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**To:** Tim Collard  
**Subject:** Staff Weekly Update Thursday 30 October 2025



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## **Staff Weekly Update Thursday 30 October 2025**

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*Tanya Miles, interim chief executive*

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Hi everyone

I want to begin by acknowledging the unease many of you may have felt following last week's update on our financial position. I know these are challenging times, and it's only natural to feel concerned when we face uncertainty together.

However, there is also a real sense of optimism that we will do things differently. We have a plan to improve, and we are doing everything we can to stabilise our budget.

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## Investing in our plans to improve

On Wednesday I am taking to workforce board two requests for much-needed roles to the leadership structure – the need for both was highlighted in the [Corporate Peer Challenge \(CPC\) review](#) and subsequent [recommendations](#).

These are fixed-term service director roles for ‘strategy and transformation’ to drive forward our plan to improve and ‘place shaping’ to renew our focus on economic growth.

The money to pay for these roles will come from two vacant posts in the leadership team and I’m confident that they will pay for themselves in the longer term - setting our direction and bringing in much-needed money to ensure our future.

But that’s not all. We plan to increase capacity in certain areas to support the work we must do as a council, to help us to stabilise and to be sustainable.

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## Plans, plans and more plans

I know that there is some confusion about all the plans we have, and the others that we want to create. Hopefully the below explanation will make things a little clearer.

We will aim to have a new Shropshire Plan by Summer 2026. The new Shropshire Plan will set out in clear terms the strategic priorities and purpose of the council. It will explain how we will achieve those outcomes: what and how we need to improve and develop; and what resources we need. This will be our shared strategic plan that we will all work towards. The four plans below will all enable the development of a rigorous, robust and tested Shropshire Plan.

- Improvement Plan: building strong foundations for the future.
- Medium-Term Financial Plan: clarity around finances.
- Corporate Plan: delivering, enabling and influencing for Shropshire.
- Partnership Plan: working with partner organisations.

Although all four plans are interconnected, our current focus must be on the **Medium-Term Financial Plan** (MTFS) and the **Improvement Plan**. This is because we must get our finances into order and improve the whole organisation so that we have the firm foundations we need to create the **Corporate Plan**. The **Partnership Plan** will be worked on separately, but with an appreciation of the other plans.

The key to achieving this is you, our people. Over the last few weeks we’ve tasked our senior leadership forum to help us shape and share the beginnings of our

People Plan. We really want to hear your thoughts, so if you haven't seen it already, please ask your manager.

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## We want to hear from you

Don't forget, everyone is invited to take part in upcoming **focus groups** next week. These sessions are a key part of shaping our **Improvement Plan**, and your input is vital.

There will be **three** face to face sessions at The Guildhall and **three** opportunities to engage online. ***Please only book on to one session.***

- **Tuesday 4 November from 12.30pm to 2pm** - Improvement Plan Staff Focus Group in the Fliss Allan Room, 3rd Floor Guildhall (15 spaces available - face to face only).
- **Tuesday 4 November from 2pm to 3.30pm** - Improvement Plan Online Staff Focus Group. Online only - 20 spaces.
- **Wednesday 5 November from 10.30am to 11.30am** - Improvement Plan Online Staff Focus Group. Online only - 20 spaces.
- **Wednesday 5 November from 12.30pm to 2pm** - Improvement Plan Staff Focus Group in the Bridgnorth Room, 2nd Floor Guildhall (15 spaces available - face to face only).
- **Wednesday 5 November from 2.30pm to 4pm** - Improvement Plan Staff Focus Group in the Bridgnorth Room, 2nd Floor Guildhall (15 spaces available - face to face only).
- **Friday 7 November from 12pm to 1.30pm** - Improvement Plan Online Staff Focus Group. Online only - 20 spaces.

Please make sure you book onto a session by visiting [Leap into Learning here](#).

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## Our financial challenges

One of the questions I've heard many times this week is 'why are we in this position?'

It's a good question, and one that needs an answer.

There are many reasons why we find ourselves projecting to spend more money than we have, but the main reasons are that we have savings we have been unable to deliver (some for a long time now) and we have increasing pressures within certain areas like children's and adults.

The lack of government funding in response to our pressures continues to make the situation worse, especially for Shropshire which is sparsely populated and has an aging population. Heather and Alex have been and will continue to lobby the government for fairer funding, however we're not hopeful that this will come in time to help us.

A more detailed and complete picture of our financial challenges, and our proposed responses, will be taken to Cabinet on 19 November.

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## **Balancing our books**

We are yet to hear from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) following our ask for funding to help us up until the end of March.

Unfortunately, some of the media coverage around this has been a little confused lately, including references to issuing a Section 114 which is inaccurate. As you know, we are in a process right now of asking for funding, otherwise known as exceptional financial support (EFS), and we are working through it. I promise to let you know as soon as we have an update.

However, it's worth noting that even if we get this funding, for now and future years, the problem has not gone away. We need to continue to do all of the things we're doing now, and more, to enable us to be sustainable in the future.

Thanks to our spending control boards, non-essential spend is stopping and essential spend is being challenged, but there is more we can do.

It's important that we all play our part. Please make sure that you carefully consider your spending and make sure that we have the correct information to make an informed decision. If we don't have this, we simply can't approve your ask. Applications that keep being resubmitted without being changed cause more work for everyone and this can't continue.

To find out more, please take a look at the email James sent to you all earlier this week. This information can also be found on the [intranet here](#).

It's not just about stopping spending though. There's lots we can do differently, take the HR and Payroll AI bot as an example. You can read more about this below.

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## **Getting the basics right**

It's more important now than ever to get the basics right. The cost of failure is pushing problems elsewhere. This impacts on us all and costs us more money in the long run.

As many of you will know, for six years now there has been 'limited assurance' internal audit opinions and we need to urgently address this.

Our response to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests on time is down to 57%. This is extremely concerning for the council as a whole and for me in particular, as there is a risk to me that if a further enforcement notice is issued by the Information Commissioner and they are not satisfied that we are addressing it, then I could be subject to contempt of court proceedings. The consequences of which could include imprisonment!

Please make sure that you answer any outstanding FOIs that you and your team have.

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## Answers to your HR and payroll questions

We're always working to improve how things run behind the scenes, and as part of our goal to be a more sustainable council, I'm pleased to let you know that we'll be launching a new Ask HR and Payroll AI bot next week.

This helpful tool will make it much easier for you to get quick answers to common questions about HR, payroll, recruitment, and our other systems. The bot uses our policies as its guide, so you can trust the information it provides. It's designed to handle those frequent, repetitive queries, saving you time and letting you focus on more important work.

Along with the bot, you'll find updated policies and new 'How to' guides, and the bot will keep getting better as we add more information. This launch is an important step in our HR and Payroll review, shaped by feedback from more than 90 colleagues, and it shows our commitment to making real, positive changes across the organisation.

I'll be sharing more details next week, including how you can use the bot and what it can do for you. Stay tuned!

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## Ask us anything

Heather and I will be hosting a webinar on **Monday 3 November from 1pm until 2pm** in the council chamber in The Guildhall.

It is the perfect opportunity to have your questions answered.

Space in the council chamber is limited, but there is no limit to how many of you join online.

Please book your place, whether you intend to come in person or online, by [following this link](#).

If you are coming to see us in person, please make sure you arrive 10 minutes or so before 1pm to grab a coffee or tea. There's lots for us to get through so we want to make sure we start on time.

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## And finally...

Again, please let me reassure you: I am not looking to make compulsory redundancies. We must continue to navigate these difficulties as one organisation, and your roles are valued and secure.

I am incredibly proud to work alongside such a passionate and skilled workforce. The dedication you show every day - your care for the services we provide and the people we serve - is our greatest asset. It's your hard work, resilience, and professionalism that will carry us forward.

A lot of us are taking a break from work this week. I am taking a few days off this week to spend time with my family and to plant some spring bulbs in my garden.

Thank you for everything you do, especially now.

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Take care and best wishes

Kind regards

Tanya Miles  
**Interim chief executive**



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