a support offer for needs relating to neurodevelopmental and speech and language issues that is needs-led and that support should be available pre, during or post diagnosis, if diagnosis is sought at all.
- We will clarify and better communicate the criteria for access to services and support from the local offer.
- We will develop, implement and embed rigorous quality assurance processes to ensure that service provision is consistent across Shropshire and meets the needs of children and young people. This includes the quality and timeliness of producing new EHC plans and completing annual reviews.
- We will focus on coherent communications and approach to all interactions with families and each other; further developing a culture of effective listening and talking between professionals and families.
- We will deliver the actions identified in the Accelerated Action Plan (APP) and the wider SEND Action plan approved by the SEND & AP Partnership Board.
- All staff across our SEND Area Partnership will know and understand their role in supporting children and young people with SEND, and the role of other professionals in the partnership.

Impact

- Children, young people and their families will tell us that we have a clear and well networked system of consistent and easy to access support services across education, health and care.
- All Shropshire professionals will be able to and be encouraged to access online and face to face learning programmes focusing on inclusion.
- Children and young people and their families tell us that things are improving for them and that our plans to support them are of a good quality, meet their needs and are jointly produced with them. New EHC plans are produced on time, to a good quality and annual reviews are completed and updated/acted upon.
- We will receive positive feedback on the Local Offer.
- Where specialist services are required, they are accessed within the required timescale dependent on need.

Priority 6

Develop a data informed and intelligence rich approach

Ambition

We will ensure that data systems enable key information (outcomes, waiting times, compliance, etc to be available to all partner services to inform forecasting and commissioning decisions, understand gaps in services and improve quality and performance where necessary.

Delivery

- We will implement robust tracking and data systems to ensure that provision evolves with changing cohorts and that we are at the forefront of strategic planning.
- We will develop our SEND and AP Data Dashboard that will draw on robust multi-agency data to help leaders across the SEND Area Partnership make better decisions and put our seven outcomes at the heart of strategic planning and review. We will generate and share reports so that all stakeholders better understand local need.
- We will co-produce and publish a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), aligned to the SEND and AP Strategy and Shropshire Plan, and regularly report on progress against these, so that we know that we are making a difference.
- We will work towards integrating data from the NHS Dynamic Support Register and Care (Education) Treatment Reviews to make sure our health and care services support people with a learning disability (and autistic people), so they are only admitted to hospital if they really need to.
- Our multi agency approach will link information from education, social care and NHS management information systems to better protect our children and young people with SEND who are vulnerable.

Impact

- Our SEND Partnership service providers will tell us that they are secure in their use of evidence; which will inform the forecasting and commissioning of provision and/or services for our children and young people with SEND and those accessing AP.
- Our stakeholders help develop the data dashboard to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- We will have a data dashboard that we can use to report to our stakeholders and governance bodies on our performance and forecast future trends.
- There is clear evidence that data is being used for forecasting joint commissioning requirements; recognising changing needs of the population.
- Our data dashboard indicates that performance across partner services is improving (outcomes, waiting times, compliance, etc...) and is better than national benchmarks.

Priority 7

Enable children and young people to feel visible and valued members of their community, ensuring they are supported to be as socially and economically independent as possible to achieve their next steps in life.

Ambition

We want all children and young people with SEND and those in AP settings to feel welcomed, valued and well supported by their education setting, including preparing well for adulthood and being able to live independently, where possible, in their communities.

Delivery

- We will ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND are always considered in local initiatives such as transport, sports facilities, public buildings and swimming pools. Engaging children and young people with SEND so they are confident to socialise, be as independent as possible and enjoy their recreation time.
- We will build on the work of the Shropshire Virtual School to develop a strategy that encourages effective relational practice and belonging in all education settings so that the vision of 'strong schools, built on love' is realised for all children and young people, including those with SEND or accessing AP.
- We will strengthen our work with charities and voluntary organisations, such as PACC, Actio and the Shropshire Youth Association (SYA), to ensure there is a vibrant range of high quality specialist activities and facilities in the community, for example local social care short breaks activities, local inclusive swimming lessons, horse riding and other opportunities for children and young people with SEND in the community, wherever you live in Shropshire. Supporting young people with SEND to develop a network of friends so they are confident to socialise and enjoy their recreation time.
- We will ensure that facilities across Shropshire are working to be more accessible for a range of physical and sensory needs.
- We will encourage and empower our children and young people to increase their independence, listening to families and young people as we further develop our preparation for adulthood offer. This could include increasing the use of personal transport budgets, independent travel training or practical activities to prepare them for living independently.
- We will work with young people, local businesses, training providers, colleges and schools to create opportunities to experience the world of work with the long-term aim of securing employment and/or meaningful work-related activity. Increasing participation in Supported Internships that lead to paid employment and/or meaningful work.

Impact

- Children and young people with SEND tell us that they have developed a network of friends and they are confident to socialise and enjoy their recreation time.
- Children and young people with SEND, including their families, tell us that their experiences in mainstream schools are positive; they feel welcomed, valued and well supported.
- Increasing participation in Supported Internships that lead to paid employment and/or meaningful work. More young people with SEND progress to further and higher education, employment, training or meaningful work
- More children and young people remain in Shropshire, including accessing more local provision that retains their connections with their community.
- Children and young people, where appropriate, participate in all aspects of early years settings, schools or Post 16, including spending most or all of their time learning in mainstream activities with their peers.
- Young people tell us their choices have been heard so that they can live in sustainable, safe and appropriate accommodation and, where possible, live independently.



**Integrated
Care System**
Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin



**Shropshire
Council**

Outcomes

Outcomes Framework

There are two reasons to develop an agreed outcomes framework.

1. We need to measure our performance by focusing clearly on how our work is impacting on outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
2. We need to ensure that we have a framework of consistent, regular measurements that we can apply year on year to see how our impact on children and young people is changing over time.

Each of the top-level outcomes on the right is broken down to reflect what good looks like in each area, where applicable, for children and young people, parent carers and professionals.

For each of these, we aim to devise a measure to track progress towards these good outcomes.





Children and Young People with SEND

Early years,
school and FE
Settings



SHROPSHIRE
Parent
And
Carer
Council



LIVE WORKING DOCUMENT



Shropshire SEND and AP Outcomes Framework 2025 - 2029

Our shared commitment to young people with SEND

“We want all Shropshire children and young people with special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) to be healthy, happy and safe, and able to achieve their potential to lead a fulfilling life.

We want them to have, and to expect, the same opportunities in life as other children and young people.

We want them to thrive and live their best life.”

An **outcomes framework** outlines a range of things that children and young people themselves, families and professionals would like all children in Shropshire to **do**, to **have**, to **feel** and to **achieve**, for them to be living the **best life** they can.

Partnership Boards will be responsible for:

- Accountability of delivery and impact of this framework.
- Quality assurance processes.
- Feedback being heard and understood to inform and influence change and decision making where appropriate.

Our shared commitment to co-production and collaboration

The outcomes framework aims to take a single, unified approach to improving outcomes for children and young people, including tracking impact across all the services that are part of the SEND and AP Area Partnership.

The local area's expectation is for our six outcomes to be embedded across all parts of the local SEND and AP system. Each individual child or young person with SEND will have a plan to support them in achieving the best possible outcomes. Organisations supporting them will have a strategic plan on how they will enable the outcomes for all children and young people with SEND.

The framework presented below illustrates how the local area partnership will deliver and measure the impact of these outcomes for all children and young people with SEND at a strategic level. The SEND and AP Strategy will have a detailed annual delivery plan which will outline how the local area partnership will deliver the required improvements

This will ensure that we are aware of the impact of these services on any members of our target audience and their families and care givers.

Future work to realise the ambition of the outcomes framework will involve setting, where possible direct, measurable targets.

We commit to establishing an annual programme of engagement that brings our co-production strategy to life and works collaboratively across the partnership with children, young people, families and partners to seek, collect and act upon their views. We will then produce regular 'You said, we did' updates so everyone can see the difference their feedback made to improving outcomes for children, young people, families and partners.



SEND and AP Outcomes Framework

Outcomes Framework

There are several reasons to develop an agreed outcomes framework.

1. We need to ensure that improving outcomes for children and young people underpins all the work we do across the SEND and AP Area Partnership.
2. We need to measure our performance by focusing clearly on how our work is impacting on outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
3. We need to ensure that we have a framework of consistent, regular measurements that we can apply year on year to see how our impact on children and young people is changing over time.
4. We need to ensure that there is connectivity between children and young people's needs and other plans that support them (e.g. Personal Education Plans)

The outcomes on the right are broken down to reflect what good looks like in each area, where applicable for children and young people, Parent Carers and families.

For each of these, we will work together to devise measures to track progress towards these good outcomes.



Children and young people with SEND, and their families, feel empowered to express their views and have them considered in decisions affecting their education, health and well-being.

Children and young people

- I have opportunities to share my wishes and feelings and what is important to me.
- I am listened to, understood, valued and respected by everyone that supports me.
- Reasonable adjustments support my preferred way of communicating and I have a range of ways to express my needs.
- I am given an opportunity to create, review and contribute to plans relating to my education, health and care.
- I am given all the information I need to make decisions. All options are explored and clearly presented to me in a way I understand.
- My views are used to make decisions, there is 'no decision about me, without me'.
- Support is provided to meet my needs at the earliest opportunity.

Parent carers

- I have opportunities to share my wishes and feelings and what is important to my family.
- I have an opportunity to co-produce, review and contribute to plans relating to my child or young person's education, health and care.
- I am supported to empower my child or young person to make their decisions, working with them to explore and explain options and review support.
- My voice is valued and respected, and our family's needs and aspirations are considered.
- Support is offered to enable us to inform and influence the care and support our family receive.
- Where things aren't right, I am supported to access clear systems and provided with the right information at the right time to find a resolution.
- The system responds to my needs at the earliest opportunity.

Children and young people with SEND (and their families) feel empowered to express their views and have them considered in decisions affecting their education, health and well-being

Key actions for the local area include:

- We will ensure that early identification of communication needs are supported with timely access to evidence informed strategies, interventions and advice to reduce the longer-term impact of communication needs. This will include early years, schools and Post 16 providers. Supporting Parent Carers, settings and schools to provide support at the earliest opportunity. (Priority 3)
- We will clarify and better communicate the criteria for access to services and support from the local offer. (Priority 3)
- We will use creative approaches to listen to the voices of children, young people and families so we know if we are making a difference. Acting on this feedback to plan, develop, redesign and commission services. Utilising the 'you said we did' feature of the local offer. (Priority 3)
- We will co-produce, implement and embed a participation strategy and co-production framework to ensure that the views of children and young people and their families are routinely incorporated into the decision-making processes across the Shropshire SEND Area Partnership. (Priority 3)
- We will communicate effectively with families via newsletters, social media and ensure the local offer is up to date. (Priority 3)
- We will support all early years settings, education and Post 16 provisions to adopt a total communication approach. (Priority 3)

How will the local area will measure impact and progress?

- Evidence from case studies indicates that children and young people with SEND (and their families) feel empowered to express their views and have them considered in decisions affecting their education, health and well-being
- Evidence of regular and increased participation in decision making by children, young people and their families.
- Evidence of how feedback from children and young people and their families influences the delivery of services.
- Evidence from plans indicated alignment across education, health and social care.
- More EHCP and Annual Reviews are delivered in a timely fashion.
- Reduction in complaints and appeals.
- Reduction in conflict and tribunal action with families as evidenced through dispute resolution and mediation.
- Increased QA of annual reviews indicating ambition for children and young people with SEND.
- Increased participation rates of training by professionals to support methods of communication.
- Increase in timely and accessible support for children and young people
- Increase in attainment and progress outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Increase in School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation
- Outcomes from children and young people's and parent carers' Annual Review survey.



Children and young people with SEND feel they have a good quality of life and are supported to make progress to achieve their aspirations cross education, health and social development.

Children and young people

- I have a good quality of life.
- I am supported to achieve my aspirations and am provided with support and guidance to enable me to do this.
- I have a range of career, volunteering or education options, my learning opportunities are not limited.
- Decisions taken to support me are made in my best interest and are co-produced.
- All my progress is recognised and celebrated, in areas that are important to me.

Parent carers

- I understand the options available to make informed decisions and choices about my child or young person and family's future. I know how to seek further support if necessary.
- I am supported to enable my child or young person to achieve their aspirations.
- Plans to support my child or young person are suitably ambitious and enable them to achieve their goals and aspirations.
- I have confidence in the systems in place to support my family



Children and young people with SEND feel they have a good quality of life and are supported to make progress to achieve their aspirations cross education, health and social development.

Key actions for the local area include:

- Ensure that data systems enable key information (outcomes, waiting times, compliance, etc to be available to all partner services to inform forecasting and commissioning decisions, understand gaps in services and improve quality and performance where necessary. (Priority 6)
- Page 121** We will develop a well-integrated, complementary and effective SEND and AP system, including mainstream education, outreach services, SEND Hubs, specialist provision, early help, social care and local health services. (Priority 4)
- We will work with early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers to support the development of relational/restorative approaches, including behaviour policies, in addition to high quality teaching, to effectively meet the needs of all children and young people in mainstream provision. (Priority 4)
- We will ensure transparent accountability for the outcomes, mobility and destinations of individual children and young people, including equitable access to alternative provision, oversight and quality assurance of this provision across Shropshire. (Priority 4)

How will the local area will measure impact and progress?

- Reasonable adjustments are made to enable children and young people to achieve.
- Evidence from case studies supporting transition and celebrations of progress.
- Increase EHCP and Annual Review timeliness.
- Increase in positive QA of annual reviews indicating ambition for children and young people with SEND.
- Increased evidence of timely support and assessment across education, health and social care.
- Increased percentage of children and young people with SEND engaged in employment, education and training.
- Improvement in Ofsted inspection outcomes of schools and settings.
- Improvement in Area SEND inspection outcomes.
- Evidence of impact of intervention programmes to support children and young people (e.g. ELSEC).
- Increase in attendance data and a reduction in suspension and exclusion data for children and young people with SEND.
- Evidence of destinations for children and young people with SEND.
- Increase in attainment and progress outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- Increase in School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation.
- Positive children and young people’s and parent carers’ Annual Review survey.



Children and young people with SEND have access to appropriate services to enable them to be healthy, happy and to live well.

Children and young people

- I live healthily and am supported to access help, where needed.
- I can communicate my health needs to those who are responsible for supporting me. This will include both my mental health and wellbeing and my physical health.
- Where appropriate, I am provided with information about treatment or medication to meet my needs and I understand this.
- Me and my family are well informed to enable us to make good choices about my diet, sleep and exercise.
- I don't have to wait for long periods of time to receive the support I need.

Parent carers

- I am provided with clear information to enable me to understand my child or young person's health condition and/or disability and make informed decisions.
- I am provided with timely information from the health care workers who are supporting my child or young person and my family.
- I understand the treatment or medication my child or young person has been prescribed, and why. My wishes and feelings have informed this.
- I am supported to ensure my child or young person attends health appointments that meets their needs.
- I am informed and supported to help my child or young person make good choices about diet, sleep and exercise.
- Our needs as a family are identified and met.



Children and young people with SEND have access to appropriate services to enable them to be healthy, happy and to live well.

Key actions for the local area include:

- Enable early identification and the right help at the right time, including reducing waiting times for speech and language therapy and neurodiversity assessments and access to Early Help assessment (Priority 2)
 - We will provide access to a high-quality training and professional development offer for our workforce, including early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers and health and social care colleagues (Priority 2)
- Ensure that the needs of children and young people with SEND are always considered in local initiatives such as transport, sports facilities, public buildings and swimming pools. Engaging children and young people with SEND so they are confident to socialise, be as independent as possible and enjoy their recreation time. (Priority 7)
- We will ensure that facilities across Shropshire are working to be more accessible for a range of physical and sensory needs. (Priority 7)
- We will build on the work of the Shropshire Virtual School to develop a strategy that, complements work Children's Social Care, encourages effective relational practice and belonging in all education settings so that the vision of 'strong schools, built on love' is realised for all children and young people, including those with SEND or accessing AP. (Priority 7)
 - We will work towards integrating data from the NHS Dynamic Support Register and Care (Education) Treatment Reviews to make sure our health and care services support people with a learning disability (and autistic people), so they are only admitted to hospital if they really need to. (Priority 6)
 - Our multi agency approach will link information from education, social care and NHS management information systems to better protect our children and young people with SEND who are vulnerable. (Priority 6)

How will the local area will measure impact and progress?

- Reasonable adjustments are made to enable children and young people to be healthy and happy.
- Evidence from case studies indicates that children and young people with SEND (and their families) have access to appropriate services to enable them to be healthy, happy to and to live well.
- Reduction in percentage of children and young people with SEND on waiting lists.
- Increase in percentage of children and young people with SEND accessing services whilst waiting.
- Introduction of comparative health data from JSNA.
- Increased in engagement by parent carers in Early Help programmes.
- Increase in School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation.
- Positive children and young people's and parent carers' Annual Review survey.



I am
supported

Children and young people with SEND and their families receive timely and appropriate support for education, health and care services.

Children and young people

- I have trusted people around me to meet my needs and advocate for my best interests.
- I am connected to a community that my family feels a part of.
- My strengths are recognised and celebrated.
- I am provided with the information I need to be able to make decisions and plan for my future.
- All my needs are understood, considered and met.
- My education, health and social needs are identified, understood and met.
- I don't have to wait for long periods of time to receive the support I need.

Parent carers

- There is a network of support to meet my family's needs.
- My family is provided with information about the choices they have available.
- I am able to access the right support and the right time through clear processes.
- My family is able to access support to provide a break from caring responsibilities.
- I have support to enable me to have a fulfilled life, which may include employment and other opportunities..



I am
supported

Children and young people with SEND and their families receive timely and appropriate support for education, health and care services.

Key actions for the local area include

- Develop local, high quality, inclusive provision across the system. Including strengthening the graduated response and inclusive mainstream provision whilst ensuring consistency and effectiveness of the emotional health and mental wellbeing offer in mainstream education settings, across all phases. (Priority 1)
- Develop our social prescribing and other community support offers for families to support early identification, inclusion and participation and building on the development of the Early Help Hubs across Shropshire. We will build a thriving market for short break provision and encourage the use of personal budgets to support respite opportunities. (Priority 1)
- Develop a system that makes sense and works together, improving co-production, communication and engagement with families and professionals from all services. Including Improving the quality and timeliness of EHC plans, annual reviews, and transition pathways. (Priority 5)

How will the local area measure impact and progress?

- Evidence from case studies indicates that children and young people with SEND (and their families) receive timely and appropriate support for education, health and care services.
- Reduction in waiting list timescales with respect to education, health and social care.
- Increase in proportion of EHCPs and annual reviews rated good or better in quality assurance.
- Improvement in data with respect to transition opportunities (NEETs)
- More young people with SEND engaged in employment, education and training.
- More children and young people with SEND accessing short-break activities.
- Positive Ofsted inspection outcomes of schools and settings.
- Positive Area SEND and ILACS inspection outcomes.
- Increase in attendance, reduction of suspension and exclusion data for children and young people with SEND.
- Evidence destinations for children and young people with SEND that are ambitious and achievable.
- Improvement in attainment and progress data for children and young people with SEND.
- Increase in of School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation
- Positive children and young people's and parent carers' Annual Review survey.



Children and young people with SEND and their families are kept safe.

Children and young people

- I am able to communicate when I feel worried, unsafe or unwell.
- I belong and am safe in my community, at my setting, activities or employment.
- I can get to and from my school/ college/ activities/ employment safely.
- Reasonable adjustments are made to enable me to be safe.
- Systems are in place to ensure that I am kept safe and protected from additional risks.

Parent carers

- My child or young person is never excluded, isolated or discriminated against because of their special education needs or disability.
- I know who I can speak to if I feel they or our family need help
- The right services are available at the right time to keep us safe.
- I have access to information to understand my rights, and how to access advice and support if I feel my child or young person is being excluded, isolated or discriminated against.
- I know that every school has a behaviour policy and every child and member of staff has a right to feel safe.



Children and young people with SEND and their families are kept safe.

Key actions for the local area include:

- We will work together to ensure children and young people with SEND and those in AP are appropriately protected from safeguarding risks, whilst also building capacity to self-manage/reduce risk to themselves, particularly around exploitation.
- We will develop the capacity of short break offers with a particular focus on Personal Assistants (PAs) to enable access to a wider range of offers. (Priority 2)
- We will ensure that our Local Offer website helps children, young people and their families find the local information and support they need, whether online or face to face. (Priority 2)
- We will work with early years settings, schools and Post 16 providers and colleagues in health and social care to promote a consistent and effective emotional health and mental wellbeing offer, ensuring there is a trained Senior Mental Health Lead in all schools. (Priority 2)
- Develop a proactive, supportive, and clear alternative provision offer. (Priority 4)
- We will strengthen our local practice and across services recognising the value of the voluntary and community sector and maximising the opportunity to address contextual safeguarding needs for children and young people with SEND. (Priority 5)

How will the local area measure impact and progress?

- Evidence from case studies indicates that children and young people with SEND (and their families) are kept safe and feel safe.
- Increase the percentage of timely assessments across education, health, and social care.
- Increase in attendance, reduction of suspension and exclusion data for children and young people with SEND.
- Fewer children and young people with SEND feature within safeguarding referrals
- Increase in EHCP record references to future safety needs.
- Reduction in use of part-time timetables
- Reduction in proportion of children and young people who are electively home educated.
- Increase in positive Ofsted inspection outcomes of schools and settings
- Improvement with respect to ILACS inspection outcomes.
- Increase in Section 11 school safeguarding audits recognising increased vulnerability of pupils with SEND.
- Increase in of School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation
- Evidence of connectivity between SEND Annual Reviews and other plans that seek to support the child or young person.
- Positive children and young people's and parent carers' Annual Review survey.



Children and young people with SEND are well-prepared for the future.

Children and young people

- I can communicate decisions about my future, and this informs the care and support I receive.
- I am informed and supported to understand choices I can make about my future.
- My wishes for the future are aspirational and appropriate and choices I make reflect this.
- I am provided with ongoing support to learn, practice and maintain the skills I need to live as independently as possible.
- I am supported to travel independently.

Parent carers

- I feel confidence that my child's future is considered in plans
- I have confidence in the range of options for my child's future.
- I am included in decision making about the support my child or young person needs to prepare for their future and understand the options available.
- I am part of a community that enables my family to build relationships, friendships and to access support in our local community.



Children and young people with SEND are well-prepared for the future.

Key actions for the local area include:

- We will ensure that our Local Offer website helps children, young people and their families find the local information and support they need, whether online or face to face. (Priority 2)
- Enable children and young people to feel visible and valued members of their community, ensuring they are supported to be as socially and economically independent as possible to achieve their next steps in life (Priority 7)
- We will encourage and empower our children and young people to increase their independence, listening to families and young people as we further develop our preparation for adulthood offer. This could include increasing the use of personal transport budgets, independent travel training or practical activities to prepare them for living independently. (Priority 7)
- We will work with young people, local businesses, training providers, colleges and schools to create opportunities to experience the world of work with the long-term aim of securing employment and/or meaningful work-related activity. Increasing participation in Supported Internships that lead to paid employment and/or meaningful work. (Priority 7)

How will the local area measure impact and progress?

- Evidence from case studies indicates that children and young people with SEND are well-prepared for the future.
- Increase the percentage of timely assessment and support across education, health, and social care.
- Increase annual reviews indicating ambition for children and young people with SEND
- Improvement in robust and timely transition between services.
- Increase in young people accessing independent or supported living at 25.
- Increase in positive Ofsted inspection outcomes of schools and settings
- Improvement with respect to area SEND Inspection outcomes.
- Increased in young people with SEND engaged in employment, education and training
- Increase in attendance and reduction in suspension and exclusion for children and young people with SEND.
- Increase in of School SEND Reviews/external quality mark validation
- Positive children and young people's and parent carers' Annual Review survey.

Parent Carer and Children and Young People's Annual Review Survey

At the point of Annual Review, children, young people and their families will be asked to complete a survey with questions similar to those suggested below.

Additional guidance notes will be provided to support the implementation of these and other questions developed by SEND partnership workstreams. The outcomes from the survey will be aggregated regularly and used to inform the future development of services and check the quality of practice by listening to the voices of those with lived experiences of SEND.

Termly, the data from this survey will be aggregated and outcomes reported to the SEND and AP partnership board.

To support this, children and young people will respond on a 1-5 numbered scale or use faces



1

2



3


4



5

Adults will also be asked to provide a score from 1-5 for each question.

Parent Carer and Children and Young People's Annual Review Survey



My voice
is heard

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I am
achieving

Child / YP question for AR	Parent Carer's question for AR
I am helped to communicate my views and wishes	I feel able to share my views and wishes about my child's education, care and health.
Adults listen to me. They consider my views when making decisions about me	My views and wishes are considered carefully by practitioners when decisions are being made about my child
I am being included in making decisions about my Plan (EHCP)	I feel I have been involved in co-producing my child's EHCP

Child / YP question for AR	Parent Carer's question for AR
I feel I am learning and making progress.	I feel my child is making progress towards reaching their potential
I have a chance to take part in clubs and activities.	My child has the opportunity to take part in clubs and activities they wish to engage with.
I have examples of my achievements.	My child's achievements are celebrated

Parent Carer and Children and Young People's Annual Review Survey

I am
healthy
and happy

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Child / YP question for AR	Parent Carer's question for AR
I can tell people how well and happy I feel - or about any worries I have	I am confident my child can tell someone how well and happy they are
I get help to be healthy and happy when I need it	I feel my child is well supported to be as healthy and happy as possible
I know where to find information about my health and well-being	I know where to find information to help my child with health, wellbeing and education
	My child is getting the right help at the right time for their health and well-being

I am
supported

Child / YP question for AR	Parent Carer's question for AR
I can name an adult I trust	I feel I have a network of support I can go to (if I wish)
I have the help I need to take part and succeed	My child has access to the help they need so they can take part and succeed
	I feel processes and timescales are clear to me (around the support my child and our family receive)

Parent Carer and Children and Young People's Annual Review Survey



**I feel
safe**

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Child / YP question for AR	Parent Carer's question for AR
I feel safe in the place where I receive my education or training.	I feel my child is safe in the place where they receive their education or training.
I can name adults I trust to go to for help	My child can identify trusted adults
I feel safe online	My child is safe online.
I feel safe in my local area when I go out and about	My child is safe in their local community



**I have
independence**

Child / YP question for AR	Parent Carer's question for AR
I have help to learn life skills and to practice them.	My child is learning and practicing life skills to help prepare them for their future
I have help to plan what I would like to achieve when I am older.	My child is being supported to be aspirational about their future
I am provided with choices about my future and supported to understand them.	My child is provided with choices about their future and we understand what these options are.
I am helped to manage changes that affects me. I am provided with the right information at the right time.	Transitions for my child are planned for in a timely fashion and well supported

Parent Carer and Children and Young People's Annual Review Survey



Free text questions for children and young people

I have enjoyed...

I don't like...

These things are important to me...

I feel confident about...

I feel worried about...

In the future, I would like...

Free text questions for Parent Carers

My child does best when...

My child struggles when...

As a family, we find this difficult...

This is working well for us as a family...

This is important to us as a family...

In the future, we would like...



Committee and Date

Cabinet

9th July 2025

Item

Public



National Planning Reform Consultations

Responsible Officer:	Tim Collard, Service Director – Legal and Governance		
email:	tim.collard@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743252756
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Cllr David Walker, Planning		

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. This report seeks consideration and approval of proposed responses (Appendix 1) to a series of Government consultations on reform to the planning system. These consultations address speed and transparency of build-out of housing, site thresholds in decision making, and planning committees.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Government is currently undertaking a series of consultations on proposed reforms to the planning system. This report seeks consideration of and approval to submit the Council's proposed response to these consultations.
- 2.2. This response seeks to ensure that proposed reforms to the planning system align with and support achievement of sustainable development in Shropshire and through this the Shropshire Plan.
 - a. Healthy People: Delivering the right number, type, size and tenure of housing in appropriate locations (which benefit from appropriate access to services, facilities and infrastructure) and acceptable timescales to meet the housing needs of our communities.
 - b. Healthy Economy: Supporting the principle of economic growth – in this instance, principally through housing development but also through related

manufacturing / supply chain and the wider benefits of additional labour force in the county.

- c. Healthy Environment: Seeking to ensure that growth gives appropriate consideration to the achievement of high-quality design and impact on our built and natural environment.
- d. Healthy Organisation: Aiming to ensure proposed reforms maintain a democratic process whilst seeking to maximise potential benefits and minimise resource implications for the Shropshire Council Planning Service.

2.3. The Government consultations on proposed reforms to the planning system addressed within this officer report and to which proposed responses have been prepared are:

- a. Planning reform working paper: speeding up build out.
- b. Technical consultation: implementing measures to improve build out transparency.
- c. Planning reform working paper: reforming site thresholds.
- d. Technical consultation: reform of planning committees.

2.4. *Planning reform working paper: speeding up build out* seeks views on measures to ensure the right incentives exist in the housing market and Local Planning Authorities have sufficient tools to encourage approved homes are built out more quickly.

2.5. The technical consultation on implementing measures to improve build out transparency seeks views on the introduction of measures allowed for within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023), which would:

- a. Require developers to submit information outlining their intended timescales for progressing a development and on progress of development to Local Planning Authorities at different stages of the planning and development cycle.
- b. Enable Local Planning Authorities to decline to determine planning applications from a person connected with an earlier development that was built out 'unreasonably slowly'.

2.6. The planning reform working paper: reforming site thresholds consultation seeks views on reform of site size 'thresholds' for residential planning applications. The stated intention of this reform is to better support housing delivery on different scales of site, by removing and streamlining disproportionate requirements on small and medium scale sites, while maintaining and strengthening requirements on major development.

2.7. Proposals include a more gradated approach to site size 'thresholds' for residential planning applications, through:

- a. The introduction of a new medium-scale residential development 'category' of 10-49 dwellings / 0.5ha to 1.0ha site size.

- b. Raising the 'threshold' for the major residential development 'category' from 10 dwellings / 1.0ha site size to 50 dwellings / 1+ha site size.
- 2.8. Proposals also include revisions to requirements for residential development which fall within each 'category' – in summary:
 - a. Streamlining or removing entirely specific requirements imposed on planning applications within the existing minor residential development 'category' (1-10 dwellings / up to 0.5ha site).
 - b. Streamlining specific requirements imposed on planning applications that fall within the proposed new medium residential development category (10-49 dwellings / 0.5ha to 1.0ha site).
 - c. Strengthening specific requirements imposed on planning applications within the 'higher' major residential development category (50 dwellings or more / 1+ha site).
- 2.9. The reform of planning committees: technical consultation seeks views on proposals around the delegation of planning functions, the size and composition of planning committees, and mandatory training for members of planning committees.
- 2.10. Appendix 1 to this report sets out the Council's proposed response to each of these four consultations, structured around the questions posed within them. This report seeks consideration of and approval to submit this response to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- 2.11. Whilst the official close of these consultations is 7th July, MHCLG has confirmed to the Council they will accept responses on 9th July given the timing of Cabinet. In view of this, and the need to submit the Council's consultation responses on the 9th July 2025, to meet deadlines for submission of three of these responses, the Call in and Urgency Mechanism in paragraph 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules will need to be applied to ensure responses can be submitted within the required timescale i.e. on the 9th July 2025.
- 2.12. The consequence of this, is that this decision will not be able to be "called in" in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Cabinet consider and 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.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. It is considered that the recommendations within this officer report do not pose a significant risk to the Council, as they relate to seeking approval to submit responses to Government consultations on proposed reforms to the planning system. Rather, these recommendations provide an opportunity to contribute to positively shaping proposed reforms.
- 4.2. However, it is important to note that proposals within these Government consultations on planning reforms could have implications for the Council.
- 4.3. Specifically, proposals within the planning reform working paper: speeding up build out and technical consultation on implementing measures to improve build out transparency both propose new responsibilities for Local Planning Authorities with associated resource implications for planning services. The proposed response (Appendix 1) seeks to identify these risks and burdens and proposes mechanisms Government could utilise to ensure they are offset.
- 4.4. Similarly, proposals within the planning reform working paper: reforming site thresholds includes proposals to remove and streamline requirements for applicants of small and medium scale residential development. Dependent on approach to these matters, this could reduce the availability of information to inform decision making and have associated resourcing implications for planning services. The proposed response (Appendix 1) supports an approach which seeks to minimise this risk by ensuring necessary information is provided and also proposes mechanisms Government could utilise to ensure resourcing implications are offset.
- 4.5. The proposal to introduce a national scheme of delegation for planning committees within the reform of planning committees: technical consultation will affect the way in which the democratic processes and Committee Services operate within Shropshire Council.
- 4.6. The Council has previously expressed concern, when responding to engagement on the Planning Reform Working Paper: Modernising Planning Committees, that a national scheme of delegation could erode local democratic oversight and accountability of planning decisions; may not allow for sufficient recognition of local variation and context; could provide little opportunity for local interpretation; and could diminish the role and influence of town and parish councils in the planning process. The scope of the proposed national scheme of delegation is now clearer within the current consultation, but these concerns still remain.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands as budgeted for within the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 27 February 2025 and subsequent updates. It is also addressed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has and continues to be undertaken to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve:
- scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope,
 - delaying implementation, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2. It is considered that the recommendations in this officer report do not have a significant financial implication for the Council, as they relate to seeking approval to submit responses to a series of Government consultations on proposed reform of the planning system. Rather these recommendations provide an opportunity to contribute to positively shaping proposed planning reform.
- 5.3. However, it is important to note that proposals within these Government consultations on planning reforms could have financial implications for the Council.
- 5.4. The planning reform working paper: speeding up build out and technical consultation on implementing measures to improve build out transparency both propose new responsibilities for Local Planning Authorities, including:
- a. Additional strategic master-planning of larger development sites.
 - b. Additional consideration of tenure mix within larger-scale residential development planning applications.
 - c. Administration and monitoring of build-out report proposals and compliance for residential development planning applications.
 - d. Administration of a new 'Delayed Homes Penalty', informed by the review of compliance with build-out reports.
 - e. Consideration of 'past performance' of organisations and individuals submitting residential development planning applications, informed by the review of compliance with build-out reports.
- 5.5. The proposed response (Appendix 1) to these consultations seeks to identify these resource implications and proposes mechanisms Government could utilise to ensure they are offset.
- 5.6. The planning reform working paper: reforming site thresholds includes proposals to remove and streamline requirements for applicants of small and medium scale residential development. Dependent on approach, particularly with regard to affordable housing and biodiversity net gain, this could either increase (by complicating decisions due to more limited availability of information) or reduce

costs (if the decision making process is subject to equivalent streamlining) for operating Council's planning services.

- 5.7. The proposed response (Appendix 1) to this consultation supports an approach which balances achieving the stated objectives of these proposed reforms and minimising resource implications. It also proposes mechanisms Government could utilise to ensure resourcing implications are offset.
- 5.8. Part of Government's stated reasoning for reforms proposed within the planning committees: technical consultation is to reduce the number of planning applications being referred to planning committees and the number of committee decisions made against officer advice that are overturned by the Planning Inspectorate with costs awarded against the Local Planning Authority. This might result in some reduction in costs for the Council in operating its planning committee processes and in planning appeals.
- 5.9. However, the proposed approach to certain application types (classified as Tier B) could result in an increase in the number of applications referred to planning committee in large, unitary council areas such as Shropshire. There is therefore an attendant risk of cost increases for the Council if the proposed reforms do result in a significant increase in committee referrals.
- 5.10. The proposed response (Appendix 1) to this consultation raises concerns with both the principle of a national scheme of delegation and the details of the approach proposed.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. It is considered that recommendations in this officer report will have no effect in relation to climate change, as they relate to seeking approval to submit responses to Government consultations on proposed reforms to the planning system.
- 6.2. Dependent on whether proposals contained within these Government consultations on planning reform are introduced and the specific approach to them, they may have some impact on climate change.
- 6.3. Specifically, proposals to streamline requirements for biodiversity net gain on small and medium scale residential development sites could have a positive or negative effect on the environment and in association carbon offsetting and mitigation.
- 6.4. Furthermore, if the planning reform working paper: reforming site thresholds results in a reduction in the amount of applications being referred to planning committee it may produce a minor positive benefit for the Council's own carbon footprint, as a consequence of minor reduction in energy and fuel consumption linked to operating the committees. This would be the case, for instance, if there is a reduction in committee site visits.
- 6.5. Conversely, if the proposed national scheme of delegation results in an increase in the number of planning applications being referred to committee there could be a minor negative impact on the Council's carbon footprint.

7. Background

- 7.1. Government is currently undertaking a series of consultations on proposed reforms to the planning system. These are:
 - a. Planning reform working paper: speeding up build out.
 - b. Technical consultation: implementing measures to improve build out transparency.
 - c. Planning reform working paper: reforming site thresholds.
 - d. Technical consultation: reform of planning committees.
- 7.2. The planning reform working paper: speeding up build out consultation, seeks views on measures to ensure the right incentives exist in the housing market and Local Planning Authorities have the tools they need to encourage homes to be built out more quickly.
- 7.3. Specifically, Government is seeking views on whether it is appropriate, and if so how, further support could be provided for models of housebuilding which build faster. This includes small sites, strategically master-planned sites, and mixed tenure (different types of home ownership and/or rental options, including affordable and specialist options) sites.
- 7.4. With specific regard to mixed tenure sites, Government are also seeking views on whether a threshold should be introduced (and if so at what level – with the proposal being 500 dwellings) where residential development should be required to be mixed tenured.
- 7.5. Through this consultation, Government is also seeking views on proposals to simplify the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process to promote its use on stalled development sites and on the principle and details of a ‘Delayed Home Penalty’, which could be introduced and utilised as a last resort by Local Planning Authorities in circumstances where a development falls substantially behind a build out schedule without reasonable exceptional circumstances.
- 7.6. In summary, the proposed response is generally supportive of proposals regarding models of housebuilding which build faster, but considers the threshold for mixed tenure development should be more responsive to the community in which the development is occurring - particularly pertinent in a rural area.
- 7.7. The proposed response is also very much supportive of the principle of the ‘Delayed Home Penalty’, given it constitutes tangible recognition that whilst Local Planning Authorities have an important role in managing the supply of housing land, it is the development industry that is responsible for delivery. The proposed response does however raise concerns about the proposals for CPOs, which appear to place the ‘risk’ with Local Planning Authorities.

- 7.8. The technical consultation on implementing measures to improve build out transparency seeks views on the introduction of measures allowed for within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023).
- 7.9. Specifically, Government is seeking views whether developers of residential schemes over a set threshold should be required to submit to Local Planning Authorities, information outlining intended development timescales at planning application stage; and subsequently progress reports on the development at different stages of the planning and development cycle.
- 7.10. Assuming Government were to introduce such a requirement, through this consultation it is also seeking views on:
- a. The scope and timescales for submission of documents associated with this process, with current proposals including a build-out statement indicating the intended approach and timescales for development with the planning application; a commencement notice; and annual progress reports, until completion.
 - b. The appropriate threshold (the proposal is 50 dwellings or more) and type of residential development (currently proposals are only for general housing) to which these requirements should apply.
- 7.11. Additionally, through this consultation Government is also seeking views on whether it should enable Local Planning Authorities to decline to determine planning applications from a person connected with an earlier development that was built out 'unreasonably slowly'. Such decisions would be informed by the information provided within build-out statements and subsequent progress reports.
- 7.12. In summary, the proposed response is generally supportive of the introduction of these measures, but considers the threshold for build-out statements should be formation of one or more dwelling so that associated information is available on all scales of residential development – particularly pertinent in a rural area.
- 7.13. For the same reason, the proposed response considers requirements related to build-out statements should apply to all forms of residential dwelling, including affordable and specialist housing for older people and those with disabilities and special needs.
- 7.14. The planning reform working paper: speeding up build out consultation and technical consultation on implementing measures to improve build out transparency both commenced on the 25th May 2025, with views sought by the 7th July 2025. Shropshire Council liaised with MHCLG and agreed an extension to the 9th July 2025, to allow for consideration of the proposed response by Cabinet.
- 7.15. The planning reform working paper: reforming site thresholds consultation seeks views on reform of site size 'thresholds' for residential planning applications. The stated intention of this reform is to better support housing delivery on different scales of site, by removing and streamlining disproportionate requirements on small and medium scale sites, while maintaining and strengthening requirements on major development.

- 7.16. Specifically, Government is seeking views on proposals for a more gradated approach to site size ‘thresholds’ for residential planning applications, through:
- a. The introduction of a new medium-scale residential development ‘category’ of 10-49 dwellings / 0.5ha to 1.0ha site size.
 - b. Raising the ‘threshold’ for the major residential development ‘category’ from 10 dwellings / 1.0ha site size to 50 dwellings / 1+ha site size.
- 7.17. Government is also seeking views on whether a similar gradated approach should be taken for non-residential development.
- 7.18. Through this consultation Government is seeking views on proposals to streamline or remove entirely requirements imposed on planning applications for residential development which fall within the ‘minor’ (1-10 dwellings / up to 0.5ha site) or ‘medium’ (10-49 dwellings / up to 1.0ha site) categories and increase requirements for planning applications for residential development which falls within the ‘major’ (50 dwellings or more / 1+ha site) category.
- 7.19. In addition, through this consultation Government is also seeking opinions on barriers and potential mitigation to support the delivery of small and medium scale residential development, with a particular focus on affordable housing.
- 7.20. In summary, the proposed response is generally supportive of the principle of introducing a ‘medium’ scale development category within the planning process, which is not dissimilar to operational practice. It also indicates provisional support for streamlining requirements for small and medium scale residential development requirements – subject to specific clarifications, including ensuring sufficient information is available to reach an informed and robust decision; ensuring that existing requirements for biodiversity net gain are not eroded; and ensuring that affordable housing requirements are not eroded.
- 7.21. With specific regard to affordable housing, the proposed response recommends a definition of designated rural areas is provided within the guidance - in such locations lower thresholds at which market residential development is required to provide affordable housing as a planning obligation can be introduced. Specifically, it is proposed this definition includes all parishes with a population of 3,000 or fewer and all parishes located in a National Park or National Landscape.
- 7.22. Further, the proposed response continues to advocate for the removal of a non-local threshold for affordable housing contributions from market residential development as planning gain.
- 7.23. The proposed response then provides information on potential barriers and mitigation options for small and medium scale residential development, including to support on-site delivery of affordable housing.
- 7.24. The planning reform working paper: reforming site thresholds consultation commenced on the 28th May 2025, with views sought by the 9th July 2025.
- 7.25. The reform of planning committees: technical consultation seeks views on proposals to reform planning committees. Specifically, Government is seeking views on a new national scheme of delegation which would categorise planning

applications into two categories, Tier A and Tier B. Tier A planning applications would be determined via officer delegation (with the limited potential for call-in to planning committee in exceptional circumstances); Tier B planning applications would be determined via officer delegation, unless it is agreed by the chief planning officer (or equivalent) and chair of planning committee that it should be considered via committee.

- 7.26. Through this consultation, Government is also seeking views on the size and composition of planning committees (with the proposal such committees should optimally be 8-11 members). In addition, Government is seeking views on the suitability of mandating training for members of planning committees.
- 7.27. In summary, the proposed response opposes the introduction of a national scheme of delegation, advocating the continuation of a local approach to delegation in order to maintain local democratic oversight, support the role of town and parish councils in decision making, and allow for the recognition of local context and circumstances.
- 7.28. Without prejudice to this position, the proposed response also identifies amendments to the categorisation of certain forms of application (those for minor commercial development, minor residential development, and reserved matters) from Tier A to Tier B, in recognition of the diverse characteristics of Local Planning Authorities across the Country, and the need to maintain local democratic oversight of contentious planning applications within these categories.
- 7.29. With regard to planning committee size and composition, the proposed response is largely supportive of proposals, which are in line with committee sizes employed by Shropshire Council. The proposed response is also generally supportive of the principle of mandating training for members of planning committees, with such an approach already pursued by Shropshire Council.
- 7.30. The reform of planning committees: technical consultation commenced on the 28th May 2025, with views sought by the 23rd July 2025.
- 7.31. Appendix 1 to this report sets out the Council's proposed response to each of these four consultations, structured around the questions posed within them. This officer report seeks approval for this response to be submitted to MHCLG.
- 7.32. In view of the urgent need to submit the Council's consultation responses on the 9th July 2025, to meet deadlines for submission of three of these responses, the Call in and Urgency Mechanism in paragraph 17 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules will need to be applied to ensure the response can be submitted within the required timescale i.e. on the 9th July 2025.
- 7.33. The consequence of this, is that this decision will not be able to be "called in" in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. Further information on Government's planning reform working paper: speeding up build out consultation is available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-reform-working-paper-speeding-up-build-out/planning-reform-working-paper-speeding-up-build-out>
- 8.2. Further information on Government's technical consultation on implementing measures to improve build out transparency is available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/implementing-measures-to-improve-build-out-transparency-technical-consultation/technical-consultation-on-implementing-measures-to-improve-build-out-transparency>
- 8.3. Further information on Government's planning reform working paper: reforming site thresholds is available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-reform-working-paper-reforming-site-thresholds/planning-reform-working-paper-reforming-site-thresholds>
- 8.4. Further information on Government's reform of planning committees: technical consultation is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reform-of-planning-committees-technical-consultation/reform-of-planning-committees-technical-consultation>

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. Government is currently undertaking a series of consultations on proposed reforms to the planning system, these being a planning reform working paper: speeding up build out consultation; a technical consultation on implementing measures to improve build out transparency; a planning reform working paper: reforming site thresholds consultation; and a reform of planning committees: technical consultation.
- 9.2. Responding to these consultations is considered important as it provides the earliest opportunity to seek to positively influence proposed changes.
- 9.3. Whilst providing positive feedback on some of the Government's proposals, the Council are proposing to raise some very significant concerns on several key areas. In particular, it is considered that:
 - a. The proposed threshold for mixed tenure development (500 dwellings) should be more responsive to the community in which the development is occurring - particularly pertinent in a rural area.
 - b. The proposed threshold for build-out statements (50 dwellings) should be more inclusive and set at the formation of one or more dwelling, so that associated information is available on all scales of residential development – particularly pertinent in a rural area. For the same reason, the proposed response considers requirements related to build-out statements should apply to all forms of residential dwelling.

- c. In principle, streamlining requirements for small and medium scale residential development is logical – subject to ensuring the detail does not result in insufficient information being available to reach informed and robust decisions and streamlining does not undermine biodiversity net gain or affordable housing requirements.
 - d. Guidance should be provided on what constitutes a designated rural area in which lower thresholds for affordable housing contributions from market housing can be secured. Specifically, this should be all parishes with a population of 3,000 or fewer and all parishes located in a National Park or National Landscape.
 - e. A national scheme of delegation is unnecessary and risks undermining local democratic oversight, the role of town and parish council's in decision making, and fails to recognise local context and circumstances. But without prejudice, if Government is minded to introduce such a mechanism, it outlines measures to improve proposals.
- 9.4. Appendix 1 to this report sets out the Council's proposed response to each of these four consultations, structured around the questions posed within them. This officer report seeks consideration of and approval to submit this response to MHCLG.

List of Background Papers

N/A

Local Member: All

Appendices:

Appendix 1. Shropshire Council Response to National Planning Reform Consultations

Shropshire Council Response

- 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
- Reform of Planning Committees: Technical Consultation

Cabinet Approval:
July 2025

Respondent: Shropshire Council

Respondent Address: The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Respondent Email Address: planningpolicy@shropshire.gov.uk

Respondent Phone Number (Planning): 0345 678 9004



Planning Reform Working Paper: Speeding Up Build Out

Question a. Do you agree with the evidence base and theory we have set out on build out rates?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council generally support the evidence base and theory set out on built out rates.
2. However, the Council would note that if one of the objectives of increased housebuilding - making properties more affordable - is to be achieved, then further consideration of 'market absorption rates' and how they influence developer practice is required.

Question b. How could we go further to support models of housebuilding which build faster, such as small sites, strategically master-planned and mixed tenure?

Shropshire Council Response:

Small and Medium Sized Sites

1. Shropshire Council recognises small and medium sized sites are often built proportionately faster than larger sites. However, such schemes have a cumulative impact on communities and infrastructure which is often greater than the individual impact of a larger scheme of equivalent scale. This must be recognised in wider proposals, including reform to site size thresholds.

Masterplanning

2. Shropshire Council considers any additional strategic masterplanning proposed to be undertaken by Local Planning Authorities must be 'matched' by appropriate additional resourcing to provide the officer capacity and skills to undertake this work.

Mixed-Tenure

3. To create certainty, Shropshire Council considers requirements for mixed tenure development should be more specific about expected 'mix'. The consultation document references affordable tenures and build to rent, however no specific proposals are provided on resultant 'mix' expectations.
4. There are also other tenures which should be considered when establishing an appropriate mix, including specialist housing for older people and those with disabilities and special needs (particularly pertinent given current and future demographics); and rent to buy, which provides another option to access home ownership.
5. Furthermore, consideration of 'mix' should extend to size and type of dwelling. An appropriate mix of dwelling sizes and types not only ensure a development is best able to meet local needs, but also ensures a scheme appeals to more of the housing market, supporting earliest delivery.
6. In addition, consideration of 'mix' can occur within affordable tenures. Different affordable housing tenures are targeted towards different needs and providers (for instance rental tenures as generally operated by registered landlords, but certain low-cost home ownership tenures go direct to individuals), providing further opportunity to support earliest delivery.

Question c. For mixed tenure, what would you consider to be an appropriate threshold level?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Mixed tenure development has the potential to both speed-up development and ensure it is more reflective of the needs of local communities.
2. The threshold applied must be responsive to the diverse characteristics of settlements across the Country. As such, Shropshire Council considers a purely numerical threshold is too inflexible.
3. Such an approach also risks the 'artificial' limitation of dwellings on a scheme to avoid whatever threshold is set.
4. Instead, Shropshire Council recommend a more flexible approach:
 - a. All schemes of 500 or more dwellings (with appropriate management of attempts to artificially sub-divide a scheme) should be required to achieve a mixed-tenure development.
 - b. All schemes of less than 100 dwellings (with appropriate management of attempts to artificially sub-divide a scheme) are exempt from specific mixed-tenure requirements, but where appropriate encouraged to integrate mixed tenure.
 - c. Schemes of between 100 and 499 dwellings (with appropriate management of attempts to artificially sub-divide a scheme) should be required to achieve a mixed-tenure development where it constitutes a meaningful proportion (for example 5% or more) of existing dwellings in the settlement.
5. Irrespective of thresholds, this process will likely have a resource implication for Local Planning Authorities. As such, it must be 'matched' by appropriate additional resourcing.

Question d. Do you have any views on how the proposed CPO measures would work best in practice?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Currently proposals to utilise CPO measures to speed-up housing delivery place all the 'risk' and very little of the 'reward' with the Local Planning Authority. Shropshire Council considers that if the CPO process is to operate effectively and support the speed-up of housing delivery, this needs to be re-considered.
2. It also needs to be recognised that CPO work is a resource intensive process for Local Planning Authorities, often requiring them to source external specialist legal and consultancy advice. Moves to streamline these powers to encourage greater use therefore needs to be 'matched' by appropriate additional resourcing.

Question e. How should MHCLG guide local authorities and developers towards reasonable build out schedules (noting that ultimately this will be negotiated locally)?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council recommends preparation of a national template for this agreement, to support resultant discussions at a local level. The Council also recommends Government provides 'examples' of national average build rates for different scales/mixes of development, which alongside local intelligence can inform these negotiations.
2. Shropshire Council notes one area of potential 'tension' that needs consideration is Local Authorities need to maintain a five year housing land supply and developers aspirations to maintain flexibility to respond to changing market conditions / market absorption rates. This tension could delay negotiations and have a negative effect on delivery timescales.

Question f. What are the right set of exemptions for external factors that impact build out rates? Should this include economic downturns which reduce sales rates, or does that mean that payments would be too weak to induce the shift toward the partnerships business models we want to see?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers specific exemptions should be limited to specific site abnormalities and weather related factors.
2. Inclusion of other factors such as availability of materials, labour and market conditions would mean this measure has no value, would undermine one of Government's stated objectives for higher levels of housing delivery - making properties more affordable, and would actively undermine Government's intended shift to a partnership business model.
3. However, Shropshire Council does consider Local Authorities should be provided with appropriate flexibility to determine the circumstances within which it takes action, which could be informed by other factors such as market conditions.

Question g. For the Delayed Homes Penalty, do you agree with the intention to use it to incentivise the shift towards higher build out models of housebuilding?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council supports this model and the specific recognition that whilst Local Authorities have an important role in managing the supply of housing land, it is the development industry that is responsible for delivery.
2. However, this does have the potential to constitute an additional resource burden on Local Authorities and is unlikely to be self-funding. This is, in part, because this is likely to introduce a further area of dispute and, ultimately, litigation. As such, it must be 'matched' by appropriate additional resourcing.

3. Furthermore, Shropshire Council would suggest there may be value in introducing penalties for applicants / their legal representatives in circumstances where they unnecessarily delay the process for the preparation and completion of S106 Legal Agreements. Frequently this process is overly long and onerous as applicants / their legal representatives seek unnecessary amendments and such delays have a direct 'knock-on' effect for the timescales of the development.

Question h. How should the Penalty be calculated? What are the strengths and weaknesses of using a percentage of house price, or reference to local council tax rates? What information would local authorities require?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers reference to "loss of income" from Council Tax presents the wrong message, implying this is the motivation behind granting planning permissions, which in reality are to meet local needs and requirements from Government. Furthermore Council Tax is generally not sufficient to cover the 'costs' of providing Local Government services to these additional properties.
2. On this basis, the Council would suggest this penalty is linked to a percentage of house prices, which could be determined based on the sale of similar properties on the site during the relevant period if available or other benchmarks for equivalent new properties in the area where not.

Question i. Are there wider options you think worth worthy of consideration that could help speed up build out of housing?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. To speed-up housing development and make properties more affordable, Shropshire Council considers further consideration of intervention on market absorption rates is required. Specifically how can you incentivise/require developers to build more houses and achieve the same return.
2. Shropshire Council would also strongly support action to increase the short and longer term supply of skilled labour, through appropriate roll-out and funding of training programmes such as apprenticeships and further education qualifications.
3. The Council would also encourage a review of the materials (raw and processed) and supply chain associated with housing development. It is often these factors which lead to delay of development.
4. Finally, Shropshire Council is aware that infrastructure provision (particularly utilities), is increasingly becoming a key constraint to the timely delivery of new housing and is often beyond the control of Local Authorities and the development industry. This needs immediate consideration and intervention if it is not to become a 'blocker' to aspirations to speed-up housing delivery. It also has implications for the achievement of high-quality development.

Question j. Do you anticipate any environmental impacts from these proposals that the government must consider and the Environmental Principles Policy Statement?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council understands the provision of infrastructure (particularly utilities) is increasingly becoming a key constraint to the timely delivery of new housing. There is a real risk that without intervention this could undermine the aspiration of speeding-up housing delivery or lead to unacceptable environmental impacts.

Question k. Do you anticipate these proposals giving rise to any impacts on people who share a relevant protected characteristic, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, that the government must consider under the Public Sector Equality Duty?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council recognises the importance of and is positively working towards meeting the housing needs of all those within our communities, including those with a relevant protected characteristics. The Council is of the general view that proposals within this consultation, particularly if refined in line with this wider response, could support its ability to meet the housing need of our communities.

Technical consultation on implementing measures to improve Build Out transparency

Question 1. Do you agree that the build out reporting measures should apply to developments which involve the building of new dwellings (including mixed use development)?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Yes, Shropshire Council generally agrees that new reporting measures should be applied consistently to development that results in the new dwellings.
2. However, it may be beneficial to establish a new cloud-based software 'housing build-out bank', to support administration of this process. This could be administered by the Local Planning Authority, but also provide a portal for developers submit information at key stages in the process. This will support Local Planning Authority resourcing and ensure developers have a consistent 'gateway' for the preparation and submission of data at each of the milestones in the process.
3. The Council considers the administration of this process will constitute an additional resource burden on Local Planning Authorities. This would need to be funded either through planning fee income or, alternatively and as the Shropshire Council's preference, the Government should consider introducing a monitoring levy on relevant development.

Question 2. Are there any other types of residential development that the build out measures should apply to? If yes, please give your reasons.

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Yes, Shropshire Council considers that this should be applied to all forms of specialist housing for older people or those with disabilities and special needs (whether self-contained dwellings or part of communal facilities) and student accommodation.
2. Such accommodation meets housing need. Furthermore, this aligns with the approach taken by Government in the annual Housing Flow Reconciliation data return provided by Council's, which directly inform the housing delivery test. It would also provide Councils with greater certainty about the additional service demands that specialist housing can bring.

Question 3. Do you agree with the proposed threshold of 50 dwellings for the build out measures to apply to?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. No. Whilst Shropshire Council supports recognition that this measure represents an additional administrative burden for Local Planning Authorities, it is not supportive of a 50 dwelling or more threshold. This is for a number of reasons, including:
 - a. It could result in the 'artificial' limitation of dwellings on a scheme to avoid the threshold.

- b. It would 'miss' a significant component of development that occurs, particularly in more rural areas. As Government recognises, small and medium sites make important contributions to housing completion rates.
 - c. It would mean other measures, including power to decline to determine applications, would be more challenging to implement as the sample against which judgements are made is only partial. Using power to decline as an example, the proposed threshold could mean developers persistently failing to build out in reasonable timescales are not identified and conversely developer may be unjustly judged only on schemes over the threshold and not all schemes.
 - d. It may create unreasonable expectations amongst the development industry that Local Planning Authorities only need information from larger development sites. However, Local Planning Authorities would still be expected to monitor sites below this threshold for inclusion in the annual Housing Flow Reconciliation data return.
 - e. Whilst the Council appreciates Government's concern this could constitute an additional burden for small and medium developers, this is somewhat offset by the fact much of the required information is often already provided either in support a planning application or as part of annual monitoring processes undertaken by Local Planning Authorities.
 - f. Paragraph 35 of the consultation document states one of the purposes of commencement notices is "*to enrich the data available about planning permissions as it identifies those permissions which will commence.*" This of course only accurate if it applies to all development above the specified threshold.
- 4. As such, the Council would recommend this requirement is applied to *all development that results in the formation of one or more dwelling.*
 - 5. This is comparable to terminology utilised in the administration of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). It is clear it applies to the formation of one or more dwellings irrespective of whether this is through new build, conversion, change of use or as part of a mixed use development.
 - 6. Irrespective of the threshold, Shropshire Council considers the administration of this process constitutes a resource burden on Local Planning Authorities. This should be funded through a monitoring levy on relevant development.

Question 4. Do you think a higher threshold should be set for development progress reports and the power to decline to determine applications? If so what should this threshold be?

Shropshire Council Response:

- 1. No. See the response to question 3.

Question 5. Do you agree that this information should be covered in the build out statements?

Shropshire Council Response:

- 1. Yes.

Question 6. Do you have any further comments on the build out statement?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council would suggest the proposed 'optional' condition allowing for variation to the build programme requires further consideration. Given that the build programme has informed the decision making process (including consultation responses), it would be inappropriate for a developer to have the option to simply amend it without any agreement.

Question 7. Do you agree that this information should be covered in commencement notices?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. No. Shropshire Council is in general agreement with the proposed scope of commencement notices.
2. However, to allow for circumstances where there are multiple developers on a site it is recommended that the form requires identification of, and contact details for, the party or parties expected to be undertaking any part of the development, where that results in the formation of one or more new dwellings, and where they are responsible for completing the annual development progress and completion notices.
3. The Council also notes that in paragraph 35 of the consultation document, one of the purposes of commencement notices is "*to enrich the data available about planning permissions as it identifies those permissions which will commence.*" This of course is only accurate if it applies to all development that results in the formation of one or more dwelling.

Question 8. Do you agree with setting a 2 month period after the reporting period ends to submit the development progress reports?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Yes. Shropshire Council considers a two month period appropriately achieves the balance of ensuring a timely return without placing an undue burden on developers.
2. However, the Council would suggest it may be appropriate to allow early returns, in circumstances where a development is completed during a monitoring period – so a developer can discharge their responsibility.

Question 9. Which option for the reporting period for development progress reports do you agree with?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council strongly considers the reporting period should align with the financial year (1st April – 31st March).

Question 10. We recognise the information in development progress reports may be useful for LPAs to calculate 5 year land supply (5YLS), are there any impacts with the reporting periods proposed and the interaction with 5YLS?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. The financial year reporting period aligns with timescales covered in the Housing Flow Reconciliation data returns provided by Local Planning Authorities and timescales in most Five Year Housing Land Supply Assessments.
2. Utilising an alternative timescale would result in an unnecessary additional burden for both Local Planning Authorities and the development industry – as the data would still be required for this period to inform the above referenced processes.

Question 11. Do you agree with the proposals for how the completion date is specified for the purposes of development progress reports?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Yes.

Question 12. Do you agree with the proposals about who submits the development progress report?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Yes.

Question 13. Do you agree with the information it is proposed development progress reports will cover?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Yes. Shropshire Council supports inclusion of information, where relevant, on why there have been delays to development progress based on the build out statement.

Question 14. Is there any other information you think development progress reports should cover?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council would suggest inclusion of sections on 'developers operating on the site' and 'changes to developers operating on a site over the monitoring period'. This will ensure transparency regarding which developers are party to the return.

Question 15. Do you have any views on how a joint approach to submitting a commencement notice could be facilitated on sites where multiple developers are involved?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council would suggest establishment of a new cloud-based software 'housing build-out bank', to allow the information associated with this process to be submitted.
2. The Council also suggests known developers and contact details should be identified on the commencement notice and subsequently updated annually through the development progress report (as outlined in response to question 14).

Question 16. Do you agree with making provisions in the regulations that would enable a joint submission of the development progress report where multiple developers are involved?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Yes. See response to question 15.

Question 17. Do you agree that this information should be covered in development progress reports where a joint approach is taken?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Yes.

Question 18. Do you have any views on what information other than in build out statements and development progress reports LPAs should have regard to when considering whether the carrying out of the earlier development has been unreasonably slow?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. No. Shropshire Council considers the information outlined is reasonable.

Question 19. Do you have any comments on the scope of the guidance?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council appreciates the proposal that this process would be applicable to all development groups under the control of a corporate entity, where one such development group is of concern. However, the Council is also aware that some developers 'close down' and 'start up' new development companies frequently, often for legitimate reasons but in some instances for other purposes. The Council considers the guidance should take account of and guidelines on this circumstance, or risk encouraging this process to occur.

Question 20. Do you have any views on the implications of the proposals in this consultation for you, the environment or the group or business you represent, and on anyone with a relevant protected characteristic? If so, please explain who, which groups, including those with protected characteristics, or which businesses may be impacted and how, or any anticipated environmental impacts. Is there anything that could be done to mitigate any impact identified?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council recognises the importance of and is positively working towards meeting the housing needs of all those within our communities, including those with a relevant protected characteristics. The Council is of the general view that proposals within this consultation, particularly if refined in line with this wider response, could support its ability to meet the housing need of our communities.

Planning Reform Working Paper: Reforming Site Thresholds

Question 1. Would a medium-sized site threshold help reduce barriers and accelerate delivery for SMEs, if linked to the proposed changes to regulatory requirements set out in the working paper?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council understands the merits of introducing a new medium-sized site threshold for residential planning applications.
2. However, if introducing the 'category', when determining associated requirements at the planning application stage, it will be important to recognise that development within it constitutes a very significant component of development in rural areas.

Question 2. Should the threshold be 10–49 units, or could other size ranges provide a better balance of simplicity and impact?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Yes. Shropshire Council considers that 10-49 dwellings or more than 0.5 – less than 1.0ha in size constitute appropriate parameters for this 'category' or residential planning application.

Question 3. Should the medium threshold apply to commercial and other non-residential development and how should mixed uses be reflected?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers there is logic in applying a similar graduated approach to planning applications for non-residential development. The specific criteria to establish the new category would require further consultation.

Question 4. If the medium-sized site threshold were introduced, should the exemption from paying the proposed Building Safety Levy for fewer than 10 dwellings be extended to align with medium-sized development sites?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. No comment.

Question 5. Should there be solely area-based size thresholds (ha) given the different contexts and densities, particularly for very small, small and medium-sized sites? Or would it be more appropriate to also specify a unit size threshold?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers it is clearer and more transparent for developers, communities and decision makers to utilise dual definitions for

each category of development – so for the proposed medium scale residential development category: 10-49 dwellings or more than 0.5 – less than 1.0ha in size constitute appropriate parameters for this 'category' or residential planning application.

Question 6. Are the proposed streamlining options the right ones for government to consider?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council is supportive of the principle of streamlining requirements for applicants of small and medium scale residential development, subject to ensure that sufficient information remains available to reach informed and robust decisions.
2. With specific regard to proposed 'streamlining' of requirements for residential applications within the proposed new medium scale development category outlined in the consultation document, Shropshire Council:
 - a. Is generally supportive of the principle of simplifying the biodiversity net gain process, provided this does not undermine the achievement of a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain. However, the Council would oppose any proposal for the removal of the requirement to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain for medium-scale development.
 - b. Has no comment on Building Safety Levy.
 - c. Disagrees with proposed exemptions from the build out transparency requirements, which should be applied to *all development that results in the formation of one or more dwelling*. There are a number of reasons for this position, as identified in the Council's response to the relevant consultation. These include:
 - Risk of artificially limiting scale of development.
 - 'Missing' a significant component of development, particularly in rural areas.
 - Undermining other measures such as the power to decline.
 - Risking creating unreasonable expectations amongst the development industry regarding information required by Local Planning Authorities – for national data returns and housing land supply process, development progress is required annually irrespective of scale of development.
 - d. Is supportive of maintaining the 13-week statutory time period for determination.
 - e. Considers Local Planning Authorities are best placed to establish a scheme of delegation for planning applications, which ensure a balance between efficient and timely consideration of the planning application and maintaining the democratic process.
 - f. Is supportive in principle of proportionate referral to statutory consultees. However, the Council would again advise that when determining what is proportionate, it must be recognised that development within it constitutes a very significant component of development in rural areas.
 - g. As Government has recognised within the consultation document, permission in principle for smaller scale development has had very limited uptake. On this basis, the Council would not support its 'roll-out' to larger scales of development.

- h. Is supportive of the principle of proportionate validation requirements. However, there requirement must be carefully considered to ensure the information required to determine the planning application is available for the outset, in order to avoid unintended consequences of delaying decision making.
- i. Would support the introduction of a national proportionate but robust national template for S106 Legal Agreements, as negotiation with developers seeking unnecessary changes to Local Planning Authority templates is often a source of delay to their completion. However, Shropshire Council would very strongly oppose any proposal for to remove the requirement to provide affordable housing as part of developments of this scale. This would undermine the ability to meet local housing need and likely slow development progress on such sites, given such provision constitutes a further outlet.
- j. In addition, it is important to emphasise that requirements must not be 'streamlined' for other environmental considerations, such as heritage and archaeological impacts, as without sufficient information from the outset such matters can result in significant delay to decision making - this is particularly pertinent in rural areas with high densities of heritage assets.

Question 7. Are there further changes that could and should be linked to new or existing thresholds? Are there wider changes that could be made through national planning policy that would be beneficial?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers that to add further clarity and transparency for developers, communities and decision makers in the operation of policies on affordable housing, Government should specifically define what constitutes Designated Rural Areas.
2. Shropshire Council recommends this definition includes all parishes with a population of 3,000 or fewer and all parishes located in a National Park or National Landscape.
3. Within communities in Designated Rural Areas, Local Planning Authorities should continue to be supported in requiring affordable housing contributions from all sites that result in the formation of one or more new dwellings. Generally this should consist of on-site provision, but in exceptional circumstances it could consist of a commuted sum to support off-site provision.
4. This approach would provide a further outlet on small development sites which could contribute to the speed of delivery. Crucially, it would also improve the supply of rural affordable housing by:
 - a. Increasing affordable housing delivery as planning gain within market development.
 - b. Reducing land values, thereby providing more opportunities for small and medium sized developers.
 - c. Encourage more landowners to consider release of land for rural exception site development, thereby facilitating additional residential development.

5. Shropshire Council would also continue to advocate for the removal of a non-local threshold for affordable housing contributions from market residential development as planning gain. This would achieve the same benefits outlined above for small-scale development in non-Designated Rural Areas.

Question 8. Is the planning application process for small sites more challenging on brownfield land than greenfield land? If so, then what are these challenges or barriers?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council does not consider that the planning application process for small brownfield sites is generally more challenging than small greenfield sites. However, it is accepted this may be the case for more complex contaminated sites where a barrier that can arise is economic viability, although these do not often arise in Shropshire. For this reason it would be inappropriate to take a 'one size fits all' approach to such development.

Question 9. Are the determination periods detailed in this working paper the correct ones? Would shorter determination periods be appropriate for a particular site size once wider reforms to planning fees have been implemented - including those set out in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers the determination periods detailed for the three 'categories' of residential planning applications are appropriate. Specifically, the Council is supportive of maintaining the 13-week statutory time period for determination of residential planning applications within the proposed medium scale category.

Question 10. What are the specific barriers SMEs face during s.106 agreements and what would be the most effective action for government to take, in line with its manifesto commitments on affordable housing?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers the main factor that delays the completion of S106 Legal Agreements between Local Planning Authorities and SME's is the unnecessary negotiation regarding unnecessary changes to Local Planning Authority S106 Agreement templates.
2. As such, the Council would support the introduction of a national proportionate but robust national template for S106 Legal Agreements, which may remove this delay factor.

Question 11. What are the barriers to developing very small sites as defined above and what parameters could be helpfully addressed in a design code?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers that the existing approach to very small sites is not overly onerous. It achieves an appropriate balance between ensuring development complements and enhances local character whilst facilitating the timely progression of such development.
2. The Council considers any design code for such development would need to ensure development is responsive to and enhances local character, rather than seeking to establish specific design requirements.
3. This is because such sites are generally within areas with an established character and this scale of development is unlikely to be able to create a new character area in and of itself. Furthermore, given the diverse characteristics of Local Planning Authorities and the settlements within them, a more 'generic' design code could not respond to local circumstances and as such would be either counter-productive or largely meaningless.
4. As, such the Council suggests such a design code could establish the principles of what constitutes 'good design' on small sites – having regard to local character and should also stipulate the need to ensure the amenity of new and existing properties.

Question 12. What types of rules set out in design codes would be most beneficial in unlocking development?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. See response to Question 11.

Question 13. Are there other issues or opportunities to consider for ensuring the success of these proposals?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council would support the preparation of a proportionate and robust S106 Agreement template.
2. Shropshire Council also considers that to add further clarity and transparency for developers, communities and decision makers in the operation of policies on affordable housing, Government should specifically define what constitutes Designated Rural Areas.
3. Shropshire Council recommends this definition includes all parishes with a population of 3,000 or fewer and all parishes located in a National Park or National Landscape.
4. Within communities in Designated Rural Areas, Local Planning Authorities should continue to be supported in requiring affordable housing contributions from all sites that result in the formation of one or more new dwellings. Generally this should consist of on-site provision, but in

exceptional circumstances it could consist of a commuted sum to support off-site provision.

5. Finally, Shropshire Council continues to advocate for the removal of a non-local threshold for affordable housing contributions from market residential development as planning gain. This would achieve the same benefits outlined above for small-scale development in non-Designated Rural Areas.

Question 14. Do you anticipate any environmental impacts from these proposals that the government must consider under the Environmental Principles Policy Statement?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers this is dependent on the proposed approach to Biodiversity Net Gain within the proposed medium-scale residential development 'category'.
2. The Council would oppose any proposal for the removal of the requirement to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain for medium-scale residential development, which could have a detrimental environmental impact.

Question 15. Do you have any views on the impacts of the above proposals for you, or the group or business you represent and on anyone with a relevant protected characteristic? If so, please explain who, which groups, including those with protected characteristics, or which businesses may be impacted and how. Is there anything that could be done to mitigate any impact identified?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council recognises the importance of and is positively working towards meeting the housing needs of all those within our communities, including those with a relevant protected characteristics. The Council is of the general view that proposals within this consultation, particularly if refined in line with this wider response, could support its ability to meet the housing need of our communities.

Additional Question 1. The specific barriers facing SMEs in agreeing s.106 obligations – including availability of willing and suitable Registered Providers:

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers the main barriers facing small and medium scale builders in agreeing S106 planning obligations are:
 - a. Unnecessary negotiation by small and medium scale developers representatives regarding unnecessary changes to Local Planning Authority S106 Agreement templates. This could be mitigated through an appropriate national S106 Legal Agreement template.
 - b. The type, size and standard of build quality, of properties. It is a significant investment for Registered Providers to purchase affordable dwellings provided through S106 planning obligations. As such, the

property needs to be of an appropriate type and size to meet need and quality that minimises needs for additional adaptations / investment in the short to medium term. This could be mitigated by ensuring small and medium scale developers liaise earlier (front load negotiations) with Registered Providers to understand needs and expectations.

- c. Unreasonable aspirations on property values of small and medium scale developers. It is not uncommon that aspirations on affordable property values of small and medium developers exceed the valuation of Registered Providers.
- d. The finances / ability to loan capital of Registered Providers. The majority of Registered Providers focus their funds on affordable housing provision through their own developments, with properties secured through S106 planning obligations seen as complementary. Therefore, there are instances where Registered Providers want the property but have insufficient capital to invest at the time they become available. This could be mitigated through further financing / providing greater ability to loan capital of Registered Providers.

Additional Question 2. What role national government should play in improving the process – including the merits of a standardised s.106 template for medium sites

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers the main factor that delays the completion of S106 Legal Agreements between Local Planning Authorities and SME's is the unnecessary negotiation regarding unnecessary changes to Local Planning Authority S106 Agreement templates.
2. As such, the Council would support the introduction of a national proportionate but robust national template for S106 Legal Agreements, which may remove this delay factor.

Additional Question 3. How the rules relating to suitable off-site provision and/or appropriate financial payment on sites below the medium site threshold might be reformed to more effectively support affordable housing delivery, where there is sufficient evidence that onsite delivery will not take place within a suitable timeframe and noting the government's views that commuted sums should be a last resort given they push affordable housing delivery timescales into the future.

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council strongly supports the retention of the existing approach – a clear preference for affordable housing obligations to be provided off-site with commuted sums for off-site provision only acceptable where there are exceptional circumstances. This is because this approach achieves integrated communities and ensures provision within the communities receiving the associated development.
2. The Council would urge caution on any changes on this matter, as it could encourage small and medium developers to increasingly expect overly

aspirational values for on-site affordable properties, beyond the valuation of Registered Providers, meaning they cannot secure a sale and there seek to 'convert' provision to a commuted sum for off-site provision.

3. This would have numerous negative impacts, including 'slowing' development, and reducing suitability and inclusivity of development.
4. In the limited circumstances where affordable housing properties provided through a S106 planning obligation genuinely cannot be 'taken-up' by a Registered Provider, there is some merit in supporting commuted sums for off-site provision. However, these sums would need to be sufficient to genuinely achieve such provision and this approach would need to avoid unintended consequences.

Additional Question 4. Would guidance for local planning authorities and developers on calculating commuted sum payments to ensure these reflect the value of onsite delivery be effective?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Yes. Shropshire Council considers such an approach could reduce unnecessary negotiation and support appropriate standardisation. However, these values must reflect the uplift to the developer and be sufficient to genuinely achieve such provision.

Additional Question 5. Are there safeguards that can be put in place to ensure that local planning authorities do not accrue commuted sums where there is limited evidence of an authority's deliverable pipeline opportunities in relation to affordable housing to ensure that commuted sums can be spent? If so, what would these be?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. In Shropshire Council's experience this is not an issue. Local Planning Authorities generally have a pool of 'opportunities' to invest these funds to secure affordable housing, often in the same or nearest sustainable settlement.

Reform of planning committees: technical consultation

Question 1. Do you agree with the principle of having a two tier structure for the national scheme of delegation?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council opposes the introduction of a national scheme of delegation. It is considered such an approach is unnecessary and will erode the ability to provide local democratic oversight and accountability of planning decisions.
2. The Council also consider a national scheme of delegation would not allow for sufficient recognition of local context or circumstances and could diminish the role and influence of town and parish councils in the planning process. Furthermore, it could mean particular types of application that could deliver significant benefits to Shropshire residents are removed from committee oversight and as such quality might be eroded.
3. The Council considers Local Planning Authorities are best placed to establish delegation procedures for the determination of planning applications in their administrative area. However, if Government considers greater standardisation is required, the Council would advocate the establishment of 'national parameters' for local schemes of delegation, rather than a national scheme of delegation.

Question 2. Do you agree the following application types should fall within Tier A? (Which would include types of applications which must be delegated to officer in all cases)

Applications for planning permission for householder development, minor commercial development and minor residential development.

Applications for reserved matter approvals.

Applications for non-material amendments to planning permissions.

Applications for the approval of conditions including Schedule 5 mineral planning conditions.

Applications for approval of the BNG Plan.

Applications for approval of prior approval (for permitted development rights).

Applications for lawful development certificates.

Applications for a Certificate of Appropriate Alternative Development.

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Without prejudice to the Council's response to Question 1, Shropshire Council does not agree all these forms of application should fall within 'Tier A'. Specifically the Council strongly considers that planning applications for minor commercial development, minor residential development, and reserved matters should be included within 'Tier B'.
2. Whilst it is entirely appropriate for the majority of such planning applications to be determined via officer delegation, there are instances where such proposals are locally sensitive and as such local democratic oversight is required. This is the approach successfully employed by Shropshire Council within its own local scheme of delegation.

3. To elaborate, the Council considers:
 - a. Inclusion of planning applications for minor commercial development and minor residential development in 'Tier A' fails to recognise the diverse characteristics of Local Planning Authorities and the communities within them – in a small rural settlement 1-9 dwellings can constitute a very significant and sensitive proposal.
 - b. Inclusion of reserved matters applications within 'Tier A' fails to recognise the importance of the review of detailed design considerations. This is contrary to Government commitments on the achievement of high-quality sustainable design.

Question 3. Do you think, further to the working paper on revising development thresholds, we should consider including some applications for medium residential development (10-50 dwellings) within Tier A? If so, what types of application?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Without prejudice to the Council's response to Question 1, Shropshire Council strongly considers that all planning applications for medium scale residential development should be retained within 'Tier B'.
2. Whilst it may be entirely appropriate for the majority of such planning applications to be determined via officer delegation, there are instances where such proposals are locally sensitive and local democratic oversight is required. Inclusion of medium-scale development within 'Tier B' would facilitate this approach.

Question 4. Are there further types of application which should fall within Tier A?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Without prejudice to the Council's response to Question 1, Shropshire Council does not consider that there are further types of planning application which should fall within 'Tier A'.

Question 5. Do you think there should be a mechanism to bring a Tier A application to committee in exceptional circumstances? If so, what would those circumstances be and how would the mechanism operate?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Without prejudice to the Council's response to Questions 1 and 2, Shropshire Council strongly considers that a mechanism should be in place which allows for planning applications which fall within 'Tier A' to be considered by planning committee.
2. Shropshire Council considers such a mechanism could be 'triggered' in circumstances where an objection is received from a statutory consultee, the relevant town/parish council, or the local member. In such circumstances a 'gateway test' comparable to that for 'Tier B' applications should then be employed to determine if the planning application is determined via officer delegation or committee.

Question 6. Do you think the gateway test which requires agreement between the chief planner and the chair of the planning committee is suitable? If not, what other mechanism would you suggest?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Without prejudice to the Council's response to Question 1, Shropshire Council considers the proposed gateway test for applications within 'Tier B' is reasonable.
2. Such an approach is comparable to that already successfully employed by Shropshire Council within its own local scheme of delegation.

Question 7. Do you agree that the following types of application should fall within Tier B? (Which would include types of applications which must be delegated to officers unless the Chief Planner and Chair of Committee agree it should go to committee based on a gateway test)

- a) Applications for planning permission aside from: Householder applications, Minor commercial applications, Minor residential development applications
- b) notwithstanding a), any application for planning permission where the applicant is the local authority, a councillor or officer
- c) applications for s73 applications to vary conditions/s73B applications to vary permissions

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Without prejudice to the Council's response to Question 1, Shropshire Council considers planning applications for all these forms of development should fall within 'Tier B'.

Question 8. Are there further types of application which should fall within Tier B?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Without prejudice to the Council's response to Question 1, Shropshire Council strongly considers that planning applications for minor commercial development, minor residential development, and reserved matters proposed to be included within 'Tier A' should instead be included within 'Tier B'.
2. Whilst it is entirely appropriate for the majority of such planning applications to be determined via officer delegation, there are instances where such proposals are locally sensitive and as such local democratic oversight is required. This is the approach successfully employed by Shropshire Council within its own local scheme of delegation.
3. To elaborate, the Council considers:
 - a. Inclusion of planning applications for minor commercial development and minor residential development in 'Tier A' fails to recognise the diverse characteristics of Local Planning Authorities and the

communities within them – in a small rural settlement 1-9 dwellings can constitute a very significant and sensitive proposal.

- b. Inclusion of reserved matters applications within 'Tier A' fails to recognise the importance of the review of detailed design considerations. This is contrary to Government commitments on the achievement of high-quality sustainable design.

Question 9. Do you consider that special control applications should be included in: Tier A or Tier B?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Without prejudice to the Council's response to Question 1, Shropshire Council strongly considers that special control applications should be included within 'Tier B'.
2. Whilst it is entirely appropriate for many such applications to be determined via officer delegation, it is important to recognise that many such proposals are locally sensitive and/or can have significant implications for individuals and the Local Planning Authority. For this reason democratic oversight can be invaluable.

Question 10. Do you think that all section 106 decisions should follow the treatment of the associated planning applications? For section 106 decisions not linked to a planning application should they be in Tier A or Tier B, or treated in some other way?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Without prejudice to the Council's response to Question 1, Shropshire Council considers it is logical for all section 106 decisions to follow the treatment of the associated planning application.
2. Where a section 106 decision is not linked to a planning application they should be in 'Tier B'. Whilst it is entirely appropriate for the majority of such decisions to be reached via officer delegation, there are instances where such proposals are locally sensitive and as such local democratic oversight is required.

Question 11. Do you think that enforcement decisions should be in Tier A or Tier B, or treated in some other way?

Shropshire Council Response:

3. Shropshire Council considers that enforcement decisions should be in 'Tier B'. Whilst there are many instances where it is appropriate for such decisions to be reached via officer delegation, it is important to recognise that many such proposals are locally sensitive and/or can have significant implications for individuals and the Local Planning Authority. For this reason democratic oversight can be invaluable.

Question 12. Do you agree that the regulations should set a maximum for planning committees of 11 members?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council is largely supportive of the proposal to establish a 'maximum' planning committee size. However, there should be specific recognition that dependent on the size and characteristics of a Local Planning Authority, more than one planning committee may be required.
2. The Council also considers a 'maximum' of 11 members is reasonable, in that it allows sufficient members to achieve an informed debate, local democratic oversight, and maintain a 'quorum' for decision making. Indeed, the Council would note that its own planning committees consist of 11 members.

Question 13. If you do not agree, what if any alternative size restrictions should be placed on committees?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. N/A.

Question 14. Do you think the regulations should additionally set a minimum size requirement?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers there may be some merit in establishing a minimum size requirement for planning committees in order to ensure there are sufficient members to achieve an informed debate, local democratic oversight, and maintain a 'quorum' for decision making.

Question 15. Do you agree that certification of planning committee members, and of other relevant decisions makers, should be administered at a national level?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council is generally supportive of the principle of establishing national expectations for the mandatory training of planning committee members. However, the Council considers a local based approach where the Local Planning Authority provides the training and certification would be preferable.
2. This is because experience demonstrates that officer involvement in the training and accreditation process garners trust and understanding between officers and committee members, which supports the effective operation of the planning committee.
3. This could be facilitated through the provision of 'national parameters' for the scope and content of this training.

Question 16. Do you think we should consider reviewing the thresholds for quality of decision making in the performance regime to ensure the highest standards of decision making are maintained?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council is a high-performing Local Planning Authority. The strong view of the Council is that the existing performance regime ensures the maintenance of the highest standards of decision making.
2. The Council considers amendments to this regime would lead to unnecessary complexity of monitoring, confusion of expectations amongst communities and applicants, have the potential to undermine the quality of development, and potentially have a negative effect on timescales.

Question 17. For quality of decision making the current threshold is 10% for major and non-major applications. We are proposing that in the future the threshold could be lowered to 5% for both. Do you agree?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. No. See the response to Question 16 above.

Question 18. Do you have any views on the implications of the proposals in this consultation for you, or the group or business you represent, and on anyone with a relevant protected characteristic? If so, please explain who, which groups, including those with protected characteristics, or which businesses may be impacted and how.

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council opposes the introduction of a national scheme of delegation. It is considered such an approach is unnecessary and will erode the ability to provide local democratic oversight and accountability of planning decisions.
2. The Council also consider a national scheme of delegation would not allow for sufficient recognition of local context or circumstances and could diminish the role and influence of town and parish councils in the planning process. Furthermore, it could mean particular types of application that could deliver significant benefits to Shropshire residents are removed from committee oversight and as such quality might be eroded.

Question 19. Is there anything that could be done to mitigate any impact identified?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. Shropshire Council considers Local Planning Authorities are best placed to establish delegation procedures for the determination of planning applications in their administrative area.
2. However, if Government considers greater standardisation is required, the Council would advocate the establishment of 'national parameters' for local schemes of delegation, rather than a national scheme of delegation.

Question 20. Do you have any views on the implications of these proposals for the considerations of the 5 environmental principles identified in the Environment Act 2021?

Shropshire Council Response:

1. No comment.

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Committee and Date

Cabinet 9th July 2025

10:30 am

Item

Public

Report heading



Transfer of Coroner's Officers to Shropshire Council

Responsible Officer:		Tim Collard	
email:	Tim.Collard@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 252756
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):		Bernie Bentick, Portfolio Holder – Health and Public Protection	

Synopsis

This report seeks the approval of Cabinet for the transfer of the Coroner's Officers from West Mercia Police to Shropshire Council from 1st October 2025.

Executive Summary

2.1 Coroners are independent judicial officers funded and supported by local authorities, with statutory responsibility under The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 for inquiring into the cause of

certain deaths. Shropshire, Telford, and Wrekin is a Coronal area, with Shropshire Council acting as the lead authority.

2.2 Coroner's Officers, who perform various support functions at the direction of the Coroner, are currently employed and funded by West Mercia Police ("WMP"). WMP has decided to cease supporting these roles as they are not considered to be core policing functions and as such responsibility for employing and funding the six officers (5 FTE) will transfer to Shropshire Council under TUPE legislation. They will continue to be based at the Guildhall and will be integrated into the existing Registration and Coroners Service.

2.3 It is proposed that this transfer take place on 1st October 2025 and that the precise arrangements for achieving this should be delegated to the Service Director – Legal and Governance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Public Protection.

2.4 The Chief Executive of Shropshire Council and the Chief Constable of WMP have provisionally agreed that funding will be reduced on a tapering basis as set out in more detail at Section 5 of this Report.

Recommendations

That Cabinet authorise:

3.1 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 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.

Report

Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1 Some current Coroner's Officers may choose not to transfer to Shropshire Council and either leave or be redeployed across West Mercia Police. This would result in considerable pressure on the remaining team until replacements could be recruited and, with their assistance, trained.

4.2 An uncoordinated transition of officers could damage the relationship between the Council and HM Coroner, lead to an uncontrolled funding pressure for the Council and damage the support provided to bereaved relatives. If the recommendation to transfer is agreed, then a project plan will be developed and implemented to ensure the transfer is managed as smoothly as possible.

4.3 Appropriate access to systems within West Mercia Police will need to be maintained to facilitate the smooth running of the service.

Financial Implications

5.1 Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands as budgeted for within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 27 February 2025 and subsequent updates. It is also addressed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been, and continues to be, undertaken to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within

the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve scaling down initiatives, changing the scope, delaying implementation, or extending delivery timescales

5.2 In 2009 an agreement was reached between Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Council which provided Coroners Services for each area and was administered by Shropshire Council. The agreement confirmed that specific case costs will be met by the Council area to which the death relates. Further service costs are met on the cost sharing basis of proportions of Coroners referrals for each area, currently 60% Shropshire 40% Telford and Wrekin.

5.3 The Council does not currently budget for the costs of the Coroner Officers as this has been 100% funded by WMP. It has been agreed between the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police and the Chief Executive of Shropshire Council that have proposed that their funding is withdrawn over four years on a phased withdrawal basis. This is the same arrangement as was agreed between Worcestershire County Council and West Mercia Police when the Coroner's Officers were transferred in a similar manner in 2023. The Table below outlines the amount and percentage of funding attributable to Shropshire Council and West Mercia Police over the four-year period.

	Year 1 – 2025 from date of transfer	Year 2 – 2026	Year 3 – 2027	Year 4 – 2028	Ongoing from 2029
SC	25%	50%	75%	100%	100%
WMP	75%	50%	25%	0	£0 0%
T&W	40% of SC costs	40% of SC costs	40% of SC costs	40%	40%

5.4 The consequences for Shropshire Council of the above proposed funding withdrawal are estimated to be, Year 1 £18,700, Year 2 £77,028, Year 3 £118,431 and Year 4 £161,856. Over the four-year period above the forecast cumulative pressure for Shropshire Council would be a total of £376,015. There will be year 4 costs, plus annual salary and on-cost increases due to inflation/demand recurrently from year 5 onwards. Whilst the additional costs for Year 1 can be absorbed within the service it will be necessary to seek growth within the budget for future years.

5.5 This proposal highlights that any future inflation / salary uplift needs to be costed and funded. It is envisaged that SC may need to review the service following transfer (subject to TUPE legislation) and would want to negotiate risk sharing any potential implications with WMP. Further conversations will need to be held with West Mercia Police over transfer of functions/staff to Shropshire Council and any cost implications recognising the importance of ensuring the service is able to continue to deliver its functions post transfer in October 2025.

Climate Change Appraisal

6.1 This report does not directly make decisions on energy and fuel consumption; renewable energy generation; carbon offsetting or mitigation; or on climate change adaption. The Coroners Officers are currently based at the Guildhall and they will continue to operate from there following the transfer.

Background

7.1 Coroners are independent judicial officers who are appointed and funded by local authorities. They inquire into deaths reported to them which appear to be violent, unnatural or of sudden and unknown causes. Coroners are judicially independent and as such determine how they discharge their functions within the statutory framework.

7.2 Over the years there have been calls for a national Coroners' Service of England and Wales, but this has not materialised, and it remains a locally funded service. The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 ("the 2009 Act") has led to some significant and ongoing reforms which are focused on providing consistent good practice, openness and fairness. This, along with the Chief Coroners model coroner area document provides guidance which places the family at the centre of the investigation/inquest.

7.3 Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin is designated as a Coronial area and as such is required to have a Senior Coroner appointed (not employed) by the Local Authority and agreed by the Chief Coroner and the Lord Chancellor. SC have significant statutory duties in respect of the coronial service. These include:

- appointing and remunerating the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Senior Coroner and Assistant Coroners;
- meeting all the costs of the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Coroner service, including body removal, post-mortems, and toxicology reports; and
- providing the Senior Coroner with suitable officers, staff, premises and office accommodation to fulfil their role

7.4 In a Coronial area consisting of two or more local authorities, as is the case in Shropshire, one of them will be the lead authority for the area. In Shropshire that is Shropshire Council (with a financial contribution of 40% from Telford and Wrekin Council). As a result, the duty to supply Officers, staff and accommodation to the Coroner in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin falls on Shropshire Council.

7.5 Coroners are supported by Coroners Officers, who are in many respects the mainstay of the administration of the coronial system. They are the officers most likely to have direct contact with bereaved Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin residents. The service and staff are already based with the Coroner at the Coroner's Court at the Guildhall. The duties and tasks they perform are directed by the Coroner and include a range of tasks such as conducting enquiries on behalf of the coroner, liaising with families, collating statements of evidence and organising post-mortems and inquests following authorisation from the Coroner.

7.6 Under the 2009 Act the duty to provide officers and other staff falls on the Council *"if, or to the extent that, the necessary officers and other staff for that area are not provided by a local policing body"*.

7.7 Within Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin these roles have historically been provided and funded by West Mercia Police. However, they are not considered core policing roles, and the current division of accountability does not sit well with a modern Coroner's Service. The roles do not require the exercise of any police powers, hence the decision of West Mercia Police to cease supporting the function.

7.8 It is envisaged that the proposal, which has been initiated by WMP, would result in the transfer of the 6 staff and their functions from West Mercia Police to Shropshire Council in accordance with Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) legislation) (TUPE) on or around 1 October 2025. The precise transfer date will be subject to formal agreement/consultation as required via TUPE legislation.

7.9 It is proposed that any staff who transfer would be located within the existing Registration and Coroners Service and will be absorbed into the existing responsibilities of the management team who already oversee the Coroner's administrative staff.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: All

Appendices

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