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Shropshire Council

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

Date: 27 August 2026

Committee:
Finance and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Monday, 7 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

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

Please click here to view the livestream of the meeting on the date and time stated on the agenda*

The recording of the event will also be made available shortly after the meeting on the Shropshire Council Youtube Channel Here

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

Members of Finance and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chris Naylor (Chair)	Gary Groves
Dawn Husemann (Vice-Chair)	Malcolm Myles-Hook
Bernie Bentick	Mark Owen
Ed Bird	Charles Shackerley-Bennett
Duncan Borrowman	Sam Walmsley
Rosemary Dartnall	

Your Committee Officer is:

Ashley Kendrick Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 01743 250893
Email: ashley.kendrick@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 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 - 6)

Members are asked to confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2026.

4 **Public Question Time**

To receive any questions from members of the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. Deadline for notification is not later than 12 noon on Tuesday 1 September 2026.

5 **Members' Question Time**

To receive any questions from Members of the Council. Deadline for notification is not later than 12 noon on Tuesday 1 September 2026.

6 **Exceptional Financial Support: External Assurance Review**

To share the report of an 'Assurance Review' undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) as part of the arrangements associated with the Council receiving Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from the Government.

Contact – Duncan Whitfield, Interim Executive Director (S151)

This item is a recent addition to the agenda and with the permission of the Chairman, the report will follow

7 **Cornovii Developments Ltd**

To receive a paper that considers options for the Council's future relationships with Cornovii Developments Ltd (CDL).

Contact – Duncan Whitfield, Interim Executive Director (S151)

The Chairman has given permission for the report to follow to ensure the most up to date information is available to the Committee

8 **Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2026/27**

To consider the Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring Report update on the Council's financial position for the current financial year 2026/27 and identify any recommendations or observations to share with Cabinet, and any topics to be considered or adding to the Committee's work programme or to be referred to another committee.

Contact – Duncan Whitfield, Interim Executive Director (S151)

The Chairman has given permission for the report to follow to ensure the most up to date information is available to the Committee

9 **Q1 Performance Report**

To consider the Quarter 1 Corporate Plan Performance Report and identify any recommendations or observations to share with Cabinet, and any topics to be considered or adding to the Committee's work programme or to be referred to another committee.

Contacts: Paul Clarke, Service Director – Strategy & Change; Tom Dodds, Strategy & Scrutiny Manager

The Chairman has given permission for the report to follow to ensure the most up to date information is available to the Committee

10 Assets Member Briefing

To receive a briefing on the scope and nature of Shropshire Council's Assets, as well as Asset Management to help develop understanding of the topic and inform whether there are specific areas that the committee would like to include in their work programme or within their planned work.

Contacts: Kassandra Polyzoides, Interim Service Director – Place Shaping; Steve Law, Head of Property & Development

A presentation will accompany this item. The Chairman has agreed that due to staff absence and workload the presentation will follow the agenda.

11 Work Programme (Pages 7 - 10)

To consider proposals for the Committee's work programme 2026 – 2027 attached

Contact: Claire Braddock, Scrutiny Officer

12 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday 16 November 2026, but it is proposed to bring this forward to 12th October 2026.

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Committee and Date
Finance and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee 7 September 2026

FINANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2026
In the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.00 am

Responsible Officer: Ashley Kendrick Democratic Services Officer
Email: ashley.kendrick@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 250893

Present
Councillors Chris Naylor (Chair), Dawn Husemann (Vice-Chair), Bernie Bentick, Ed Bird, Duncan Borrowman, Rosemary Dartnall, Gary Groves, Malcolm Myles-Hook, Mark Owen, Sam Walmsley and Brendan Mallon (Substitute) (substitute for Charles Shackerley-Bennett)

In Attendance
Tanya Miles (Chief Executive), Rachel Robinson (Interim Deputy Chief Executive), Tim Collard (Service Director – Legal & Governance), Paul Clarke (Service Director – Strategy & Change), Laura Tyler (Service Director – Commissioning), Natalie McFall (Interim Service Director – Care & Wellbeing), Duncan Whitfield (Interim S151 Officer – remote), Jess Edwards (Team Manager BI Strategic Lead – remote), Daniel Powner (Service Manager, Community Partnerships and Day Opportunities), Tom Dodds (Overview & Scrutiny Manager), Claire Braddock (Overview & Scrutiny Officer), Ashley Kendrick (Democratic Services Officer)

4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Charles Shackerley-Bennett, substituted by Councillor Brendan Mallon.

5 Disclosable Interests

No declarations were received.

6 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the mintues of the meetings held on 13 April 2026 and 14 May 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record.

7 Public Question Time

Two public questions had been received:

John Palmer, in relation to PWC savings through the Digital Programme.

Marianne Aitken, read by Gill George, in relation to good governance.

The full questions and responses can be found on [Response to Public Questions - 8 June 2026.pdf]

8 **Members' Question Time**

One Members' question had been received:

Councillor Thomas Clayton, in relation to adult social care budget.

The full question and response can be found on [Response to Member Questions - 8 June 2026.pdf]

9 **Financial Outturn 2025/26**

The Committee considered the financial outturn report for 2025/26, which set out a significant adverse variation of approximately £50m against the approved budget. It was noted that the position had been managed through the use of reserves and Exceptional Financial Support, reflecting the Council's ongoing structural budget deficit.

Members highlighted continuing pressures in adult and children's social care, where demand, complexity and rising placement costs had contributed to substantial overspends. Concern was also expressed regarding the historic use of unachievable savings targets and the impact of reduced staffing capacity arising from previous redundancy programmes.

The Committee noted that some stabilisation had been achieved towards the end of the financial year and welcomed the reduced reliance on Exceptional Financial Support compared to earlier projections. It was further acknowledged that improvements in financial monitoring and governance were being implemented.

Members requested that future complex financial reports be supported by pre-meeting briefings to enable more effective scrutiny. It was also agreed that further scrutiny of adult and children's social care pressures and transformation programmes would be scheduled.

The Committee noted the report and agreed that its comments be fed to Cabinet, with particular emphasis on the need for realistic budget setting, strengthened governance, and continued focus on high-cost service areas.

10 **Q4 Performance Report**

The Committee considered the Quarter 4 performance report and the introduction of a new performance framework aligned to the Council's corporate plan. It was noted that 77% of indicators were at or above target, representing a marginal improvement on the previous quarter.

Members welcomed improvements in performance monitoring processes and the development of a revised framework incorporating key performance indicators, delivery commitments and annual review arrangements. However, concerns were raised that the headline figures presented an overly positive position and did not fully reflect the Council's financial context or the challenges faced in key service areas.

Specific concerns were highlighted in relation to the absence of integrated financial and performance reporting, the prominence of statutory and high-risk indicators, and the need for clearer presentation of underlying data, including volumes and backlogs. Members also noted inconsistency in the presentation of KPIs across reports and requested greater clarity and standardisation.

Attention was drawn to a number of areas of concern, including adult and children's services pressures, school readiness outcomes, and the visibility of resident-focused issues such as highways and waste services. Members emphasised the importance of distinguishing between critical and non-critical indicators and ensuring that KPIs meaningfully reflect outcomes for residents.

Officers advised that many of these issues were being addressed through the development of the new performance framework and committed to further engagement with Members to refine its design and presentation.

The Committee noted the report, endorsed the recommendations and agreed that the issues raised should inform the development of the new framework and future performance reporting.

11 **Improvement Plan - Progress Report**

The Committee considered the update on delivery and progress of the Council's Improvement Plan, noting that it remains the overarching framework for stabilisation, recovery and longer-term transformation following the declaration of a financial emergency.

Members acknowledged that progress to date was broadly in line with the plan, with early milestones achieved, including securing Exceptional Financial Support, setting a more robust Improvement Plan.

The Committee considered the update on the Council's Improvement Plan, noting that it remains the overarching framework for stabilisation, recovery and longer-term transformation following the financial emergency declared in 2025.

Members acknowledged progress made to date, including strengthened financial management, improved governance and compliance, the establishment of a more realistic budget for 2026/27, and the securing of Exceptional Financial Support. It was also noted that key foundations for longer-term improvement were being developed, including the corporate plan, transformation savings portfolio and supporting strategies.

However, it was emphasised that while progress on organisational structure and governance was evident, the Plan did not yet provide a fully detailed or quantified route to achieving financial sustainability. Members raised concerns regarding the lack of clarity on the delivery of savings, the reduction of reliance on Exceptional Financial Support, and the identification and timing of difficult service decisions required to address the structural deficit.

Officers advised that the Improvement Plan provides the strategic framework, with detailed financial planning and delivery to be set out in the forthcoming Medium Term Financial Plan. It was noted that this would include further development of the financial sustainability strategy and transformation programme, although the position would remain subject to ongoing change.

Members also sought greater clarity in reporting, including clearer explanations of performance ratings and the need to reduce ambiguity in standard wording within reports.

The Committee recognised the complexity and evolving nature of the Council's financial position and noted the progress made to date, while emphasising the need for clearer, more detailed delivery plans and continued scrutiny as the next phase of improvement and financial planning develops.

12 **Organisational Transformation: Lessons Learned Review**

The Committee considered the independent lessons learned review of the Council's transformation programme, noting that it provided a forward-looking assessment of governance, delivery and oversight arrangements rather than attributing fault.

Members acknowledged the significant escalation in scope and cost of the programme and raised concerns regarding value for money, clarity on delivered outcomes, and the extent of realised savings. Particular concerns were expressed about insufficient business case development, lack of comparative tender evaluation, and limited transparency and member scrutiny during the programme.

The review's findings highlighted weaknesses in governance, commercial assurance and organisational ownership, including concentration of decision-making, limited wider engagement, and insufficient challenge and oversight. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring stronger democratic accountability and real-time scrutiny for future programmes.

Officers and Portfolio Holders outlined a revised approach to transformation, including strengthened governance arrangements, clearer accountability, enhanced procurement and contract management processes, and the introduction of more robust business case and benefits realisation requirements. It was also noted that additional capacity and systems were being implemented to improve commissioning, financial oversight and programme delivery.

Members welcomed the commitment to implement the review's recommendations and to bring forward regular reporting to Scrutiny and Cabinet. The Committee stressed the importance of ensuring that future transformation activity is deliverable, transparently monitored, and clearly demonstrates outcomes and value for residents.

The Committee noted the report and endorsed the proposed actions to strengthen governance, oversight and accountability in future transformation activity.

13 Helena Lane Older Peoples Day Service

The Committee considered the report on the review of the Helena Lane Day Service, noting the financial sustainability case and the outcome of the consultation undertaken.

Members acknowledged that the current model operates with very low utilisation and a high net annual cost, and that the service does not represent value for money within the context of the Council’s financial position. It was noted that demand for building-based day services has reduced over time, with increasing preference for alternative, personalised forms of support.

Concerns were raised regarding the potential impact on service users, carers and the wider community, particularly in relation to respite provision, access in rural areas, and the wellbeing of unpaid carers. Questions were also raised around demand trends, consultation timing, and the clarity of financial information presented.

Officers confirmed that a comprehensive consultation had been undertaken, including direct engagement with service users, carers and the community, and that equality impacts had been assessed. It was emphasised that the Council’s duty is to meet eligible needs rather than maintain a specific service model, and that individual Care Act assessments and transition support would be provided to those affected.

The Committee recognised the complexity of the decision and the balance required between individual impacts and wider financial sustainability. It was agreed that the process followed was appropriate, while noting that learning points around timing and clarity of information should be considered for future proposals.

The Committee noted the report and supported its progression to Cabinet for decision, with the expectation that impacts and outcomes will be monitored through the wider Adult Social Care transformation programme.

14 Aquamira Learning Disability Day Service

The Committee considered the report on the proposed relocation of the Aquamira Day Service to Abbotswood, noting the financial sustainability challenges associated with the current building-based model, including high running and maintenance costs.

Members acknowledged the specialist nature of the service and the complex needs of users, and recognised the concerns raised through consultation, particularly in relation to the loss of the current environment, transport arrangements and access to the hydrotherapy pool. Questions were raised regarding the adequacy of alternative provision, potential transport impacts, and whether projected savings would be offset by transition and ongoing costs.

Officers advised that the proposal would retain a specialist service offer within an existing facility, with suitable adaptations, including provision of sensory space, and that individual assessments and transition planning would be undertaken to mitigate impacts. It was confirmed that hydrotherapy is not a statutory requirement, and that the Council's duty is to meet eligible needs through appropriate provision.

Members also raised concerns regarding the future use and ongoing costs of the existing building, noting that this had not been fully detailed within the report. It was suggested that further clarity on property implications would be beneficial in future reporting.

The Committee recognised the difficult balance between maintaining specialist provision and achieving financial sustainability. It was agreed that, subject to the concerns raised, the report could progress to Cabinet for decision, with the expectation that impacts on service users and delivery of mitigations would be closely monitored.

15 **Work Programme**

The Committee considered its future work programme and potential areas for further development.

Members supported the use of informal briefings to enable more detailed understanding of complex issues outside formal meetings, particularly in relation to major financial and organisational matters. Key topics identified for future briefings included the Medium Term Financial Plan, the Council's assets strategy, and the structure and operation of the improvement and transformation governance arrangements.

It was suggested that an additional meeting be scheduled in July to ensure timely consideration of forthcoming reports and to follow up on issues raised during the meeting. Members also noted the importance of forward planning and ensuring sufficient time is allowed for scrutiny of reports, particularly where late papers are received.

The Committee agreed that further work programming would be developed following a dedicated session on scrutiny planning, with proposed briefing topics and meeting arrangements to be confirmed and circulated to Members.

Signed .... (Chairman)

Date: ....

Finance and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme – 2025 / 2026 / 2027

COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

Date	Topic	Responsible Officer	Portfolio Holders	All Member Briefing	Task and Finish Group followed by a report to Committee	Report straight to committee	Previous topic of review - an update against the action plan
~~19-Jan-26~~	~~Draft Financial Strategy 2026/2027 – 2030/2031~~	~~James Walton~~	~~Roger Evans~~			~~✓~~	
~~19-Jan-26~~	~~Capital Strategy 2025/27~~	~~James Walton~~	~~Roger Evans~~			~~✓~~	
~~09-Feb-26~~	~~Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2025/26~~	~~Mannie Ketley~~	~~Roger Evans~~			~~✓~~	
~~09-Feb-26~~	~~Financial Strategy 2026/2027 – 2030/2031~~	~~Mannie Ketley~~	~~Roger Evans~~			~~✓~~	
~~09-Feb-26~~	~~Fees and Charges 2026/27~~	~~Mannie Ketley~~	~~Roger Evans~~			~~✓~~	
~~09-Feb-26~~	~~Partnership Working T&F Group~~	~~Tim Collard~~	~~Alex Wagner~~		~~✓~~ ~~To report at regular intervals throughout programme~~		
~~13-Apr-26~~	~~Part One report of the CIL Task and Finish Group~~	~~Greg Ebbs~~	~~David Walker~~		~~✓~~ ~~To report at regular intervals throughout programme~~		
~~08-Jun-26~~	~~Performance Monitoring Report Q4 and Corporate Plan Performance Framework~~	~~Paul Clarke / Jess Edwards~~	~~Heather Kidd~~			ü	
~~08-Jun-26~~	~~Financial Outturn 2025/26~~	~~Duncan Whitfield~~	~~Roger Evans~~			ü	
~~08-Jun-26~~	~~Improvement Plan – Update Report~~	~~Paul Clarke~~	~~Heather Kidd~~			ü	
~~08-Jun-26~~	~~PWC Local Partnerships Report~~	~~Rachel Robinson~~	~~Alex Wagner~~			ü	
~~08-Jun-26~~	~~Aquamira Learning Disability day service~~	~~Natalie McFall~~	~~Ruth Houghton~~			ü	

~~08-Jun-26~~	~~Helena Lane Older people's Day Service~~	~~Natalie McFall~~	~~Ruth Houghton~~			~~ü~~	
07-Sep-26	Exceptional Financial Support: External Assurance	Duncan Whitfield	Roger Evans			✓	
07-Sep-26	Cornovii Developments Ltd	Duncan Whitfield	James Owen			✓	
07-Sep-26	Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2026/27	Duncan Whitfield	Roger Evans			✓	
07-Sep-26	Performance Monitoring Report Q1	Paul Clarke / Tom Dodds	Heather Kidd			✓	
07-Sep-26	Assets Member Briefing	Steve Law / Kassandra Polyzoides	Roger Evans	✓			
date tbc - possible for an Oct 2026 session which will replace one of the Nov sessions							
16-Nov-26	Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2027 - 2032	Duncan Whitfield	Roger Evans			✓	
16-Nov-26	Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2026/27	Duncan Whitfield	Roger Evans			✓	
16-Nov-26	Performance Monitoring Report Q2	Paul Clarke / Jess Edwards	Heather Kidd			✓	
30-Nov-26							
08-Feb-27	Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 3 (Period 8) 2026/27	Duncan Whitfield	Roger Evans			✓	
08-Feb-27	Medium Term Financial Plan 2027/28 – 2031/32	Duncan Whitfield	Roger Evans			✓	
08-Feb-27	Performance Monitoring Report Q3	Paul Clarke / Jess Edwards	Heather Kidd			✓	

Other identified areas of interest from Committee discussions, including topics for briefings and potential Task and Finish Groups:

Planned Task and Finish groups		
North West Relief Road (in conjunction with E&E as lead committee)	terms of reference drafted	
Partnership Working - Phase 3	Autumn 2026	

Devolution	To take place Autumn 2026	
Planned Member Briefings		
~~Medium Term Financial Plan~~	~~13th July~~	✓
~~SEND~~	~~13th July~~	✓
Assets	7th Sept	
Adult Social Care Finance	21st Sept	
Other items for consideration		
Use of Consultants		

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