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

Committee: Council

Date: Wednesday, 16 September 2026

Date: **Thursday, 24 September 2026**
Time: **10.00 am**
Venue: **The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ**

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

Members of the Council – a briefing note will be circulated by e-mail prior to the meeting with important housekeeping details and arrangements for the meeting.

Members of the Public – If you wish to attend the meeting, please e-mail democracy@shropshire.gov.uk to check whether 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

Richard Phillips
Service Director – Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Duncan Borrowman (Chairman)
Gary Groves (Vice-Chair)
Heather Kidd (Leader)
Alex Wagner (Deputy Leader)
Sho Abdul
Caroline Bagnall
Elizabeth Barker
Bernie Bentick
Neil Bentley
Ed Bird
Jeremy Blandford
Andy Boddington
Thomas Clayton
Susan Coleman
Rachel Connolly
Tom Dainty
Jamie Daniels
Rosemary Dartnall
David Davies
Pamela Davies
Andy Davis
Julian Dean
Joshua Dickin
Mandy Duncan
Greg Ebbs
Susan Eden
Donna Edmunds
Craig Emery
Brian Evans
Roger Evans
Adam Fejfer
Rhys Gratton
Andy Hall
Kate Halliday
Harry Hancock-Davies
Nick Hignett
Alan Holford
George Hollyhead
Ruth Houghton
Dawn Husemann
Peter Husemann
Benedict Jephcott
Robert Jones
Duncan Kerr
Christopher Lemon
Nigel Lumby
Brendan Mallon
Sarah Marston
David Minnery
Vicky Moore
Mark Morris
Alan Mosley
Malcolm Myles-Hook
Chris Naylor
James Owen
Mark Owen
Wendy Owen
Vivienne Parry
Ed Potter
Rosie Radford
Sharon Ritchie-Simmons
Carl Rowley

Charles Shackerley-Bennett
Colin Stanford
Jon Tandy
Colin Taylor
Dan Thomas
Teri Trickett
David Vasmer
Beverley Waite
David Walker
Sam Walmsley
Alison Williams
Rob Wilson

Your Committee Officer is:

Tim Ward Committee Officer
Tel: 01743 257713
Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

When attending this meeting, Members are reminded of the three principles of the Jo Cox Foundation and Compassion in Politics Civility Pledge:

1. *Use a civil and constructive tone in debate*
2. *Act with integrity, honesty and compassion*
3. *Behave respectfully towards others, including those I disagree with*

*(Please note that while we strive to live stream meetings, technical issues may occasionally occur. In the event of a technical disruption, the meeting will be paused to try to resolve the issue. Should it not be possible to resume the live stream, the meeting will proceed as scheduled, and a backup recording will be made available after the meeting. Any disruption to the live stream does not affect the legality of the meeting).

AGENDA

1 **Apologies for Absence**

2 **Disclosable Pecuniary 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 - 10)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 July 2026.

4 **Announcements**

To receive such communications as the Chairman, Leader and Head of Paid Service may desire to lay before the Council.

5 **Public Questions**

To receive any questions from the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. Deadline for notification is 12 noon on Friday 18 September 2026.

6 **Questions from Members**

To receive any questions from Members, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2. Deadline for notification is 12 noon on Friday 18 September 2026.

7 **Senior Management Structure & Appointments** (Pages 11 - 28)

Report of the Chief Executive

Contact Tanya Miles – tanya.miles@shropshire.gov.uk

8 **Exceptional Financial Support: External Assurance Review** (Pages 29 - 54)

Report of the Interim Executive Director (S151)

Contact Duncan Whitfield – duncan.whitfield@shropshire.gov.uk

9 **Local Transport Consolidated Funding**

Report of the Service Director – Infrastructure

Contact Andy Wilde – andy.wilde@shropshire.gov.uk

REPORT TO FOLLOW - Further discussion is required with the Portfolio Holder/s before publication

10 **Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy 2026 – 2029** (Pages 55 - 96)

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Contact David Shaw - david.shaw@shropshire.gov.uk

11 **Independent Remuneration Panel Report** (Pages 97 - 108)

Report of the Service Director – Legal & Governance

Contact Richard Phillips - richard.phillips@shropshire.gov.uk

12 **Annual Scrutiny Report** (Pages 109 - 136)

Report of the Service Director – Strategy & Change

Contact Paul Clarke paul.clarke@shropshire.gov.uk

13 **Changes to Committee Membership** (Pages 137 - 138)

To approve the changes to committee membership – report attached.

14 **Motions**

The following motions have been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 16:

a **Motion received from Councillor Alan Holford and supported by Bernie Bentick, Duncan Borrowman, Adam Fejfer, Gary Groves, Ruth Houghton, Heather Kidd, Rosie Radford, Alex Wagner and Alison Williams**

This Council:

1. Acknowledges the cultural memory of Saint Erkenwald and the high altar stone of Old St Paul's Cathedral is deeply held in both Shropshire and London, and notes recent research suggests that physical items associated with them may have been placed at Soulton Hall for safe keeping.
2. Observes that if these items were translated, their protection formed part of a broader pattern of statecraft by Sir Rowland Hill of Soulton (Lord Mayor of London 1549–50), who repeatedly used his authority to preserve endangered books, records, and cultural heritage, offering a principled response to the destruction, violence, and profound loss of human life during the upheavals of the sixteenth century.
3. Expresses gratitude to James D. Wenn and James Syrett of Byrga Geniht Ltd, and to Aed Thompson, for their research and expertise in bringing these matters to light.
4. Expresses thanks to the Ashton family and their ancestors. Their continuous care of Soulton Hall has preserved this history during dangerous times, and they are now presenting it to the public with care and discernment.
5. Recognises that these events offer a rare chance to build understanding and bridge divides between different faith communities today.
6. Highlights the ancient Quit Rents ceremony – a shared tradition between Shropshire and the City of London spanning over 800 years where these historical matters were formally addressed during the 813th ceremony.
7. Affirms that Shropshire deeply values its close relationship with the City of London built over centuries and continuing today.

b **Motion received from Councillor Julian Dean and supported by the Green and Progressive Independent Group**

Council notes:

- The Summer of 2026 is expected to have been the hottest on record for the UK, with 6 out of 7 of the hottest recorded summers all coming in the last 8 years.
- The previous winter was the wettest on record for many parts of the UK. Average winter rainfall has risen from around 290mm in the 1970s and 1980s to 380mm in the decade up to 2021.
- The Climate Change Committee states that "The UK's preparations for climate change are inadequate", and "Adaptation is needed now to ensure that the UK is prepared for today's extreme weather as well as the rapidly increasing severity of future risks. The costs of these impacts are already being felt, and the risks will continue to grow even if international targets to limit global warming are met. Action is needed now whilst we still have the opportunity to address these risks in a way that is both cost-effective and timely"
- That from 30 Nov 2026, Phase 2 of Awaab's Law will extend social landlords' duties to significant excess heat and cold hazards.
- The TUC heat campaign calling for the urgent modernisation of Health and Safety standards, including a legal maximum working temperature of 30°C (27°C for strenuous work), above which non-essential work is paused or adapted.
- The Public and Civil Servants union has highlighted in the early Summer that "We are seeing [Whitehall] job cuts in key policy areas despite the mounting evidence that we need to do more, not less to restore nature and mitigate and adapt to the climate crisis."

Council believes:

- There must be continued and redoubled efforts to move the council area, the country and the global community to net zero carbon emissions. Climate adaptation and emissions reduction must be pursued together, recognising that many measures such as increasing tree canopies, are appropriate for both.
- The increasing threat to the health and livelihoods from climate change related extreme weather requires a national planned response, the key elements of which are:
- Protecting and improving our water supply, which now clearly requires taking the industry back into public ownership together with significant investment.
- Protecting and improving the ability of land to manage flooding and fire risks by investing in and enforcing natural flood and fire risk land management.
- Protecting and improving the ability of our buildings, infrastructure and transport systems to manage the risks from flooding and prolonged extreme heat through planning and building control regulation, including natural temperature control measures such as increased tree canopy cover and external shading to reduce the need for energy intensive cooling.
- Protecting and enhancing our food security through regulations and investment in sustainable agriculture, diversifying to increase horticulture and reduce land-intensive cattle and sheep production.
- Recognising that the damaging effects of climate change unequally distributed and so adaptation measures must address these inequalities.
- The UK government must set the pace, the regulations and provide the investment for a national adaptation strategy. An initial step would be to establish a unit in Downing Street and new Cabinet Minister to coordinate and drive forward progress on adaptation and resilience.

NOTE: Adrian Ramsay is specifically calling for this in the Autumn

- The current version of the devolution agenda is putting the rapid development of adaptation and resilience measures at risk. Strategic Authorities are being established with a 'growth first' agenda, whilst cuts to both DEFRA and DESNZ have reduced Whitehall capacity to deliver the support local government needs to lead on place-based adaptation and resilience.

Council resolves:

To ask the leader to write to our MP(s) and to relevant ministers putting our council's position as outlined above and calling on government to:

- Provide adequate funding and capacity support for locally delivered adaptation and resilience measures as part of a national plan, including in particular, a fully funded heat-resilience programme for schools, hospitals, care settings and social housing.
- Recognise the role of both strategic and local authorities as much place-based adaptation and resilience work will continue to be best delivered through local authorities rather than by strategic authority mayors.
- Underpin action on both climate change mitigation and adaptation with an appropriately resourced statutory duty as supported by the Local Government Association.
- To publicly support the TUC campaign to see the law changed, so that employers and workers know when action must be taken to keep workers cooler and safer.

Council further resolves:

- To ask the council leader to identify the Cabinet role with responsibility for leading on climate change adaptation and resilience.
- To ask Cabinet to ensure that climate adaptation and resilience risks are incorporated into the Council's corporate risk-management arrangements, with identified senior officer responsibility.
- To ask Cabinet to report on how extreme heat is being addressed in the Council's adaptation and resilience work to a future full council before Summer 2027.
- To ensure that the preparation of the new Local Plan is informed by evidence of current and future climate risks, and that appropriate policies address overheating, flood risk, water scarcity and drought, green and blue infrastructure, sustainable drainage and urban tree canopy.
- To invite the relevant portfolio holder to set out the Council's developing approach to assessing and managing excess heat and excess cold in the STAR Housing stock, having regard to its statutory responsibilities under Awaab's Law.
- To continue, through existing communications and partnerships, to promote appropriate practical advice before and during periods of extreme heat and other weather extremes.
- To request the relevant scrutiny committee to consider the establishment of a Task and Finish group to both identify practical measures the Council can undertake to reduce the impact of extreme heat on our residents in the short-term and to consider evidence and planning from partners such as fire and rescue, the ICB and the education sector on climate related impacts and needs, in order to bring forward further recommendation.
- To ensure safe working practices for council workers and contractors, which may, for example, include agreeing exceptional conditions protocols and appropriate maximum working temperatures in consultation with staff trade unions.

c **Motion received from Councillor Rosemary Dartnall, supported by the Labour Group**

This motion requests a review of the planned closure of Meole Brace Park and Ride based on public opinion.

There is no doubt among Meole Brace and Oxon P&R users that closure will have a negative impact on residents in Shrewsbury, the surrounding villages and Shropshire visitors to Shrewsbury from the south and east of the county town.

Concerned residents have dedicated enormous amounts of their time speaking regularly to P&R passengers at all three Shrewsbury sites over recent months. A petition asking for a review and reversal of the planned closure has reached almost 5,000 signatures. It's hard to see how this strength of opinion can be ignored.

Services users come from nearby and far away.
40% - Shrewsbury and Bayston Hill residents who find the P&R service more user-friendly than their local timetabled bus services
40% - from farther afield although within Shropshire
20% - from out of Shropshire: British regions, foreign visitors

In terms of sustainable public transport, traffic congestion, pollution levels, town centre economy and viability, Meole Brace Park and Ride fulfils its role. The opportunity cost is high - in closing Meole Brace P&R we remove its powerful contribution to the Shrewsbury Movement Strategy in the future.

Furthermore, there is good reason to expect a disproportionately negative impact from the closure on people with disability and young families. Wheelchair users and families with buggies report they are often refused from regular bus services but that P&R always allows them on board which helps explain the popularity of the service.

Most people asked, say that if the closure goes ahead they will either stay at home, drive into town or simply go elsewhere. There is no general appetite to switch to Oxon P&R because passengers recognise it is at capacity.

Conversely, Oxon passengers have expressed concern that they will be unable to access P&R, as they do now, if more users switch to this site. Surely, none of this is what councillors want – we need to support our local economy, bring passengers into town to use the businesses and attractions in Shrewsbury by continuing with a valued service for people in Shrewsbury and Shropshire.

Therefore, Cabinet is requested to consider pausing the closure plans and allow services from Meole Brace Park & Ride to continue to serve the public.

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Committee and Date
Council
24 September 2026

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2026
In the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.00 am - 1.05 pm

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward
Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257713

Present
Councillors Duncan Borrowman and Heather Kidd (Leader), Gary Groves (Vice-Chair), Alex Wagner (Deputy Leader), Sho Abdul, Caroline Bagnall, Elizabeth Barker, Bernie Bentick, Neil Bentley, Ed Bird, Jeremy Blandford, Andy Boddington, Thomas Clayton, Rosemary Dartnall, David Davies, Pamela Davies, Andy Davis, Julian Dean, Joshua Dickin, Mandy Duncan, Greg Ebbs, Susan Eden, Donna Edmunds, Craig Emery, Brian Evans, Roger Evans, Adam Fejfer, Rhys Gratton, Andy Hall, Kate Halliday, Nick Hignett, Alan Holford, George Hollyhead, Ruth Houghton, Dawn Husemann, Peter Husemann, Benedict Jephcott, Robert Jones, Duncan Kerr, Nigel Lumby, Brendan Mallon, Sarah Marston, David Minnery, Vicky Moore, Mark Morris, Alan Mosley, Malcolm Myles-Hook, Chris Naylor, James Owen, Mark Owen, Wendy Owen, Vivienne Parry, Ed Potter, Rosie Radford, Sharon Ritchie-Simmons, Carl Rowley, Charles Shackerley-Bennett, Colin Stanford, Jon Tandy, Colin Taylor, Dan Thomas, Teri Trickett, David Vasmer, Beverley Waite, David Walker, Sam Walmsley and Rob Wilson

20 Apologies for Absence

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chairman read a statement acknowledging the tragic murder of Ann Widdecombe and the Council joined in a minute's silence in her memory.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Susan Coleman, Rachel Connolly, Tom Dainty, Harry Hancock Davies, Chris Lemon and Alison Williams

21 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

22 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2026, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

23 **Announcements**

Chairman's Engagements

The Chairman referred Members to the list of official engagements carried out by himself and the Vice Chairman since the last meeting of the Council on 14 May 2026, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

24 **Public Questions**

The Chair advised that 6 questions had been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 14.

Question from Graham Betts regarding responses to various highways matters he had raised

Question from Kate Fejfer regarding pedestrian safety on Monkmoor Road

Question from Jamie Russell regarding Far-Right Marches

Question from Angela Vnoucek regarding the closure of Meole Brace Park and Ride. In response to a supplementary question the Portfolio Holder advised that when he talked about consolidation, he was referring to the consolidation of services from three sites into two

Question from John Palmer regarding the Spatial Development Strategy.

Question from John Adams concerning building regulations at a retirement development. In response to a supplementary question the Portfolio Holder commented that as it as a private development there were different regulations and, in the case mentioned it was the NHSBC that were monitoring the building not the Council.

The full questions and responses can be found here PUBLIC QUESTIONS COUNCIL 16 JULY 2026 with responses.pdf

PETITION

A petition, bearing over 1000 signatures has been received from Marianne Aitken requesting a debate under the Council's Petition Scheme.

The petition requested that Shropshire Council withdraw its proposal to close the Day Care Service at Ludlow's Helena Lane Centre.

Derek Young presented the petition to the meeting., and a period of debate by councillors followed.

The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health responded on behalf of the administration and proposed that no further action be taken.

RESOLVED:

That no further action be taken.

PETITION

A petition, bearing over 1000 signatures has been received from Christine Hart requesting a debate under the Council's Petition Scheme.

The petition requested that the Council overturn the closure of the Meole Brace Park and Ride

Angela Vnoucek presented the petition to the meeting., and a period of debate by councillors followed.

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Regeneration responded on behalf of the administration and stated that he was happy to meet with the petitioners and stated that he would be writing to the new Prime Minister and relevant Secretary of State to explain the decisions that had been made in Shropshire as a result of the decisions taken in Westminster

25 **Questions from Members**

The Chairman advised that 6 questions had been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.

Question from Councillor Adam Fefjer regarding a collaborative approach to addressing the infrastructure backlog.

Question from Councillor Andy Boddington regarding the removal of bins in Ludlow. In response to a supplementary question the Portfolio Holder confirmed that he would continue to work with the Town Council to find a solution to the problem.

Question from Councillor Greg Ebbs regarding the roll out of ANPR cameras.

Question from Councillor Dawn Husemann regarding financial commitment to PWC.

Queston from Councillor Brendan Mallon regarding extensions to decision making time for planning applications. In response to a supplementary question the Portfolio Holder stated that work was ongoing the restructure the service to make it more efficient and to manage the workload to make the service as efficient as possible.

Question from Councillor Donna Edmunds regarding the Dutton Close, Stoke Heath asylum placements. In response to a supplementary question the Leader of the Council commented that it would be useful if Councillor Edmunds wrote to the Home Office lobbying for more transparency and openness.

The full questions and responses can be found here [MEMBER QUESTIONS COUNCIL 16 JULY 2026 with responses.pdf]

26 **Financial Outturn 2025-26**

It was proposed by Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance, and seconded by Councillor David Minnery that the report and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Members:

In respect of the revenue budget:

a) Note that the outturn variance in the year is £49.428m above budget.
b) Note that £19.637m has been funded by EFS, leaving £29.278m to be funded from the General Fund reserves and balances.
c) Note the consequent level of the General Fund Balance is £5.000m.
d) Note the increase of £5.658m in Earmarked Reserves & Provisions and the resulting level of earmarked reserves of £29.812m (£25.113m is the balances held by schools are excluded).
e) Note the £17.722m level of savings delivery achieved over the year.
f) Note that the current combination of earmarked and un-earmarked (General) reserves of £34.069m is at a level that is below that would normally seen as appropriate for a Council of this size.
g) Note that the MTFP sets out an agreed plan to restore these balances to more appropriate levels over time, including further requests for Exceptional Financial Support in 2026/27 and beyond.
h) Note that £61.8m of EFS has been applied in 2025/26, some £9.6m less than what was requested originally and approved by MHCLG.

Related to ringfenced funding:

i) Note the performance of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) this is an account associated with Shropshire Councils housing stock - £1.372m (5.75%) surplus outturn for 2025/26 on £23.861m turnover, and the resulting level of the HRA reserve of £13.489m.
j) Note the £28.029m overspend for the DSG and the consequent level of the DSG reserve of £45.655m in deficit.
k) Note that the level of school balances has decreased by £1.994m, from £6.693m in 2024/25 to £4.699m, in the financial year.

In respect of the capital programme:

l) Note the net budget variations of £26.932m to the 2025/26 capital programme (in Appendix 7) and the re-profiled 2025/26 capital budget of £77.375m.

m) Note the re-profiled capital budgets of £145.380m for 2026/27, including slippage of £15.258m from 2025/26, £129.536m for 2027/28 and £89.113m for 2028/29 as detailed in Appendix 11.
n) Accept the outturn expenditure set out in Appendices 8, 9 and 13 of £68.698m representing 88.79% of the revised capital budget for 2025/26.
o) Approve retaining a balance of capital receipts set aside of £22.309m as at 31st March 2026 to generate a one-off Minimum Revenue Provision saving of £0.363m in 2026/27.

General

p) Note that these outturn results will now be incorporated in financial statements for external audit and oversight by the Audit and Governance Committee
q) Note that the Finance risk register is subject to review and will be incorporated in the July Cabinet report that will provide an updated MTFP?

27 **Annual Treasury Report 2025/26**

It was proposed by Councillor Roger Evans, Portfolio Holder for Finance, and seconded by Councillor David Minnery that the report and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Members

a) Approve the actual 2025/26 prudential and treasury indicators in this report.
b) Note the annual treasury management report for 2025/26.
c) Note the inclusion of EFS borrowing in the 2025/26 position

28 **Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review**

It was proposed by The Leader, Councillor Heather Kidd, and seconded by Councillor Alex Wagner, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Economic Growth that the report and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Full Council

a) Note the report of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review undertaken on 12th May 2026.
b) Note that the CPC recommendations, along with subsequent feedback from the Progress Review, will continue to inform the Council’s plans for improvement and financial sustainability

29 **Audit and Governance Committee Annual Assurance report to Council 2025/26**

It was proposed by Councillor Sharon Ritchie Simmons, Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee and seconded by Councillor Kate Halliday that the report and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Council

a) Endorse the Audit and Governance Committee's opinion that it has operated effectively in accordance with its terms of reference.
b) Note the limited assurance provided over the Council's Governance, Risk management and internal control arrangements.

30 **Political Balance and Allocation of Committee Seats**

It was proposed by The Leader, Councillor Heather Kidd, and seconded by Councillor Alex Wagner, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Economic Growth that the report and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Council

a) Agree the composition and revised allocation of seats to each of the political groups for the remainder of the 2026/27 as detailed in the report.

b) Note the following changes to committee membership:

Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Gary Groves to replace Councillor Ben Jephcott as a Member of the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Ben Jephcott to replace Councillor Gary Groves as a Substitute Member of the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Beverley Waite to replace Councillor Jon Tandy as a Member of the Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Chris Naylor to replace Councillor Andy Boddington as a Member of the Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Jon Tandy to replace Councillor Jeremy Blandford as a Substitute Member of the Southern Planning Committee

Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Caroline Bagnall to replace Councillor Rosemary Dartnall as a Member of the Northern Planning Committee

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Viv Parry to replace Councillor Rhys Gratton as a Member of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Rhys Gratton to replace Councillor Duncan Borrowman as a Substitute Member of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

31 **Localism Act 2011 - Appointment of Independent Persons**

It was proposed by The Chairman, Councillor Duncan Borrowman, and seconded by Vice Chairman, Councillor Gary Groves that the report and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Full Council agree the appointment of Alan Boyd, Tim Griffiths and Tom Senior as Independent Persons for an initial period of four years

32 **Motions**

The following motion had been received from Councillor Alan Holford, supported by Councillors Bernie Bentick, Neil Bentley, Gary Groves, Ben Jephcott, Sarah Marston and Chris Naylor

This Council:

1. Celebrates the homecoming performance of William Shakespear's 'As You Like It' by the Shropshire Youth Theatre, which took place at Soulton Hall on 8 May 2026.

2. Recognises the deep historical and literary importance of this production, which returns the play to the specific North Shropshire landscape that influenced its creation.

3. Observes that Soulton Hall was the childhood home of Thomas Lodge, whose work Rosalynde served as the primary source for the play; and was the estate of Sir Rowland Hill, the individual who inspired the character of Old Sir Rowland.

4. Acknowledges the significant cultural heritage of the site, including the ancestral connections between the Hill family and Mary Arden, the mother of William Shakespeare.

5. Applauds Soulton Hall for its continued dedication to the arts, specifically its support of youth performance groups and its achievement in staging a substantial portion of the Shakespearean canon within the county.

6. Supports the ongoing collaboration between charitable organisations and the private sector as a powerful method for driving civic renewal and economic vitality in rural areas.

7. Resolves to promote and celebrate the unique international literary legacy of Shropshire, ensuring that the contributions of our local heritage continue to inspire future generations of residents and visitors.

This was seconded by Councillor Sarah Marston

By way of amendment Councillor Julian Dean proposed that the following be added

8. Requests the relevant portfolio holder to bring forward proposals for a refresh of the council's "Vibrant Shropshire - cultural strategy" in the light of changes to the council's capacity to deliver since it was drafted in 2021, recognising and addressing the threat to cultural assets and opportunities that the financial situation presents

Councillor Holford indicated that he was willing to accept the amendment and on taking a vote it was **RESOLVED**

This Council:

1. Celebrates the homecoming performance of William Shakespear's 'As You Like It' by the Shropshire Youth Theatre, which took place at Soulton Hall on 8 May 2026.

2. Recognises the deep historical and literary importance of this production, which returns the play to the specific North Shropshire landscape that influenced its creation.

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5. Applauds Soulton Hall for its continued dedication to the arts, specifically its support of youth performance groups and its achievement in staging a substantial portion of the Shakespearean canon within the county.

6. Supports the ongoing collaboration between charitable organisations and the private sector as a powerful method for driving civic renewal and economic vitality in rural areas.

7. Resolves to promote and celebrate the unique international literary legacy of Shropshire, ensuring that the contributions of our local heritage continue to inspire future generations of residents and visitors.

8. Requests the relevant portfolio holder to bring forward proposals for a refresh of the council's "Vibrant Shropshire - cultural strategy" in the light of changes to the council's capacity to deliver since it was drafted in 2021, recognising and addressing the threat to cultural assets and opportunities that the financial situation presents

33 **Report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority**

It was proposed by Councillor Adam Fejfer that the report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, be received and noted.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority be noted.

Signed .... (Chairman)

Date: ....

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Council

24 September 2026 | **10:00 am**

Senior Leadership Structure & Senior Appointments Report

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Heather Kidd - Leader	
Lead Director:	Tanya Miles, Chief Executive	
Service Area:	Chief Executive's Office	
Report Author	Tanya Miles, Chief Executive	
Officer contact details	01743 255811 – tanya.miles@shropshire.gov.uk	
Electoral Divisions Affected	All Divisions	
Key Decision?	Not Key Decision	
Cabinet Forward Plan	Not Applicable	
Report considered by	Full Council – 24 September 2026	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report sets out the revised senior leadership structure for the council.

1.2 As the council's Head of Paid Service, the Chief Executive has a statutory duty to advise on and deliver the structures, roles and staff numbers necessary to deliver our services effectively and efficiently, within the available financial envelope, both now and in the future.

1.3 The report sets out the approach to recruitment to statutory chief officer posts within the structure and recommends confirmation of successful candidates.

2. Recommendations

2.1 In accordance with Article 12.2(a) of Part 2 of the Constitution, Council receives this report of the Head of Paid Service outlining the new staffing structure of the Council, including the number and grades of posts in the senior management team that will enable delivery of the Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan and effectively discharge the functions that the council is responsible for (see Appendix A for the new structure chart).

2.2 It is recommended that Council confirms the appointments to the statutory chief officer posts of:

- Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) - Chris Atherton
- Corporate Director Growth & Connected Communities – Helen Martin
- Corporate Director Change & Improvement – Jo Brown

2.3 It is recommended that Council notes the appointments to non-statutory chief officer posts of:

- Service Director Housing – Ravi Kaur Phull
- Service Director Inclusive Education, Family Help & Skills – Amanda Smith

2.4 It is recommended that Council agrees the updated Senior Officer Employment Procedure to align with the new structure and roles (Appendix B).

3. Background

3.1 Following the permanent appointment to the Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service role, in June 2026, a revised senior management structure has been created to provide capacity and capability at a strategic level.

3.2 Delivery of the Council's plans will only be possible if the gaps identified through the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) are addressed. Both the CPC and Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) Review made strong recommendations to strengthen and add capacity at a senior leadership level. Delivery of an ambitious whole-council transformation programme over the next 4-5 years is critical in achieving financially sustainability and ultimately reducing reliance on exceptional financial support.

3.3 A strong senior management structure with the right capability and capacity ensures the council has the leadership, accountability and resource to deliver its priorities at pace, maintain financial control and provide confidence to members, residents and government.

3.4 Following a competitive procurement exercise Faerfield Executive Recruitment agency was chosen to lead the external recruitment to the six statutory and non-statutory chief officer roles within the structure. The timeline of search is shown below:

Executive search commenced	11 June (4-5 weeks). Vacancies closed between 8 – 15 July.
Longlisting	w/c 13 July
Technical Interviews	w/c 20 July
Shortlisting	w/c 27 July
Assessment Centres	w/c 10 & 17 August
Final Panel Interviews	w/c 17, 24 & 31 August

3.5 The assessment centres comprised stakeholder panels, people panel, values-based panel, media exercise (for two roles), meet and greet with the Leadership Board and members. The outcomes from the assessments informed the final interview.

3.6 As required by the Senior Officer Employment procedure, the statutory chief officer roles have been appointed to by the Chief Officer Employment Panel made up of the three main political parties (or their nominees), and two other members subject to proportionality rules, the Chief Executive, Head of Paid Services and the Service Director Enabling (or their deputy). For the non-statutory chief officer posts, the recruitment was led by the Chief Executive with representation from members and the relevant portfolio holder(s) as appropriate.

3.7 The outcome of the recruitment process was as follows:

Corporate Director Growth & Connected Communities:

- 20 Applicants, 7 Longlisted and 4 Shortlisted for assessment centre/final interview
- Helen Martin is recommended for appointment. Helen currently works as Director of Communities and Place at Cotswold District Council and has previously held the role of Director of Regeneration at Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council.

Corporate Director Change & Improvement:

- 21 Applicants, 6 Longlisted and 2 Shortlisted for assessment centre/final interview
- Jo Brown is recommended for appointment. Jo has recently worked as a consultant with Leeds City Council advising on major transformation programmes and budget sustainability and has previously held roles at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (Assistant Chief Executive) and Cheshire East Council (Director of Transformation).

Director of Adult Services (DASS):

- 5 Applicants, 5 Longlisted and 1 Shortlisted for assessment centre/final interview
- Chris Atherton is recommended for appointment. Chris is currently Strategic Director, Adult Social Care & Health at Nottingham City Council and has previously held roles in adult social care at Haringey Council.

Corporate Director Finance & Governance (S151):

Unfortunately, no appointment was made to the Corporate Director Finance & Governance (S151) and this post will be re-advertised shortly. The current interim S151 Officer contract has been extended.

Service Director Housing:

- 10 Applicants, 5 Longlisted and 3 Shortlisted for assessment centre/final interview

- Ravi Kaur Phull is appointed. Ravi is currently Head of Service – Strategic Housing and Regeneration at Telford & Wrekin Council and has previously held roles in housing at Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, as well as working in environmental health at Wolverhampton City Council.

Service Director Inclusive Education, Family Help & Skills:

- 7 Applicants, 4 Longlisted and 3 Shortlisted for assessment centre/final interview

- Amanda Smith is appointed. Amanda is currently Head of Service for Early Intervention, Youth and Community at Swindon Borough Council. She has previously held roles in early help, residential social work at Cornwall and Somerset Councils.

4. Summary of Main Proposals

4.1 The report proposes that Council receives the revised senior leadership structure, developed by the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service, to provide the capacity, capability and accountability needed to deliver the Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan and council transformation programme.

4.2 Council is asked to confirm appointments to the statutory chief officer posts of Director of Adult Social Services, Corporate Director Growth & Connected Communities, and Corporate Director Change & Improvement, following an external recruitment process supported by Faerfield Executive Recruitment.

4.3 Council is also asked to note appointments to the non-statutory chief officer posts of Service Director Housing and Service Director Inclusive Education, Family Help & Skills, alongside the intention to re-advertise the Corporate Director Finance & Governance (S151) post following an unsuccessful appointment process.

4.4 Appointment to these key leadership positions demonstrates real progress against the recommendations of both the CPC and CIPFA review.

5. Alternative Options

5.1 Council could choose not to approve the recommendations contained within the report, however given the need to increase senior Officer capacity, the legislative requirements to ensure statutory officer posts are filled and the work required as part of the Council’s improvement plan, this option is not recommended.

6. Key risks and Opportunities

6.1 A lack of senior leadership capacity and capability is not simply an organisational issue it is a financial risk in its own right. Without sufficient strategic leadership, organisations struggle to control spending, deliver transformation, make timely decisions, maintain governance and retain confidence of staff, members and the public.

<table>
<tr><th>Risk</th><th>Mitigation</th><th>Link to Strategic Risk</th></tr>
<tr><td>Failure to deliver the Financial Strategy and Improvement Plan</td><td rowspan="5">Recruit to critical leadership positions quickly to ensure sufficient capacity and reduction in reliance on key individuals.

Prioritise activities with the greatest financial and organisational impact.

Bring in external expertise and experience to support delivery of plans at pace.

Create protected capacity for recovery work separating from day-to-day operational pressures so leaders can focus on stabilisation and transformation.</td><td>Recruitment & Retention</td></tr>
<tr><td>Poor financial decision making due to lack of strategic oversight, delayed decisions, inadequate challenge and missed opportunities</td><td>Financial Sustainability</td></tr>
<tr><td>Loss of organisational control and governance leading to an increased risk of governance failures</td><td>Financial sustainability</td></tr>
<tr><td>Inability to deliver transformation at pace, slowing implementation and benefits realisation.</td><td>Financial sustainability</td></tr>
<tr><td>Burnout and loss of key people as existing leaders become overloaded, increased sickness absence, turnover and loss of corporate memory.</td><td>Employee wellbeing/recruitment and retention</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unable to recruit to posts in a challenging recruitment market.</td><td>Use of executive search agency to reach potential candidates, strong media campaign through multiple channels.</td><td>Recruitment & Retention</td></tr>
</table>

6.2 Key opportunities include the injection of additional capacity, capability, skills and experience to deliver the council transformation programme, achieve financial sustainability and ultimately reducing reliance on exceptional financial support.

7. Council Priorities

7.1 A strong senior management structure is critical to ensuring that the council delivers on its ambitions to be sustainable, resilient and together. Senior Officers are responsible for delivering the Council's priorities within available resources, supporting services to reduce demand, improve outcomes and operate more sustainably. The recommendations in this report support all of the Council's priorities set out in the Council's Improvement Plan and Shropshire Council Corporate Plan.

8. Financial Implications

8.1 The senior management structure and appointment to key posts is a critical enabler of the Council's financial sustainability and Medium Term Financial Plan. It is expected to make a material contribution to the Council's medium term financial position by managing demand, improving efficiency effectiveness, supporting transformation and change, and ensuring sustainable service delivery.

8.2 Funding for the senior management structure is through a combination of base budget and transformation funding. One off recruitment costs have been covered through transformation funding.

9. Legal and HR implications

9.1 Recruitment to posts within the senior leadership structure has been undertaken in accordance with the Senior Officer Employment Procedure, taking account of the requirements set out in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

10. Electoral Division Implications

10.1 Not applicable.

11. Health, Social (including "Child Friendly Shropshire") and Economic Implications

11.1 Not applicable.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

13. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no climate change, biodiversity and environmental implications arising from this report.

14. Background Papers

14.1. Shropshire Council Corporate Plan (2026)
14.2. Improvement Plan
14.3. Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)

15. Appendices

Appendix A – Senior Management Structure
Appendix B – Senior Officer Employment Procedure

Shropshire Council Senior Management Structure 2026

Chief Executive
(HoPS)
Tanya Miles

Corporate Director
Population, Wellbeing & Neighbourhoods
(DPH)
Rachel Robinson

Corporate Director
Growth & Connected Communities
Helen Martin

Corporate Director
Finance and Governance (S151)
Duncan Whitfield

Corporate Director
Change and Improvement
Jo Brown

Director of Children's Services
(DCS)
David Shaw

Director of Adult Services (DASS)
Chris Atherton

Director of Legal & Governance (MO)
Richard Phillips

Director
People & Culture
Sam Williams

Director of Finance
(Deputy S151)
Clare Williams

Service Director
Children's Social Care
Sonya Miller

Service Director
Communities & Customer
Paula Mawson

Service Director
Adult Social Care
Natalie McFall

Service Director
Place Shaping
Kassandra Polyzoides

Head of Pensions LGPS
Senior Officer
Justin Bridges

Service Director
Strategy & Change
Paul Clarke

Service Director All Age

Service Director

Shropshire Council Senior Management Structure 2026

Appendix B – Senior Officer Employment Procedure

1.0 General

1.1 Staff within the organisation are employed on behalf of the whole Council and not by parts of the organisation or individuals.

1.2 The employment or engagement of all staff will be in compliance with the law and the policies and practices of the Council.

1.3 Persons employed or engaged by contractors under specific agreements or contracts are not staff of the Council but are employees engaged by the Contractor.

1.4 The Council, as outlined in the Constitution will approve the overall management structure and provide the necessary resources to support it.

1.5 Generally (except for certain senior staff appointments and dismissals) the function of appointment and dismissal of and taking disciplinary action against a member of staff of the Council must be discharged on behalf of the Authority by the Chief Executive - Head of the Paid Service or, in most cases, by an officer nominated by him/her.

1.6 In relation to staff employed in Community, Voluntary Controlled, Community Special and Maintained Schools and Nursery schools, the responsibility for appointment, discipline and dismissal rests with the governing body and the Local Authority.

1.7 In Shropshire Council Chief Officer means employees whose contract of employment is subject to Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Chief Officers terms and conditions. However, for specific purposes there are statutory definitions of Chief Officer in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and as set out in more detail within the Annex A.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 This section sets out the definition of terms used for the purposes of these Rules in respect of particular posts.

2.2 "Chief Officer" means each of the following:

2.2.1 Chief Executive - Head of Paid service designated under section 4(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

2.2.2 Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) designated under section 5(1) of that Act.

2.2.3 Corporate Director Finance and Governance (S151) having responsibility for the purposes of section 151 of Local Government Act 1972

2.2.4 "Statutory Chief Officer" has the meaning as set out in section 2 (6) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and for this Council will be the

Corporate Director Population, Wellbeing and Neighbourhoods (Director of Public Health (DPH)), Corporate Director Growth and Connected Communities, Corporate Director Finance and Governance (S151), Corporate Director Change and Improvement, Director of Children's Services (DCS) and Director of Adult Services (DASS)

2.2.5 "Non - Statutory Chief Officer" means a person who reports to the Chief Executive - Head of the Paid Service or who is directly accountable to the local authority or any committee or subcommittee of the authority as set out in Section 2 (7) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and for this Council will be any other Director appointed by the Council who are not Statutory Chief Officers.

2.2.6 "Deputy Chief Officer" means a person who for most or all of his/her duties is required to report direct, or is directly accountable, to a statutory or non-statutory Chief Officer as set out in section 2 (8) of the 1989 Act (excluding persons whose duties are solely secretarial, clerical or in the nature of support services). See Annex A.

2.3 "Independent Panel" means a panel consisting of at least two Independent Persons. The Independent Persons must already be acting in that capacity either within the Council or at another local authority, and be invited in accordance with the following priority order:

1. a relevant Independent Person who has been appointed by the authority and who is a local government elector;

2. any other relevant Independent Person who has been appointed by the authority;

3. a relevant Independent Person who has been appointed by another authority or authorities

The Panel should comprise solely independent persons, rather than incorporating elected members.

2.4 "Independent Person" means someone appointed under section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011.

2.5 "Dismissal" means when an employment contract is terminated by the employer for the reasons of misconduct, capability, or a legal reason for 'some other substantial reason', otherwise than by mutual agreement. For the avoidance of doubt this does not include a dismissal on the grounds of redundancy or ill health retirement.

3.0 Recruitment and Appointment of Staff

3.1 All recruitment and appointment of staff will be conducted in accordance with the law, the Council's policies and procedures and the Council's Finance Procedure Rules.

4.0 Responsibility of the Chief Officer Employment Panel

4.1 The Chief Officer Employment Panel supports, amongst other things as set out below, the recruitment of the Chief Executive – Head of Paid Service. Membership of the Panel shall comprise the Leaders of the three main political parties (or their nominees), and two other members subject to the proportionality rules and the Director of People and Culture or their nominated deputy. The Chair of the Panel will be the Leader of the Council or his/her nominated deputy. Where the appointment isn't relating to the Chief Executive – Head of Paid Service, he/she will form part of the panel membership.

4.2 The quorum for each meeting of the Committee/Panel is three, including a member of the Administration and main opposition party.

4.3 For the purposes of this procedure, the Proper Officer shall be the Chief Executive - Head of Paid Service, except where the appointment/ dismissal relates to the Chief Executive - Head of Paid Service in which case the Proper Officer shall be the Director of People and Culture.

4.4 The Panel is also responsible for hearing and determining any appeals from Chief Officers as appropriate under the Council's discipline, grievance, performance management and grading policies, the suspension of sick pay and the review and determination of matters relating to contracts of employment. In determining these matters, the Panel will have regard to the appropriate provisions of these Rules. The Panel may agree to discharge some of these functions through a Sub-Committee.

5.0 Appointment of Head of the Paid Service.

5.1 The appointment is subject to specific requirements as set out below.

5.2 The Chief Officer Employment Panel shall:

a) agree a statement specifying the duties and any qualifications or qualities to be sought in the person to be appointed.

b) agree for the post to be advertised in such a way as is likely to bring it to the attention of persons who are qualified to apply for it.

c) agree for a copy of the statement mentioned above to be sent to any person on request.

d) where a post has been advertised as required above, will select from the applications a short list of qualified candidates and will then interview those included in the short list.

e) agree interview arrangements e.g. stakeholder panels

f) following the interview of candidates, will come to a view as to the most suitable person for the position.

g) where following the interviews is of the view that there is no suitable candidate, it will re-advertise the post.

5.3 The Director of People and Culture has, within the period specified in the notice under paragraph 5.4 notified the Leader that each member of the Cabinet has stated that they do not have any objection to the making of the offer; or the Director of People and Culture has notified the Leader that no objection was received from any member of the Cabinet within the specified period; or The Leader is satisfied that any objection which has been received from any member of the Cabinet within the specified period is not material and/or is not well-founded or does not outweigh the other factors taken into consideration by the panel

5.4 The period within which any objection to the making of the offer is to be notified to the Director of People and Culture. The standard period will be three working days but may be shortened by the Chair of the Panel/Leader where necessary for the proper discharge of the Council's functions, subject to a minimum period of 24 hours.

5.5 Where following the above procedure there are no objections to the proposed appointment or any objections are not upheld, the panel will recommend that person for appointment at the next meeting of the Full Council or at a specially convened meeting of the Council. If the full Council approves the recommendation, then a formal offer of appointment can be made.

5.6 Where full Council does not approve the recommendation of the panel, they shall indicate how they wish to proceed.

6.0 Appointment of Statutory Chief Officers, Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) designated under section 5(1) of that Act and Corporate Director of Finance and Governance (S151) Resources (S.151 Officer) having responsibility for the purposes of section 151 of Local Government Act 1972

6.1 Where the Council is appointing the officers to which this section applies the Chief Officer Employment Panel, or their nominated deputies shall be convened and:

a) agree a statement specifying the duties and any qualifications or qualities to be sought in the person to be appointed.

b) agree for the post to be advertised in such a way as is likely to bring it to the attention of persons who are qualified to apply for it.

c) agree for a copy of the statement mentioned above to be sent to any person on request.

d) where a post has been advertised as required above, the panel will select from the applications a short list of qualified candidates and will then interview those included in the short list.

e) agree interview arrangements e.g., stakeholder panels

f) following the interview of candidates, will come to a view as to the most suitable person for the position. Cabinet will be notified of the selected candidate with confirmation of appointment at the next available Council meeting.

g) where following the interviews is of the view that there is no suitable candidate, it will re-advertise the post.

6.2 The period within which any objection to the making of the offer is to be notified to The Director of People and Culture. The standard period will be three working days but may be shortened by the Chair of the Panel/Leader where necessary for the proper discharge of the Council's functions, subject to a minimum period of 24 hours.

6.3 The Director of People and Culture has, within the period specified in the notice under paragraph 6.2 notified the Leader that each member of the Cabinet has stated that they do not have any objection to the making of the offer; or the Director of People and Culture has notified the Leader that no objection was received from any member of the Cabinet within the specified period; or The Leader is satisfied that any objection which has been received from any member of the Cabinet within the specified period is not material and/or is not well-founded or does not outweigh the other factors taken into consideration by the panel

6.4 Where following the above procedure there are no objections to the proposed appointment or any objections are not upheld, the panel will recommend that person for appointment.

7.0 Employment responsibility of Chief Officers (Non-Statutory), Deputy Chief Officers and below to Chief Officer Service Manager Level.

7.1 Employment responsibilities under the Council's Human Resources policies in respect of posts below Statutory Chief Officer to Service Manager levels will be the responsibility of the Chief Executive - Head of the Paid Service or nominated officer and will be exercised in accordance with the scheme of delegation and relevant personnel policies.

7.2 Appointments may not be made by Councillors.

7.3 A Committee (the Appeals Committee) will be appointed to hear an appeal by an Officer employed by the Council as provided in the Human Resource Policies of the Council from time to time.

8.0. Appointment of Deputy Returning Officer 8.1 The Returning Officer (Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service) may appoint one or more Deputy Returning Officers to exercise all or any of the functions of the Returning Officer, in accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983. The appointment of a Deputy Returning Officer is a matter reserved to the Returning Officer and must be made in writing, specifying the functions delegated. Any person appointed as a Deputy Returning Officer shall have the authority to discharge those functions on behalf of the Returning Officer as set out in the written appointment.

9.0 Disciplinary Action Relating to the Head of the Paid Service, Monitoring Officer or S151 Officer in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 (the Regulations) (as amended by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015, the Chief Executive Employment Procedure Rules 2008.

9.1 No disciplinary action in respect of the above Chief Officers may be taken by or on behalf of the Authority) other than in accordance with the provisions set out in Schedule 3 (or provisions to the like effect) of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, as amended by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

9.2 The Chief Executive - Head of Paid Service, Director of Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer) and Corporate Director of Finance and Governance S151 Officer may be suspended (in accordance with paragraph 8.3 below) while an investigation takes place into alleged misconduct or incapability. Suspension does not itself constitute disciplinary action and does not imply guilt. Any suspension will be on full pay and will be reviewed after two months and periodically thereafter as appropriate.

9.3 The responsibility for implementing the suspension of the Chief Executive – Head of Paid Service will be the Director of People and Culture in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the responsibility for implementing the suspension of the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer will be the Chief Executive – Head of Paid Service and the Director of People and Culture

9.4 Where an allegation is made relating to the conduct of these officers the matter will be considered by the Chief Officer Employment Panel.

9.5 Where the Chief Officer Employment Panel determines that a matter requires more detailed investigation, this will be undertaken by an independent investigator.

9.6 The Chief Officer Employment Panel will determine from the investigation report whether further action is required. Where the decision is any action short of dismissal, the decision will be taken by the Panel itself.

9.7 Where the recommendation is for dismissal, an Independent Panel, as defined at paragraph 2.4 above is convened and approved at full Council.

10.0 Dismissal of Head of the Paid Service, Monitoring Officer or S151 Officer.

10.1 An Independent Panel must be convened in accordance with Schedule 3 the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 (as amended) having considered and recommend the dismissal of an Officer to whom this section applies. The panel must be appointed at least 20 working days before a meeting of Council is held to consider any dismissal.

10.2 The Director of People and Culture on behalf of the Independent Panel will submit a report to Council on the recommended dismissal.

10.3 Notice of dismissal must not be given until approval of the Full Council.

11.0 Termination of Employment of the Head of the Paid Service, Monitoring Officer or S151 Officer

11.1 Where a mutually agreed termination of employment is being pursued, the Leader of the council, along with the Chief Executive - Head of Paid Service and Director of People and Culture (or their deputy) shall ensure that the circumstances have been fully considered and documented from the Monitoring Officer and/or independent external legal advisers as appropriate, considering the financial, governance, operational and reputational implications of the proposal. Any discussions with the postholder will be conducted on a without prejudice and confidential basis. With any proposed payment, a business case will be required and approved in line with statutory guidance on special severance payments.

11.2 Where a mutually agreed termination of employment is to be pursued for the Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service this matter will be actioned by the Chief Officer Employment Panel with the support of Director of People and Culture (or their deputy).

11.3 Special Severance payments of £100,000 and above must be approved by a vote of full council, as set out in the Localism Act 2011. Payments of £20,000 and above, but below £100,000, must be personally approved and signed off by the Head of Paid Service, with a clear record of the Leader's approval and that of any others who have signed off the payment. Payments below £20,000 must be approved according to the local authority's scheme of delegation.

12. Disciplinary Action relating to Statutory Chief Officers

12.1 The Chief Officers Employment Panel has power to decide whether to investigate any allegation of misconduct by a Statutory Chief Officer and all matters relating to the conduct of the investigation and/or any subsequent disciplinary process.

12.2 Officers may be suspended whilst an investigation takes place into alleged misconduct. The decision to suspend on full pay shall be made by the Chief Executive - Head of Paid Service or their designated nominee in consultation with the Leader of the Council and/ Deputy Leader and the Director of People and Culture.

12.3 The Chief Officer Employment Panel may decide to dismiss or take disciplinary action short of dismissal. This can only take effect where no well-founded objection has been made by any member of the Cabinet. Any objection needs to relate to the Council's disciplinary, capability and related procedures and policies.

12.4 The Director of People and Culture on behalf of the Chief Officer Employment Panel will submit a report to Cabinet on the recommended action.

12.5. The period within which any objection to the proposed action is to be notified to The Director of People and Culture. The standard period will be three working days but may be shortened by the Chair of the Panel/Leader where necessary for the proper discharge of the Council's functions, subject to a minimum period of 24 hours.

12.6 The Director of People and Culture has, within the period specified in the notice under paragraph 10.5 notified the Leader that each member of the Cabinet has stated that they do not have any objection to the proposed action; or the Director of People and Culture has notified the Leader that no objection was received from any member of the Cabinet within the specified period; or The Leader is satisfied that any objection which has been received from any member of the Cabinet within the specified period is not material and/or is not well-founded or does not outweigh the other factors taken into consideration by the panel

12.7 In the event that a reasoned objection is received, the Director of People and Culture shall refer the matter to a specially convened meeting of the Chief Officers Employment Panel (the members of the specially convened Panel must be the same members who recommended the dismissal/disciplinary action) and the decision of this specially convened Panel will be final.

13. Grievances

13.1 Grievances made by all Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers including the Chief Executive - Head of Paid Service, Corporate Director of Finance and Governance S151 and Director Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's relevant procedures at the relevant time or as set out in the Chief Officer Handbook Joint Negotiation Committee in force at the relevant time.

Annex A

Statutory and non-statutory chief officer and deputy chief officer posts are defined in the Localism Act 2011:

The Localism Act 2011, chapter 8, section 43(2) states:

In this Chapter “chief officer”, in relation to a relevant authority, means each of the following:

1. the head of its paid service designated under section 4(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;

2. its monitoring officer designated under section 5(1) of that Act;

3. a statutory chief officer mentioned in section 2(6) of that Act;
   a. Corporate Director Population, Wellbeing and Neighbourhoods (Director of Public Health (DPH))
   b. Corporate Director Growth and Connected Communities
   c. Corporate Director Finance and Governance (S151)
   d. Corporate Director Change and Improvement
   e. Director of Children’s Services (DCS)
   f. Director of Adult Services (DASS)

4. a non-statutory chief officer mentioned in section 2(7) of that Act;
   a. Person whom the Head of Paid Service is directly responsible for*.
   b. Person who, as respects all or most of his post, is required to report directly or is directly accountable to the head of paid service*.
   c. Any person, who all or most of duties of the post is required to report directly or is directly accountable to the local authority themselves or any committee or sub-committee of the local authority.

   (*excluding anyone who duties are secretarial/clerical/in the nature of support services).

5. a deputy chief officer mentioned in section 2(8) of that Act.
   a. person who, as respects all <u>or</u> most of the duties of their post, is required to report directly or is directly accountable to <u>one or more</u> of the statutory or non-statutory chief officers:

      i) All of Corporate Director Population, Wellbeing and Neighbourhoods (Director of Public Health (DPH))
      ii) direct reports
      iii) All of Corporate Director Finance and Governance (S151) direct reports
      iv) All of Corporate Director Growth and Connected Communities direct reports.
      v) All of Corporate Director Change and Improvement direct reports.
      vi) All of Director of Children’s Services (DCS) direct reports.
      vii) All of Director of Adult Services (DASS) direct reports

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Committee

Council
24th September 2026

Audit & Governance Committee
25th September 2026

Public

Exceptional Financial Support: External Assurance Review

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Heather Kidd, Leader Councillor Roger Evans, Finance
Lead Director:	Tanya Miles, Chief Executive Duncan Whitfield, Section 151 Officer
Service Area:	Corporate/Finance
Report Author	Duncan Whitfield – Executive Director and 151 Officer Paul Clarke – Service Director (Strategy & Change)
Officer contact details	duncan.whitfield@shropshire.gov.uk paul.clarke@shropshire.gov.uk
Electoral Divisions Affected	All Divisions
Key Decision?	Not Key Decision
Cabinet Forward Plan	Not Applicable
Report considered by	Full Council – 24 September 2026 Audit & Governance Committee – 25 September 2026

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To share the report of an 'Assurance Review' undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in April 2026 on behalf of MHCLG as part of the arrangements associated with the Council receiving Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from the Government, and the initial management response to its recommendations. The Assurance Review report (**Appendix A**) has been considered by both Finance & Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. A summary of how the Council is responding, or planning to respond, to each of the report's recommendations is attached at **Appendix B** for

Full Council review and agreement, with the intention that it will form part of a response to MHCLG, required by the end of September 2026.

2. Recommendations

2.1 **Full Council (24/09/26)** is recommended to:

(a) Note the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained within the CIPFA External Assurance Review attached at **Appendix A**.

(b) Review and support the initial management response to the report and its recommendations summarised at **Appendix B,** which will be used as the basis for a response to MHCLG.

(c) Note that many of the recommendations align with priorities already being addressed through the Council's Improvement Plan and Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy.

2.2 The **Audit and Governance Committee (25/09/26)** is recommended to:

(a) Note and agree the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained within the CIPFA External Assurance Review attached at **Appendix A.**

(b) Note and support the initial response to the report and its recommendations summarised at **Appendix B,** considered by Full Council, which will be used as the basis for a response to MHCLG**.**

(c) Note the existing governance, assurance and scrutiny arrangements for monitoring and oversight (summarised in Section 3), including regular progress reporting to the Improvement Board, Cabinet and Finance and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny, and suggest any further arrangements the Committee thinks the council should consider.

3. Background and context

3.1. The Assurance Review provides an independent assessment of the Council's financial resilience, governance arrangements, service transformation activity and organisational capacity. It was undertaken in April 2026 as part of the Council’s Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) arrangements, with a focus on 2025/26, and as such represents the Council’s position at that time.

3.2 The Review recognises the scale of the financial challenge facing the Council and concludes that significant action and activity is required if financial sustainability is to be achieved. It acknowledges that the Council has already taken a number of important steps following the declaration of a financial emergency in September 2025, including the development of an Improvement Plan, establishment of an independently chaired Improvement Board, strengthened governance and compliance arrangements, strengthened financial management and budget monitoring arrangements and an increased focus on transformation, savings delivery and financial sustainability.

3.3 The Review makes 22 recommendations across the following areas:

- Quality of financial management and financial processes
- Financial sustainability and risk
- Service reform, delivery and transformation

- Governance, culture and leadership

3.4 The recommendations are broadly consistent with themes already identified through the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, External Auditor recommendations and previous CIPFA resilience work. Consequently, the Council is already responding to many of the recommendations already through its Improvement Plan and associated programmes, and the Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy.

3.5 Plans and progress against the recommendations will be overseen and scrutinised by the Improvement Board and MHCLG, who have requested a formal progress update on implementation of the recommendations by the end of September 2026. That timeline has meant this report going to Full Council ahead of the Audit and Governance Committee. The update will be followed by routine quarterly reporting meetings. These arrangements sit alongside existing reporting requirements associated with Improvement Plan delivery, EFS and the Best Value Notice process.

Initial response and next steps

3.6 Whilst the findings of the review are significant and should not be underestimated, it is important to recognise the Review represents a point-in-time assessment undertaken during April 2026 and reflects a period in which many governance, improvement and transformation arrangements were still being established and embedded. Since April further progress has been made, including:

- Work to review the CIPFA recommendations and assess them against current actions and plans to inform any additional or accelerated activity and priorities to be addressed. **Appendix B** provides a summary of the initial response to the recommendations.
- Continued delivery of the Improvement Plan – overseen by the Improvement Board - including programmes focussed on strengthening financial management with a stronger approach to budget monitoring – ensuring more grip and understanding of the in-year financial position.
- Development of a Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy – approved at Cabinet as part of a revised Medium Term Financial Plan on 08/07/26
- Further development of the Council's transformation, change and improvement portfolio – facets of which have been reported to Cabinet, including Children's Transformation (10/06/26) and Digital Roadmap (05/08/26). Other major transformation programmes, including Adult Social Care Transformation and the Assets and Corporate Landlord programmes will be reported accordingly.
- A budget and business planning approach – including an initial round of budget challenge sessions with each Director over the summer - to understand and identify opportunities for efficiencies, savings, income and service improvement.
- Continued embedding of the Budget, Transformation and Change Review Panel approach – to challenge proposals for transformation and change, and consideration of projects and activity that will require investment of corporate support and resources to deliver.
- Changes to the Improvement Board, including a new Chair and additional members who will bring specific experience and critical friend challenge on Children's Services and Adult Social Care.

- A strengthened internal control environment with new processes introduced including a full review of all outstanding recommendations and service director ownership, leading to a significant reduction in these.

3.7 Whilst progress has been made, several recommendations remain that require substantial further work – including the further development of detailed transformation delivery plans, quantified savings trajectories and longer-term financial recovery arrangements remain a work in progress. This is a key action within the Improvement Plan, a key facet of the Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy approved by Cabinet in July 2026, and a component of the 'flightpath' to financial sustainability included in the Improvement Plan update report presented to the Finance & Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 08/06/26 and Cabinet on 10/06/26.

3.8 The Improvement Plan will be reviewed and refreshed (by December 2026), providing an opportunity to ensure activity that addresses the Assurance Review recommendations is subsumed into one overall plan and programme for organisational improvement and optimisation, along with other anticipated external reviews and recommendations including the External Audit Annual Report.

Oversight and Scrutiny: Monitoring our response

3.9 An update on implementation progress will be provided to MHCLG by the end of September 2026 in accordance with the requirements set out in the EFS arrangements and Best Value Notice process. After that, progress and delivery will be closely monitored by MHCLG officials, through a regular monitoring meeting with the Council.

3.10 In addition, the Improvement Board will maintain its focus on the delivery of our Improvement Plan, and the programmes that form the transformation, change and improvement portfolio and improve the Council's overall financial position. The Board, including all political group leaders, meets monthly and receives updates on the financial position and progress in developing and delivering plans for improvement. An update of delivery against the Improvement Plan is periodically reported to Cabinet and the Finance and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee and will incorporate the response to the Review recommendations.

3.11 Together, these arrangements provide multiple layers of assurance and oversight and create a robust framework through which implementation of the Review's recommendations can be monitored, challenged and reported. The role of the Audit and Governance Committee needs to be considered in the context of these oversight arrangements.

4. Alternative Options

4.1. Responding to the CIPFA Review recommendations is a requirement of the EFS arrangements and will be monitored by MHCLG as part of the Best Value Notice process. As such there is an essential need to respond to the recommendations, and no alternative options have been considered. There will, though, be a range of ways in which to respond to the recommendations and these are currently being considered, with a focus on adapting and accelerating existing plans and programmes where most appropriate to do so.

5. Key risks and Opportunities

5.1. The External Assurance Review highlights significant risks relating to financial sustainability, organisational capacity, transformation delivery and governance. These risks are reflected within the Council's risk management arrangements and are monitored through established governance structures. The principal risk remains the pace at which financial recovery and transformation activity can be delivered whilst maintaining service delivery and meeting statutory responsibilities.

6. Council Priorities

6.1 The Review and its recommendations are linked to the Corporate Plan strategic ambition of being a *financially sustainable council, with clear priorities and purpose, and a workforce that is supported to excel*. Taking action in line with the CIPFA recommendations will help strengthen the quality of financial management and financial processes, and the delivery of transformation, and the governance, culture and leadership required to do that.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. The review does not, of itself, create any direct financial implications. However, implementation of the recommendations forms an important element of the Council's wider financial recovery activity and supports the objective of reducing future reliance on Exceptional Financial Support.

8. Legal and HR implications

8.1. In light of the Council's ongoing engagement with MHCLG, the Exceptional Financial Support arrangements and the Best Value Notice process, it is essential that the Council gives proper consideration to the findings and recommendations contained within the CIPFA External Assurance Review. The Council is under a continuing statutory duty to secure Best Value under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999, requiring continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The recommendations within the Review will therefore need to be considered through the lens of delivering sustainable services, sound governance and long-term financial resilience. Legal Services will provide ongoing advice and support as specific proposals are developed and brought forward for decision, to ensure compliance with the Council's statutory duties, decision-making framework and applicable legal requirements.

8.2. There are no direct staffing reductions arising from this report. However, implementation of some recommendations and future transformation activity may lead to organisational change proposals, which would be subject to the Council's established workforce policies, consultation arrangements and governance processes.

8.3. The Review identifies the importance of organisational capacity, capability and leadership in supporting the Council's financial recovery and long-term sustainability. Implementation of the Review recommendations will require continued focus on ensuring the Council has sufficient workforce capacity and the appropriate skills in key areas including finance, transformation, programme management, commercial activity, commissioning and change management. The Council already have a number of arrangements to address these, including delivery of the People Plan, management development activity, strengthened performance management arrangements, refreshed organisational values and investment in key capacity within finance, strategy and transformation functions.

9. Electoral Division Implications

9.1. Future decisions arising from the implementation of recommendations, particularly those relating to service transformation, asset management, financial sustainability or service delivery models, may have implications for individual electoral divisions. Where this is the case, such implications will be considered and reported as part of the relevant decision-making process.

10. Health, Social (including "Child Friendly Shropshire") and Economic Implications

10.1. This report has no direct health, social or economic implications. Implementation of recommendations arising from the External Assurance Review is intended to strengthen the Council's financial sustainability and organisational effectiveness, supporting the continued delivery of services and outcomes for residents, communities, children and young people, and the local economy. Any specific proposals, including transformation proposals, arising from the Council's response will be subject to appropriate impact assessment and decision-making processes.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

11.1. The Review and this report have no direct equality, diversity or social inclusion implications. However, future actions arising from the recommendations, particularly those relating to transformation, service redesign and financial sustainability, may require detailed assessment of impacts on residents, service users and staff. Such impacts will be considered through the Council's established Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment processes and relevant governance arrangements.

12. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

12.1. This report has no direct climate change or biodiversity implications. Any future proposals arising from the Council's response to the External Assurance Review will be subject to the Council's normal assessment processes and will consider climate change and biodiversity impacts where relevant.

13. Background Papers

1. Shropshire Council Improvement Plan
2. Shropshire Council Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy

14. Appendices

APPENDIX A – CIPFA External Assurance Review Report – published here: Shropshire_External_Assurance_Review_2026.pdf

APPENDIX B – Summary of response to the CIPFA External Assurance Review Report and its' recommendations

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Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
Quality of financial management and financial processes				
1. There is an embedded culture in the council of weak compliance with regard to the internal control environment that has undermined financial governance. This is actively being addressed by the current leadership, but it will take time to remedy and risks delaying effective actions to address the structural gap in the council's finances.	1. The council should develop a clear action plan **in the next few months** that sets out who is responsible for resolving each of the weaknesses in the control environment and target completion dates.	The Improvement Plan continues to drive a range of activity to strengthen the internal control environment. This includes a set of actions within the Improvement Plan Programme 2: Strengthening financial management and practice, and Programme 8: Getting the Basics Right (improving governance and compliance). Activity delivered and planned includes: • Strengthened approach to budget monitoring: this has seen a sustained improvement in budget holders completing the required monthly monitoring requirements – increasing confidence and robustness in the in-year (2026/27) position being reported. • Improving responsiveness to Internal audit recommendations: A new process includes regular principal auditor and service director meetings, a live dashboard tracking recommendations and responses, and more statutory officer oversight. • Embedding expectations about good governance and compliance with statutory requirements into day-to-day management, including team meetings, 'role of the manager' toolkit, and 'good conversations' framework. • The continuation of Spend and Workforce Board arrangements, at a service level, to ensure visibility and control on expenditure during the year. • A new budget and business planning approach rolled out over the summer (from August), including an initial round of 'budget challenge' sessions with each director – focussing on	Head of Paid Service and Head of Audit	December 2026

Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
		understanding the make-up of budgets, and the opportunities for income, savings and efficiencies. Further actions and activity will be developed and included in refreshed Improvement Plan (December 2026), ensuring all recommendations regarding internal controls from recent external and internal reviews are addressed. Each activity will have an identified responsible officer.		
2. Without sufficient skilled resources within the finance team, it is difficult for the council to forecast accurately, thereby undermining its ability to set realistic budgets and to monitor performance effectively.	2. The council should review the job descriptions for each finance post **as soon as possible** and identify what training and support is needed for existing staff to address any skills gaps.	A review and restructure of the Finance Service is being undertaken. CIPFA are supporting the Council to review job roles. Additional capacity to support and co-ordinate restructure secured (August 2026). Implementation of the new structure is estimated to be complete March 2027. Training activity has included: • Budget monitoring training (June/July) for budget holders, supported by a new monitoring dashboard to inform monitoring and management of budgets • Financial management training for senior managers (July-October) has focussed on strengthening challenge and curiosity in monitoring and forecasting and identifying practice improvements.	Corporate Director (Finance & Governance – s151) and Deputy 151 Officer	March 2027 and ongoing
3. The high dependency on a small number of key individuals in finance and the staffing gaps in key areas leaves the council's	3. The council should, **over the next few months**, explore the costs and benefits of employing further interims in finance to mitigate the risks	Additional capacity is being sourced, including several interim roles and the recent recruitment of an interim Director for Financial Improvement role (started 17th August). Additional capacity to support restructure is being provided by CIPFA.	Corporate Director (Finance & Governance – s151) and Deputy 151 Officer	September 2026

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Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
financial management at risk if further individuals leave.	if key staff were to leave.			
4. The lack of resources available in the council and the possibility that external candidates will be aware of its financial situation might make it difficult to recruit sufficiently experienced and capable finance staff.	4. Given the difficulties faced with recruitment, the council should explore the feasibility, **by December 2026,** of collaborating with other authorities, such as through a shared service to find the resources required.	Shared services opportunities arguably not as available or viable in Shropshire as in other areas, partly due to geography. There have been previous explorations of opportunities and potential – including counter fraud and emergency planning. Additional joint ICB roles are also being explored. The Budget and Business Planning approach adopted prompts directors and service managers to consider opportunities for different models of service delivery, the Future Council principles prompt consideration of opportunities to work in partnership with others. The Council remains open to collaboration with partners.	Leadership Board / Directors	December 2026
5. The risk management arrangements that have been put in place are more structured and robust, but given the reluctance of some individuals to report concerns,	5. The council should, **in the next six months,** consider the feasibility of a training programme or guidance for staff on the importance of raising issues timeously that	A review of risk management arrangements is being undertaken, including a new Risk Management Strategy and Framework to be presented to Audit & Governance Committee on 25/09/26. There will need to be a programme of activity to support the implementation of the new strategy and framework including awareness raising, training and guidance for staff on the importance of raising issues timeously. This activity will form part of the refreshed improvement plan. We will also use existing practice to embed the culture of risk awareness and escalation, including through the 'Role of the Manager' work and Senior Leaders Forum (SLF) sessions, and	Head of Policy & Governance	January 2026

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Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
it will be important that staff are encouraged to raise issues timeously	require risk management.	the 'Good Conversations' framework that supports one-to-ones between manager and employee/teams. Service workforce and spend control boards are also opportunities to raise risks, curiosity and challenge. These arrangements will be overseen and reviewed periodically by a governance group has established with oversight of risks and the statutory officer group has oversight of strategic risk.		
Financial sustainability and risk				
6. Previous actions to deliver savings have been undermined by a lack of detailed plans that set out how savings will be delivered and this could be repeated unless granular plans are developed this time. The council has the basics of a clear strategy for how it will reduce costs in adult social care but this is not yet underpinned by reliable estimates of the potential financial	6. The council needs to develop detailed delivery plans to underpin its transformation projects that include risk-based assessments of the potential costs and savings profiled over time. These plans should be stress tested by the council's Budget Transformation and Change Panel as well as its Improvement Board **by December 2026.**	An overall portfolio of transformation, improvement and change is being developed based on six key programmes: • Children's Reforms • Adults Transformation • Assets and Corporate Landlord • Digital Programme • Income and Commercial • Organisational Improvement The projects and delivery plans within those are at various stages of development and delivery. All project proposals will be submitted through the Budget Transformation and Change Panel to ensure: • Strategic alignment with council priorities (Improvement Plan, Corporate Plan, Financial Plan) • Relevant and proportionate investment and resources are available and committed to deliver programmes • Benefits and return on investment are articulated and quantified at the outset, with financial benefits/savings profiled across the medium term	Corporate Director (Change & Improvement) and Service Director (Strategy & Change) Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) Assistant Director (Children's Services Reforms) Service Director (Place Shaping) Head of Automation and Technology Head of Commercial	December 2026

Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
impact. Without such information it is difficult to assess what savings it might generate. Similarly, plans are being developed in children's services albeit they are currently at an earlier stage of development. As with adult social care, unless these are underpinned by reliable estimates of the financial impact it will be difficult to assess what savings it might generate.		A summary of the portfolio will be included with the Medium-Term Financial Plan presented to Cabinet in November 2026. Not every facet of the portfolio and its delivery will be fully developed by December 2026, and it is unlikely that there will be detailed delivery plans for every programme and project. Capacity and capability issues in both service areas and key enabling functions (such as finance and corporate PMO) will constrain and limit the council's ability and pace to do this. There is also a need to undertake discovery and diagnostic work (e.g. Adults and Assets) to inform a fully developed portfolio with quantifiable opportunities. While some key programmes of service transformation (Children's and Adults) will be defined, other facets of the portfolio, by their nature, will be a prioritised programme of reviews and projects, informed by ongoing and annual activity such as budget and business planning. The full Adult Social Care Transformation programme will be informed by an external consultancy diagnostic commissioned in September 2026. Additional expertise and practitioner perspective – including a serving local authority DASS and DCS - has been added to Improvement Board to provide critical friend challenge 'stress testing' to service transformation proposals. (See response to recommendation 17) The Income and Commercial part of the Portfolio will be informed by work being undertaken by the Interim Head of Commercial Recruited who will recommend a prioritised programme of reviews of the Council's traded services and companies.		
7. Despite the issues the council experienced with its	7. The council should explore, **by December 2026,** how	There has been some restructuring of the leadership of the organisation. Recruitment concluded September 2026, with new directors expected to join the council from November 2026.	Leadership Board	December 2026 and ongoing

Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
previous initiatives to restructure how it operates, it cannot afford to abandon such efforts. Any savings from adults and children's services are likely to take time to materialise and are unlikely to be sufficient to bridge the gap.	services might be restructured to reduce costs. This should include options previously considered, such as digitisation, as well as the potential for collaboration with other authorities or outsourcing.	There are various restructures planned or in progress across the organisation – including finance, highways, planning and assets. Given the need to build organisational capacity and capability, some of these restructures are not driven by cost savings but have an objective of building capacity. The impact of some previous workforce reductions is having to be reviewed and addressed. A proposed programme of sprint reviews, as part of the Improvement Plan, and focussing on process efficiency and digitisation to increase productivity will help to mitigate further workforce growth and additional demands on the budget that brings. Greater productivity and efficiency will help embed previous 'resizing' changes that were implemented and ensure services continue to meet required standards, outputs and outcomes. Our Future Council principles drive how we transform, improve and change as a council – including a focus on both digitisation and working in partnership with others as a means of delivery services and outcomes at less cost to the council.		
8. Whilst the council should focus on those areas where the greatest savings can be made, it cannot afford to ignore any other potential opportunities, such as	8. The plans should consider the minimum viable service delivery obligations for the council, so that the options of scaling back or stopping activities are considered as well as initiatives to improve efficiency.	The business and budget planning approach – and budget challenge sessions in particular – are positioned to consider some of this. The approach challenges Service Directors to think differently, and to consider minimum viable service delivery. The transformation, improvement and change portfolio focusses beyond the transformation of adults and children's services on the need to the identification of opportunities to scale back or stop services and modernise policy and practice to improve efficiency as part of continuous improvement, supported by business-as-usual processes such as business planning, the Budget, Transformation & Change Panel, and Commissioning Boards.	Leadership Board / Directors	Ongoing

Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
stopping those activities it is not obliged to deliver.		There are several areas where services have recently been scaled back, or where there is likely to be proposals to do so – including Adults Day Services, Cultural services and Libraries. In terms of understanding the understanding costs of service provision, there has been extensive work undertaken since 2023/24 to understand both statutory and non-statutory service provision and resourcing levels. This included a series of savings and cabinet decision papers to reduce or remove non statutory services, and review of workforce. Reviews supported by the LGA have taken place across the organisation, including benchmarking and baselining service levels (e.g. Children's Services, Adult Social Care and Revs & Bens). A summary of this was presented to the Improvement Board in February 2026. Work will continue to review all spend across the Council through the Budget and Business Planning Process, and Business Transformation and Change Review Panel.		
9. The longer it takes to develop realistic plans to transform service delivery in order to reduce costs, the more the council will need to borrow to fund its existing gap	9. The council should set a clear timeline that transformation plans across adults, children's services and all other areas of the council should be developed and submitted to the council's Budget Transformation and Change Panel **by**	The activity in response to recommendation 6 regarding the development of the Transformation, Improvement and Change portfolio also responds to this recommendation. A number of transformation plans have been submitted to the Budget, Transformation and Change Panel including Children's Reforms, Adults Transformation (some projects), and Digital programme. External consultancy support is being commissioned to help further define and quantify the Adult Social Care Transformation programme, and the opportunities for demand prevention and savings beyond what has already been developed, with detailed project proposals submitted to the Panel after that.	Service Director (Strategy & Change) Leadership Board / Directors	December 2026 and ongoing

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Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
and the bigger the financial challenge becomes	**the end of December 2026.**	While some key programmes of service transformation (Children's and Adults) will be defined, other facets of the portfolio, by their nature, will be a prioritised programme of reviews and projects, informed by ongoing and annual activity such as budget and business planning. There will need to be a continuous pipeline of proposals presented to the Panel beyond December 2026.		
10. Until the council has well structured, quantified transformation and other savings plans to reduce its expenditure, it is difficult to quantify the scale of any remaining gap and whether further increases in council tax above the 4.99% threshold should be sought.	10. The council needs to develop a clear financial recovery strategy **by December 2026** that sets out how it plans to bridge the gap. This should take into account the transformation and other savings plans currently being developed as well as an estimate of any further council tax increases needed to bridge the remaining gap.	A Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy was approved by Cabinet as part of a refreshed Medium Term Financial Plan in July 2026. The Strategy sets out eleven ways the council will become financially sustainable. While transformation and reviewing Council Tax levels are both part of the Strategy there is not necessarily an interdependency as both will be required to achieve financial recovery and sustainability. The Strategy also includes a focus on improving tax collection, enhancing efficiency, rebuilding reserves, and optimising debt and capital expenditure. Alongside these, the Council will continue advocating for fairer government funding and promoting economic growth. Together, these actions aim to deliver a resilient financial position, reduce costs and demand, and secure long-term sustainability for the organisation. A refreshed Medium Term Financial Plan due to presented to Cabinet in November 2026 will give an updated position and forecast and demonstrate a year-on-year reduction in EFS requirement and include Council Tax requirement. It is unlikely to bridge the entire gap with quantifiable plans at this point in time.	Corporate Director (Finance & Governance – s151) (Resources) Corporate Director (Change & Improvement) and Service Director (Strategy & Change)	November 2026

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Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
11. Unless the council can bring forward significant savings plans or increase the timing and quantum of its capital receipts it is very exposed to the uncertainties in geo-politics for the costs of its borrowing.	11. The council should make clear to Members **in the next iteration of the medium term financial strategy,** the costs of borrowing associated with exceptional financial support and the risks of changes in interest rates to support the drive to find further savings and assets that can be sold.	The refresh of the Medium-Term Financial Plan in November will include this.	Corporate Director (Finance & Governance – s151) and Deputy 151 Officer	November 2026
Service reform, delivery and transformation				
12. Without advocating a 'fire sale' the council cannot afford delays to its asset disposals. Exploring the development of the Shirehall building prior to sale will create additional risks, necessitate further borrowing in	12. The council should **as soon as possible** set a clear, short deadline for any feasibility work underway on the future of Shirehall and seek to sell the asset as soon as possible.	The sale of Shirehall was agreed by Cabinet on 14/07/25. It was agreed to take steps to move urgently and in principle to the marketing for disposal of the site. A further update report, including the draft prospectus for sale, will be presented to Cabinet in the Autumn.	Service Director (Place Shaping) and Corporate Director (Resources)	As soon as possible

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Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
the interim and delay the receipt of much needed funds.				
13. Until the council has a clear strategy for which assets can be released, their potential market value and when any sale best be achieved it is difficult to assess the financial impacts and the costs of borrowing continue to mount. The council cannot afford to take out further borrowing to enable Cornovii Development Ltd to purchase its lan or buildings for development	13. The council should identify those assets that can be sold and develop a strategy for how this can be done to secure best value. This work needs to be **completed by December 2026** alongside transformation plans so that there is a clear financial recovery plan and an understanding of any further council tax increases that might need to be sought.	An Assets Disposal and Corporate Landlord programme is a key facet of the Financial Recovery and Sustainability Strategy presented to Cabinet in July 2026. The programme resets how the Council's property is governed and managed. Following an initial focus to review the current disposals pipeline, a refreshed Asset Management Strategy will be developed, and the assessment, design and implementation of a new Corporate Landlord model. Phase 1 of the disposal pipeline review is now complete. The action plan and disposal completions to date for 2026/27 are being consolidated to provide assurance on disposal capital receipts and future disposals. Several decisions have been taken by Cabinet regarding asset disposal – including: the disposal of St Andrews, Shifnal (10/06/26), Bridgnorth Youth Centre (08/06/26), and the in-principle disposal of Whitchurch Civic Centre (09/09/26) While transformation, assets disposal and reviewing Council Tax levels are all part of the Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy there is not necessarily an interdependency as all will be required to achieve financial recovery and sustainability, given the scale of the challenge.	Service Director (Place Shaping) and Corporate Director (Finance & Governance – s151)	December 2026 and ongoing
14. Without a clear, structured	14. The council should, **in the next six**	A key facet of the Council's Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy is once again reviewing, rationalising and	Corporate Director (Finance & Governance – s151)	February 2027

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Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
prioritisation process it is difficult for the council to assess the potential risks and benefits of any changes to the capital programme.	**months,** review its governance arrangements for the capital programme and establish a more structured approach to assessing the revenue and capital costs and benefits of additions, removals or significant slippage on projects.	refreshing the capital programme. This is over and above the Annual Capital Programme reviews. It will ensure that the programme continues to contain identification and earmarked resourcing for statutory, health and safety and contractually committed works that are necessary and unavoidable. It will also be reprioritised and extended over a ten year period to allow for maximum visibilty of future unavoidable commitments. Given current circumstances, there will need to be clear reference to the funding or likely funding sources for the critical work. Other schemes in the programme will be deemed unaffordable and therefore undeliverable without positive business cases and identification where possible of alternative funding. The HRA will be able to make firmer commitments given its ring-fenced nature, subject the HRA business plan which has been overhauled and will be updated each February. A new structure will be created under the leadership of the s151 officer that will give closer oversight and scrutiny of the programme. This will include clear accountability and provide regular checks on progress of schemes and any hurdles that impact on deliverability. The structure will also determine funding allocations including capital receipts, section 106, CIL, grant funding, etc. The Council has already refreshed its capital programme in February 2026 to end and pause some projects. This will repeat with a new capital programme reported alongside a refreshed Medium-Term Financial Plan. As part of refreshed programme there is likely to be a need to cancel some paused projects as they are no longer affordable. This will be based on clear criteria and rationale.	and Deputy 151 Officer	

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Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
15. Whilst the council has cut back its capital programme largely to grant funded schemes only, its experience with the North West Relief Road demonstrates the financial risk of grant claw back when works do not proceed as planned.	15. **From here on,** the assessment of any proposed capital projects dependent on grant funding should consider the financial risks of claw back and the adequacy of project management arrangements to mitigate such risks.	See response to recommendation 14 above. The Budget, Transformation and Change Panel should consider all grant funding opportunities and test them against a range of criteria including financial risks including claw back, liabilities, and organisational capacity to service and support the grant arrangement and delivery against its requirements.	Corporate Director (Finance & Governance – s151) and Deputy 151 Officer	**ongoing**
16. The growth in demand for adult and children's services in recent years has contributed to the increased costs of these services in Shropshire compared to its statistical neighbours.	16. The council should supplement its transformation plans it is developing in children's and adult services with other short term cost cutting initiatives in order to alleviate the more immediate financial pressures. These	The transformation, improvement and change portfolio being finalised includes the proposed transformation of Children's and Adults Social Care services. These are based on early intervention and the prevention and reduction of demand, the financial benefits of which will not be immediately realised. A range of shorter-term savings opportunities for 2026/27 and 2027/28 are being identified through budget and business planning and the Budget, Transformation and Change Panel. Additionally spend control measures remain in place, and robust financial monitoring is also an opportunity to identify opportunities for one-off savings. Progress in terms of in-year delivery of the 2026/27 savings opportunities was reported to Finance & Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in September 2026 as part of the Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring Report, which stated 90.92% of savings are forecast to be delivered by the end of the financial year.	Leadership Board Director of Children's Services (DCS) Director of Adult Social Services (DASS)	November 2026

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Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
Until such trends are abated, growing demand will continue to increase the financial gap facing the council. The focus on early intervention to stem the growing numbers requiring care will take time to have a significant financial impact. Short term impact is dependent on policies to facilitate step down or to find alternative support to those already in care.	plans need to be developed **by November 2026**.	Achieving financial recovery is not just about reducing current expenditure; it also requires managing the underlying demand, cost and inflationary pressures that would otherwise continue to increase the Council's spending requirements year after year. A range of actions are being delivered and planned across the council, including Children's and Adults Services to mitigate in-year pressures to ensure the Council lives within its budget for 2026/27.		
17. The 'good' and 'outstanding' assessments of adult social care and children's services in Shropshire should	17. The council should, **as soon as possible**, encourage the Improvement and Assurance Board to bring in external	The membership of the Improvement Board has been updated and will take effect in September 2026. Changes include a new Chair and serving Director of Children's Services (DCS) and Director of Adult Social Care Services (DASS) added to the membership of the Board. This will better enable the Board to provide practitioner perspective and critical friend challenge to the Council's transformation, improvement and change proposals, informed by direct experience.	Chief Executive	September 2026

Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
minimise the need for further investment, but it does not necessarily mean that efficiencies can be secured. The absence of specialists in these areas on the Improvement Board limits the opportunities to identify and challenge existing practices	representatives with direct experience of children's services and adult social care.			
18. The council's improvement plan is underpinned by a clear set of projects to transform services. They are very much work-in-progress at present and until the potential impact is known it is unclear what difference they will make to the	18. **By December 2026**, the council should identify the potential financial impacts of each initiative so that those projects likely to make the biggest contributions to resolving the financial gap can be resourced and expedited.	Programme 6 of the Improvement Plan is focussed on the development of a transformation programme more aligned to the financial recovery of the Council and including the initiatives (e.g. service transformation) that will have the biggest contribution to make to resolving the financial gap. The Council is not only facing a financial recovery journey, it needs to improve and modernise the organisation in parallel and that is the focus of the Improvement Plan which will be refreshed to respond to the recommendations from this CIPFA Assurance Review, Annual Audit Report, and leaning from the delivery of the Improvement Plan to date. A refreshed Improvement Plan (and People Plan) will be supported by defined projects that will improve how the organisation operates. Those projects need to be robustly	Corporate Director (Change & Improvement) and Service Director (Strategy & Change) Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) Assistant Director (Children's Services Reforms) Service Director (Place Shaping)	**December 2026**

Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
council's financial recovery plans Many of the anticipated benefits are about service improvements. Whilst these are important, there is a risk that initiatives to reduce cost will not necessarily be prioritised		scoped, defined, resourced and managed through clear activity, milestones and measures that help demonstrate impact and benefits.	Head of Automation and Technology Head of Commercial	
19. Existing transformation plans have not been quantified yet, but there is a very high risk that they will be insufficient to bridge the financial gap forecast by the council. The focus to date has been on efficiency improvements and more radical options,	19. As part of the development of a financial recovery plan **by December 2026,** the council should explore the feasibility of alternative methods of service delivery, whether through outside organisations, digitalisation or collaboration with other authorities.	The responses to recommendations 4, 6 and 9 also form the response to this recommendation. The 'future council' principles – set out in the Improvement Plan - and budget & business planning approach are prompting directors to think about alternative approaches to service delivery including digitalisation and working with and through partners. This needs to be a feature of how we plan our role as a council, rather than a definitive one-off list of opportunities. The principles intended to guide how we work and provide a basis for our continued development into a council that is financially sustainable and equipped to deliver, enable, and influence for Shropshire and its residents in the most effective, efficient and economical way – and include: 1. Agility & adaptability 2. Early Intervention and prevention 3. Working with others in partnership 4. Digitally enabling and automation 5. Resident and customer focus	Service Director (Strategy & Change) Leadership Board / Directors	December 2026 and ongoing

Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
such as sharing services with other authorities to achieve economies of scale have not been explored.		6. Data, insight and demand management		
On governance, culture and leadership				
20. The change in leadership has led to a much greater focus on governance and decision-making processes and while the direction of travel is encouraging, much is dependent on actions over the next few months. The extensive reporting and assurance requirements are important, but they risk	20. The council should address the gaps in leadership needed to drive progress and appoint an Executive Director responsible for transformation and change **as soon as possible.**	There has been significant recruitment activity throughout July and August, to several leadership positions, including the new post of Corporate Director for Change and Improvement.	Chief Executive	November 2026

DRAFT **APPENDIX B – Recommendations and Response**

Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
absorbing capacity that should be deployed on delivery				
21. Discussions and papers at the Improvement and Assurance Board have been too focused on process and lacked an analytical challenge	21. **From here on**, the Improvement and Assurance Board should be re-named as a Financial Recovery Board to demonstrate its focus. Its Membership and agendas need to be centred on the need to drive the delivery of initiatives to bridge the financial gap.	There is no current intention to change the name of the Board from Shropshire Council Improvement Board (SCIB). The Council is not just on a financial recovery journey, there is a need to improve and develop the organisation at the same time, and one cannot be delivered without the other. It is important the Board remains positioned to challenge, support, and provide assurance on the Council's plans and delivery of both financial recovery and organisational improvement. A new chair has been appointed, providing a timely opportunity to review the terms of reference of the Board, the roles it performs and the balance between scrutiny and support.	Chief Executive and Chair of the Shropshire Council Improvement Board (SCIB)	November 2026
22. Financial responsibility and ownership will be critical to future sustainability. Unless staff comply with the financial regulations and manage their budgets appropriately, planned savings will not be delivered	22. **Over the next six months,** the council should explore the feasibility of mandatory training, guidance and other support for its budget holders and wider staff on the importance of financial management. Failure to participate or to	The Improvement Plan has a current programme focussed on strengthening financial management practice, and additional activity will be considered as both Improvement Plan and People Plan are reviewed and refreshed Recent activity has included: • Budget monitoring training (June/July) for budget holders, supported by a new monitoring dashboard to inform monitoring and management of budgets • Financial management training for senior managers (July-October) has focussed on strengthening challenge and curiosity in monitoring and forecasting and identifying practice improvements. There is follow up activity scheduled for October, focussed on pragmatic	Corporate Director (Finance & Governance – s151) Deputy 151 Officer and Director of People and Culture	January 2027

Key finding / risk	CIPFA Recommendation	Council's current position and/or planned actions	Lead / Responsible Officer(s)	Timescale / Target date
	pass an associated test should lead to follow up action.	improvements to managing budgets, and provision for coaching/mentoring support where required.		

Committee	Council
Date and Time	24th September 2026 Public

Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy 2026 - 2029

Cabinet Member:	Andy Hall	
Lead Director:	David Shaw	
Service Area:	Children and Young People	
Report Author	John Rowe, Head of Education, Quality and Safeguarding	
Officer contact details	01743 254515 john.rowe@shropshire.gov.uk	
Electoral Divisions Affected	All	
Key Decision?	Key	
Cabinet Forward Plan	Yes 18th May 2026	
Report considered by	*People Overview and Scrutiny Committee 14th January 2026* *And 22nd April 2026*	

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. This report sets out the ambitious strategy to ensure children and young people achieve and thrive in education in Shropshire. It clarifies Shropshire Council's approach to education quality and safeguarding standards and seeks Cabinet endorsement of the strategy and the recommendation of adoption by Council.

2. Recommendations

That Council:

2.1 Consider and endorse the final draft Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy 2026-29 attached as appendix A and recommend its adoption to Council in September.

2.2 Refer the impact of the strategy for regular review by the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and for this committee to receive regular reports on its implementation.

3. Background

3.1. Reflecting the national context, the local education system is increasingly diverse and autonomous, with most education settings in Shropshire, including schools, now operating outside direct Council control. Children attend a range of settings including non-school alternative provision where it is in their best interests to do so. The strategy sets out how Shropshire Council will exercise its system leadership role as a champion for children, young people and families whilst ensuring robust assurance and accountability across all settings, in line with the legal duties on the Council.

3.2. The strategy brings together the Council's duties to promote high standards of education (under the Education Act 1996) and to safeguard and promote welfare for all children in the area (under the Children Acts 1989/2004), alongside the Council's responsibilities to challenge and intervene in maintained schools and to escalate concerns about academies, independent schools, early years providers and non-school alternative provision to the appropriate regulator and inspection bodies.
.

3.3. The strategy seeks to develop a consistent countywide 'line of sight' through agreed monitoring areas and data sources. It sets out clearer thresholds for support, challenge and intervention; and transparent expectations for leaders about how concerns will be raised, how improvement support will be brokered, and how progress and impact will be reported through governance and scrutiny. This all aligns with the key national safeguarding framework, Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2026.

3.4. The strategy sets expectations and monitoring arrangements for achievement, attendance, behaviour, inclusion and SEND, and safeguarding. It introduces a countywide framework using regular data analysis, targeted visits and structured strategic conversations with leaders (including academy trusts) to identify risk early, provide challenge and broker support.

3.5. The strategy defines and enhances the support available to maintained schools. It sets out the support provided to new headteachers and the support afforded to maintained schools at the point of Ofsted inspection.

3.6. Recognising that most of Shropshire's children and young people are educated in academies, where multi-academy trusts are the responsible body. The strategy makes provision to ensure the routine monitoring of multi-academy trusts to ensure the quality and safety of the education provision they receive. This supports the legal duties on specific areas of performance across individual academy sites. Principally this is determined by the Children and Families Act 2014 (with respect to the monitoring of SEND provision) and the Children Act 2004 (with respect to safeguarding responsibilities) and the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (with respect to the Admissions Code). Additionally, the Department for Education's statutory guidance 'Support for Intervention in Schools' makes clear that, 'should a local authority have any concerns about an academy's standards, leadership or governance, they should raise these directly with Regions Group [of the Department for Education].'

3.7. The strategy seeks to outline the support and challenge provided to schools and settings to support the most vulnerable children and young people, including those who have SEND or are looked-after by the Council.

3.8. The strategy ensures a consistent expectation across all phases and education types, including early years, post-16, alternative provision, educational visits, out-of-school settings and complaints, ensuring consistent oversight across the full range of provision.

3.9. The strategy builds on the Shropshire SEND and AP Strategy by strengthening inclusive practice, early identification and joined-up support across schools and settings.

3.10. Details are provided about how the Education Quality and Safeguarding team works with the Virtual School and other Children's Services teams to support vulnerable children with coordinated oversight.

3.11. It includes clear governance and reporting arrangements, with progress and impact overseen through partnership boards, scrutiny and senior leadership structures.

3.12. The strategy supports the new mechanisms for school improvement instigated by the Department for Education including the Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) programme. It complements the well-developed relationships between the Department and other agencies, including Ofsted.

4. Summary of Main Proposals

4.1. Council is asked to adopt the Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy 2026-2029 to set a clear, consistent Local Authority framework for promoting high education standards and safeguarding for all children and young people, regardless of education provider.

4.2. The role of educators is critically important, there are many settings, schools and colleges delivering excellent work across our county and the Council has a role to support them to deliver this. This is a statutory requirement, but this strategy is seeking to ensure that there is clarity about how we do this working with them through a clearly defined offer.

4.3. The strategy clarifies the accountability which is critically important across a system which is diverse within a mixed economy of private childcare, schools and colleges which are both academies, maintained and other settings, including those that are unregistered.

4.4. It seeks to strengthen early identification of risk through agreed monitoring and escalation routes, and describes how the Council will support, challenge and where necessary intervene (including raising concerns with the Department for Education (DfE) and/or Ofsted where required).

4.5. By strengthening and formalising the process of school and setting challenge and support we are seeking to be open and transparent so that an environment can be fostered that supports all children and young people to flourish in Shropshire, regardless of the provision that they attend.

5. Alternative Options

5.1. Lack of clarity with respect to education monitoring risks impoverishing schools and pupils through a system that would ultimately lack cohesion. Consideration could be given to a wholly sector led monitoring solution whereby schools provide challenge and support to schools within minimal oversight by the Council. This is challenging and would not sufficiently discharge the duties of the Council. It risks developing a system whereby support is variable and the lack of connectivity to Council systems means that opportunities to intervene early are missed.

6. Key risks and Opportunities

6.1. Strategic Risk:

Risk	*Response*
Lack of safeguarding oversight of education settings.	Failure to meet statutory duties. Children and young people being at risk of significant harm due to inadequate procedures and practice.
Lack of challenge and support for education settings	Failure to meet statutory duties. Weak pupil outcomes. Limited evidence of improvement activity.
Increase proportion of schools and academies with weak Ofsted outcomes	Increase the risk of reputational damage to the council, and the county as a whole.

7. Council Priorities

7.1. The strategy strongly supports the council priorities set out in the Corporate plan.

7.2. The strategy is referenced, albeit under its working title of the Education Excellence Strategy, under the ambition for ‘Everyone has the opportunity to be healthy and thrive at every stage of life’ but also aligns with the ‘Safe inclusive places with homes that meet their needs’.

7.3. The policy supports the articulation of the Council’s statutory education responsibilities and work with schools and partners to support improved outcomes, including enabling children and young people with SEND (EHCP) to be supported in mainstream education.

8. Financial Implications

8.1. The cost of educational failure is significant for individual children, for schools, for the community and for the county in economic terms. It is therefore evident that the role of the Council in enabling raising standards in all schools and settings will result in economic benefits for the county.

8.2. Since the removal of the School Monitoring and Brokering Grant, there has been no specific resource to support specific school improvement work in schools. Whilst the Dedicated School Grant can be used to support elements of school monitoring and support work, the regulations provide limitations.

8.3. The development of this strategy has limited financial impact beyond the current budgets within Learning and Skills and specific grants received. This strategy, for the first time, determines and clarifies ways of working as the previous 'Education Improvement Service' changes to the 'Education Quality and Safeguarding Service'.

8.4. Strengthening support for children and young people with SEND will lead to more effective provision and promote early intervention which will support the ambitions of the SEND and AP Strategy. Through strengthening inclusive mainstream practice in line with ambitions of the National reforms in SEND and the implementation of the Local Area SEND Reform Plan.

8.5. Any costs will be contained within current budgets, whether Council or Grant funded, such as the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) or through the top-slice to maintained schools. As an example, this resulted in maintained schools de-delegating a proportion of their delegated funding (to a total of £112,480 across the county) to support specific activities with respect to maintained schools.

9. Legal and HR implications

9.1. There are no Human Resource implications beyond the existing arrangements.

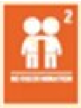
9.2. The legal basis supporting the accountability for schools are noted in the draft Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy at Appendix A.

10. Electoral Division Implications

10.1 There are no implications for specific electoral divisions, however this strategy applies to all electoral divisions across Shropshire.

11. Health, Social (including “Child Friendly Shropshire”) and Economic Implications

11.1. The strategy contributes strongly to all of the ambitions of ‘Child Friendly Shropshire’ and the 4 key rights. It places as a priority the aspiration for all children in Shropshire to be educated in effective and safe provision where decisions are taken in children’s best interests. It also enables delivery of non-discrimination, the inherent right to life, survival and development along with respecting the views of children and young people.



Non-discrimination

The rights of all children are respected, without discrimination of any kind irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

Best interests of the child

The best interests of children are a primary consideration in decisions that may affect them with the government assuring the care and protection necessary for their wellbeing.

The inherent right to life, survival and development

Children have the right to life, with the government committed to ensuring the maximum extent possible, their right to survival and healthy development.

Respect for the views of the child

Children have the right to voice their opinions and have these be taken into account in decisions that affect them.

Further information is available here **[Child Friendly Cities Initiative | Child-Friendly Cities Initiative]**. *We ask that you consider these as part of your report. Where it is relevant you should show how the views of children have been heard and their interests considered or acted upon.*

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1. Some children and young people, schools and settings face greater challenges in achieving educational success; there are therefore equalities implications to the Council and to schools in ensuring that every child and young person achieves their full potential and every school and setting secures good educational outcomes.

12.2. Analysis of performance data, as part of Education Quality Advisers’ allocation of time for schools, enables a thorough review of outcomes for pupils across the range of vulnerable groups including gender, disadvantage, ethnicity and prior attainment. This also informs the bespoke and targeted offer of support and development to schools. It is referenced in the document in the Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR).

12.3. The work of Education Quality Advisers and safeguarding includes providing support and challenge with respect to the legal responsibilities on school with respect to duties under the Equality Act 2010.

12.4. Work is developed digitally to promote the opportunity to use assistive technology.

12.5. Schools and settings have been consulted as part of the development of this strategy. Feedback has been incorporated into the revisions of this document.

13. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1. Where we are able to use Microsoft Teams for meetings to reduce climate impact, this takes place.

13.2. The nature of work by the Education Quality and Safeguarding team does require face to face visits to schools and settings. This does necessitate travel where remote visits are not possible. Consideration has been given to the deployment of staff to, where possible minimise travel distances.

14. Background Papers

14.1 The policy was referenced in the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 22nd October 2025 plus in the meeting on the 14th January 2026 along with sharing an early working draft for comment by the committee. The comments received directly informed the development of the final version.

15. Appendices

Appendix A – Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy – 2026-29

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Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy - 2026-2029

Contents

Foreword

Shropshire Council is passionate about making sure every child in our county gets the best possible education—no matter which school, setting, or type of provision they attend. Every child deserves to learn in an environment that meets their needs and keeps them safe.

Children in Shropshire attend a range of education provision: maintained schools, academies, independent school, early years settings, alternative provision, post-16 providers, and out-of-school settings. Our ambition is to all ensure that settings are safe and are of a high quality.

Over the past few years, the role of local authorities in England has changed considerably. Instead of running schools directly, we now focus more on supporting and guiding the whole education system. This shift has happened mainly because there are now many more academies, which run independently from the council. Even with these changes, councils like still have important legal responsibilities and remain key champions for high standards in education for all children and young people in our area.

This new strategy sets out how we'll meet those responsibilities and make sure we're always working towards the best outcomes for Shropshire's children and young people.

Statutory Responsibilities for Education

Section 13a of the Education Act 1996 outlines the current statutory obligations of local authorities regarding education standards.

Local authorities must carry out their education functions with the aim of promoting high standards. This duty exists within a landscape where schools and education settings have increasing autonomy and where there is a shifting model of accountability. Crucially, there is an expectation that schools themselves lead their own improvement.

“Local authorities have overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area, regardless of the types of educational settings they attend. There are a number of statutory duties under the 1989 and 2004 Children Acts which make this clear. In order to fulfil these duties effectively, local authorities need to work in partnership with all schools (including independent schools), appropriate religious bodies and further education and sixth form colleges in their area” (Support and intervention in schools - GOV.UK:p40).

Strategic Role in Education Improvement

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 further defines the strategic role of the local authority in supporting improvement across schools and education settings.

The Act establishes the local authority as:

- A ‘champion’ for the needs of children, young people, and their families.
- Responsible for planning, commissioning, and assuring the quality of educational services.
- Tasked with challenging schools and educational settings, commissioning support when necessary, and intervening in management and governance where appropriate.
- Required to raise concerns about the performance of academies/ free/independent schools directly with the Department for Education.
- Obliged to refer concerns about Early Years settings to the childminder agency and/or Ofsted.

Shropshire Council

Responding to Concerns and Powers of Intervention in Local Authority Maintained Schools

The 2006 Act also gives local authorities a duty to respond to parental concerns about the quality of local schools. It grants new powers to intervene earlier in maintained schools that are underperforming. Specifically, Part 4 of the Act enables:

- Early action to address school underperformance before it becomes entrenched and leads to formal failure.
- Immediate provision of effective support and challenge when standards are found to be unacceptable, ensuring rapid improvement.
- Decisive intervention if a school in 'special measures' fails to make sufficient progress, in order to protect the education and life chances of pupils.

Use of Intervention Powers

With respect to maintained schools, the Act provides a clear responsibility on local authorities to intervene where schools are causing concern. These expanded statutory powers are designed to ensure every child receives the quality of education and opportunities they deserve. Shropshire Council will employ these intervention powers as appropriate. The Education Quality and Safeguarding Team will work collaboratively with other teams across the local authority to gather evidence and information about maintained schools' vulnerabilities, ensuring timely and effective support or intervention when required.

This is part of an ongoing process *built on strong relationships, respect and effective communication*. Where schools are deemed to require additional support, this will be determined, when necessary, in order to ensure that swift action is taken to address concerns.

Role of the Director of Children's Services

Section 18 of the Children Act 2004 requires every top tier local authority to appoint a Director of Children's Services. The DCS has professional responsibility for the leadership, strategy and effectiveness of local authority children's services. The DCS is responsible for the performance of local authority functions relating to the education and social care of children and young people. The DCS is responsible for ensuring that effective systems are in place for discharging these functions, including where a local authority has commissioned any services from another provider rather than delivering them itself.

The *Education Quality and Safeguarding team* plays a pivotal role in supporting the Director of Children's Services to discharge their statutory responsibilities effectively. *This team works closely with schools, providing expert guidance, challenge, and practical assistance to ensure that educational standards and safeguarding practices are consistently robust.* Through regular monitoring, sharing of best practice, and targeted support, the team helps to address areas of concern swiftly, foster school improvement, and ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet the highest standards across all settings.

Core Principles

Building positive relationships

We recognise that educational leadership is a complex and often demanding. In all our interactions, we are committed to treating educational providers with professionalism, courtesy, empathy, and respect, and we expect the same standards in return.

By promoting this mutual expectation, *we foster an environment built on trust, understanding, and constructive partnership*, ensuring that all support and challenge is delivered in a manner that values expertise and dedication on all sides—ultimately focussed on achieving the very best outcomes for children and young people.

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Effective communication

Shropshire Council is committed to ensuring that school leaders receive timely and relevant information, with as much advance notice as possible, to enable effective planning and decision-making. Open communication will be supported through

- The weekly education update
- Termly headteacher briefings
- The publication of the directory of LA services
- Shropshire Learning Gateway.
- Maintained Headteachers' Forum
- Schools Forum
- Various partnership boards and sub-groups with education representation
- Half Termly Early Years Network Meetings
- Monthly Early Years updates

We will aim to ensure that all schools and settings are kept informed of developments and opportunities. The LA will continue to seek new opportunities to support communication.

In return, Shropshire Council expects all schools and trusts to keep the local authority informed of key events in accordance with the Notifiable Incidents Protocol and to share examination data promptly to facilitate robust cross-county analysis and collaborative improvement.

This two-way approach to communication enhances transparency, accountability, and shared understanding across the education community.

Early identification of needs

Shropshire Council's approach is built upon principles designed to ensure proactive engagement, be informed by data, and aimed to foster collaborative relationships with all setting and schools.

The primary aim is to identify potential issues at an early stage, enabling the provision of constructive challenge and support before concerns escalate.

This approach seeks to cultivate a culture of continuous self-evaluation and improvement within schools.

This allows for timely, supportive interventions to be deployed before issues reach a crisis level. As a result, this intervention minimises disruption to pupils' education and maximises the potential for school-led improvement.

The framework will facilitate a continuous process of reflection, leadership development, and collaborative practice, *aiming to ensure that every pupil thrives.*

Recognition of context

Shropshire is a diverse county. When school performance is examined, including the analysis of data, it is essential to recognise the unique context in which each school and setting operates. Factors such as demographic profile, community circumstances, local challenges, and resource availability can significantly affect outcomes and progress. For example, where schools are working hard to provide inclusive environments for pupils with the most significant needs, it is recognised that this might not be reflected in 'headline' data.

A nuanced understanding of context allows for a fair and balanced interpretation of data and actions, ensuring that the strengths and barriers faced by each school and setting are acknowledged and inform both evaluation and support strategies.

Professional challenge

Through our work in supporting the best possible outcomes for children and pupils, we seek to fostering a culture of constructive dialogue and accountability among education professionals. By encouraging open discussions about practice, performance, and outcomes, the framework enables both recognition of achievements and identification of areas for development. This atmosphere of professional challenge is not adversarial, but is designed to support growth, reflective practice, and the sharing of expertise, ensuring that all schools and settings strive for continuous improvement while feeling supported and respected in their efforts.

Key Monitoring Areas and Data Sources

The Education Quality and Safeguarding Team will co-ordinate the gathering and analysis of data across several key areas to gain a comprehensive understanding of school performance and identify areas requiring support.

This will include analysis of -

- Educational Performance
- Published and internal data with respect to pupil achievement
- Outcomes of Ofsted inspections
- Attendance data
- Suspension and Exclusion data
- Outcomes from safeguarding assurance activities or other information from other Local Authority teams relating to the safeguarding arrangements in education settings.
- Practice with respect to the management of off-site visits
- Financial health
- Provision for pupils who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Information provided by Shropshire HR
- Information provided by Children's Services
- Use of non-school (unregistered) Alternative Provision
- Use and impact of non-statutory additional funding and support e.g. EYIAF, GSP, Primary and Secondary Inclusion Development Grants, Outreach.

Challenge and Accountability – Academy Trusts

Shropshire Council is committed to fostering a collaborative partnership with academy CEOs and their schools, with the collective goal of ensuring high-quality educational provision for every child and young person in Shropshire. *Academies nurture their pupils; the Local Authority has a duty to all children.*

The Annual Conversation

As part of the Council's commitment to robust accountability and support, all academy CEOs are invited annually to engage in a strategic dialogue with Education Quality Advisers.

These conversations are designed to offer both support and constructive challenge to academy trusts, providing a forum to address areas of concern, promote open communication, and strengthen the relationship between the local authority and the trust. Key focus areas for these discussions include:

- Academy trust successes
- Ofsted inspection outcomes
- Pupil outcomes and achievements
- Attendance, suspensions and exclusions
- The quality of safeguarding arrangements across schools in the Trust, including engagement with local arrangements
- Support offered to pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- The Trust's capacity to support other schools
- Use and impact of non-statutory additional funding and support e.g. EYIAF, GSP, Primary and Secondary Inclusion Development Grants, Outreach.

Monitoring visits to academies

The annual meeting will be used to determine the schools to be visited by Education Quality Advisers during the year. This will be informed by specific needs and risks in discussion with the CEO.

These meetings will provide an opportunity to share and celebrate effective practice, validate the judgements of leaders, and provide an opportunity to highlight areas of need through professional challenge.

An academy meeting typically involves open dialogue between Education Quality Advisers and school leaders, where key successes are recognised, areas for growth are constructively discussed, and practical solutions are collaboratively explored with the aim of fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

EQAs will aim to visit all academies in a two-year rolling cycle.

Where schools are receiving support through RISE advisers, the progress of this improvement work will be examined. EQAs will not seek to provide additional input where schools have been identified as needing support through RISE.

To support academies further, additional services from the Education Quality and Safeguarding team may be procured, subject to negotiation, availability and team capacity.

Maintained Schools

To provide effective support and challenge, all schools maintained by the local authority *will aim to receive at least three visits per year from one of our Education Quality Advisers*. This will be supplemented by an additional visit from an Associate Headteacher. Where schools need additional support, this will be provided by either colleagues from the Education Quality and Safeguarding team and/or additional Associate Headteacher time.

These visits will support leaders with respect to school condition and standards. In all visits, the headteacher's own agenda will be prioritised.

Records of visits will be maintained through the annual visit record. This will record areas of discussion relating to

- Safeguarding
- Inclusion
- Curriculum and Teaching
- Achievements
- Attendance and behaviour
- Personal development and wellbeing
- Leadership and Governance

And where appropriate

- Early years
- Post-16 provision

Where other Local Authority Education Quality and Safeguarding staff are involved in visits to the school, these notes will be appended to this record.

Where schools are deemed to require a higher level of support this will be identified through discussion with the headteacher.

Higher support may be deemed appropriate in response to

- Factors that affect the leadership and management of the school
- Concerns with respect to safeguarding
- Concerns with respect to inclusion and attendance
- Concerns with respect to pupil outcomes

To address the concern, the Lead EQA in consultation the headteacher will consider

- A local authority review (a 1 day on-site visit by EQAs)
- A School Performance meeting involving the school and diocesan representatives to support

Programme of activities

The visit record can be used to structure conversations between EQAs/ Associate Headteachers and Headteachers during the visits.

Visit may also include, but not limited to, the following programme of activities:

- Review of SEF
- Review of SDP
- Learning walks
- Workbook scrutiny
- Moderation
- Data analysis
- Ofsted support
- Website checks
- Governance support
- Safeguarding support
- Premises and condition checks
- Health and safety checks
- Finances
- Policy review
- Complaints support
- Training

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Associate Headteachers

The Local Authority maintains a pool of highly experienced headteachers from maintained schools.

Their work supplements the work of Education Quality Advisers and will provide a valuable link to support sector led school improvement work.

All schools will have an attached link associate headteacher to complement the work of the EQA team.

These leaders are called upon to offer specialist advice, peer challenge, and direct support to schools identified as needing a higher level of intervention.

The involvement of these associate headteachers is formally commissioned by the Local Authority, and where a higher level of support is needed the funding arrangements negotiated between the schools requiring support and the LA.

This ensures that all schools benefit from relevant expertise while fostering a culture of professional collaboration and continuous improvement.

Associate headteachers will meet regularly with the EQA for school standards to receive training and support to fulfil their responsibilities and to build a strong link between their work and the Local Authority.

Local Authority Reviews

To support the school in addressing areas of concern within maintained schools, the LA may seek to determine an LA review. This will have a specific area of focus and work with the school in analysing more closely areas of need. This may include work scrutiny, lesson visits, viewing documentary evidence. School leaders will be involved in this process and the outcomes communicated through updating the annual visit record.

Maintained School Performance meetings / monitoring

Both Local Authority Reviews and School Performance meetings are structured to provide schools with targeted guidance, rigorous evaluation, and actionable recommendations.

School Performance meetings, on the other hand, bring together school leaders, governors. relevant local authority representatives, and, where appropriate, diocesan representatives. *These meetings enable a holistic exploration of pupil outcomes, trends in attendance and inclusion, and the overall quality of educational provision.*

Monitoring will take place at a LA, trust and school level. Local authority education quality advisors will meet regularly to discuss schools and performance alongside associate headteachers and other LA officers. as previously mentioned, the LA will also hold annual conversations with Trusts regarding the performance of their schools as well as agreeing a timetable for individual school visits. Individual schools will receive at least 2 monitoring visits a year. These will examine areas linked to the new Ofsted framework as well as looking at areas such as finance, health and safety and school condition. At least one of these visits will be conducted by a Senior Education Quality Advisor. Written records will be made of all visits and shared accordingly.

Discussion is both reflective and forward-looking, enabling stakeholders to jointly celebrate progress, address emerging challenges, and agree on support strategies. Action points from these meetings are tracked and followed up to ensure sustained improvement.

The school would work with EQAs to develop the plan of support. Where it is deemed that a school will require an additional level of support, consideration will be given to brokering additional support from associate headteachers.

Acting Headteachers

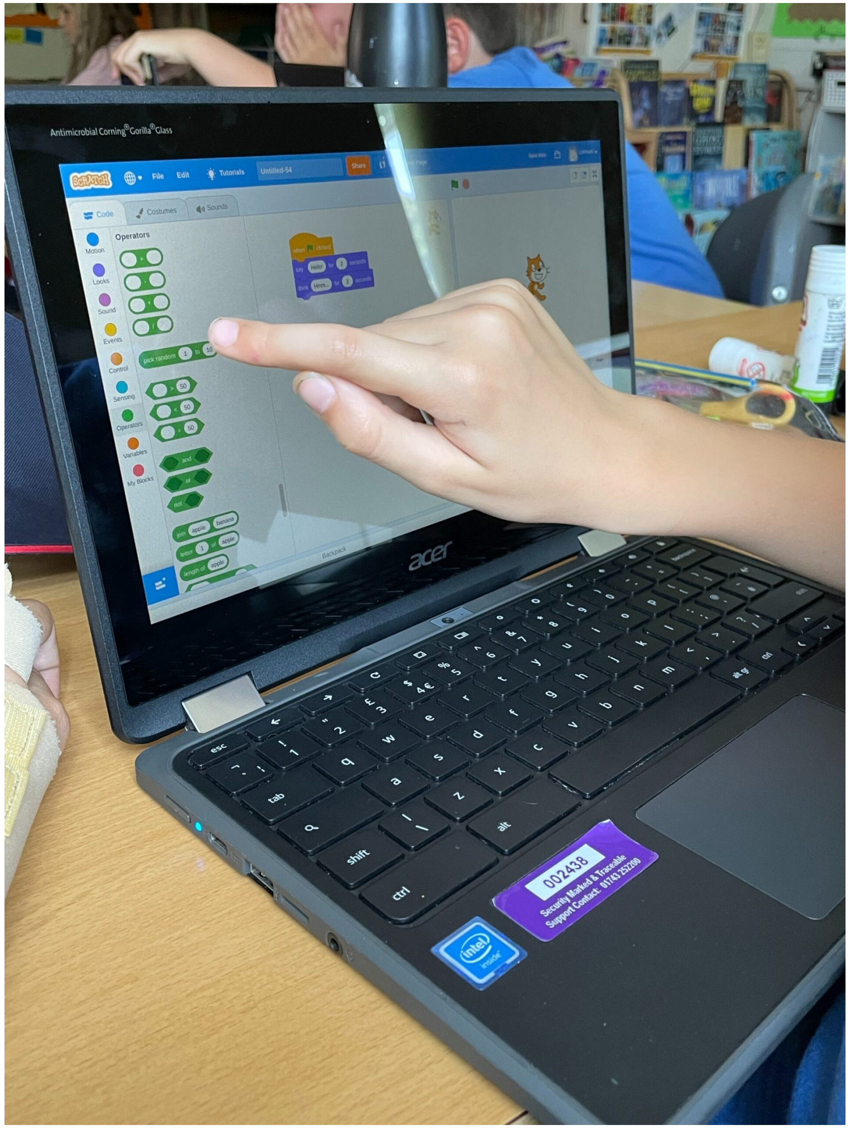
The Education Quality and Safeguarding Team will maintain and train a pool of acting headteachers drawn from aspiring headteachers from across the county. This pool will support, in conjunction with School Human Resources, the arrangements to support maintained schools at those times where an acting headteacher is required.

When a maintained school faces the long-term absence of its substantive headteacher, governors are advised to follow established protocols to ensure continuity and stability.

Initially, the governing body should consider whether cover can be provided using existing staff within a federation, if applicable. The substantive headteacher, during their absence, should not be expected to undertake leadership or management tasks, though limited contact with the school may be agreed upon following advice from medical professionals and with the support of Human Resources. The level of such engagement must be regularly reviewed.

An extraordinary meeting of governors should be convened to discuss the expected duration of absence, any ongoing or new initiatives, impending inspections, and to collate relevant policies and Human Resources casework for the acting headteacher. The governors should also address next steps for arranging cover, with three main options typically considered: having a current staff member step up (usually the deputy headteacher), contracting a leader from another school or academy, or appointing an executive headteacher on a temporary basis. If a deputy headteacher becomes acting headteacher, arrangements must be made to cover their previous role, and adjustments to contracts and pay should be handled in liaison with Human Resources.

Brokering arrangements between schools and trusts with respect to acting headships would be supported by the Head of Education Quality and Safeguarding.



Support for new headteachers

In recognition of the particular challenges faced by those stepping into headship for the first time, a structured support package is in place for all new headteachers. Central to this is the provision of three Education Quality Advisors (School Standards) visits during the first year, designed to offer guidance, assure quality, and reinforce positive leadership practices. Alongside this, each new headteacher is paired with a dedicated link associate headteacher, who serves as a mentor and sounding board.

In addition, where schools are identified as requiring further support beyond the core offer, additional capacity and expertise will be deployed as appropriate from the wider Education Quality and Safeguarding team. This flexible approach ensures that schools have access to a breadth of specialist knowledge and resources tailored to their unique contexts and improvement priorities.

Through the Senior Education Quality Advisors for school standards, the Local Authority will facilitate an ongoing network for new headteachers during their first year.

Support for maintained schools during an Ofsted inspection

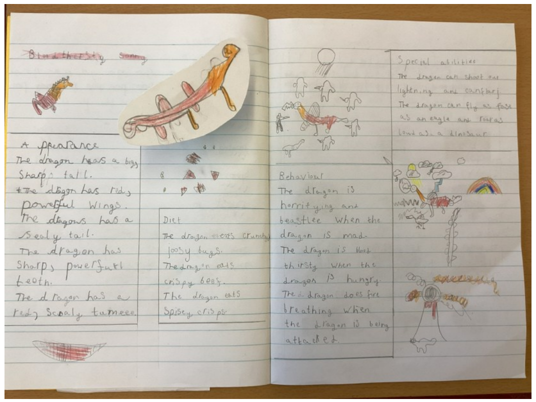
An Education Quality Adviser of the Local Authority is in a position to be the named responsible person for headteachers wellbeing at the point of school inspection. During the planning call by Ofsted, this will be established by the lead inspector.

Advisers will contact schools at the point of notification and work to provide support to school and discuss queries. Education Quality Advisers will contribute to the inspection in line with the requirements of the inspection handbook. This will usually be through an in-person meeting with the lead inspector.

Headteachers will have mobile phone access to the nominated EQA for use during the inspection process.

Where it is felt by the headteacher and/or Local Authority that additional time on site is appropriate in order to provide support, this will be provided through an Education Quality Advisor or an associate headteacher.

The Local Authority, through representation by EQA or associate headteachers, will always seek to attend the outcome meetings of Ofsted inspections in person.



Small schools

It is recognised that Shropshire faces a particular challenge with respect to the proportion of small (under 150 pupils) primary schools. Whilst there are myriad benefits to small schools, this also poses a challenge. This can impact on curriculum design, capacity for leadership, and recruitment and retention of staff. Small schools are also more affected by specific challenges and events that present (e.g. complaints, critical incidents, and falling rolls)

To support this, the EQS team will be sensitive to these challenges.

As a rural Local Authority, Shropshire Council follows the presumption against the closure of rural schools. This requires officers to work closely to support schools and governing bodies in developing alternative strategies to support positive outcomes for pupils and communities. In addition, a small school closure policy has been developed in line with Department for Education guidelines. This is included as an appendix to this policy.

Supporting inclusive practice in schools and effective practice for pupils with Special Educational Needs/and or Disabilities (SEND)

Shropshire Council will co-produce a robust and sustainable Local Inclusion Specialist Support Offer that will build the capacity of all schools and settings to meet the needs of their pupils.

Shropshire Council is committed to ensuring children can be educated successfully and fully included within their local mainstream schools when appropriate to do so.

Through Education Quality Advisers for SEND and AP, the Council offers a range of support, guidance and challenge to schools and settings to foster inclusion, including:

- A range of Continuing Professional Development and training courses
- Investigation of SEND related complaints on behalf of the Department for Education and Ofsted
- SEND Reviews to support practice
- Specialist Outreach
- Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce
- Traded support packages from specialist SEND professionals
- Access to Early Years SEND Support Officers (EYSSOs) to support the transition of pre-school children to mainstream schools.
- Access to high needs top up funding without an EHCP, to support early intervention and a graduated response (EYIAF and GSP)
- Access to capital and revenue funding through the Primary and Secondary Inclusion Development Grants, to support schools to develop their own setting-based approaches to SEND and inclusion to meet identified needs.

Early Years SEND Support Officers (EySSOs) support early years providers, including childminders and schools through to the end of Reception, in meeting the needs of children with SEND. They are able to provide weekly visits for monitoring and coaching, quality assure EYIF usage and work closely with agencies like Portage and the Child Development Centre to ensure access for all children, including those with complex needs. EySSOs also help children with Step into School funding transition smoothly to schools.

The Council endeavours to co-produce and co-deliver support by working with a wide range of local providers, including schools, Multi Academy Trusts (MATs), Health colleagues and SEND specialists, to ensure the support on offer remains current, good value for money and of a high quality.

In addition, Shropshire Council is committed to further growing its network of SEN Units and Resource Provisions (SURPs) across the county, to extend the range of provision on offer within our mainstream schools, avoid unnecessary travel and promote belonging and inclusion within the local community. The work of EQAs for SEND and AP seeks to support this development, providing access to ongoing training and networking opportunities.

Safeguarding

The Education Quality and Safeguarding Team have staff within it who take the lead role in offering training, advice, support and challenge with respect to the management of safeguarding to all educational settings.

The work of the lead officers within this team includes

- The provision of safeguarding Continuing Professional Development (including training and networking) opportunities for education providers in line with local safeguarding arrangements
- Support for the Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership to facilitate the quality assurance of 'training pool' activity
- The provision of safeguarding consultancies to support identification of strong practice worthy of dissemination and identification of practice that needs to be strengthened
- Providing advice to providers to support a strong culture of safeguarding (including template policies/guidance)
- Management and oversight of statutory safeguarding audits (in line with duties outlined in Section 11 Children's Act 2004)
- Completing quality assurance checks on safeguarding arrangements in education provision. This will typically be following discussion with school leaders but can include exceptional short notice visits to ensure the safety of children where serious and urgent concerns are raised that indicate safeguarding arrangements are ineffective. Where such visits are organised, the purpose and rationale will be clearly explained to the provider on arrival
- Investigation of safeguarding complaints on behalf of the Department for Education and Ofsted
- Facilitating and supporting the involvement of education providers as 'relevant agencies' in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (including maintaining the link between the Education Safeguarding Sub-group, Education Partnership Board and Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership)
- Working with other teams in the local authority to share information about safeguarding arrangements to support best practice and address the need for any improvements
- Facilitating the representation of education on strategic, working and operational groups/ processes

Links to other teams within Children's Services

Education Quality and Safeguarding team activities complements the work of other areas within Children's Services, particularly the Education Access Service, the Virtual School and the EHCP team. Information is routinely shared to support early intervention, appropriate escalation and coordinated planning, to support work in schools and settings. This integrated approach strengthens safeguarding, promotes inclusion, and ensures that pathways for reintegration or alternative provision are considered within a clear policy framework.

Joint working between the Education Quality and Safeguarding Team and the Shropshire Virtual School is well established. The Education Quality and Safeguarding team supports and challenges schools with respect to provision for children and young people in care, or who have been in care and enjoys good links with the Virtual School. The EQS itself supports independent scrutiny of the Virtual School's work through established governance routes, including reporting and oversight via senior leadership and partnership boards. This ensures that the Virtual School's priorities, use of pupil premium funding, and impact on outcomes are subject to appropriate challenge, while also identifying opportunities for system-wide improvement.

Support with respect to Educational Trips and Visits

The Outdoor Education Adviser provides comprehensive support to schools and settings, *ensuring that educational trips and visits are both enriching and safe.*

Drawing on the principles and best practices of OEAP (The Association of Advisers for Outdoor Learning and Educational Visits) this includes an annual review of Local Authority Policies and procedures guidance which links to an online visits form called 'eVisits'. This supports the submission by schools and settings of all offsite visits (this incorporates an approval system for Quality Assurance purposes).

The eVisits software enables trip leaders to link in with OEAP National Guidance website for additional information when organising an offsite trip. The Outdoor Education Advisor also has a management responsibility for Schools Forest School programmes and approval of Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions.

To support schools effectively, the Outdoor Education Adviser's activities encompass the following:

Training and Capacity Building

- *Delivering a structured programme of training for Educational Visit Coordinators (EVCs), group leaders, and accompanying staff.* This training is regularly updated to reflect current national standards and includes modules on risk management, emergency protocols, effective supervision, legal responsibilities, and specific topics such as inclusion, medical needs, and adventurous activities.
- Facilitating induction sessions for new staff involved in visits, as well as refresher training to ensure ongoing competence and confidence.
- *Providing specialist workshops on topics such as overseas visits, residentials, and high-risk environments*, tailored to the needs of individual schools or groups of settings.
- Supporting whole-staff briefings to promote a culture of safety and shared understanding of roles and responsibilities during off-site activities.

Monitoring and Quality Assurance

- Regularly reviewing schools' visit policies and procedures to ensure alignment with OEAP National Guidance and statutory requirements.
- Auditing a sample of educational visit records, including risk assessments, consent forms, and post-visit evaluations. This helps to identify areas of good practice and opportunities for development.
- Conducting monitoring visits, which may include observing pre-visit briefings, accompanying visits to evaluate practice in real-time, and providing detailed feedback.
- Offering constructive recommendations following audits or monitoring, supporting continuous improvement in the planning and delivery of visits.

Advisory and Emergency Support

- Serving as a key point of contact for schools, offering advice on risk management, trip planning, and the use of external providers, including vetting of providers and venues.
- Maintaining up-to-date knowledge of sector developments, disseminating updates, and sharing case studies or learning from incidents to promote best practice.
- *Providing real-time support in the event of an incident or emergency during a visit*, assisting with incident management, communication, and post-incident review.

Development of Resources

- Creating and updating guidance documents, checklists, exemplar risk assessments, and templates to assist schools in their planning and record-keeping.
- Facilitating access to OEAP National Guidance resources and supporting schools in interpreting and implementing this guidance in their local context.

Through these activities, the Outdoor Education Adviser ensures that all aspects of educational trips and visits—from initial planning and risk assessment to delivery and evaluation—are robustly supported.

This approach helps schools provide safe, inclusive, and high-quality outdoor learning experiences for all pupils, in line with the expectations set out by OEAP National Guidance.

Shropshire Council

Early Years

The Early Years Education Quality Adviser and the Early Years Quality Improvement and Learning Co-ordinator, in collaboration with other colleagues in the EQS service provide a comprehensive programme of support and challenge to group and school-based providers and childminders, designed to raise standards and ensure the best possible outcomes for children aged 0-5.

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Their support role includes:

- Visiting group and school-based providers and childminders to offer hands-on guidance and personalised feedback tailored to the individual context and needs of each provider.
- Modelling high-quality practice across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), demonstrating effective strategies for teaching, learning, assessment, inclusive provision, and positive interactions with children and families.
- Facilitating access to targeted professional development, including training workshops, coaching, and peer networks, to build practitioner confidence and expertise.
- Advising on the effective use of assessment and observation to inform planning and meet the learning and development needs of all children, including disadvantaged children, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being
- Providing or signposting to resources, toolkits, self-evaluation frameworks, and practical materials to assist settings in quality improvement and reflective practice.

- Providing advice, guidance and challenge to group and school-based providers and childminders drawing upon the Ofsted framework for the inspection of the Early Years, and schools. This includes supporting group and school-based providers and childminders with inspection preparation, supporting action planning in response to feedback, and embedding a culture of continuous improvement.

In addition, the Early Years team (Senior Education Quality Adviser Early Years and Safeguarding, Early Years Quality Improvement and Learning Co-ordinator, Early Years Childcare Sufficiency Officer, Early Years Safeguarding Officer and Education Quality Adviser SEND)

- Monitor and evaluating the quality of provision through a range of mechanisms, including learning walks, scrutiny of documentation, and analysis of data such as Ofsted outcomes, Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) results, and attendance patterns.
- Identify underperformance, gaps in provision, or safeguarding concerns, and address these promptly through clear, evidence-based recommendations and agreed action plans.
- Support settings with respect to ambitious but achievable improvement targets and providing robust follow-up to ensure progress and impact are sustained over time.
- Encourage a culture of high aspiration, reflective practice, and accountability, supporting leaders and practitioners to embrace challenge as a catalyst for positive change.
- Escalate persistent concerns or significant safeguarding issues to the local authority and other relevant agencies to ensure swift and appropriate intervention.

Collaboration is central to the Early Years Team approach: they work closely with group and school-based providers, childminders, local authority teams, and other partners to foster networks of support, share best practice, and ensure that early years provision is inclusive, safe, and responsive to the needs of every child and family. Where issues are identified, they keep clear records of visits, actions agreed, and progress made, ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the process.

Work is focused on empowering early years providers to deliver consistently high standards, nurture children's development, and build a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

Category	Support Status	Ofsted Reference	Local Authority Reference	Leadership and Management	Business	Allocated days of Support
Green providing a Expected standard or better education	LOW SUPPORT	Judged Exceptional, Strong or expected in all areas; or ‘met’ at the last Ofsted inspection.	Work with the Early Years team; attends CPD and network meetings. In contact with members of EY team as necessary	All key documentation is in place and safeguarding practices are robust. Partnership working is effective. Equality of opportunity is evident. SEND provision and polices meet individual needs and highly effective working relationships with outside agencies and parents secures positive outcomes	Well established business, sustainability and sufficiency plans are in place; clear understanding of funding; local authority terms and conditions adhered to; Occupancy levels are above 80%	0 days
Amber level of education provided judged Needs attention	MEDIUM SUPPORT	Setting shows vulnerability of not attaining an Expected standard at the next inspection. Or has been judged as Needs Attention or not met by Ofsted. The setting or childminder is struggling to demonstrate the capacity to make the necessary changes. This is evidenced through the work of the Early Years team as well as information from outside services	Key roles in place such as SENCo and room leads but possibly support needed in embedding roles and responsibilities. Welfare requirements are being met consistently but safeguarding audit might highlight some areas for improvement. Settings who have previously been judged as Outstanding or Good at the previous inspection but are now considered by the local authority to be vulnerable at the next inspection.	Leaders are committed to improving practitioners’ knowledge to enhance and improve provision. Leaders engage effectively with children, their parents and others in their community, including schools and other local services. Leaders engage with their staff and are aware of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload. Provision to support children’s personal development is not good. Any breaches of the statutory requirements for safeguarding and welfare and/or learning and development do not have a significant impact on children’s safety, well-being and personal development. Provision for all children is not consistently good. Quality of education is not good and does not meet the needs of all children. Leaders and managers have a clear vision for their setting but are unable to demonstrate how to bring about change and drive the improvements needed.	Funding support needed; sufficiency and sustainability plans in place; possible concerns over occupancy; some concerns over terms and conditions being consistently met and / or concerns raised re staff turnover. Supervisions not driving change Lack of impact from CPD Concerns around the premises Policies not up to date Ofsted not informed of changes	2 visits + 2 online teams meeting/ phone call
Red – level of education provided has serious weaknesses or is in special measures	INTENSIVE / HIGH SUPPORT	Safeguarding is ineffective. Breaches of EYFS requirements have a significant impact on the safety and well-being and/or the learning and development of children. The setting has received two previous ‘Requires Improvement’ judgements and it is still not at Expected standard. This is evidenced through the work of the Early Years team as well as information from outside services	A poorly designed and implemented curriculum does not meet children’s needs. The needs of babies and young children are not met. Children are not well prepared for school or the next stage of their learning, particularly those who are in receipt of additional funding.	Leaders require support, guidance and intervention to be able to improve the quality of education and care. Actions taken to tackle areas of identified weakness have been insufficient or ineffective. Practitioners have a poor understanding of the areas of learning they teach and the way in which young children learn. Strategies for engaging parents are weak and parents do not know what their child is learning or how they can help them improve. Mandatory training is not undertaken. Breaches of the statutory requirements have a significant impact on children’s learning and development.	Premises unsecured and unsuitable, including the learning environment and equipment available; terms and conditions not returned; occupancy levels below 50% ; sufficiency and sustainability plans not in place; records and documentations not in place.	3 visits + 3 online teams meeting/ phone call

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Category	Support Status	Ofsted Reference	Local Authority Reference	Leadership and Management	Business	Allocated days of Support
Blue- not in contact with EY team so not known	Contact with signposting and offer of support	Could be any Ofsted grade	Setting unknown as doesn't attend CPD or contact the wider team. Offer of visits from LJ have been declined or not acknowledged			Contact made - email or phone call
New setting / New Manager	Bespoke support	After registration / after taking post	A standard email to be sent to all new settings, childminders and new managers outlining the support offered by the EY team to newly registered settings. Face-to-face visits by the EY team .	Term 1 - Childcare and sufficiency visit from DS following support if they receive capital grant funding as well as a Learning and Development visit. Term 1 or 2 – Safeguarding visit. Term 3 - EQA SEND visit The outcome will be a setting in the green category. All key documentation is in place and safeguarding practices are robust. Partnership working is effective. Equality of opportunity is evident. SEND provision and polices meet individual needs and highly effective working relationships with outside agencies and parents secures positive outcomes	Term 1 - Childcare and sufficiency visit from DS following support if they receive capital grant funding as well as a Learning and Development visit. Term 2 – Safeguarding visit. Term 3 - EQA SEND visit Well established business, sustainability and sufficiency plans are in place; clear understanding of funding; local authority terms conditions adhered to; Occupancy levels are above 80%	Up to 4 days face to face during the first year. 0 days during the second year

Post 16

The Post 16 team plays a crucial role in supporting young people as they transition from secondary education into further education, employment, or training. Central to their work is the tracking of pupils who are at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), as well as those whose post-16 destinations are not known. This involves systematic monitoring of attendance, engagement, and progression data, enabling early identification of students who may require additional support. There is a strong communication network between schools, colleges and the Local Authority via a SharePoint site that collects and shares data safely and efficiently.

Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) professionals within the team provide tailored support to students and their families, helping them to explore post-16 options and make informed choices about their future pathways. Transition Support Workers collaborate closely with schools, colleges, and external agencies to facilitate smooth transitions, ensuring that vulnerable students are connected with appropriate resources and support networks.

In Year 11, the team works proactively with school careers and safeguarding staff to identify vulnerable students who may be at risk of disengagement or who face barriers to successful transition. This is achieved through effective data sharing and analysis of risk factors, and individual casework. We also share the pen portrait of their transition support needs to the confirmed provider in early September to ensure that places are successfully maintained by enabling early interventions to occur.

Education Settings Outside the Local Area and Independent Special Schools

To ensure the highest standards of provision and safeguarding across all education settings, EQAs will coordinate periodic visits to Independent Special Schools within the local area and to education settings situated outside the immediate local area when commissioned for Shropshire CYP. These visits are designed to provide an objective evaluation of the quality of education, the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, and the overall well-being of pupils.

During these visits, EQAs will undertake a range of monitoring activities. This may include reviewing safeguarding protocols, examining documentation, meeting with school leaders, and conducting learning walks to observe classroom practice. Particular attention will be paid to how well the school responds to the needs of its pupils, inclusivity, and attendance patterns. Findings and recommendations from these visits will be communicated promptly to SEN commissioners and be used to inform decision around future placements Before and after visits to education settings outside of the local area, EQAs will communicate with the Local Authority within which the setting is located. Visits may be dictated by commissioners in response to concerns or complaints.

Monitoring and Safeguarding in Out-of-School Settings (OOSS)

Shropshire Council's commitment is to ensure that all children and young people in the area, regardless of the setting they attend, are safe and supported.

Shropshire Council acknowledges that OOSS—such as tuition centres, supplementary schools, sports clubs, dance classes, religious education, and youth organisations—play a significant part in the lives of children and young people in the county. While many of these settings provide enriching educational and social experiences, they are not regulated under the same statutory safeguarding frameworks as registered education settings.

The Council will work closely with the Department for Education (DfE), Ofsted, statutory safeguarding partners and other relevant agencies to ensure that children attending OOSS are as safe as possible and receive a suitable education. The Council's approach will include the following key actions:

- Mapping and Understanding Local Provision: Shropshire Council will take steps to identify and understand the range of out-of-school settings operating in the area. This will involve gathering basic information, engaging with local communities, and establishing or strengthening processes for reporting concerns about specific settings.
- Promoting Good Safeguarding Practice: The Council will encourage OOSS providers to implement and maintain robust safeguarding policies and procedures. Where possible, the Council will condition any lease, hire, or funding agreements for local authority premises or financial support on compliance with minimum safeguarding standards, as outlined in DfE guidance.

Out-of-school settings: safeguarding guidance for providers - GOV.UK

- Support and Training: The Council will consider offering guidance, training opportunities, and information on voluntary accreditation schemes (such as Ofsted's voluntary childcare register) to OOSS providers. The Education Quality and Safeguarding team may provide advice, share best practice, and facilitate access to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks as appropriate.
- Engagement with Families: The Council has a duty to provide parents with information about available services and facilities, including guidance on what safeguarding measures to expect from OOSS providers. The Council will promote awareness among families so they can make informed decisions about their children's participation in these settings.

- Support and Training: The Council will consider offering guidance, training opportunities, and information on voluntary accreditation schemes (such as Ofsted's voluntary childcare register) to OOSS providers. The Education Quality and Safeguarding team may provide advice, share best practice, and facilitate access to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks as appropriate.
- Engagement with Families: The Council has a duty to provide parents with information about available services and facilities, including guidance on what safeguarding measures to expect from OOSS providers. The Council will promote awareness among families so they can make informed decisions about their children's participation in these settings.

Alternative Provision

The local authority (LA) maintains close communication with LA commissioners to ensure robust quality assurance of non-school (unregistered) alternative provision (AP). Regular updates and collaborative reviews are held to monitor the effectiveness, safety, and suitability of such placements, with feedback from EQAs informing these discussions. Commissioners are kept informed of any concerns or areas for improvement identified during monitoring visits, and joint action plans may be agreed where necessary to address specific issues.

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Responsibility for the oversight of the alternative provision used always rests with the local authority or school that commissioned the placement.

Schools should always inform the local authority when they commission a placement in alternative provision for a child to ensure the local authority maintains oversight of sufficiency and safeguarding. This is an expectation of the Department for Education. The Education Access Service will maintain a register of all AP placements of which they have been notified.

Guidance for schools commissioning AP emphasises the importance of thorough due diligence before making any placement. Schools are advised to seek assurances regarding safeguarding, health and safety, curriculum quality, and staff qualifications, and to maintain ongoing oversight throughout the child's time in AP. The LA provides schools with practical checklists and support materials to guide their selection and monitoring of AP providers, ensuring that placements meet both statutory requirements and the individual needs of pupils.

The Local Authority will publish and maintain an up to date AP. Directory which will guide schools in their choice of AP placements, while making it clear that the school retain responsibility for undertaking their own QA prior to commissioning.

The Council will continually review and strengthen its processes for monitoring, supporting, and, where necessary, intervening in out-of-school settings, working collaboratively with partners, families, and communities to uphold the highest standards of safeguarding and educational quality.

Complaints about schools and settings

Most complaints about schools are managed directly by the schools themselves, following clear procedures set out in statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted.

All schools and trusts must publish accessible complaints policies, enabling parents, carers, and stakeholders to raise concerns. The process usually starts with informal resolution, progressing to formal complaints if needed, and may culminate in a hearing by the school's governing body. *The local authority (LA) does not arbitrate or mediate individual complaints, nor does it overturn school decisions. Instead, the LA monitors the frequency and nature of complaints to assess risks relating to safeguarding and school, trust and setting processes.* Where concerning patterns or significant issues emerge, this intelligence informs decisions about further support, scrutiny, or escalation and where necessary information is shared with partners such as the DfE and Ofsted.

As the regulator, the Department for Education will occasionally seek assurances from the LA on the receipt of complaints about schools, academies and settings directly received by the Department. The LA will therefore, from time to time, conduct enquiries in order to provide this information on behalf of the Department for Education. However, this function is again not to act as an arbitrator on behalf of the complainant.

When Ofsted or other bodies refer qualifying complaints to the LA, the information is considered as part of broader risk assessment and oversight. The LA reviews these referrals for evidence of ongoing issues or safeguarding risks.

.At all times, the LA maintains oversight of quality and safety, while ensuring the primary responsibility for resolving complaints remains with the individual schools, trusts and settings.

In cases where concerns are identified, the local authority's contact will be limited to the school itself, ensuring communication remains direct and appropriate. For academies, the local authority will request that the academy makes the relevant trust aware of the issue. This approach respects the governance structures of academies, where trusts hold oversight responsibilities, and ensures that concerns are managed by those with the requisite authority and accountability to take effective action.

This may trigger further information being sought from the complainant/provider to assess whether there is an indication of wider concerns. However, the LA will not intervene in any existing complaints processes. Such intelligence is used to guide ongoing monitoring, support (in the case of maintained schools), or potential escalation in line with statutory and local safeguarding requirements.

Schools, academies and settings will be provided of information shared by the LA with Ofsted and/or the Department for Education.

Education Providers causing concern

In circumstances where Shropshire Council identifies serious concerns regarding the performance or operation of a provider, the Council will initially contact the individual provider to raise these issues. Quality assurance activities may also be arranged; including exceptional short notice visits to ensure the safety of children where serious and urgent concerns are raised that indicate safeguarding arrangements are ineffective. Only in exceptional circumstance will information not be shared, such as where doing so would place a person at increased risk of significant harm or injury and/or obstruct or interfere with any potential regulatory body or enforcement agency investigation.

Serious concerns might include, but are not limited to -

- Serious circumstances that compromise the safety of children, young people and staff.
- Persistent failure to comply with legal duties after this has been identified.
- Continued underperformance
- Concerns that necessitate action in line with whistleblowing and audit procedures.

This correspondence is shared with leaders of this provision, and, where relevant, the governing board of this organisation.

If, after raising concerns, the Council concludes that sufficient progress has not been made to address them, this will escalate the matter to the relevant department within the DfE and/or Ofsted or the relevant regulatory authority.

Oversight and Governance

The Head of Education Quality and Safeguarding will periodically accompany staff to visits to support the quality assurance of support and challenge provided to schools and settings through visits and training.

The impact of this plan will be systematically monitored and reported through several key governance forums. Specifically, progress and outcomes will be shared with the quarterly People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, ensuring thorough oversight and accountability. Additionally, updates will be provided to the SEND and AP Partnership Board, the Children's Safeguarding Board of the Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership, and the Shropshire Education Partnership Board along with its sub-groups. This multi-layered approach guarantees that all relevant stakeholders are kept informed and involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the plan and driving continuous improvement.

Development of this Strategy

You said	We did
Change the order so that the 'schools causing concern' is seen as exceptional action rather than following on from the day to day	Moved this section towards the end of the document
Reference more clearly 'challenge' as a principle and to describe	The notion of professional challenge, although referenced
Recognise more strongly the role of sector led improvement as being of benefit for all schools, not just those judged to be in need	More detail provided about the role of associate headteachers confirming blend for all schools of LA QA visits and associate HT
Need to more clearer detail the support offered to maintained schools at the point of Ofsted inspection	Added additional detail to section on support with respect to Of-sted inspections. This significantly enhances the 'remote' support
Provide greater clarity with respect to the format of the annual conversation with CEOs	Planned development of model agenda developed through CEO representatives from Education Partnership Board
Clarify process of how complaints are managed	New section added.
Concern that this is interpreted as the LA operates as a 'maintained era' QA model	With respect to academies, this strategy is focused on developing a culture of information sharing between academies and the LA. This is not about LA delivered consultancy with respect to school improvement rather about building relationships between the LA and academies (particularly where there has been variability in
There is little around structure with respect to small schools and federation, academisation and closure	Added section to include the Small School Closure policy.

Shropshire Council

Appendix 1

I) School Closure Policy

Introduction

This policy is in relation to the closure of maintained schools within Shropshire Council's geographic area.

Decision maker: For the purposes of this document the decision maker will normally mean the local authority e.g. Shropshire Council who have overall responsibility for the school closure process of maintained schools.

2. School closures

2.1 Stages of the proposed school closure

Under section 15 of Education and Inspections Act 2006, a local authority can propose the closure of a community, foundation, voluntary, community special, foundation special or maintained nursery school; and the governing body of a voluntary controlled, voluntary aided, foundation or foundation special school may publish proposals to close its own school.

The statutory process is set out in the DfE guidance Opening and closing maintained schools

Alternatively, the governing body of a foundation or voluntary school may give at least 2 years' notice of its intention to close the school to the Secretary of State and the local authority.

2.2 Reasons for considering closing a school

The DfE's guidance: Opening and closing maintained schools states that the reasons for closing a maintained school include, but are not limited to, where:

- there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium to long term;
- it is to be amalgamated with another school;
- it has been judged inadequate by Ofsted and the Secretary of State has revoked the academy order;
- it is no longer considered viable;
- it is being replaced by a new school.

2.3. Avoiding school closures

Closing a school is a difficult decision which impacts on the whole school community including the children, parents and school staff and would normally only be taken when all other options to keep the school open have been exhausted.

As a rural local authority, the DfE guidance Opening and closing maintained schools holds the position that…

“Proposers should be aware that the department expects all decision makers to adopt a ***presumption against the closure*** of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school will never close, but that the case for closure should be strong and clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area. ***Shropshire Council follows this presumption***.

The presumption does not apply where a rural infant and junior school on the same site are being closed to establish a new primary school.

Proposers should set out whether the school is referred to in the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order or, where the school is a secondary school, whether the school is identified as rural on the Get Information about Schools (using the Office for National Statistics’ Rural Urban Classification In formulating any closure proposals under this section in relation to a rural primary school, proposers must have regard to:

- the likely effect of the discontinuance of the school on the local community;
- the availability, and likely cost to the local authority, of transport to other schools;
- any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase; and
- any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school.

Proposers, for all rural closures, in addition to the above, should also provide evidence to show they have carefully considered:

- alternatives to closure including:
- conversion to academy status and joining a multi-academy trust
- federation with another local school;
- the scope for an extended school to provide local community services and facilities (e.g. childcare facilities, family and adult learning, healthcare, community internet access);
- the availability, and likely cost to parents, of transport to other schools;
- whether the proposal will result in unreasonably long journey times – as well as the cost to transport arrangements following the school transport policy – which provides transport to the nearest or catchment school where the distance criteria is met i.e. 2 miles for primary, 3 miles for secondary.

• whether the school is now surplus to requirements (e.g. because there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium or long term);

• wider school organisation and capacity of good schools in the area to accommodate displaced pupils" (DfE Opening and Closing Maintained Schools pg24)

When a school is being considered for closure which may result in the displacement of staff, the Local Authority will explore all possible alternatives to the potential school closure.

3. School amalgamations

According to the DfE's guidance: Opening and closing maintained schools, there are 2 ways to amalgamate 2 (or more) existing maintained schools.

• The local authority and/or governing body (depending on school category) can publish proposals to close 2, or more, schools and the local authority (or a proposer other than the local authority depending on category) can publish a proposal to open a new school. Where this is a *presumption school, this will be subject to publication of a section 6A notice . This will result in the creation of a new school.

• The local authority and/or governing body (depending on school category) can publish a proposal to close one school (or more) and enlarge/change the age range/transfer site of an existing school (following the Statutory Prescribed Alterations Process as necessary), to accommodate the displaced pupils. The remaining school would retain its original school number, as it is not a new school, even if its phase has changed. This is sometimes referred to as a 'merger'.

**Where a local authority identifies the need for a new school, section 6A of EIA 2006 places the local authority under a duty to seek proposals to establish an academy (free school) via the 'free school presumption'.*

4. Pre-statutory procedure actions

In order for Shropshire Council to follow the local authority statutory procedure (Section 5), the Director of Children's Services would take a 'Working Paper' to cabinet for discussion and exploration. This paper would highlight reasons for closure as well as alternative possible solution – including any financial implications. If agreed at cabinet then the statutory procedure outlined in Section 5 would be followed.

Shropshire Council

5. Local authority statutory procedure

The DfE's guidance: Opening and closing maintained schools outlines the steps the local authority for maintained schools needs to take when making a decision on the permanent closure of a school;

Stage 1: Consultation
It is a statutory requirement to consult any parties the proposer (e.g. the local authority) thinks appropriate before publishing proposals to open or close a maintained school.

Stage 2: Publication
A statutory proposal should be published within 12 months of the initial consultation period being completed. It marks the start of the representation period or formal consultation.

Stage 3: Representation
This is the formal consultation period. The proposer should consult organisations, groups and individuals they feel to be appropriate during the representation period though any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the local authority (LA), to be taken into account by the decision maker. The representation period starts on the date of publication of the statutory proposal and MUST last for 4 weeks.

Stage 4: Decision
All of the responses received during Stage 3 must be considered by the decision maker. Related prescribed alterations proposals should also be considered and, where possible, determined at the same time. The LA will be the decision maker on a school closure proposal, unless the closure proposal is 'related' to another proposal that is to be decided by the Schools Adjudicator. The decision would be made by Full Cabinet.

Stage 5: Implementation
The decision made in stage four is implemented. There is no maximum limit on the time between the publication of a proposal and its proposed date of implementation. However, decision makers should be confident the proposers have good justification (for example an authority-wide reorganisation) if they propose a timescale longer than 3 years. The proposer must implement a proposal in the form approved, including any modifications made by the decision maker.

Appendix 2

Use of images for this document

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Shropshire Council

Committee	Full Council
Date and Time	24 September 2026 Public

Report of Independent Remuneration Panel

Cabinet Member:	Councillor Kidd – Leader of the Council
Lead Director:	Richard Phillips – Service Director - Legal and Governance
Service Area:	Legal and Governance
Report Author	Graham White – Interim Democratic Services Manager
Officer contact details	01743 252757 graham.white@shropshire.gov.uk
Electoral Divisions Affected	All Divisions
Key Decision?	Not Key Decision
Cabinet Forward Plan	Not Applicable
Report considered by	Full Council – 24 September 2026

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel in relation to the level of basic remuneration for Shropshire Councillors together with a full review of special responsibility allowances available.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Full Council is recommended to consider and approve, with or without amendment, the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations.

3. Background

3.1. The Council last approved the level of allowances in 2021, when it was agreed that allowances would be index linked to increase in line with the annual increase awarded to officers each year.

3.2. The Panel has met a number of times to give consideration to Members' Allowances. The Panel's recommendations are contained within the Report attached at Appendix A

4. Summary of Main Proposals

4.1. It is proposed that the current basic allowance remains unchanged.

4.2. Slight adjustments have been proposed to the special responsibilities allowances to more accurately reflect the current level of responsibilities attached to each position.

4.3. It is proposed to increase the mileage rate to align with the current HMRC figures.

4.4. Some changes are proposed to the way in which allowances are calculated to further reduce to the risk of overpayments being made

5. Alternative Options

5.1. The Council is required to have regard to the recommendations of the Panel. It can adopt the recommendations, adopt the recommendations with amendments or reject the recommendations.

6. Key risks and Opportunities

6.1. Changes which are perceived as increasing councillor remuneration may attract adverse public or media attention, particularly given the Council's financial position.

6.2. Conversely, if allowances do not adequately reflect the level of responsibility and time commitment required, there is a risk of discouraging individuals from seeking or undertaking key leadership and governance roles.

6.3. Members may disagree with the allocation or level of SRAs, leading to concerns that allowances do not properly reflect relative workloads and responsibilities.

6.4. Changes to payment arrangements and scheme rules require clear implementation to avoid payroll errors, overpayments, or compliance issues. Internal Audit has previously highlighted member allowance administration as an area requiring ongoing attention.

6.5. The review provides an opportunity to ensure SRAs accurately reflect current governance structures and the responsibilities attached to specific roles.

6.6. Consideration of the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations demonstrates that decisions are informed by an independent process rather than by members themselves.

6.7. Proposed changes such as aligning mileage rates with HMRC rates and revising payment arrangements can improve consistency and administrative efficiency.

6.8. Introducing or revising allowances for positions such as the co-opted Audit Committee member and Audit Committee Chair may support effective scrutiny and governance arrangements.

7. Council Priorities

7.1 The Members' Allowances Scheme supports the effective operation of democratic decision-making and organisational improvement.

8. Financial Implications

8.1. The proposed adjustments are not likely to have a material impact on already budgeted amounts for allowances.

9. Legal and HR implications

9.1. The proposed scheme has been drafted in accordance with the legislative framework[RP1.1] set out in the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003

10. Electoral Division Implications

10.1. There are no direct electoral division impacts arising from this report.

11. Health, Social (including "Child Friendly Shropshire") and Economic Implications

11.1. The proposals in this report do not have any Health, Social and Economic implications.

12. Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1. The proposals in this report do not have any Equality and Diversity implications.

13. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

13.1. The proposal in this report do not have any Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental implications.

14. Background Papers

14.1 Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003
14.2 Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel 2021

15. Appendices

15.1 Appendix A -Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

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REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL - REVIEW OF MEMBERS'S ALLOWANCES SCHEME FOR 2026-2027

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Independent Remuneration Panel met on 11 June 2026, 06 July 2026, and 13 August 2026 and received oral representations from the following:

Cllr Dawn Huseman	Reform Group Leader
Cllr Rob Wilson	Portfolio Holder (Transport and Regeneration)
Cllr Alex Wagner	Deputy Leader
Cllr Ed Potter	Scrutiny Committee Chairman
Cllr Teri Trickett	
Councillor Heather Kidd	Leader

1.2 Written representatives were received and considered by the panel from the Liberal Democrat, Conservative and Labour Political Groups.

1.3 Written representatives were also received and considered by the panel from the following members:

Cllr James Owen	Portfolio Holder (Housing)
Cllr Thomas Clayton	
Cllr Sam Walmsley	
Cllr Teri Trickett	
Cllr Sho Abdul	Deputy Portfolio Holder – Transformation and Economic Growth

1.4 In addition, The Panel considered comparative data based on a CIPFA provided comparison package. Panel Members also took note of the general situation with Public Sector pay and external inflation movements.

2.0 MEMBERS BASIC ALLOWANCE

2.1 **Recommendation**

That the basic allowance paid to members should remain unchanged at £14,839.00.

2.2 **Reasoning**
The allowance is currently in the top quartile of similar, or bigger, unitary councils.
.

SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES

3.0 CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL

3.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairman of Council remains unchanged at 0.75

3.2 Reasoning
It is proportional for the responsibilities and commitment for this post.

4.0 LEADER OF COUNCIL (INC GROUP LEADER)

4.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Leader of Council (including Group Leader) remains unchanged at 2.25.

4.2 Reasoning
It is proportional for the responsibilities and commitment for this post

5.0 DEPUTY LEADER OF COUNCIL + PORTFOLIO HOLDER

5.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Deputy Leader of Council (Portfolio Holder) remains unchanged at 1.5.

5.2 Reasoning
It is proportional for the responsibilities and commitment for this post.

6.0 EXECUTIVE MEMBERS (PORTFOLIO HOLDERS)

6.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Executive Members (Portfolio Holders) remains unchanged at 1.

6.2 Reasoning
It is proportional for the responsibilities and commitment for this post.

7.0 DEPUTY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

7.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Deputy Portfolio Holders be reduced from 0.25 to 0.15

7.2 Reasoning
This reflects the balance of responsibilities between the Portfolio Holders and their Deputies.

8.0 OPPOSITION GROUP LEADERS (with at least 10% of the membership of the Council)

8.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Opposition Group Leaders (with at least 10% of the membership of the Council) remains unchanged at 0.5.

8.2 Reasoning
It is proportional for the responsibilities and commitment for this post.

9.0 CHAIRMEN OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE(S)

9.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees be reduced to 0.75

9.2 Reasoning
To rebalance the SRA between the chairmen and vice chair.

10.0 VICE CHAIRMAN OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE(S)

10.1 That a Special Responsibility Allowance be introduced for Vice Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees with a multiplier of 0.25

10.2 Reasoning
Rebalance the SRA between the chairmen and vice chair. In addition the work involving them on T&F groups

11.0 CHAIRMAN OF AREA PLANNING COMMITTEES

11.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairmen of Area Planning Committees be reduced to 0.5.

11.2 Reasoning
Since the last review some of the work is now carried out by council officials.

12.0 VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE AREA PLANNING COMMITTEES

12.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Vice Chairmen of Area Planning Committees be reduced to 0.15

12.2 Reasoning
Since the last review some of the work is now carried out by council officials.

13.0 CHAIRMAN OF STRATEGIC LICENSING COMMITTEE

13.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairman of the Strategic Licensing Committee remains unchanged at 0.25

13.2 Reasoning
No reason presented for any change, work commitment remains static.

14.0 CHAIRMAN OF LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE / VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE STRATEGIC LICENSING COMMITTEE

14.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairman of the Licensing Sub-Committee/Vice Chairman of the Strategic Licensing Committee be deleted from the scheme

14.2 Reasoning
The meetings are now infrequent

15.0 CHAIRMAN OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

15.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairman of the Audit Committee be increased to 0.5.

15.2 Reasoning
To reflect wider responsibility and Council's financial situation.

16.0 AUDIT COMMITTEE CO-OPTED MEMBER

16.1 Recommendation

That a Special Responsibility Allowance be introduced for a Co-Opted member of the Audit Committee with a multiplier of 0.1

16.2 Reasoning
This is a new post and merits, although modest, an SRA.

17.0 CHAIRMAN OF PENSIONS COMMITTEE

17.1 Recommendation

That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairman of the Pensions Committee remains unchanged at 0.25

17.2 Reasoning
No reason presented for any change, work commitment remains static.

18.0 ANNUAL MEMBERS ALLOWANCE INCREASE

18.1 Recommendations

That the Annual Increase in Allowances in line with the annual increase for Local Government Staff (at SCP18) be removed.

18.2 Reasoning

The panel does believe this should be "automatic" but voted on by the whole council.

19.0 TRAVEL AND SUBSISTANCE ALLOWANCES

19.1 Recommendations

That the mileage rate within the scheme should reflect the HMRC allowance rates for the time being in force.

19.2 Reasoning

21.0 PAYMENT OF ALLOWANCES

20.1 Recommendations

That the annual allowances for basic and special responsibilities will be split into a daily amount (365 days or 366 days in a leap year) and the amount paid each month will equal the number of days in that month. For example, April would have 30 days allowance.

20.2 Reasoning

We were advised by the payroll team that this would significantly reduce time spent administering the allowances and provide further safeguards against overpayments in the event of changes in membership or responsibilities.

21.0 PAYMENT OF TRAVEL AND SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES

21.1 Recommendations

That, where a member is also a member of another Authority, Travel and Subsistence Allowances will not be paid where that other authority has also made a payment in respect of the same duties.

21.2 Reasoning

Allowance will be paid once and ideally from another body.

22.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

22.1 That the basic allowance paid to members should remain unchanged at £14,839.11.

22.2 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairman of Council remains unchanged at 0.75

22.3 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Leader of Council (including Group Leader) remains unchanged at 2.25.

22.4 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Deputy Leader of Council (Portfolio Holder) remains unchanged at 1.5.

22.5 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Executive Members (Portfolio Holders) remains unchanged at 1.

22.6 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Deputy Portfolio Holders be reduced from 0.25 to 0.15

22.7 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Opposition Group Leaders (with at least 10% of the membership of the Council) remains unchanged at 0.5.

22.8 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees be reduced to 0.75

22.9 That a Special Responsibility Allowance be introduced for Vice Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees with a multiplier of 0.25

22.10 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairmen of Area Planning Committees be reduced to 0.5.

22.11 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Vice Chairmen of Area Planning Committees be reduced to 0.15

22.12 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairman of the Strategic Licensing Committee remains unchanged at 0.25

22.13 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairman of the Licensing Sub-Committee/Vice Chairman of the Strategic Licensing Committee be deleted from the scheme

22.14 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairman of the Audit Committee be increased to 0.5.

22.15 That a Special Responsibility Allowance be introduced for a Co-Opted member of the Audit Committee with a multiplier of 0.1

22.16 That the Special Responsibility Allowance multiplier for the Chairman of the Pensions Committee remains unchanged at 0.25

22.17 That the Annual Increase in Allowances in line with the annual increase for Local Government Staff (at SCP18) be removed.

22.18 That the mileage rate within the scheme should reflect the HMRC allowance rates for the time being in force.

22.19 That the annual allowances for basic and special responsibilities will be split into a daily amount (365 days or 366 days in a leap year) and the amount paid each month will equal the number of days in that month. For example, April would have 30 days allowance.

22.20 That, where a member is also a member of another Authority, Travel and Subsistence Allowances will not be paid where that other authority has also made a payment in respect of the same duties.

22.21 That in all other respects, the scheme for members' allowances remains unchanged.

Timothy Griffiths JP (Chairman)
Vince Hunt
Tony Parsons

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Committee	
Council	Public
Date and Time	
24 September 2026	

Annual Scrutiny Report 2025/26

Cabinet Member:	Heather Kidd – *Leader of the Council*
Lead Director:	Paul Clarke - Service Director Strategy and Change
Service Area:	Strategy and Change
Report Author	Tom Dodds – Strategy and Scrutiny Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Officer contact details	01743 258518 tom.dodds@shropshire.gov.uk
Electoral Divisions Affected	All
Key Decision?	Non Key
Cabinet Forward Plan	Not applicable
Report considered by	Not applicable

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. To provide Council with an update on the development of overview and scrutiny at Shropshire Council, and work carried out by the overview and scrutiny committees during 2025/26.

2. Recommendations

Full Council is asked to

2.1. Note the progress in developing Overview and Scrutiny working in 2025/26, and the work carried out by Overview and Scrutiny Members.

2.2. Support the ongoing development of Overview and Scrutiny to contribute to the Council being financially sustainable

3. Background

3.1. It is good practice that an annual scrutiny report is presented to council. It is recognised that doing so is an opportunity to put overview and scrutiny in the spotlight and provides those who have been involved the chance to share their experiences.

3.2. Overview and Scrutiny Committees and their work provides Members who are not on Cabinet the opportunity to help inform the policies of the council and the decisions that are taken through evidence-based recommendations. This can contribute to decision making as well as holding decision makers to account, bringing through the voice of communities, and contributing to improving public services.

3.3. The topics that the committees consider all relate to the priorities of the council. In September 2025 Cabinet announced a Financial Emergency which the Overview and Scrutiny Committees needed to respond to in terms of their work programmes, how they looked into topics and issues, and the pace they carried out their work.

4. Summary of Main Proposals

4.1. The Annual Scrutiny Report attached as Appendix A, provides an update on the work that has been carried out by the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees that were in place during 2025/26 and shares the development of the Overview and Scrutiny function during the year.

4.2. The Local Elections 2025 saw a significant number of new councillors become members of Shropshire Council, many of whom became members of the overview and scrutiny committees. This created an important opportunity to clarify the role of Overview and Scrutiny as an apolitical, evidence-led critical friend that supports policy development, strengthens accountability and helps ensure that decisions are transparent, well informed and focused on outcomes for residents.

4.3. The recently published External Assurance Review carried out by CIPFA on behalf of MHCLG looked back at 2025/26, and referenced early meetings of the committees, identifying that Scrutiny should be improved. The developments that have taken place during 2025/26 and into 2026/27 have moved the function forwards, but this is a continual learning process.

4.4. A key component and function of overview and scrutiny working is to understand and identify learning and how this can be used to contribute to the improvement of public services and the outcomes for communities and people using services. This is equally true of how overview and scrutiny function carries out its role. 2025/26 has been a year of developing how the Overview and Scrutiny function works and embedding its continuous improvement. Continuous improvement of overview and scrutiny is also a core purpose of the Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committee Chairs Group.

4.5. The Annual Report identifies the following key issues and developments:

- the post Local Election reset of Overview and Scrutiny, including induction, training and support for new and returning Members;
- the development of more coordinated governance arrangements through the Scrutiny, Audit and Governance Chairs Group;
- stronger links between scrutiny, audit and Cabinet while maintaining the independence of the different functions;
- greater use of pre-decision scrutiny to help inform proposals before formal decisions are taken;
- the application of a financial emergency and financial sustainability lens across scrutiny work programmes;
- the use of Task and Finish Groups, whole committee working and Member briefings to support deeper investigation and evidence-led recommendations;
- improved arrangements for monitoring the progress and impact of scrutiny recommendations; and
- the forward focus for 2026/27, including revised committee arrangements and strong alignment with the new Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan and Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy.

4.6. During 2025/26 the committees have carried out work that has contributed to decision making, delivered deeper dives and research into topics to contribute to policy review and development, and held decision makers to account including through reviewing performance management and financial management reports.

4.7. The overview and scrutiny committees have a key role to play in contributing to the council's work and progress over the coming years towards being financially sustainable. This has included the Improvement Plan which was shared with the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee during its development, the development of the Medium-term Financial Strategy and Budget 2026/27, the development of the Corporate Plan and informing the performance measures for its reporting, as well as the 2025/26 quarterly performance management and financial management reports.

5. Key risks and Opportunities

5.1 The effective operation of Overview and Scrutiny helps manage governance, financial and service delivery risks by providing constructive challenge, evidence-led review and Member oversight. The key opportunity is to build on the progress made during 2025/26 so that scrutiny continues to add value through timely work programming, stronger follow-up of recommendations and closer alignment with the Council's strategic priorities.

6. Council Priorities

6.1 Overview and Scrutiny working and the committee work programmes directly relate to the delivery of the council's priorities.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. There are no Financial Implications associated with this report

8. Legal and HR implications

8.1. There are no Legal or HR implications associated with this report

9. Electoral Division Implications

9.1. There are no Electoral Division implications associated with this report

10. Health, Social (including "Child Friendly Shropshire") and Economic Implications

10.1. There are no implications associated with the decisions in the report. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have been looking at Health in All policies, Social Care and a Child Friendly Shropshire as part of their work in 2025/26 and in their work in 2026/27 onward.

10.2. Overview and Scrutiny working offers a good opportunity for young people to have their voices heard. Plans are in place to build this into how topics are considered.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

11.1 There are no direct equality, social inclusion or health implications arising from this report. The Annual Report includes examples of scrutiny activity that considered issues affecting residents and communities, including health, social care, children's services, transport, housing-related matters and community infrastructure.

12. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

12.1 There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from this report. The Annual Report includes activity considered by the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including work linked to environmental and infrastructure matters.

13. Background Papers

13.1 None

14. Appendices

Appendix A – Annual Scrutiny report 2025/26

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Shropshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report

May 2025 to May 2026

Contents

Foreword

We are pleased to introduce this Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2025/26. An annual report should be an opportunity to share and highlight differencethat overview and scrutiny has made, provide examples of the work done and recommendations and impact that has been achieved.

The report reflects a year in which scrutiny has played an increasingly important role in supporting the Council develop improved governance, providing effective challenge and supporting better decision-making across Shropshire Council. Following the local elections in May 2025, the Council welcomed a significant number of newly elected Members, many taking up public office for the first time. This created both an opportunity and a responsibility to reset, strengthen and clarify the role of Overview and Scrutiny so that all Members could contribute confidently.

During 2025/26, Members from across political groups have worked together as an apolitical critical friend, helping to test assumptions, examine evidence, bring local insight into policy development and hold decision-makers to account. This has been especially important during a period of significant financial challenge, where difficult choices have required robust governance, early engagement and a clear focus on long-term sustainability.

Stronger arrangements, including the Scrutiny, Audit and Governance Chairs Group, have helped improve coordination between Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Audit and Governance Committee and Cabinet. These arrangements have supported earlier consideration of key decisions, strengthened work programming, and helped ensure that scrutiny activity is directed towards the areas where it can add greatest value. The development of clearer protocols, practical toolkits and accessible resources has also provided Members with stronger foundations for effective scrutiny.

Our overview and scrutiny committees considered a range of topics within their remits that focused on the delivery of the council's priorities, and increasingly through the year, taking account of the Financial Emergency that was declared by Cabinet in September 2025. Work included following up on previously agreed recommendations, holding decision makers to account e.g. through quarterly performance management and financial management reports, and carrying policy development and review and pre-decision scrutiny e.g. Highways Contract Review, Health in All Policies – Planning, and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

We would like to thank all Members, officers, partners and witnesses who have contributed to Overview and Scrutiny during 2025/26. Their time, expertise and constructive challenge have helped strengthen the Council's approach and improve the quality of debate. As we look ahead to 2026/27, the task is to build on this progress: embedding stronger links with the Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan and financial sustainability work; continuing to focus scrutiny where it can have the greatest impact; and ensuring that the voice of residents continues to inform the choices the Council makes.

Cllr David Minnery – Chair of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Chair of the Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committee Chairs Group 2025/26

Cllr Ed Potter – Chair of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Chair of the Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committee Chairs Group 2026/27

Developing Overview and Scrutiny through the year

The backward-looking External Assurance Review (May 2026) carried out by CIPFA for MHCLG identified that Scrutiny should be improved. The improvements and developments described in this annual report set out the overview and scrutiny journey through 2025/26. This is continual learning that will take place through 2026/27 and beyond.

The 2025 local elections marked an important reset point for Overview and Scrutiny at Shropshire Council. With a significant number of newly elected councillors, many taking on a role in local politics for the first time, there was a clear need to rebuild confidence, clarify expectations and strengthen the way scrutiny operates across the Council.

Support began with an all-Member induction, giving new and returning councillors a shared understanding of scrutiny's role as an apolitical, evidence-led "critical friend". This helped Members understand how Overview and Scrutiny can influence policy, hold decision-makers to account, test evidence and amplify the voice of residents.

A number of practical developments supported this work. The Enabling Effective Overview and Scrutiny SharePoint pages were developed through the Member Gateway, bringing together induction material, toolkits, templates, best practice guidance and links to wider resources in one accessible place. A separate Task and Finish Group page also made it easier for Members to see what work was underway and observe meetings where appropriate.

Improving the coordination between Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Audit and Governance Committee and Cabinet

The focus then shifted from induction to embedding the structures, relationships and ways of working needed for effective scrutiny. Cross-party Chairs and Vice-Chairs were appointed and the council strengthened the coordination of activity across committees creating the Scrutiny, Audit and Governance Chairs Group, drawing on learning from other councils. This group brings together the Overview and scrutiny committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, the Chair of Audit and Governance, Group Leaders, statutory officers and scrutiny support officers together in a regular forum. This provided a clearer structure for discussing work programmes, emerging risks, Council priorities, opportunities for joint working, referrals to Audit and Governance Committee and the continuous improvement of scrutiny practice.

The group marked a shift from committee-by-committee planning towards a more strategic, organisation-wide model of scrutiny. It created a visible leadership space where Members could consider the collective impact of Overview and Scrutiny across the Council, strengthen links with Audit and Governance, and ensure that scrutiny remained independent while being better connected to executive decision-making. This was particularly important as the Council responded to the financial emergency and needed scrutiny activity to be more coordinated, timely and focused on areas of greatest organisational risk and value.

Several practical outputs supported this change. Benchmarking and horizon scanning with other local authorities, including those that had experienced government intervention, informed the development of stronger local arrangements. An Audit/Scrutiny Protocol and Cabinet/Scrutiny Protocol were produced, clarifying how scrutiny, audit and the executive should work together in their different roles. The Terms of Reference for the Group also formalised its purpose, including driving continuous improvement, identifying opportunities to increase scrutiny effectiveness, aligning committee activity, sharing good practice, encouraging Member engagement and reviewing how scrutiny adds value to Council decision-making.

Evening meetings were introduced in recognition of the changing profile of elected Members, including those balancing council responsibilities with full-time employment. This was an important step in supporting wider participation and making scrutiny more accessible and responsive.

As the year progressed, the Council's financial emergency became a defining theme. Scrutiny needed to be more coordinated, flexible and focused on the areas where it could add most value. Work programmes were adjusted to apply a financial emergency lens, supporting difficult decisions, organisational improvement and sustainable service delivery. This led to stronger governance arrangements, including Cabinet/Scrutiny and Audit/Scrutiny protocols, and the Chairs Group was developed into the Scrutiny, Audit and Governance Chairs Group. Pre-decision scrutiny was also strengthened so that Members could engage earlier with key issues aligned to Cabinet timescales, influence proposals before decisions were taken and support more responsive decision-making.

The new group provided a stronger cross-party mechanism for oversight, coordination and continuous improvement. Its Terms of Reference clarified the role of Members in sharing work programmes, identifying cross-cutting issues, encouraging engagement, triangulating evidence and improving scrutiny practice.

Choosing the right topics

A key component to effective overview and scrutiny work is the identification and scoping of the right topics to be included in the committee work programmes. The focus was upon ensuring that Overview and Scrutiny activity aligned with corporate priorities, emerging risks, major policy developments and the Council's response to the financial emergency. Our Overview and Scrutiny resources are finite and therefore must be directed towards those areas where Members can add the greatest value through review, challenge and policy development.

> *"Short, sharp and to the point. Focused. Well chaired and had a clear objective. Many other relevant thoughts and important areas to look at were identified and noted for future work but the focus remained. I felt it was an effective use of my time."*

Task and Finish Group Member work in 2025/26

The Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit, Shropshire Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit.docx, contains guidance around identification and focus of work programme topics.

Overview and Scrutiny topics should not be developed in isolation, therefore increasingly throughout the year, open and transparent dialogue between officers, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Members has helped in shaping the prioritisation and timeliness of appropriate topics for review.

Having worked well in 2025 this approach has been continued in 2026, with a half day joint strategic work programming session for all Committees, key officers, and Cabinet organised for the 9th June 2026. The aim is that the relationship will evolve towards a model where senior officers increasingly see Scrutiny not simply as a point of accountability, but as a source of insight, challenge and improvement.

Introducing an overarching key theme

The significance of the Council's Financial Emergency prompted a change in how Overview and Scrutiny approached its work across committees. The Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Chairs Group confirmed that Overview and Scrutiny Committees should apply a financial emergency lens across their work programmes as they review their topics. Committees discussed the need to adjust committee work programmes, identify common themes and develop consistent lines of enquiry that could be applied across all Overview and Scrutiny activity, with the financial emergency being the key theme applied to everything undertaken.

What the committees have done in 2025/26

Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee sets its own work programme based on topics that they identify and prioritise. Some of these topics are in the form of regular reports that are considered each quarter or annually and allow the committees to maintain a consistent view of key issues. This allows the committee to identify topics that they could add value to by taking a deeper dive and/or the opportunity to share points and recommendations with Cabinet to inform their work.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Topic	Frequency
Transformation and Improvement	Corporate Performance Report	Quarterly
	Financial Monitoring Report	Quarterly
Economy and Environment	Shropshire Community Safety Partnership Annual Report	Annually
People	Adult Social Care Performance report	Quarterly
	Children's Services Performance Report	Quarterly

In addition to the above examples of standing items, the Committees have also carried out a range of investigations and reviews through 2025/26. They have also requested a number of member briefings to help them better understand topics and issues to inform their work and protect the time in their committee meetings for overview and scrutiny.

Committees used a range of different approaches to inform and carry out their work. Unlike a formal committee meeting, which can cover multiple agenda items within a limited timeframe, Member Briefings, whole committee working and Task and Finish Groups can focus on a single issue in depth, and over a number of sessions.

All-Member Briefings enable Members to build a deeper understanding of a topic; it may be from these that potential Task and Finish Group topics can emerge.

Whole committee working allows all members of the committee to come together to collectively explore topics in greater detail and develop their findings and recommendations which will be reported back through the formal committee meeting.

The Task and Finish Group setting enables Members to delve further and explore root causes, examine evidence in detail, speak to key witnesses and receive briefings on more specific topics and issues, undertake site visits, and consider a wider range of options before reaching conclusions. They also report their findings back to a formal committee meeting.

> *"I'd say this all worked very well and if other groups are similarly structured and managed, they should be equally effective. A much better and more effective use of member and officers time than committee meetings."*

Member feedback following 2025/26 Task and Finish Group work

Adding value to decision-making

Overview and Scrutiny is an integral part of the Council's wider policy development and decision-making processes. Cabinet recognises that whilst overview and scrutiny committees retain ownership of their work programmes, the Council benefits when policy development and scrutiny are linked in a structured and transparent way that allows Members from across the council to contribute the knowledge and experience to decision making. During the year committees have increasingly been reviewing topics ahead of decisions being taken and move at pace to facilitate carrying out work that supports meeting the challenges of the financial emergency.

An early example was the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked by the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Environment to consider potential approaches for a review of the Highways contract. The committee commissioned a rapid Task and Finish Group to review the immediate future of the Highways Contract carrying out a very focussed and detailed piece of work. As a result of their research and the cross-party group were able to formulate robust evidence-based recommendations. This was the first piece of overview an scrutiny work carried out following the 2025 Local Elections, and members of that Task and Finish Group fed back on their positive experience of the work.

> *"We were working to a tight deadline … stuck to the 'apolitical critical friend' brief well…. Officers supporting the work did a great job … Overall, a very positive experience."*

Other examples of the pre-decision approach during 2025/26 include the Community Infrastructure Levy Task and Finish Group carried out by the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee that its finding should be shared to align with Local Plan discussions and to inform future decisions.

Children's Services Reforms were considered by the People OSC where members engaged with service transformation at an early stage, rather than after delivery. This including the national reform proposals covering Families First Partnership, Family Hubs, Youth Strategy and SEND Reform. Members tested assumptions and highlighted issues including transport barriers, the role of community facilities and the importance of partnership working before implementation progressed.

The value of this approach was also reflected in Cabinet's consideration of the Health in All Policies Task and Finish Group report, where the contribution scrutiny had made to shaping wider policy thinking was recognised:

> *"Members welcomed the report as a comprehensive and valuable piece of scrutiny work, with particular support for its emphasis on prevention and the links between planning, housing and health outcomes. Comments highlighted the importance of embedding health considerations more broadly across policy areas, whilst acknowledging that the Task and Finish Group had necessarily focused on planning."* Minutes of the 10 June 2026 Cabinet.

Over the year there has been increasing recognition that Overview and Scrutiny work adds greater value when it is involved early on in the development of policy and strategy, rather than solely reviewing outcomes after decisions have been made. Pre-decision scrutiny also provides the opportunity for a wider selection of Members from across the Council to contribute their knowledge, experience and expertise to help inform decision-making. This approach has put Overview and Scrutiny at the heart of the Council's policy development and review approach, as a tool to help to shape thinking, test assumptions and improve proposals before formal decisions are made.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees will not be able to consider every decision before Cabinet takes them – they would not add value in all cases, and there would be a risk that it adds additional work and could slow down the process. The identification of the right forthcoming decisions that would benefit from pre-scrutiny is key. The Cabinet/Scrutiny protocol helps to set out the relationship between the committees and provides some guidance in relation to handling pre-decision/pre-scrutiny.

Overview and Scrutiny - contributing to developing key strategic plans

2025/26 has seen the development of key strategic plans for the Council, and Overview and Scrutiny Committees have contributed. As the committee that leads of corporate matters the developing Improvement Plan was brought to Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The committee also had input into the development of the Corporate Plan and helped to shape the Corporate Plan key performance indicators that now form the basis of quarterly performance reporting. These plans were also the subject of Member briefings. Another key strategic plan that has been considered by the committee was the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which was considered on its journey to Council for agreement.

Summary of 2025/26 for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

During 2025/26, the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee delivered clear outcomes through the establishment of cross-party Task and Finish Groups on Community Infrastructure Levy governance and partnership working. These reviews created stronger evidence bases for decision-making, promoted greater transparency in how infrastructure funding is allocated, and generated practical recommendations to improve reporting, communication, member involvement and local accountability. The Committee’s focus on CIL also improved understanding of how town and parish councils and communities can access funding, supporting more consistent engagement and better local influence over infrastructure priorities. Through its consideration of local partnership approaches the Committee helped contribute learning and insights from conversations with Town and Parish Councils in different areas of Shropshire to inform the opportunities for the development of the devolution of services to those who were interested in taking them forwards.

Alongside these areas of work, it maintained scrutiny of the Council’s corporate performance, financial performance and governance arrangements, as well as contributing to the development of the Council’s Improvement Plan, Corporate Plan and the Performance Management Framework measures. The overall impact was a stronger scrutiny contribution to improvement, accountability and transformation, with Members providing challenge at an earlier stage, helping to shape future decisions, and reinforcing a clear focus on outcomes, transparency and better services for residents.

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee delivered a work programme centred on interdependent issues with strategic impact, including highways, waste services and food waste collection, Sports Village development, community safety, economic growth, flooding and transport infrastructure. This helped direct scrutiny effort towards areas where recommendations could influence future policy and service delivery.

The Committee carried out focused pre-decision Task and Finish work on the Highways Contract Review, and a rapid Task and Finish Group focused on learning from the Shrewsbury Station Gyratory project, making recommendations to Cabinet, and followed up on progress with delivering the agreed recommendations from a previous scrutiny investigation on Developer Contributions. The Committee also heard a petition for a Skateboard Facility and Pump Track in Oswestry and recommended to Cabinet that it be passed to the relevant Portfolio Holder to explore the most appropriate route for transferring the land to Oswestry Town Council.

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

During 2025/26, the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided challenge and oversight across some of the Council’s most significant demand-led services. Members scrutinised rising SEND demand, High Needs DSG pressures, children’s placement costs and increasing Adult Social Care demand, helping to strengthen understanding of the relationship between service performance, demand and financial sustainability.

The Committee also undertook early scrutiny of national Children’s Services reforms, including Families First, Family Hubs, Youth Strategy and SEND Reform, influencing discussions before implementation and ensuring local issues such as transport, accessibility and partnership working were considered. Through regular performance monitoring and targeted Member briefings, the Committee strengthened accountability, improved Member understanding of complex service areas and supported evidence-based decision-making to improve outcomes for Shropshire residents.

Their work included applying the lens of the Financial Emergency to their work including considering the High Needs DSG pressures, including a £41m deficit, alongside growth in SEND demand, Adult Social Care demand and self-funder related demand pressures, and children’s placement pressures. These discussions enabled scrutiny to examine the relationship between performance, demand and financial sustainability across demand-led high-pressure service areas.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee focused on prevention, health inequalities and the impact of policy decisions on residents' health and wellbeing. Members undertook a detailed review of Health in All Policies and Planning through the commissioning of a Task and Finish Group, gathering evidence from a wide range of stakeholders to explore how planning, housing and the built environment can support healthier communities. The Committee also scrutinised emerging NHS service developments, including the review of Primary Care Locally Commissioned Services, ensuring that issues such as rural access, community engagement and the shift towards community-based care were considered. Through evidence-led inquiry and constructive challenge, the Committee strengthened understanding of the wider determinants of health and helped ensure that residents' needs remained central to discussions on future service and policy development.

Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee provided oversight of significant NHS service developments affecting residents across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. Working jointly across both local authorities, the Committee scrutinised the Hospital Transformation Programme, proposals for closer collaboration between local NHS trusts, developments in primary care and out-of-hours services, winter planning arrangements, and wider system planning for health services. Through constructive engagement with NHS partners, the Committee examined the potential impact of proposed changes on service accessibility, patient pathways, community provision and workforce resilience, helping to ensure that the interests of local communities were reflected in discussions relating to the future delivery of health services across the area.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY 2025/26

AT A GLANCE

Shropshire Council

Supporting better governance, effective challenge and informed decision-making across Shropshire Council.

57	22	43	56
Committee Memberships	Formal Committee Meetings	Individual Scrutiny Members	Reviews, Investigations & Briefings

346	20	16	100%
Member Involvements	Recommendations Made	Recommendations Submitted to Cabinet	Recommendations Accepted by Cabinet

Overview and Scrutiny helping to shape policy, **improve governance** and **amplify the voice** of Shropshire communities throughout 2025/26.

The table below sets out the range of investigative topics and various approaches covered by committees, including work carried out between Committee meetings.

Topic	Approach	Lead Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Link
Member Bullying and Harassment	Task and Finish Group	Transformation and Improvement	• Member Bullying & Harassment PDF 231 KB • Report of the Member Bullying and Harassment Task and Finish group , item 9. PDF 651 KB
Health in All Policies and Planning	Task and Finish Group	Health	• https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/s44727/HOSC%20-%20Health%20in%20All%20report.pdf
Highways Contract Review	Rapid Task and Finish Group	Economy and Environment	***Exempt item***
Oswestry Skateboard and Pump Track	Petition heard at Committee followed by E&E report to Cabinet	Economy and Environment	• Scrutiny Item - Skateboard Facility and Pump Track Petition - recommendation from Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee PDF 250 KB
Partnership Working	Task and Finish Group	Transformation and Improvement	• Report of the Partnership Working Task and Finish Group PDF 241 KB • APPENDIX ONE - Report of the Partnership Working Task and Finish Group - T&I 17.11.2025 , item 30. PDF 401 KB • Partnership Working Task & Finish Group PDF 227 KB • Report of the Partnership Working Task and Finish Group - Appendix One - 09.02.2026 , item 62. PDF 385 KB • https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=34372&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI26161
Staff Bullying and Harassment	Update against actions from	Transformation and Improvement	• Staff Bullying and Harassment Task and Finish Group update PDF 410 KB

	a previous Task and Finish Group		• Staff Bullying & Harassment T&F Group Update PDF 556 KB
Station Gyratory	Rapid Task and Finish Group	Economy and Environment	• Scrutiny Item – Report of the Station Gyratory (LUF2) Task & Finish Group PDF 265 KB • APPENDIX ONE - Station Gyratory Task and Finish Group Report , item 86a PDF 310 KB • https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=1927
Community Infrastructure Levy	Task and Finish Group	Transformation and Improvement	• Part One Report of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Task and Finish Group PDF 282 KB • APPENDIX ONE - Part One Report of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Task and Finish Group , item 70. PDF 774 KB
Artificial Intelligence	All-Member Briefing	Transformation and Improvement	Artificial Intelligence Briefings
Adult Social Care	All-Member Briefing	People	Adult Social Care Briefings
Blue Badge	All-Member Briefing	People	Blue Badge Overview
Community and Family Hubs	All-Member Briefing	People	Community and Family Hubs Briefings
Carbon Monitoring Report	All-Member Briefing	Economy and Environment	Carbon Monitoring Report 2025
Renters Rights	All-Member Briefing	People	Renters Rights
Healthwatch Shropshire	All-Member Briefing	Health	Health and Wellbeing
SEND Transport	All-Member Briefing	People	SEND Transport
Leisure Contract Procurement	All-Member Briefing	Economy and Environment	Leisure Contract Procurement
Waste Contract	All-Member Briefing	Economy and Environment	Waste Briefings

The following case studies provide greater detail as to some of the Task and Finish Group work undertaken in the 2025/26 year:

Station Gyratory Case Study

Purpose: Further to public concern, including a live petition with more than 6,000 signatures, and after discussions with the Leader and Deputy Leader, the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth asked that the Chair of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider investigation of the Station Gyratory project.

Context: The management, development and delivery of the Station Gyratory project had been complicated and highly controversial, mainly due to technical issues such as changing established traffic routes in the town’s congested medieval centre. The rapid Task and Finish Group reviewed the project from bid to inception, including stakeholder engagement, future risks and opportunities, grant-funding implications and lessons to guide current and future projects.

How: Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members agreed that the rapid Task and Finish Group review should be undertaken as a priority. As part of the investigation, witnesses were invited including emergency services, local businesses and key stakeholders. Evidence was received in person and through written submissions, and Members considered this during a full-day session focused on the project background, design and build phases, wider context and public concerns.

Outcome: As part of their conclusions, the Group reviewed the process flow to identify the problem the project was intended to solve and whether it had met that purpose. Members felt that the need had been driven by receipt of the grant and the requirement to submit the application and deliver the scheme quickly. The Group has continued to track progress of the project and its recommendations, with its most recent report including a request for Cabinet to explore options around reversion of the scheme to two lanes of traffic.

Factors contributing to success: This was a detailed and thorough piece of work by a highly engaged group of Members. The Task and Finish Group heard from a broad range of witnesses, listened to public opinion and developed clear recommendations which continue to be tracked.

Partnership Working Case Study

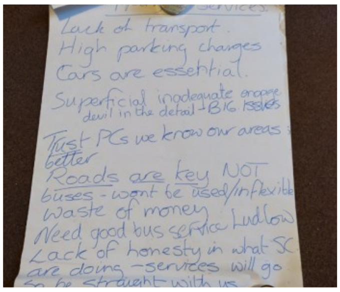
Purpose: The Partnership Working Task and Finish Group was established in September 2025 to identify opportunities to strengthen partnership working across the county. The Group aimed to explore how improved outcomes for people and communities in Shropshire could be achieved through more efficient and effective collaboration, including local-level initiatives.

Context: The Transformation and Improvement Committee recognised that every community has different needs and that approaches which work in a rural parish may not suit a large market town. Cabinet asked the Group to examine opportunities around the devolution of street scene services to non-pilot areas and feedback ideas and issues to inform the proposed wider rollout in 2027.

How: The Group reviewed approaches including clustering arrangements, hub-and-spoke networks, collaborative parish groups, blended delivery models and community work teams. Members met with town and parish council clerks and chairs across the county and tested the feasibility, risks and opportunities of different models through three workshops held in Bridgnorth, Ludlow and Oswestry.

Outcome: The Group heard from around 30 town and parish councils. Clear cross-cutting themes emerged across the workshop sessions and these formed the basis of the Group's recommendations.

Factors contributing to success: The Group engaged directly with town and parish councils across Shropshire, listened to local views and held open, honest conversations in communities' local areas. Regular reporting to Cabinet helped keep decision makers informed as the work progressed and supported the development of clear benefits for local communities.

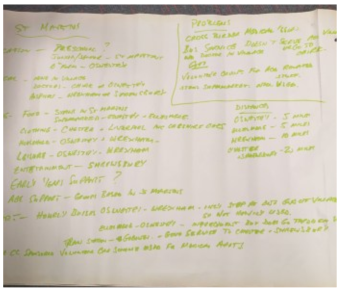


Plenary

Ludlow

Session 1

Bridgnorth



Session 2

Oswestry

Health in All Policies (HiAP) and Planning Task and Finish Group

Purpose: To examine how planning policy and decisions influence health and wellbeing in Shropshire and identify opportunities to embed Health in All Policies principles more effectively, particularly in relation to prevention, reducing inequalities and supporting independent living.

How: Members gathered evidence from Planning, Public Health, Adult Social Care, Children's Services, developers, housing providers, residents and carers. The Group reviewed national and local policy, considered lived experience evidence, benchmarked with other authorities and undertook a visit to Telford and Wrekin Council to examine examples of health-focused planning and place shaping.

Outcome: The Group concluded that planning should be recognised as an upstream public health intervention and recommended stronger cross-service working, clearer policy support for accessible housing, greater recognition of rural social sustainability and improved monitoring of the health impacts of planning decisions.

Factors contributing to success: A detailed, evidence-led review involving a broad range of witnesses, lived experience, cross-sector perspectives and practical comparator learning helped the Group develop balanced and deliverable recommendations for healthier communities.

o Staion Quarter Site Visit oo Communal Space ooo Adaptable shower oooo Bedroom ooooo Kitchen

Monitoring progress and impact of recommendations made

Following up recommendations is essential to effective Overview and Scrutiny. It allows committees to understand how their recommendations that have been accepted have been implemented and the impact that has been realised. To support this work an action plan template was developed to help officers track progress, which has been used regularly throughout the year.

During 2025/26, Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes included follow-up items to review progress against previous recommendations, including:

- Developer Contributions Task and Finish Group – update against previous actions.
- Staff Bullying and Harassment Task and Finish Group – six month follow-up of actions against Task and Finish recommendations – *"The committee expressed encouragement about the work done and the direction of policy and evidence tracking." – minutes of the 1.12.2025 T&I Overview and Scrutiny Committee* Agenda Template

This approach has worked well and is continuing in the 2026/27 work programmes, with action plans from 2025/26 Task and Finish Groups already followed up or scheduled for review. Since May 2026, follow-up has taken place on recommendations from the Station Gyratory and Highways Contract Review Task and Finish Groups.

This enables Overview and Scrutiny to demonstrate that they are focused not only on making recommendations, but also on understanding whether their work has led to meaningful change.

What is being worked on in 2026/27 onward

The year to May 2026 was a year of resetting and reestablishing the role of Overview and Scrutiny more firmly within the Council, starting with the member induction sessions and training and support for overview and scrutiny members. After a full year of scrutiny in action 2026/27 will be a year that builds on what has gone well, embeds strong links to the new Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan and Financial Sustainability and recover Strategy, and ensures the continuous improvement of the function.

The overarching direction and focused theme for overview and scrutiny work will progress from financial survival to financial sustainability, reflecting the strategies of the council. This repositions Overview and Scrutiny from reacting to financial pressures towards helping shape sustainable solutions.

May 2026 saw changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure to better reflect the priorities and focus of the council. The Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny has been replaced with Finance and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny, and a new Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been established. The remits for all current Committees are available on the Enabling Effective Overview and Scrutiny webpages via this link - Overview and Scrutiny Committee Remits.pptx

The chairs and vice chairs of Committees have continued to reflect a strong cross-party mix, with non-administration party chairs and vice chairs in place for the coming year.

In order the strengthen the strategic focus of the overview and scrutiny work programme, a joint session was held on 9 June 2026. This was attended by members of all of the overview and scrutiny committees with senior officers and portfolio holders. The session provided direction for future work programme priorities, reflecting the work planned for the coming year and key decisions in the Cabinet Forward Plan. This session has been followed up by each committee where they have further refined and defined their topics.

Further pre-decision scrutiny is planned for the coming year to enable members not on Cabinet to contribute to their knowledge and experience to inform decision making. Committees will also continue to hold decision makers to account and carry out investigations and reviews to inform policy development and review, improve public services, and amplify the voice of Shropshire communities. This will include identifying and pursuing opportunities to bring forward the voices of young people and those who use and experience services.

The ongoing connections with Local Government Association (LGA) and Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) networks will continue to provide additional support for Members and officers around benchmarking, best practice, and training opportunities.

Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2026/27

Following our joint strategic work-programming session, each Overview and Scrutiny Committee has identified key areas of focus for 2026/27.

These are examples of the work planned by each committee over the next municipal year.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Neighbourhood health
- Children and young people's mental health
- Health in all policies

Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Urgent and emergency care performance
- Winter plan
- Hospital Transformation plan

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Adult social care transformation plan
- Children's services transformation plan
- Child friendly Shropshire

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Riverside Gardens development
- Station gyratory
- Waste minimisation

Finance and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Financial monitoring
- Performance monitoring
- Partnership working

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Housing strategy
- Local plan
- STAR Housing review

Our focus

These work programme priorities will help ensure that our scrutiny activity is aligned to the Council's priorities, supports financial sustainability, and helps to improve outcomes for the people and communities of Shropshire.

All Member Riverside Gardens Site Visit - July 2026 coordinated by the economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee alongside an all-Member briefing.

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Changes to Committee Membership

Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Elizabeth Barker to replace Councillor Sharon Ritchie-Simmons as a member of the Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Mark Owen to replace Councillor Alan Holford as a substitute of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Duncan Kerr to replace Councillor Chris Lemon as a member of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Thomas Clayton to cease to be a substitute member of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Dawn Husemann to replace Councillor Thomas Clayton as a member of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Audit and Governance Committee

Councillor Brendan Mallon to replace Councillor Thomas Clayton as a member of the Audit and Governance Committee

Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Thomas Clayton to cease to be a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee.

Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Brendan Mallon to replace Councillor Thomas Clayton as a member of the Southern Planning Committee.

Standards Committee

Councillor Dawn Husemann to replace Councillor Thomas Clayton as a member of the Standards Committee

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