



Date: Wednesday, 15 October 2025

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury,
Shropshire, SY3 8HQ

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CABINET

TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)

7 CPC Action Plan (Pages 1 - 14)

Lead Member – Cllr Heather Kidd, Leader

Lead Officer – Tanya Miles, Interim Chief Executive

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Committee and Date

Cabinet

15 October 2025

Item

Public



Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Heather Kidd		

1. Synopsis

This report presents the action plan to address the 10 recommendations and other proposed improvements set out in the report of the Corporate Peer Challenge carried out in July 2025.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The LGA were invited to carry out a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) which took place between the 14 to 17 July 2025. The Administration wanted to establish a baseline position and springboard for the Council at an early stage following the May 2025 Local Elections. The report and recommendations made by the CPC Team following their onsite work were presented to Council on the 25 September 2025.
- 2.2. This report shares the action plan (appendix 1) to respond to the 10 recommendations made by the peer team. These actions and the recommendations will be subsumed into the Council's Improvement Plan, which is currently being developed and will form the organisational improvement priorities

within the wider Council Corporate Plan. As outlined in the [Council paper](#), the improvement Plan will be part of the first section of the Council's strategic plan, with a 12-to-18-month timeframe. It is proposed that the Improvement Plan will also incorporate actions to address other areas of improvement set out in the CPC report, previously identified improvement actions arising from recent regulatory inspections (CQC and Ofsted) and the council's People Plan, to provide a single overall plan and framework for the Council's organisational improvement activity.

- 2.3. It is worthwhile noting that many actions that will be taken will address more than one recommendation e.g. doing so by tackling issues in parallel, or by creating the environment that will enable the further actions to be successful and achieve their full impact. So, taking actions which help to create a one council culture will directly assist the council being able to meet outcomes in different ways within the available funds.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. To agree the CPC action plan and the plan's integration into the overarching improvement plan as the first section of the Council's Strategic Plan.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 The CPC has taken place early in the new Council, following the Local Elections 2025. This has provided an early external view of the position of the council, giving a clear baseline and is a springboard to plan and deliver in the future.
- 4.2 The financial challenges and risks to the Council have been in focus for several years and the CPC report and recommendations have confirmed this focus. Opportunities to develop governance were also highlighted, including introducing an independently chaired Improvement Board.
- 4.3 The review has also highlighted some further areas and opportunities for the Council to look at including embedding being 'one council' and taking the opportunity at this early stage in a new council with many new Members, to develop how officers and Members develop their work together.

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to be 'One Council' with all staff understanding how the council operates in the 'new operating model' and the need to pull together to realise benefits and meet the challenges	The development of Our People Plan, including a performance management framework and defining the role of the Manager will support the development of a strong, agile, learning culture focused on supporting our people and driving transformation and improvement.

Officers and members do not understand their respective roles and how they work together to achieve financial sustainability and deliver the priorities and outcomes of the council

A programme of workshops supported by the LGA is in place to develop relationships and common ways of working, to align priorities and plans for Members and Officers

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers and/or Portfolio Holders review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):
- scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope of activities,
 - delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2 The initial costs associated with the development of the Improvement Board and the creation of an Improvement Plan are to be funded by contributions from LGA or managed within existing resources.

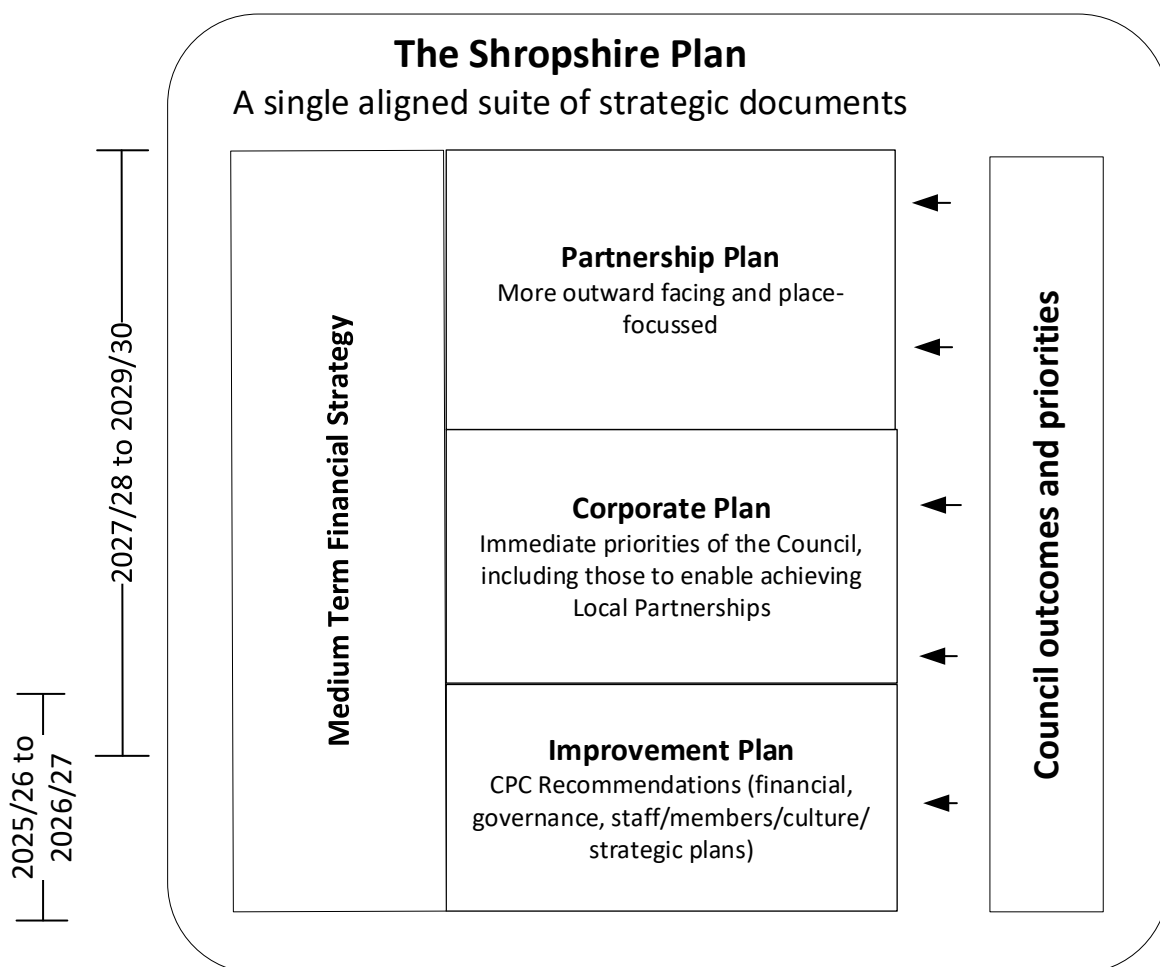
6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 Whilst this paper does not present options and recommendations that directly impact on climate change, the decisions that need to be taken and the actions that will need to take place to deliver financial sustainability and the priorities and outcomes of the council are likely to have impacts.
- 6.2 Opportunities to decarbonise the provision of services and increase energy efficiency of council assets may require some capital investment but will realise financial benefits e.g. through reducing energy usage, or through the generation of energy on council assets that either bring costs down or can generate income.
- 6.3 Climate change appraisals will need to be undertaken as appropriate for each project and approach that is developed to ensure that opportunities are identified and pursued, and that any 'invest to save' opportunities are investigated and fully evidenced to ensure that these can be taken into account in decision making.

7. Background

- 7.1. The Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) was carried out between the 14 – 17 July 2025. The preparation and intensive onsite work resulted in a report that highlighted a number of improvement and development opportunities for the council and made 10 recommendations. The action plan attached to this report covers the 10 recommendations set out by the peer team.

- 7.2. The full CPC report contains several other key issues and ‘in-report’ recommendations (specified opportunities for improvement) highlighted by the peer team. These have not been included in the CPC action plan to ensure that there is clear initial focus on the 10 recommendations, but they will be considered as part of the overall council improvement plan which will incorporate the CPC action plan actions. It is intended that this wider Improvement Plan, as the first part of the Council’s Strategic Plan, will be presented to Council in December 2025
- 7.3. This single improvement plan is an essential component in ensuring that all of the improvement recommendations and associated actions identified for the council are set out, aligned and resourced in one place. This will include any relevant actions from the recent Ofsted and CQC inspections, alongside the actions to address the CPC recommendations and improvement opportunities, and actions to implement the council’s People Plan.
- 7.4. It will be closely aligned to the Council’s Corporate Plan and needs to set out the actions and plan that will enable robust foundations to be in place to build the delivery of the council’s priorities and outcomes in the most effective and financially sustainable way.
- 7.5. In this context the Improvement Plan can be thought of as the first chapter of the aligned single Shropshire Plan, a suite of strategic documents that will include the Corporate Plan, more outward facing Partnership Plan, and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Improvement Plan will help ensure that the council is best placed to deliver the priorities and outcomes that the Corporate Plan and Partnership Plan will set out, reflecting the focus set out in the New Direction for Shropshire paper presented to Council on the 25 September 2025.



8. Conclusions

- 8.1. Addressing the recommendation made by the peer challenge team will be a key step in the council progressing on its improvement journey. The actions to do this are already underway with some key steps completed. The action plan at appendix 1 sets out the initial and immediate response and these will be incorporated into the Improvement Plan along with further steps to realise a sustainability going forward. The single Improvement Plan will support a clear, streamlined focus on the work that needs to be done to achieve this.

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

[Corporate Peer Challenge and Response](#) – Council 25 September 2025

[A New Direction for Shropshire](#) – Council 25 September 2025

Local Member: All

Appendix 1 – Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

Corporate Peer Challenge 2025 Recommendations - Action Plan

CPC Recommendations		Council response/current position	Action	Lead	By when
1	Urgently prepare a multi-year plan (MTFS) demonstrating and detailing the council's route to financial and operational stability. Ensure this is realistic, widely understood and shared.	A structured approach to the development of the MTFS and setting the Budget 2026/27 is in place. The council will ensure that there is cross-party awareness of the development of both, as well as across officers.	(i) Ensure cross-party awareness of and involvement in the development of the financial strategy and budget setting. (ii) Arrange and hold regular cross-party Budget Forum meetings supported by statutory officers. (iii) MTFS and Budget 2026/27 considered by the Improvement Board	Executive Director (S.151)	First meeting of the Budget Forum early/mid-August 2025. Meeting at least monthly thereafter.
			Confirm and deliver the programme of work to develop the new 4–5-year MTFS and Budget 2026/27	Executive Director (S.151)	Updated Financial Strategy will be considered by Cabinet on 15 October 2025. Updated MTFS and proposed Budget 2026/27 to be considered by Cabinet 3 December 2025. Draft MTFS and Budget (informed by provisional settlement) to be considered by Cabinet 21 January 2026. Final MTFS and Budget 2026/27 (informed by final settlement) to be considered by Cabinet 11 February 2026 and Council 26 February 2026

CPC Recommendations		Council response/current position	Action	Lead	By when
2	Immediately assess and negotiate your EFS requirements for 25/26 and for the period of the MTFS before a s114 notice becomes a necessity.	The council has been modelling the different options for EFS including use of capital, increasing Council tax and borrowing, to enable an informed decision to be made about the best options for Shropshire. A decision is required from Government on NWRR funding to inform 2026/27 EFS requirements.	Ongoing discussions with MHCLG on options in readiness to confirm requirements against the transformation and improvement plan requirements to achieve financial sustainability. Prepare a detailed MTFS (aligned to the new Corporate Plan), budget plan and robust delivery plans including accurately assessed investment requirements (including EFS) and delivery timescales, following public consultation and ahead of agreeing the budget in February 2026.	Executive Director (S.151)	EFS to be submitted as necessary and in accordance with MHCLG guidelines
	Quickly implement an externally supported, independently led Improvement Board with CIPFA, a governance expert and LGA peers, preferably with support from MHCLG, to advise, assist and drive urgent changes.	Senior officers started to address this recommendation shortly after the Peer review feedback 18.7.2025. The independent chair has been identified and confirmed. Draft TOR for the board have been drafted and have been shared with Council 25.09.25. Work is underway with the LGA to ensure that support is in place. First meeting on the 10th November.	(i) Identify and appoint the independent chair and Improvement Board members. Draft the Terms of Reference. Invite and secure attendees from external organisations. (ii) (ii) Hold first meeting of Improvement Board 10th November	Interim Chief Executive	(i) September 2025 (ii) November 2025
			Establish an Improvement Plan for the council that comprehensively and robustly addresses the recommendations from the CPC and other related actions that are required to achieve financial stability and sustainability.	Interim Chief Executive	November 2025 (approval at Council December 2025)

CPC Recommendations		Council response/current position	Action	Lead	By when
4	Prepare a clear whole council transformation plan that carries the aspirations and narrative for the future council and accurately aligns the resources for delivery. Ensure this is realistic, widely understood and shared	The council will review its existing transformation plan and develop a new prioritised plan that aligns the outcomes of the council (including achieving financial stability and sustainability) with the way of working for the council and doing so within available resources. Transformation programmes and projects will be written into the delivery plans for the single aligned Shropshire Plan.	Establish through codesign and collaboration with Members and staff, a robust and transparent mechanism to prioritise and update transformation activity and related investment and integrate this into the strategic plans of the Council. Develop and maintain a mechanism that ensures that the transformation activity for the Council consistently enables the delivery of the priorities and outcomes of the organisation within the available resources.	Interim Chief Executive	Mar 26
Page 9	Consider how to urgently reinvigorate your cultural connections and relationships across the workforce – the organisation has become fractured, and the current context has blunted the value of initiatives such as 'Getting It Right'	This is a critical area to address and will be progressed in parallel to stabilising the finances of the Council. Aligning the Council's people and finances to the councils' priorities will be three pillars in the Improvement Plan. The council carried out a PULSE survey of staff in June 2025, and a series of planned engagement sessions have been delivered with staff. As a result of feedback received the council has revisited and refined its People Plan and is putting in place different routes for staff engagement.	Finalise the People Plan for the Council and accelerate implementation of the Plan. Please note some of the activity is already in train. Establish multiple routes for staff to engage in the improvement of the council and the development and delivery of plans e.g. surveys, Engagement Hub, and forums and programme/project work	Interim Chief Executive	Dec 25

CPC Recommendations		Council response/current position	Action	Lead	By when
6	Coproduce a new council plan that recognises the financial constraints the council is under and delivers the manifesto commitments. Ensure this is realistic, widely understood, socialised and owned.	The current strategic plan of the council finishes in 2025, as planned. It will be replaced with a new plan that reflects the ambition of the Administration, as set out in the New Direction for Shropshire paper presented to 25 September. The first section of the plan will be the Improvement Plan focused on addressing the recommendations of the CPC.	Establish with Members a clear framework for the different phases of activity to realise financial stability, and the plans to achieve the outcomes of the council. Confirmation of the outcomes and priorities of the administration.	Interim Chief Executive	Nov-25
			Deliver a programme of engagement with all members, staff, partners and communities/ residents on the outcomes and priorities together their feedback and through to inform the development of the plan and actions to be taken.	Interim Chief Executive	Feb-26
			Develop, with members and partners, a consistent narrative of place for Shropshire that describes the place it will be.	Interim Chief Executive	Jun-26
7	Improve the visibility of managerial and political leaders to help make the organisation legible for colleagues at a time of great change.	The council underwent a change in its senior structures and the way it works, and a change to its membership and Administration following the Local Elections 2025. This level of change requires the opportunity to establish relationships and understanding. Progress is being made and there is more activity underway, including support from the Local Government Association (LGA).	Deliver a programme of communication to all staff, Members and partners about managerial and political points of contacts for service areas, including a clear directory of roles and responsibilities for officers and members.	Interim Chief Executive	Oct-25
			Introduce and hold Regular Senior Leadership Forums for engagement between Leadership Board and their direct reports. Simplify operating model to describe way of working	Interim Chief Executive	Sept-25

CPC Recommendations		Council response/current position	Action	Lead	By when
			With the LGA, establish and deliver sessions between Cabinet Members and Leadership Board to build greater understanding of respective roles to get the best outcomes together.	Interim Chief Executive	Oct-25
8	Improve the status of and make efforts to drive good governance; consider implementing a 'statutory officers board' or similar mechanism to include the head of paid service, monitoring officer and s151 officer which would consider pressing issues, co-ordinate responses and drive implementation of, for example, internal audit recommendations.	Actions are being taken to address this recommendation.	We have established a statutory officer board consisting of the Head of Paid Service (HoPS), S.151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer to provide oversight and direction of key issues for the council and drive good governance. An immediate action is a message from the HoPS reiterating the importance of compliance with our governance and assurance arrangements.	Interim Chief Executive	Oct-25
			Develop coordination and working between the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Audit Committee around the improvement priorities and the Financial Emergency, including reviewing their work programmes.		Oct-25 Statutory Officer Group to prioritise actions from October 2025.
			Define and implement a comprehensive approach to ensuring that the Council takes a full view of the conditions contributing to the 'limited assurance' internal and external auditor opinions and ensure that they are understood and addressed now and going forward.		Leader and Chief Executive to work closely with Audit Committee to demonstrate commitment to change. Statutory Officer Group to prioritise actions from October 2025.

CPC Recommendations		Council response/current position	Action	Lead	By when
9	Budget monitoring needs to be focussed on actual spend and projections with clear understanding of one off and recurring expenditure with appropriate intervention and action.	Monthly budget monitoring by budget managers is in place, underpinned by Financial dashboards, including savings dashboards, which are available to budget managers. Monthly monitoring reports are presented to Leadership Board and Cabinet members, and to T&I OSC as part of quarterly reporting. Quarterly financial reporting to Cabinet and T&I OSC. There is scope to improve forecasting and projections by budget managers to help ensure a more accurate view of likely year end positions is maintained throughout the year	Develop and implement further guidance and training the establish a minimum standard of knowledge and skills of budget managers to inform and maintain forecast expenditure and accurately record this in their monthly budget monitoring reporting.	Executive Director (S.151)	Monthly monitoring approach to be reviewed for Periods 5 and 6 to ensure Portfolio Holder understanding and accountability. Improved monitoring to include 'Actuals' to be implemented from Quarter 2 (Period 6) reported to Cabinet on 19 November 2025
			Deliver refresher training and set out standards to ensure greater consistency in how financial dashboards are used by senior teams and managers to review savings delivery.	Executive Director (S.151)	Nov-25
			Establish a 'one council' accountability framework to ensure that responsibility for delivering specific change and savings is clearly defined and is not impacted by collegiate working or changes to staff.	Executive Director (S.151)	Nov-25

CPC Recommendations		Council response/current position	Action	Lead	By when
10	Change your narrative, tell your story and clearly celebrate your success as one council.	A communications plan is in progress but there is more to do. This includes changing the narrative and approach, which will be produced with staff following feedback from PULSE survey	Establish and implement a consistent, clear and agreed communications plan	Interim Chief Executive	Oct-25

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