Shropshire Council

Committee and Date

Economy and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12th November 2026

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 1st September 2026
In the Shrewsbury Room, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ

Responsible Officer: Sarah Townsend Committee Officer
Email: sarah.townsend@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257721

Present:
Councillors Ed Potter (Chairman), Sam Walmsley (Vice-Chair), Donna Edmunds, Adam Fejfer, Gary Groves, Brendan Mallon, Chris Naylor, Julian Dean (Substitute) (substitute for Craig Emery) and Mark Owen (Substitute) (substitute for Wendy Owen)

Other Members in Attendance:
Councillor Tom Dainty – Deputy Portfolio Holder for Flooding & Highways
Councillor Roger Evans – Portfolio Holder for Finance (remotely)
Councillor Ruth Houghton – Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care & Public Health (remotely)
Councillor James Owen – Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Rob Wilson – Portfolio Holder for Transport & Regeneration

Officers in Attendance:
Claire Braddock – Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Steve Holdaway – Executive Manager: Highways Operations
Sarah Jones – Growth Programme & Strategy Manager
Kassandra Polyzoides – Service Director Place Shaping (remotely)
Tim Pritchard – Shrewsbury Programme Manager
Andy Wilde – Service Director Infrastructure

16 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Craig Emery, Alan Holford and Wendy Owen. Councillor Julian Dean was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Craig Emery and Councillor Mark Owen was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Wendy Owen.

17 **Disclosable Interests**

There were no interests declared.

18 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:
That the minutes of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2nd July 2026 be approved as a correct record.

19 **Public Question Time**

A public question had been received from Ms Victoria Kinnersley regarding grass verge maintenance transferring from STAR Housing to Shropshire Council. In her absence, her question was read out by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer and the response to the question was provided by the Chairman. A full copy of the question and response provided is available from the web page for the meeting.

20 **Member Question Time**

No member questions had been received.

21 **Review of Highways Maintenance Strategy and Highways Inspection Policy**

The Committee received an update from the Service Director Infrastructure and the Executive Manager: Highways Operations on the review of the Highways Inspection Policy and Highways Asset Management Policy. Members were advised that both documents dated from 2017 and required updating to reflect current corporate priorities, national best practice and recent Department for Transport requirements. It was also explained that the review was important in securing the full highways funding allocation, 25% of which was described as incentive funding. The revised documents were expected to be considered by Cabinet in November 2026 prior to a formal response being submitted to the Department for Transport.

Members welcomed the review and focused much of the discussion on the role of Town and Parish Councils and the need for greater involvement in identifying local priorities, supplying intelligence on highway conditions and supporting non safety critical work, provided that clear guidance was available on what could be undertaken safely and what remained the responsibility of the highway authority. Reference was made to the Church Preen pilot, which demonstrated how the Parish Council, local volunteers and highways officers could work together on low risk activities such as drainage and ditch maintenance. Officers agreed that the pilot offered valuable learning and could help shape future partnership working with local communities.

A significant part of the discussion centred on performance measurement and communication. Members questioned how success against the proposed priorities would be measured and noted that whilst the documents identified intended improvements, they did not clearly set out baselines, measurable outcomes or explain how progress would be reported. Particular reference was made to drainage maintenance, pothole reduction and the need for information that demonstrated whether investment decisions were delivering improvements. Officers confirmed that considerable operational data was already collected and could be presented in a more accessible way through a dashboard and performance measures developed with members.

Members also explored issues around prioritisation, response times and the quality of repairs with questions asked regarding how schemes were selected for capital investment, whether published response times were realistic and how residents could be provided with clearer information when reported defects could not be addressed

immediately. Officers explained that capital investment was prioritised countywide using customer complaints and enquiries, defect data, available funding and local engineering knowledge rather than according to area or ward boundaries. It was also confirmed that improved contractor arrangements, inspection processes and quality monitoring had contributed to better quality repairs, although pressures arising from recent increases in potholes continued to affect some work programmes. Members further suggested that inspections undertaken by bicycle should extend beyond designated cycleways in order to better reflect the experience of cyclists on the wider highway network.

The Committee suggested that the revised strategy and policy documents should:

- Strengthen engagement with Town and Parish Councils and establish clearer mechanisms for sharing local intelligence, priorities and feedback;
- Explore how the Church Preen pilot could be extended to support safe community led highway maintenance, accompanied by clear guidance on what local Town and Parish Councils and volunteers could and could not undertake;
- Establish clear baselines, measurable outcomes and performance reporting so that progress could be assessed against priorities and targets;
- Improve communication and feedback on reported defects, prioritisation, programme delivery and realistic delivery timescales;
- Consider simplifying approval and delegation processes for locally funded town and parish initiatives; and
- Examine the scope for carriageway inspections to be undertaken by bicycle to better reflect the experience of cyclists using the highway network.

It was agreed that the proposed recommendations would be drafted following the meeting and circulated to Committee members for comment and consensus, prior to being forwarded to officers to inform the revised documents.

RESOLVED:
Following the meeting, the following was agreed by Committee members:

On the 1st September 2026 the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Review of Highways Maintenance Strategy and Highways Inspection Policy and make the following recommendations to Cabinet relating to performance measurement, transparency, community engagement, active travel, inspection processes, communication and long-term asset management -

Recommendation 1: Highways Performance Framework

Members highlighted the need to demonstrate success and provide assurance that investment and resources are delivering improved outcomes for residents and recommended that the revised Highways Maintenance Strategy includes a clear performance framework with measurable outcomes.

Whilst acknowledging that the strategy says what the council intends to do, it does not include information around what success looks like. Members would like detail on what measurable outcomes can be expected over the next three years and how scrutiny will be able to hold the service to account.

Including information on:

- What are the measures to show successful outcomes?
- What does good look like?
- Members would also like to work with officers to determine what measures they would like to see included?
- What is meaningful for Members and for their communities, and how to track them.

Recommendation 2: Improved Member Transparency and Communication

Members expressed concerns that existing dates and performance information do not always appear to reflect activity on the ground, and recommended that the information available to Members regarding reported highways defects and repairs, ensures that:

- Target completion dates are meaningful and realistic
- Progress updates are clearly communicated
- Delays and backlogs are visible
- Performance information is available through an accessible dashboard where possible.

Recommendation 3: Increased Community Involvement through Town and Parish Councils

Members identified opportunities to utilise local knowledge and build on learning from existing pilot projects. They recommended stronger engagement with Town and Parish councils, and local communities in identifying local priorities and enabling greater proactive Town and Parish council involvement, supported by:

- Clear governance arrangements
- Suitable training
- Insurance and safety requirements
- Defined roles and responsibilities
- Developing a clear understanding of how Town and Parish Councils like to be engaged with

Developing a communication / consultation strategy that allows Town and Parish Councils to work alongside Shropshire in the decision-making process, allowing Highways to make better use of local knowledge and intelligence. Supporting town and parish councils in what they can do for themselves by enabling processes and unblocking any blockers.

Recommendation 4: Active Travel Considerations within Highway Inspections

Members questioned whether current inspection approaches sufficiently capture issues affecting cyclists using the wider highway network and recommended that the revised inspection policy explicitly considers the needs of cyclists and other active travel users, including whether inspection methods adequately identify defects experienced by users of the highway network beyond dedicated cycleways. Utilising the opportunity to inspect the carriageway by bicycle.

Recommendation 5: Resident Communication of Highway Repair Priorities

The committee discussed the importance of managing expectations and increasing public understanding of how highways maintenance decisions are made and recommended that the Council improves public communication regarding highway repair priorities, timescales and decision-making criteria so that residents better understand:

- How defects are assessed
- Why some repairs are prioritised over others
- Expected response times
- The impact of exceptional weather events and resource pressures on delivery

Recommendation 6: Long-Term Asset Management Approach

That the revised Highways Maintenance Strategy places greater emphasis on preventative maintenance and long-term asset management, helping to reduce future deterioration and improve network resilience.

Officers advised that the strategy refresh is intended to align with current priorities, best practice and Department for Transport funding requirements.

22 **Riverside Gardens Development**

The Committee received an update from the Shrewsbury Programme Manager on progress with the Riverside Gardens development following the recent all member briefing and site visit. Members were advised that planning approvals and secured funding were in place for the first phase of the project, including demolition, site remediation, initial public realm works and the creation of a temporary "meanwhile" space pending future development. It was reported that construction was progressing to programme and within budget and that Shrewsbury Town Council would play a key role in the planting, management and maintenance of the site. The intention was to create an attractive, flexible public space capable of hosting low-level events, activities and temporary uses whilst remaining available for future development.

Members questioned the future use and governance of the meanwhile space, including who would determine activities on the site and how the area would be managed. It was advised that governance arrangements with Shrewsbury Town Council were still being worked through, with the Council remaining as the corporate landlord, as the site was a Council asset and potential development site, whilst Shrewsbury Town Council was expected to have a role in the day to day management and events.

Questions were raised about accessibility, particularly Frankwell footbridge and the wider Welsh Bridge junction. Officers acknowledged these concerns and advised that improvements to the approach to Frankwell footbridge were being explored with the Environment Agency, although the bridge itself would remain constrained by its gradient.

Members also discussed how the Riverside development would relate to the Shrewsbury movement strategy, particularly in light of the cancellation of the North West Relief Road, future housing, parking provision, servicing and public transport connectivity. It was

advised that the next phase of movement strategy work was currently being scoped and would include detailed traffic modelling, including impacts beyond the town centre and on surrounding routes. The need for alignment with the Local Plan and the progression of strategic transport assessments against new planned growth was emphasised, as was the work of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Concerns were raised about the meanwhile space becoming underused, unsafe or vulnerable to anti-social behaviour or unauthorised use. In responding, Members were advised that these issues were being considered through the design and management arrangements for the site. Whilst it was acknowledged that anti-social behaviour could not be ruled out, it was hoped that increased footfall, managed activity and positive use of the space would help mitigate risks.

Members also asked whether the difficult economic viability position for future development had improved and it was confirmed that the position remained challenging. It was suggested that, given the likely timescale before development could come forward, the meanwhile space should provide meaningful temporary uses for however long it remained available such as semi-permanent small scale food, drink or small events, while avoiding competition with existing town centre businesses.

Councillor Rob Wilson, Portfolio Holder for Transport and Regeneration, was in attendance and declared that he was also a member of Shrewsbury Town Council. He highlighted the importance of step free access to Frankwell footbridge, links with transport and development planning and the need to consider issues such as anti-social behaviour and legal encroachments.

The Committee welcomed the progress made to date and noted that further updates may be brought back as the project and related movement strategy work progressed.

23 Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Committee reviewed their work programme and received updates on the progress of several Task and Finish Groups.

It was noted that the Highways Contract Task and Finish Group, chaired by Councillor Walmsley, was progressing and expected to report back later in the year.

Members were advised that the terms of reference for the North West Relief Road Task and Finish Group had been drafted and circulated, with membership still open following an extension to the application period. The group would work jointly with the Finance and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the financial element whilst considering the wider implications of the North West Relief Road decision, including links to movement strategy work and local plans.

An update was also provided on the proposed Licensing Task and Finish Group and it was noted that the terms of reference had been drafted and a call for members would be issued shortly.

Given existing scrutiny capacity pressures, it was suggested that pyrolysis could initially be considered by the full Committee rather than through a separate Task and Finish Group, before determining whether further detailed review work was required.

It was noted that the topic of school streets remained under review, with a further discussion expected in October once additional information was available. Following this, an all member briefing would be held.

It was noted that the Station Gyratory Task and Finish Group had completed its work and that recommendations arising from that work would be considered by Cabinet in December 2026. However, this item would continue to remain on the Committee's work programme.

24 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED:
That, in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4 (3) of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items.

25 **Exempt Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED:
That the exempt minutes of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2nd July 2026 be approved as a correct record.

26 **Date/Time of Next Meeting of the Committee**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 12th November 2026 commencing at 6.00 p.m.

Signed ..... (Chairman)

Date: .....