

Shropshire Health & Wellbeing Board, 20th November 2025

Chair's report: Shropshire Council Financial Emergency and Impact on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery

As co-chair and Portfolio Holder for Health and Public Protection at Shropshire Council, I want to take this opportunity to update you on Shropshire Council's current financial position and the steps we are taking to address the challenges ahead, in particular to offer reassurances in terms of the impact on our Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and propose a further discussion with partners on our future plans and any implications as these emerge.

As you know, we declared a financial emergency in September and I appreciate that this may have left staff, partners and the public feeling uncertain about the council's future. Firstly, let me reassure you that we are doing everything possible to regain financial stability and protect the services we deliver.

After a worsening financial position witnessed over recent months, we have completed a detailed review into all areas of our budget. This has enabled the true scale of the financial challenge facing us to be uncovered. A report which outlined our financial monitoring position, based on information to the end of September, was presented to Cabinet yesterday. Early indications show that we may overspend by £50 million by March 2026 if no alterations are made.

Over the last few months, the Council has been working hard across the organisation to stabilise our finances as quickly as possible. Our focus is on stopping spending, reducing costs where possible, increasing income, and delivering the savings we have already committed to. Alongside these immediate actions, we are also putting in place longer-term plans to ensure the council's sustainability for the future.

I want to assure partners that our priority is to maintain essential services and support our communities during this period.

We have been in ongoing discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), seeking both immediate and longer-term financial support. While our main request is for the funding needed over the next three years to invest in transformation and stabilise our budget, we have also asked for urgent help to ensure we can continue to deliver services until March 2026.

We expect to apply for longer-term funding in December and hope to hear a decision by February 2026. We are awaiting confirmation regarding our request for immediate support and will keep you updated as soon as we know more.

We are making tough decisions to reduce spend, increase income and protect our most vulnerable residents. Some services may be affected, and there could be changes to fees and charges as we prepare our next budget. Where changes are proposed we will produce Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA) alongside and share these with partners and the public.

We will also continue to lobby for fairer funding and ensure that the unique challenges of rural authorities like Shropshire are properly recognised.

We know this news may be concerning, but we want to assure you that the council is fully committed to working through these challenges, with transparency and collaboration at the heart of our approach.

We greatly value your partnership and support, and we will continue to keep you informed as the situation develops going forward as we continue to develop our long term plans including our corporate and partnership plan which will seek to ensure that despite our challenges, we can make Shropshire Council sustainable, fulfil the promises the administration made in our New Direction paper and create a council we can all be proud of. Specially, the New Direction paper specifically sets out our continuing commitment to health over the next 4 years. We are committed to working in partnerships, in local communities where possible, we recognise the importance of our public places in Shropshire and will continue to focus on prevention and address underlying inequalities in our diverse communities which deliver not only better outcomes but have a clear benefit to our long term financial sustainability. We retain a strong focus on prevention, early intervention and reducing demand. Over the next few months we welcome the opportunity to bring updates to partners and engage with you all more directly on how we can achieve these ambitions.

Health and Public Protection

Outcome:

We are committed to improving health and wellbeing outcomes through targeted programmes to reduce inequalities, shift to prevention, neighbourhood-based service delivery, and stronger multi-agency collaboration while ensuring we meet our statutory duties.

Our approach is to:

- Champion a systemwide programme to increase update Vaccinations & Immunisations Improvements Programme (V&IP) with an initial focus on Autumn/Winter 2025/26
- Commit Health in All Policies (HiAP) collaborative approach to improving the health of all people by incorporating health considerations into all Council decision-making
- Establish Neighbourhood Hubs and mini-hubs working with partners and communities to deliver health and wellbeing outcomes, services and support, including co-location with partners and with GP practices where feasible. This includes building on outreach provision into rural areas including sustainable use of mobile buses within the resources available.
- Continue to Target improvements where resources allow to areas of highest deprivation including rural areas experiencing deprivation.
- Develop metrics to identify and monitor rural deprivation.
- Work with partners to seek assurance and prioritise the following activities;
 - To ensure the response to NHS reforms doesn't impact negatively on our residents including that adequate local patient safety systems are in place and to communicate with local provider plus regional and national patient safety systems.
 - Expand access to community-based and specialist mental health services.
 - Establish a Healthcare Dashboard to monitor urgent and emergency care KPIs.
 - Implement medium-priority improvements in 2026/27, including commissioning reform, ICB funding transfer, increased community bed capacity, expanded therapy provision, and improved dental, mental health, women's health, and sexual health services.
 - Integrate statutory Medical Examiner Reports into the Healthcare Dashboard.
- Ensure private water supply regulation is funded through appropriate charges.
- Ensure delivery of food standards and hygiene inspections are prioritised in accordance with the regulations.
- Work towards meeting capacity needs for The Regulatory Services, Health Protection, Health and Safety and Environmental Health.