

**Committee and Date**

Cabinet

14 October 2026

CABINET**Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2026****In the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.30 am****Responsible Officer:** Ashley Kendrick

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

Present

Councillors Heather Kidd, Roger Evans, Andy Hall, Ruth Houghton, James Owen, Rob Wilson, David Vasmer, David Walker and Sarah Marston

In attendance

Group Leaders – Councillors Dan Thomas (Conservatives), Rosemary Dartnall (Labour), Dawn Husemann (Reform UK), Duncan Kerr (Green & Progressive Independents)

Tanya Miles (Chief Executive), Rachel Robinson (Interim Deputy Chief Executive), Duncan Whitfield (Interim Executive Director S151), Richard Phillips (Monitoring Officer), Paul Clarke (Service Director – Strategy & Change), Cassandra Polyzoides (Interim Service Director – Place Shaping), Mannie Ketley (remote) (Interim Director – Finance Improvement), Phil Weir (remote) (Revenue and Benefits Service Manager) Ashley Kendrick (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors Jamie Daniels, Chris Naylor

234 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Alex Wagner.

235 Disclosable Interests

In relation to agenda Item 16 – Whitchurch Civic Centre & Library – Asset Decision, Councillor Andy Hall declared that he was a member of Whitchurch Town Council. He is also Chair of Oversight which includes finance for Whitchurch Town Council which holds a current lease on the Civic Centre. It was confirmed that he would leave the room for this item.

236 Minutes**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 August 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record.

237 Public Question Time

At the discretion of the Chair, seven public questions had been received:

Maralyn Hepworth, in relation to Meole Brace Park and Ride.

Tony Burton, in relation to Meole Brace Park and Ride. In response to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder advised that said the 12-minute service increased passenger numbers and revenue, but rising contract costs meant it was no longer affordable to retain all three Park and Ride sites while also protecting essential bus services across Shropshire.

Mike Streetly, in relation to S106 and CiL receipts.

Chris Deaves, in relation to Income Tax revenue.

Rod Himsley, in relation to Whitchurch Library and Civic Centre. In relation to a supplementary question, the Leader and Portfolio Holder advised that the administration had inherited a worsening financial position and cannot afford the substantial investment needed to restore the building, so it is seeking community-led solutions while considering disposal options to avoid further costs. Members would be present at the community meeting later in the week.

John Palmer, in relation to housing.

Paul Wiseman, in relation to CIPFA External Assurance and Whitchurch Library and Civic Centre.

The full questions and responses can be found on [Response to Public Questions - Cabinet 9 September 2026.pdf](#)

238 Member Question Time

Three members' questions had been received:

Councillor Kate Halliday, in relation to Riverside Development.

Councillor Malcolm Myles-Hook, in relation to Whitchurch Civic Centre.

Councillor Jamie Daniels, in relation to Wier Hill S106 agreement. In response to a supplementary question seeking a clear timescale for action, the Portfolio Holder stated that any enforcement action must be considered carefully and be legally robust. Officers were reviewing the outstanding obligations with legal services and expect to provide a specific update on the position and potential next steps within the next couple of weeks.

239 Scrutiny Items

There were no scrutiny items.

240 Exceptional Financial Support: External Assurance Review

Cabinet considered the CIPFA External Assurance Review and the associated Best Value Notice issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Leader emphasised that the report was an independent assessment of the significant financial, governance and organisational challenges facing the Council and acknowledged the need for continued improvement.

Members noted that work was already underway to strengthen governance, financial management, leadership capacity and organisational accountability, alongside delivery of the Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy. It was further noted that the review reflected the Council's position in April 2026 and that progress had since been made, including reductions in the anticipated call on Exceptional Financial Support and the recruitment of senior leadership posts.

The Chair of the Finance and Improvement Scrutiny Committee reported the committee's consideration of the review and supported the findings, while recommending regular monitoring of progress against the report's recommendations, continued strengthening of financial controls and greater public accountability through the Improvement Board.

Members discussed the scale of the financial challenge facing the authority, the importance of maintaining momentum in implementing improvements, and the need for transparency with residents regarding the Council's financial position. Staff were thanked for their efforts in supporting financial recovery while continuing to deliver council services.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- (a) Noted and agreed the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained within the CIPFA External Assurance Review attached at Appendix A.
- (b) Noted that many of the recommendations align with priorities already being addressed through the Council's Improvement Plan and Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy.
- (c) Noted that progress against the recommendations will be reported quarterly to Cabinet as part of overall Improvement Plan update reports.

241 Annual Customer Feedback Report 2025/26

Cabinet received the Annual Customer Feedback Report covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. Members noted that complaint volumes had continued to increase, with the most common issues relating to service standards, delays and decisions taken by the Council, although Ombudsman upheld rates remained below the average for comparable authorities and compliance with Ombudsman recommendations was 100%.

Members highlighted the importance of addressing the underlying causes of complaints, improving service capacity and learning from both complaints and compliments to support service improvement. It was acknowledged that increasing complaint numbers did not

necessarily indicate increasing dissatisfaction and could reflect improved accessibility of the complaints process. Members also welcomed improvements in some service areas, including highways, and recognised the positive feedback received by staff working in complex services.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet considered and agreed the recommendations and actions in the Annual Customer Feedback Report (pages 34 and 35), Appendix A, to support and improve customer feedback performance within Shropshire Council.

242 Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2026/27

Cabinet considered the Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring Report, which showed a favourable forecast position of £2.291m and projected savings of £5.238m against a target of £5m. Members were advised that the report provided the first evidence of progress in stabilising the Council's finances during the current financial year.

The Chair of the Finance and Improvement Scrutiny Committee advised that the committee welcomed the improved financial monitoring arrangements and the positive forecast position, whilst highlighting continuing financial pressures within Children's Services and requesting further scrutiny of this area. Members also discussed the reliance on asset sales, the impact of borrowing costs and Exceptional Financial Support, and the need to maintain progress through the Council's transformation and financial recovery programmes.

Cabinet noted the positive contribution of staff in improving financial management and recognised that significant financial challenges remained, requiring continued focus on savings delivery, service transformation and long-term financial sustainability.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Noted the detailed position set out in this quarterly report which forecasts a favourable variation of £2.291m against the General Fund budget as set out in Table 1.
2. Noted that the s151 Officer continues to work with directorates in order to help them to ensure that their net expenditure is contained within their budgets and take appropriate mitigating actions where forecasts are exceeding budget.
3. Noted the risks identified as at 30 June 2026 as set out in section 13 of report including potential impact on the financial sustainability of the Council;
4. Noted the continued use of the Budget, Transformation and Change Panel (formerly the Operations Boards) and the Workforce Review Board with a view to enhancing the control of spend and authorisation of projects and the approvals to date of £ 3.127m for 2026/27 and £3.507m for 2027/28.

5. Noted the forecast level of savings achieved of £5.238m to date and a further £523k to be delivered by the end of the financial year, this against a target of £5m.
6. Noted the Capital programme and forecast outturn position as at quarter 1.
7. Noted the forecast General Fund Balance of £15m at 31 March 2027, in line with the Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy agreed by Cabinet in July 2026, which aims to increase reserves by £10m per year to £35m over the longer term.
8. Noted the reduced call for EFS in 2026/27 to £90m from the £121m set out in the MTFP report to Council in February 2026, the reduction being in line with the revised MTFP received by Cabinet in July 2026.
9. Noted that Cabinet will receive quarterly financial updates on the financial position during 2026/27, the Quarter 2 report scheduled for November 2026 and regular updates will also be available for the Budget Forum.
10. Approved the Capital and Revenue budget virements as set out in Appendix 3 and 5.

243 Whitchurch Civic Centre & Library - Asset Decision

It was agreed to bring this item forward to this point in the meeting.

After declaring an interest, Councillor Hall left the meeting for the duration of this item.

Cabinet considered a report on the future of Whitchurch Civic Centre and noted that, despite previous assumptions regarding potential capital investment, no funded scheme had been identified to undertake the necessary repairs. Members acknowledged the importance of the building to the local community but were advised that the Council's severe financial position meant it could not afford the significant capital investment required to bring the building back into use.

Members confirmed that community-led proposals would continue to be welcomed and that engagement with local councillors, Whitchurch Town Council and other stakeholders would continue as the disposal process progressed. It was emphasised that any future proposal would need to be fully funded, deliverable and legally compliant.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Declared the Whitchurch Civic Centre and Library site, edged red at Appendix A, surplus to the Council's operational requirements, for the reasons set out in sections 4 and 5 of this report, and having regard to the capital requirement and continuing maintenance and holding liabilities set out in section 4.
2. Approved its in-principle disposal, subject to the due diligence described in section 5, the financial and policy requirements in section 9, and the legal and statutory requirements in section 10, and in accordance with the Asset Disposal Policy within

the Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy approved by Cabinet on 8 July 2026.

3. Delegated authority to the Service Director for Place Shaping, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Portfolio Holders for Finance and Assets, to determine and implement the disposal strategy and secure the best consideration reasonably obtainable.
4. Noted that officers and the Portfolio Holder will continue to engage with the Members for the Whitchurch electoral divisions, Whitchurch Town Council and other interested parties as the disposal strategy progresses.

244 Cornovii Developments Ltd

It was agreed to bring this item forward to this point in the meeting.

Cabinet considered a report on the future of Cornovii Developments Limited (CDL) and heard that the Council's financial emergency and reliance on Exceptional Financial Support meant it could no longer provide the borrowing required to support the company's existing business model. Members were advised that, whilst CDL had delivered 196 homes and made a positive contribution to housing provision, the recommended option represented the lowest-risk approach available and would limit further financial exposure to the Council.

The Chair of the Finance and Improvement Scrutiny Committee advised that the committee supported the recommended approach and emphasised the importance of keeping tenants informed and undertaking a 'lessons learned' review once the closure process is complete.

Members discussed the achievements of CDL, the implications for future housing delivery, the estimated financial impact of closure, and the need to protect existing tenants throughout the process.

Cabinet acknowledged that the decision was driven by the Council's financial circumstances rather than the housing needs of the county, which remain significant, and noted that alternative mechanisms for delivering affordable housing would continue to be explored.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Noted the financial circumstances currently facing the Council and especially the limitations on borrowing arising from EFS commitments in at least the short and medium terms.
2. Noted the financial circumstances of CDL as illustrated by their most recent balance sheet and the need for the Council to act in order to maintain solvency of the company in the absence of Council funding for future development activity.

3. Approved the structured closure of the Company over a period of time (Section 4; Option 6) in order to minimise the financial exposure to the Council and to seek best consideration to the Council from any property and land disposals and transfers.
4. Noted that this decision is consistent with the requirements set out in the Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy agreed by Cabinet in July.
5. Authorised the s151 Officer with support from the Monitoring Officer to notify formally the CDL Board of Directors of the decision of the Cabinet to close the company.
6. Instructed the two statutory officers to bring together a governance structure which works together with CDL to ensure an orderly closure of the Company and the future management and ownership of land and property.
7. Approved funding for CDL to complete planning applications for London Road Phase 2 and for SUE West sites in order to maximise the future value of the sites, as housing developments as originally requested.
8. Authorised the s151 Officer to ensure that CDL has sufficient funding to remain solvent whilst completing planning on the schemes in progress and the sale or transfer of sites as set out in this report.
9. Noted the estimated cost to the Council arising from the closure of CDL and delegates to the s151 Officer and Monitoring Officer to take actions necessary to ensure that the company remains solvent.
10. Noted that as estimated costs arising from the closure will be included within the next Medium Term Financial Plan to be presented to Cabinet in November.
11. Instructed officers to ensure that additional and appropriate professional support and advice as necessary throughout the period of closure to ensure full compliance with company law and local government regulation.
12. Instructed officers in consultation with the CDL Board of Directors to ensure that their tenants are kept fully informed of changes that will be made and that those tenants are in no way impacted adversely by the closure of CDL

245 Q1 Performance Report

Cabinet considered the Quarter 1 Performance Report, which provided an update on progress against the Shropshire Plan and corporate priorities. Members noted that delivery of commitments was largely on track, with only a small number of actions experiencing minor delays, and that the report provided a new framework for monitoring progress, performance and outcomes.

Members focused on key performance indicators, including transport, active travel, road safety, complaints, FOI performance, health inequalities, children's services, adult social care and housing. Members welcomed examples of positive progress while recognising

areas requiring further improvement and the need to understand the causes of underperformance where indicators were rated red.

Cabinet welcomed the improved reporting format, which links service delivery, performance measures and strategic priorities, and noted that future quarterly reports would provide a clearer picture of progress and outcomes over time.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Reviewed performance at quarter 1 and confirmed any areas in the report that need action to address them
2. Provided feedback on the performance report that can be taken into account to improve the report format.
3. Proposed emerging topics or issues as appropriate to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider for inclusion in their work programme.

246 Treasury Management Update Quarter 1 2026/27

Cabinet received the Treasury Management Update Report, which provided an overview of treasury management activity and confirmed that borrowing, investments and cash management activities had been undertaken in accordance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy.

Members noted the report and the continuing work to manage the Council's financial resources prudently in a challenging financial environment.

The report was presented as a technical update detailing the implementation of previous treasury management decisions, and no significant issues were raised during discussion.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Noted the summary of the wider economic environment and the Council's borrowings and investments set out in Appendix A
2. Noted the performance within prudential indicators for quarter 1, 2026/27 (Appendix B)

247 Business Rate Relief and Council Tax Discretionary Discount Policy

Cabinet considered the annual review of the Business Rates Relief and Council Tax Discretionary Discount Policy. Members noted that the report largely continued existing arrangements whilst introducing additional support for residents who are unable to occupy their homes due to unforeseen circumstances, such as flooding or other events beyond their control.

Members considered the balance between providing support for vulnerable residents and maintaining council income. The importance of the Crisis Resilience Fund and the proposed development of a hardship fund to support residents facing financial difficulties was highlighted, alongside the need for a consistent and transparent approach to discretionary relief decisions.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approved the existing policy for business rates discretionary rate relief set out at Appendix A;
2. Noted the updated Rural Settlement List at Appendix B;
3. Delegated the awarding of Hardship Relief, Discretionary Business Rate Relief and Part Occupied Relief to the Revenues and Benefits Service Manager in line with approved Council policy with any appeals to the Section 151 Officer;
4. Approved a separate policy document for Council Tax Discretionary Discounts as set out at Appendix C;
5. Continue to offer council tax discretionary discounts to care leavers leaving Shropshire Council care, up until the age of 25;
6. Introduced a new policy to support residents with their council tax where they have to move out of their homes due to an uninsured 'Act of God';
7. Delegated decisions concerning council tax discretionary discount awards to the Revenues and Benefits Service Manager in line with approved Council policy with any appeals to the Section 151 Officer;
8. Instructed the s151 Officer to plan for the creation of a Council Tax Discretionary Discount Hardship Fund to enable discretionary discounts to be awarded in circumstances that fall outside of the agreed policy or where support cannot be provided by the Crisis and Resilience Fund.
9. Committed to review both policies in 2029/30.

248 Council Tax Support Scheme

Cabinet considered the draft Council Tax Support Scheme and proposals to consult on changes to the scheme for 2027/28. Members noted concerns that households moving onto Universal Credit could face increased council tax liability because child benefit is treated differently within the benefit system.

The proposed changes would disregard child benefit income when calculating entitlement to Council Tax Support, helping to protect low-income families from additional council tax charges. Members recognised that the proposal would reduce council tax income but

considered it an important measure to support vulnerable households during the cost of living crisis.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet noted the proposed changes below which will be subject to a formal consultation of up to six weeks that will run from September 2026 to October 2026:

- Retain the current tapered scheme with following adjustments:
- Disregard Child Benefit as an income at an estimated cost of £750k - £800k per year
- Retain current 20% minimum payment and maintain current protections for vulnerable groups
- Continue to support those impacted by 20% minimum payment with a top up from the Crisis Resilience Fund as follows
 - 2026-27 (current year) – up to £80
 - 2027-28 – up to £90
 - 2028-29 – up to £100

249 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Cabinet considered the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Policy and 30-year Business Plan and agreed that both documents should be referred to Housing Scrutiny before returning for final approval. Members were advised that the HRA remained in a sound financial position and that the plan provided the framework for future investment, governance and budget decisions.

Members highlighted the significant investment required to meet future regulatory requirements, including property safety, housing quality and energy efficiency standards, while maintaining the long-term sustainability of the housing stock. Members recognised the opportunity for the HRA to support future affordable housing development once compliance and improvement programmes had been delivered, noting the continuing demand for affordable housing across Shropshire.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approved the HRA Policy at Appendix A developed as part of the HRA review undertaken in June 2026, and delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the relevant Service Director, to make any minor amendments required to support implementation and ensure alignment with the approved HRA Business Plan.
2. Approved the 30-year HRA Business Plan 2026 at Appendix A, including its financial strategy, investment programme, and statutory compliance measures.

3. Noted that provision has been made within the HRA Business Plan to support potential applications for Government grant funding to increase capacity within the HRA stock. This does not constitute approval to submit a bid. A further detailed report will be brought back to Cabinet for consideration and approval before any bid is submitted, setting out the proposed programme, financial implications, match funding requirements and associated delivery arrangements.

250 Fostering Payment Arrangement Policy

Cabinet considered proposals to enhance the fostering payment arrangements as part of the Council's strategy to recruit and retain foster carers and increase the number of children able to live in family-based care. Members heard that fostering provides better outcomes for children whilst reducing reliance on costly external residential placements.

The report highlighted recent success in recruiting additional foster carers and included proposals to strengthen the financial and wider support available to foster families. Members welcomed the ongoing work to develop partnerships with local businesses to provide additional benefits for foster carers and discussed the importance of supporting carers to help meet growing demand.

Cabinet recognised the valuable contribution made by foster carers and the positive impact they have on the lives of children and young people in care.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approved uplift to fostering Skills Payment at 5% increase with effect from 01/04/26.
2. Considered and approved increasing mileage rate paid to internal foster carers from 0.45 per mile to £0.55 per mile from 01/04/26 as per the change in government agreed figure.
3. Considered and approved increasing amount of mileage that can be claimed, removing the requirement for foster carers to deduct the first 30 – 70 miles weekly before claiming mileage. To commence from 01/04/27.
4. Considered and approve paying approved carers beyond our Care Plus rate (£640.50 with uplift), with an additional Skills payment of £250 per week for first 12 months as part of Belonging and Stable Homes Scheme, where a child is assessed to need residential care, and support work has been completed by the team around the child, and the child is ready for a family care arrangement. This payment is to incentivise Foster Carers to transition children from residential care into supportive, stable homes and recognises the skill and commitment required during settling period.
5. Approved the proposal to pay annual National Trust Membership for up to 100 Fostering households

6. Considered and approved offering free parking to Shropshire Foster Carers at all our council parking venues. This is difficult to cost as this would reflect a small reduction in council income as opposed to direct cost. Should this be something that Council are prepared to support in principle a further survey can be completed to gather more data for exact car parks used by each foster carer.

251 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED:

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

252 Exempt Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 5 August 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record.

253 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 14 October 2026.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: