Committee and Date
Council
11 December 2025

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2025
In The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.00 am

Responsible Officer: Ashley Kendrick
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, 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, Sarah Marston, David Minnery, Vicky Moore, Mark Morris, Malcolm Myles-Hook, Chris Naylor, James Owen, Mark Owen, Wendy Owen, Vivienne Parry, Ed Potter, Rosie Radford, Carl Rowley, Charles Shackerley-Bennett, Colin Stanford, Jon Tandy, Dan Thomas, Teri Trickett, David Vasmer, Beverley Waite, David Walker, Sam Walmsley, Alison Williams and Rob Wilson

34 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillors Brendan Mallon, Alan Mosely, Sharon Ritchie-Simmons and Colin Taylor.

35 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.

Councillors Heather Kidd, Ruth Houghton and Joshua Dickin declared an interest in item 11 – Bishops Castle Leisure- Approval for Decarbonisation and Pool Renovation Project. Councillors Kidd and Houghton would be leaving the room for the debate, and Councillor Dickin would be abstaining from the vote.

36 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2025, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

37 **Announcements**

The Leader announced that Tanya Miles would be acting as Interim Chief Executive and Rachel Robinson would be acting as Interim Deputy Chief Executive.

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 17th July 2025, which had been circulated at the meeting.

38 **Public Questions**

Petitions

The Chairman advised that a petition bearing more than 1,000 signatures had been received from Sian Powell, on behalf of the Friends of Cleobury Mortimer Sports Centre, requesting a debate under the Council's Petition Scheme. The petition urged the Council to:

"Prioritise funding, find sustainable financial solutions, and explore partnerships that can safeguard the future of Teme Leisure's offerings."

Ms Powell was given 5 minutes to open the debate and outline her case, which was briefly as follows:

- Cleobury Mortimer Sports Centre has been a vital community hub since 1985, which receives over 30,000 visits annually, supports 26 local sports clubs, and serves 590 members, acting as a key venue for health, connection, and opportunity in the town.
- It provides a safe, inclusive environment for physical activities that improve physical and mental health, including GP referrals for tailored exercise plans.
- The centre offers local employment, including part-time roles for young people, and supports youth engagement through sports
- The Friends of the Centre requested that the Council reconsider budget cuts, support fundraising efforts, and potentially underwrite costs to prevent closure, emphasizing that the centre is essential for sustaining community health and reducing long-term healthcare burdens

In response to the petition the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure, Councillor James Owen thanked the petitioner for submitting the petition and made the following points –

- Within the current budget which removed any subsidies for leisure facilities, there was no room to reinstate funding this year.
- Since the contract notice, local community members have actively sought ways to preserve the leisure centre, with council leaders engaging in discussions and

supporting alternative solutions, including learning from successful fundraising efforts like those in Bishop's Castle.

- As of the latest update, no formal confirmation had been received about extending the current operator's contract beyond December, though there is an indication they may seek to continue operations temporarily
- Council members had visited Cleobury Mortimer, engaged with fundraising groups, and committed to continuing negotiations and exploring all options to sustain leisure services until a broader contract can be established in 2027.

In closing the Portfolio Holder thanked the petitioner again and indicated that no further action would be taken and that the Council would continue to seek ways to maintain the service in negotiation with the Council and other third parties.

Public Questions

The Chairman advised that public questions had been received from Rev. Paul Cawthorne, Emma Bullard, Ron and Jane Berry, Frances Rickford, Susan Wedlock and John Palmer.

The full questions and responses can be found on Public Questions - Council 25.9.25.pdf

39 **Questions from Members**

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

Question from Councillor Beverley Waite regarding increasing the size of car parking spaces. By way of supplementary question Councillor Waite asked that if a trial was possible, that Ludlow could be considered. The Portfolio Holder agreed to arrange a meeting between Councillor Waite and the relevant officer to discuss further.

Question from Councillor Sarah Marston regarding speed limits and road safety measures. There was no supplementary question.

Question from Councillor Harry Hancock-Davies regarding the collection of council tax and business rates. By way of supplementary question, Councillor Hancock-Davies sought confirmation that the Portfolio Holder would commit to reversing the staffing cuts made to the revenues and benefits team. The Portfolio Holder gave his assurance that he would have discussions with the appropriate officers at all levels to try and ensure that the situation on the debt collection for both council tax and the business rates is improved.

An urgent question had been received from Councillor Carl Rowley with regards to supporting St Martins School following the recent fire.

A copy of the questions and the responses provided are available from the web page for the meeting - Member Questions - Council 25.9.25 with responses.pdf

40 Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Response

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

Members discussed the need for detailed consultation, realistic timelines, scrutiny involvement, and the importance of balancing planning, action, and internal controls to achieve sustainability.

RESOLVED:

Council

1. Endorsed the recommendations in the LGA CPC report (appendix 1), noted the immediate actions being taken, and the intention to present an action plan to address the recommendations being presented to 15 October 2025 Cabinet.

2. Recognised the relationship between the planned 12-to-18-month timescales for the Improvement Plan to achieve financial sustainability and the urgency to address the financial emergency.

3. Approved the draft terms of reference for the Improvement and Assurance Board (appendix 2) and delegated the finalisation of arrangements including governance, to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader.

4. To work across political parties to identify, support and pursue options that will achieve the CPC recommendations and financial sustainability for the council and the delivery of the council's priorities and outcomes for Shropshire communities in years to come**.**

41 A New Direction for Shropshire

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

Members acknowledged the need for measurable objectives, resource implications for town and parish councils, and the importance of economic and contract strategies.

RESOLVED:

Council:

1. Considered and endorsed the strategic direction and priorities outlined in the attached document (Appendix A) with a view to agreeing an aligned way forward for the Council.

2. Agreed that detailed delivery plans are created at a Portfolio Holder level, subject to the consideration under the Scrutiny process, with Portfolio Holders reporting back to Council on a regular basis on the progress being made.

42 SEND and AP Strategy and Outcomes Framework

It was proposed by Councillor Andy Hall, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education and seconded by Councillor Neil Bentley that the report of the Director of Children's Services and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

Members acknowledged that there is a recognized national need to improve SEND provision, and while local improvements have been made, further progress was needed. It was noted that the strategy will be scrutinised in six months to assess progress and identify areas for improvement.

RESOLVED:

Council

1. Considered and approved the final draft SEND and AP Strategy 2025 – 2029

2. Adopted the Outcomes Framework as a 'live working document', noting the ambitions to focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

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

43 Children's Social Care Ofsted Report and Next Steps

It was proposed by Councillor Ruth Houghton, Portfolio Holder for Social Care and seconded by Councillor Sarah Marston that the report of the Director of Children's Services and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

Members acknowledged the work of the Children's Improvement Board, staff, and previous portfolio holders, and were urged to get involved with the Corporate Parenting Panel as it was extremely rewarding.

RESOLVED:

Council:

1. Acknowledged this outstanding achievement and the positive impact on the lives of children, young people and families in Shropshire.

2. Acknowledged the Council-wide commitment to sustaining and embedding this outstanding achievement, at the same time recognising the preventative benefits that doing so will bring to children, young people and families

44 Bishop's Castle Leisure – Approval for Decarbonisation and Pool Renovation Project

It was proposed by Councillor James Owen, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure and seconded by Councillor Jeremy Blandford that the report of the Service Director for Commissioning and the recommendations contained therein be received and agreed.

Members noted that the Friends of SPARC had raised £500,000 locally and secured £2.5 million in government grants for facility improvements, with the aim of reducing energy and maintenance costs and ensuring long-term sustainability.

The Portfolio Holder clarified that the project is funded through capital, not revenue, and aligns with the administration's aim to protect services through community partnership and use of available funds.

RESOLVED:

Council:

1. Approved the Bishop's Castle Pool Refurbishment Project for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

2. Approved the Bishop's Castle Decarbonisation Project for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

3. Delegated authority to the Service Director for Commissioning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure to procure, negotiate and agree the terms of any agreements and contracts necessary and to proceed with the delivery of both projects.

45 Appointment to Committees

It was proposed by the Chairman, Councillor Duncan Borrowman, and seconded by the Vice Chairman, Councillor Gary Groves, that the amendments to committee membership as set out in the agenda papers be agreed. In addition, members were notified of an additional amendment to the Southern Planning Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the amendments to committee membership as set out in the agenda papers be agreed, together with the addition of Councillor Carl Rowley replacing Councillor Dawn Husemann as a substitute member of the Southern Planning Committee.

46 **Motions**

The following motion was proposed by Councillor Duncan Kerr and supported by the Green and Independent Group:

Last year Carers UK launched a policy report and a national campaign to establishing that caring should be a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act saying

"Carers have given us strong evidence that they do not feel that there is a level playing field. They feel invisible, overlooked, and discriminated against. When applying for jobs, equality monitoring forms do not ask whether someone has unpaid caring responsibilities. There is no direct requirement for simple reasonable adjustments for carers in the workplace. Carers say that this would make a difference".

This Council has already shown its willingness to help those who suffer disadvantage and discrimination by its unanimous decision to treat care-leavers as having a protected characteristic under this Act and I know this has meant a lot to the children that we have parental responsibility for. Carers clearly feel they suffer discriminations and inequality that limits their role. Empowering them by giving them this protection would not only improve the quality of life for the people they care for but also reduce demands on Social care.

We therefore call on the Council to:

1. Support the campaign by Carers UK to make having caring responsibilities a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act and

2. To treat carers in Shropshire as though they had a protected characteristic.

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

1. Supports the campaign by Carers UK to make having caring responsibilities a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act and

2. Treats carers in Shropshire as though they had a protected characteristic.

Motion received from Councillor Rosemary Dartnall and supported by the Labour Group

The financial crisis that has been rumbling forwards for a number years has reached an inevitable crunch point. Unless urgent action is taken to avert a section 114 notice, Shropshire Council will not be able to balance its budget this financial year. If we cannot pull back from the brink, we are now looking at the very real prospect of government commissioners running the council.

This outcome is not in the public interest and I'm sure none of us want it to happen.

The basic member allowance is due to increase by 3.2% - to be back-dated to either 1 April or 5 May, in the October payroll. **We propose the increase for all councillors is cancelled immediately.**

Allowing for the addition of basic allowance multipliers for portfolio holders and councillors with certain roles, this will save £44,500 in the current financial year and impact positively on coming years. While a relatively minor financial contribution in terms of the overall position, it equates to 5% of the current shortfall and represents a small but important step in the right direction.

Unanimous agreement to this motion would demonstrate leadership and make a strong statement to the public and to Shropshire Council staff, who have endured several years of uncertainty about their jobs.

Please vote with us to cancel the proposed member increase with immediate effect.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion failed.

Motion received from Councillor Harry Hancock-Davies and supported by the Reform UK Group

Motion: Establishment of a Fraud Investigation Team

Currently, Shropshire Council has no dedicated fraud investigation team. As a result, the authority faces a significant risk of under-detecting and under-reporting fraud. This may lead to fraudulent claims or practices going unchallenged, minimal recovery of public funds, and a growing perception that fraud within Shropshire is unlikely to be detected. This may exacerbate financial pressures and erode public confidence in the Council's ability to safeguard resources.

This Council notes with concern the findings of the 2023 report by Crowe, Peters & Peters, and the University of Plymouth, which estimate that annual losses to the UK's public sector amount to £50.2 billion. Of this, £8.8 billion (excluding benefits) is attributed to fraud within Local Authorities. The largest risks are identified in procurement (£5bn), housing tenancy fraud (£2bn), and payroll fraud (£1.2bn). Additionally, benefit-related fraud accounts for £2.9bn, including Housing Benefit fraud (£700m) and Council Tax Reduction fraud (£60m).

This Council believes:

That taking proactive steps to prevent, detect, and address fraud is essential to protecting public funds, ensuring fairness, and maintaining trust within local government.
That a dedicated fraud team, whether internally managed or externally contracted—subject to a feasibility assessment—can provide a robust structure for risk-based investigation, prevention, and enforcement while positively contributing to the Council's financial resilience.

This Council notes:

The support provided to local authorities by the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally strategy, which sets out a coordinated national framework supported by the Public Sector Fraud Authority (PSFA) and the National Audit Office (NAO).

The effectiveness of focused fraud investigation and detection, as evidenced by the annual reports of the National Fraud Initiative.

That whilst the exceptional recovery ratios achieved in some large urban areas may not be matched in Shropshire, evidence from comparable councils suggests that even modest detection and recovery levels can result in net savings exceeding operational costs.

This Council recognises that every pound lost to fraud is a pound not being invested in our communities, public services, and adult social care. Fraud directly impacts the Council's ability to provide services to those in genuine need and adds stress to already stretched finances.

That from the 1 September 2025, the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 introduces a new corporate offence of failure to prevent fraud. This legislation places a duty on organisations to implement reasonable fraud prevention measures and holds them criminally liable for fraudulent acts committed by employees or agents

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Establish a permanently dedicated and resourced Fraud Investigation Team, tasked with the detection, investigation, and recovery of monies lost through fraudulent activity, in compliance with the Council's governance and budgetary procedures.
2. Ensure the Team works closely with other relevant Council departments—such as procurement and Revenues & Benefits to maximise recovery and prevention efforts.
3. Where appropriate, pursue prosecutions to deliver a strong deterrent effect, ensuring that successful cases taken through the courts are publicised through the media to maximise deterrence, and that all work is carried out fully within the legislative framework available.
4. Develop partnerships with external agencies including the Police, HMRC, DWP, and other relevant organisations to strengthen investigations, prosecutions, and the recovery of proceeds of crime.
5. Implement a timeline for the establishment and review of the Fraud Investigation Team, with periodic reporting to Full Council or the Audit Committee.

The motion was ruled out of order due to budget implications and was referred, following a vote to the Audit and Governance Committee for further consideration.

47 Report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority

It was proposed by Councillor David Minnery that the report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority be received and noted.

RESOLVED:

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

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....