



Committee
Council

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Public

Annual Scrutiny Report 2025/26

Cabinet Member:	Heather Kidd – <i>Leader of the Council</i>
Lead Director:	Paul Clarke - Service Director Strategy and Change
Service Area:	Strategy and Change
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Electoral Divisions Affected	All
Key Decision?	Non Key
Cabinet Forward Plan	Not applicable
Report considered by	Not applicable

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To provide Council with an update on the development of overview and scrutiny at Shropshire Council, and work carried out by the overview and scrutiny committees during 2025/26.

2. Recommendations

Full Council is asked to

- 2.1. Note the progress in developing Overview and Scrutiny working in 2025/26, and the work carried out by Overview and Scrutiny Members.
- 2.2. Support the ongoing development of Overview and Scrutiny to contribute to the Council being financially sustainable

3. Background

- 3.1. It is good practice that an annual scrutiny report is presented to council. It is recognised that doing so is an opportunity to put overview and scrutiny in the spotlight and provides those who have been involved the chance to share their experiences.
- 3.2. Overview and Scrutiny Committees and their work provides Members who are not on Cabinet the opportunity to help inform the policies of the council and the decisions that are taken through evidence-based recommendations. This can contribute to decision making as well as holding decision makers to account, bringing through the voice of communities, and contributing to improving public services.
- 3.3. The topics that the committees consider all relate to the priorities of the council. In September 2025 Cabinet announced a Financial Emergency which the Overview and Scrutiny Committees needed to respond to in terms of their work programmes, how they looked into topics and issues, and the pace they carried out their work.

4. Summary of Main Proposals

- 4.1. The Annual Scrutiny Report attached as Appendix A, provides an update on the work that has been carried out by the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees that were in place during 2025/26 and shares the development of the Overview and Scrutiny function during the year.
- 4.2. The Local Elections 2025 saw a significant number of new councillors become members of Shropshire Council, many of whom became members of the overview and scrutiny committees. This created an important opportunity to clarify the role of Overview and Scrutiny as an apolitical, evidence-led critical friend that supports policy development, strengthens accountability and helps ensure that decisions are transparent, well informed and focused on outcomes for residents.

- 4.3. The recently published External Assurance Review carried out by CIPFA on behalf of MHCLG looked back at 2025/26, and referenced early meetings of the committees, identifying that Scrutiny should be improved. The developments that have taken place during 2025/26 and into 2026/27 have moved the function forwards, but this is a continual learning process.
- 4.4. A key component and function of overview and scrutiny working is to understand and identify learning and how this can be used to contribute to the improvement of public services and the outcomes for communities and people using services. This is equally true of how overview and scrutiny function carries out its role. 2025/26 has been a year of developing how the Overview and Scrutiny function works and embedding its continuous improvement. Continuous improvement of overview and scrutiny is also a core purpose of the Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committee Chairs Group.
- 4.5. The Annual Report identifies the following key issues and developments:
- the post Local Election reset of Overview and Scrutiny, including induction, training and support for new and returning Members;
 - the development of more coordinated governance arrangements through the Scrutiny, Audit and Governance Chairs Group;
 - stronger links between scrutiny, audit and Cabinet while maintaining the independence of the different functions;
 - greater use of pre-decision scrutiny to help inform proposals before formal decisions are taken;
 - the application of a financial emergency and financial sustainability lens across scrutiny work programmes;
 - the use of Task and Finish Groups, whole committee working and Member briefings to support deeper investigation and evidence-led recommendations;
 - improved arrangements for monitoring the progress and impact of scrutiny recommendations; and
 - the forward focus for 2026/27, including revised committee arrangements and strong alignment with the new Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan and Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy.
- 4.6. During 2025/26 the committees have carried out work that has contributed to decision making, delivered deeper dives and research into topics to contribute to policy review and development, and held decision makers to account including through reviewing performance management and financial management reports.
- 4.7. The overview and scrutiny committees have a key role to play in contributing to the council's work and progress over the coming years towards being financially sustainable. This has included the Improvement Plan which was shared with the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee during its development, the development of the Medium-term Financial Strategy and Budget 2026/27, the development of the Corporate Plan and informing the performance measures for its reporting, as well as the 2025/26 quarterly performance management and financial management reports.

5. Key risks and Opportunities

- 5.1 The effective operation of Overview and Scrutiny helps manage governance, financial and service delivery risks by providing constructive challenge, evidence-led review and Member oversight. The key opportunity is to build on the progress made during 2025/26 so that scrutiny continues to add value through timely work programming, stronger follow-up of recommendations and closer alignment with the Council's strategic priorities.

6. Council Priorities

- 6.1 Overview and Scrutiny working and the committee work programmes directly relate to the delivery of the council's priorities.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. There are no Financial Implications associated with this report

8. Legal and HR implications

- 8.1. There are no Legal or HR implications associated with this report

9. Electoral Division Implications

- 9.1. There are no Electoral Division implications associated with this report

10. Health, Social (including "Child Friendly Shropshire") and Economic Implications

- 10.1. There are no implications associated with the decisions in the report. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have been looking at Health in All policies, Social Care and a Child Friendly Shropshire as part of their work in 2025/26 and in their work in 2026/27 onward.
- 10.2. Overview and Scrutiny working offers a good opportunity for young people to have their voices heard. Plans are in place to build this into how topics are considered.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 11.1 There are no direct equality, social inclusion or health implications arising from this report. The Annual Report includes examples of scrutiny activity that considered issues affecting residents and communities, including health, social care, children's services, transport, housing-related matters and community infrastructure.

12. Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

- 12.1 There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from this report. The Annual Report includes activity considered by the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including work linked to environmental and infrastructure matters.

13. Background Papers

- 13.1 None

14. Appendices

Appendix A – Annual Scrutiny report 2025/26