



<u>Committee and Date</u>
Council
14 December 2017



PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT UNIVERSITY & STRATEGIC PETER NUTTING: LEADER, SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

1. Summary

I became the Leader of the Council in May 2017 and at the outset I made clear that the new Administration would have two priorities:

- i) Economic Growth.
- ii) Changing the Culture of the Council.

I am very pleased to report that good progress has been made on both of these issues.

2. Economic Growth

Shropshire's Economic Growth Strategy was launched in September and this marks a 'sea change' in ambition and scale for growth. Shropshire's economy continues to perform well. The backbone of our business base is small and medium enterprises, particularly those employing fewer than 10 people (90% of all enterprises). The Council has continued to support this and an example is the ongoing success of the Shropshire Growth Hub operating virtually and with a physical presence based at the Food Enterprise Centre in Battlefield. Between 1st January and 31st October this year over 740 business contacts have been made by phone or face to face and this relates to the creation of 33 new jobs.

I have also paid attention to the economic needs of our Market Towns and I have visited all of our key towns and many of our parishes to gauge their ambition. The Council is developing proposals for a number of locations and I expect them to be submitted to the Marches LEP and I am optimistic that they will be funded.

We also have plans for strategic economic growth and there are a number of projects which I expect to announce shortly.

3. Priority Projects

We have set out a number of priority projects as follows:

- i) M54 Corridor.
- ii) Shrewsbury Shopping Centres.
- iii) Housing.
- iv) Car Parking.
- v) Shirehall Refurbishment.
- vi) Quarry Swimming Centre.
- vii) Digital Transformation.
- viii) Green Waste.
- ix) Capital Programme.
- x) Community Enablement Team.
- xi) CIL.
- xii) Mardol House.

4. Changing Organisation Culture

I want to encourage a more commercial 'can do' approach within the Council and I have been clear to implement a 'no blame' approach. I want our staff to be empowered to make decisions and eliminate command and control styles of management.

The Council has implemented an in-house 'Leadership Programme' to encourage improvements in leadership/management practice and to extend the skill range of our managers. The programme has received 100% positive feedback from the participants.

Digital Transformation will also provide the vehicle for changing the way in which the Council operates to be more efficient and customer/community focussed.

5. Commercial Activity

The Council needs new, self-generated income streams. We have a Commercial Strategy and I am accelerating this through the Deputy Leader. Our aim is to invest £300 million over the next 3 years with an overall return of 10%, or 5% net of capital repayments and interest.

6. Children and Adult Social Care

Our Social Services continue to perform well and I want to congratulate the Portfolio Holder and staff for achieving 'good' at the recent Children's Social Care Ofsted inspection. This is a truly fantastic achievement.

The future for social care is to reduce predicted demand by innovation and new interventions. The relevant Portfolio Holders are focussed on making this happen.

7. Financial Strategy

Our Financial Strategy will set out in detail the approach we are taking to managing our finances. Finance continues to be a challenge and we have taken steps to correct this in the medium term. Our aim is to protect services and the front line by being more efficient and raising new income streams. It will be necessary, as planned, to use freed up earmarked reserves over the next few years.

8. Digital Transformation

The Council is investing £24 million into developing new IT systems which will enable us to work in a modern way. The technology will reduce the number of inputs and transactions required and will provide proper management information and business intelligence. Our aim is to drive out £10 million of savings by implementing a new operating system. New ways of working will also improve our culture and the 'job satisfaction' experienced by our staff.

9. Estates and Assets

A review of our Estates function has been initiated and I expect this to make recommendations on how our staff and operations need to change. The final report will be available in January 2018.

Following the review of Estates, it is likely that a review of our Assets (land, buildings and plant) will need to be undertaken to ensure we are maximising their potential.

10. University Centre, Shrewsbury (UCS)

The Council has partnered the University of Chester to develop a University of Shrewsbury. UCS is intended to become an independent entity once it has 2000 or so students attending.

Progress in student recruitment has been slower than we would have liked and currently the university has 336 students in total. I am told that this compares favourably with other 'fledgling' universities at this stage in the process.

The Council's investment into the partnership is to provide buildings including the Guildhall, Rowley's House and student accommodation. I am pleased to report that we have fulfilled our commitment ahead of when required. Approximately 65 new student living units are currently being

constructed at the Tannery site in Shrewsbury with capacity to extend this as the university grows.

The role of Chester University is to develop curriculum which is beneficial to our economy by attracting young people to study and stay here in higher paid jobs. I am pleased that the university is diversifying into new curriculum areas including environmental science and new health technologies.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

None.

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Peter Nutting.

Local Member

Appendices

None.