



Date: Wednesday, 3 December 2025

Time: 10.30 am

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

Contact: Ashley Kendrick, Democratic Services Officer
Tel: 01743 250893
Email: ashley.kendrick@shropshire.gov.uk

CABINET

TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)

- 6a **Scrutiny Item – Report of the Station Gyrotory (LUF2) Task & Finish Group**
(Pages 1 - 20)
Lead Member – Councillor Ed Potter, Chair of the Economy and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Lead Officer – Claire Braddock, Overview and Scrutiny Officer

This page is intentionally left blank



Committee and Date

Cabinet

3rd December 2025

Item

Public



Report of the Station Gytratory Task and Finish Group

Responsible Officer:		Claire Braddock, Overview and Scrutiny Officer	
email:	claire.braddock@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258913
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):		Councillor Rob Wilson	
Scrutiny Chair:		Councillor Ed Potter	

1. Synopsis

This report sets out the recommendations and findings of the Station Gytratory rapid Task and Finish Group which was formed further to recommendations of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on the 13 November 2025 and agreed by Cabinet on the 19th November 2025.

2. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to notify Cabinet of the actions undertaken, findings obtained, and recommendations proposed by the Station Gytratory rapid Task and Finish Group, further to their meeting on the 24th November 2025.

it is a statutory requirement for the Cabinet to be notified and consider reports and recommendations made by a scrutiny committee.

3. Recommendations

The Task and Finish Groups' 10 recommendations are contained within Appendix One of this report in detail, and are grouped into a number of key themes as follows –

- Safety and Accessibility
- Safety and Emergency Services
- Wider Impacts
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Governance and Oversight

- Financial Management
- Active Travel and Connectivity
- Data Monitoring
- Learning and Culture
- Strategic Partnership Arrangements

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1 Effective Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) is a feature of the Council's governance arrangements, particularly where the Council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range of factors that could result in risks to Council of not doing O&S effectively.
- Failure to challenge and hold decision makers to account.
 - Failure to link O&S work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management – failure to demonstrate added value
 - Failure to carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations.
 - Failure to engage partners and providers.
 - Failure to ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources.
 - Failure to ensure that O&S can operate as the voice of communities.
 - Failure to draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.
- 4.2 To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- Operating in an apolitical manner.
 - Clarity of vision and purpose
 - Overview and Scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
 - Effective engagement and commitment by Members and officers at all levels, including Cabinet, Opposition Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs and Senior Officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
 - Robust work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
 - Access to and availability of robust data and intelligence
 - Good relationships with partners and providers
- 4.3 Overview and Scrutiny Committees have remits that cover the breadth of the work of the Council, as well as looking externally including Health Services and provision through Health Overview and Scrutiny requirements.
- 4.4 Topics for Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes are identified based on a number of different considerations including an understanding of risks to the Council, employees, people who use services, to the services themselves, and to communities. These may be identified through reviewing performance information and comparing with others, changes to national and local policies, budget information, feedback from communities and customers/service users, feedback from partners/providers, and reports from regulators.

- 4.5 During Overview and Scrutiny work evidence will be gathered that builds on this understanding to inform the development of conclusions and evidence-based recommendations.
- 4.6 The use of external peer challenge such as that offered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny provides objective review and feedback about opportunities to develop the effectiveness and impact of Overview and Scrutiny. The Council carries out a regular review of Overview and Scrutiny to collect feedback from Members and Officers on what is going well and where there are opportunities for continuous improvement.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

6 Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes directly link to the Shropshire Plan priorities, including Healthy Environment which is built around climate change and carbon reduction, and the natural and historic environment.

7 Background

- 7.1 In response to public concern - including a live petition that has already collected over 6,000 signatures - and following discussions with the Leader and Deputy Leader, the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth requested that the Chair of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee include the Station Gyratory project on their agenda for 13th November.
- 7.2 On 13 November, the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee employed a select committee style approach to examine the Station Gyratory - Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (LUF2): Project 2 in Shrewsbury.
- 7.3 Following this meeting, a number of recommendations were taken to Cabinet on the 19th November, these were as follows -

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee consider this report and identifies specific areas of focus that it may want to explore in more detail; the outcomes of which will be included in a future report. The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee will establish a rapid Task and Finish Group before the end of November in order to report to Cabinet on 3rd December 2025.
- 2. The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Service Director Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Economic Growth considers the commissioning of an independent safety audit review of the current proposals to provide assurance that associated risks, such as congestion and emergency access are robustly addressed.

3. That Cabinet be asked to review the Council's Strategic Partnerships.
 4. That the lessons learned from this process are applied not only to future initiatives but also to existing schemes currently in operation, to ensure robust governance and prevent similar issues from arising. This approach will help to strengthen oversight and promote best practice across all ongoing programmes.
- 7.5 The Station Gyrotory rapid Task and Finish Group was set up in line with recommendation one above, with Committee Members confirming it as a priority, in order to report back to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity and alleviate public concern. As part of this process, witnesses such as emergency services, local businesses, and key stakeholders would be invited to participate as part of this investigation.
- 7.6 Members of the cross party Task and Finish Group met for a full day on Monday 24th November to explore this topic in detail and meet with number of key witnesses throughout the day who were able to share their experiences and knowledge of the Station Gyrotory scheme. Additional evidence was received by the Task and Finish Group in the form of written evidence such as reports, letters, and emails. This was all taken into consideration alongside the verbal feedback.
- 7.7 Further to their investigations, Task and Finish Group Members determined that a breakdown in communication had occurred between the various stakeholder groups involved. This led to insufficient information being shared, resulting in a scheme that was different to the initial aspiration.
- 7.8 The commitments regarding outcomes and timelines were highly specific and deeply embedded in the bid itself. Consequently, opportunities for pausing, reflecting, and reviewing the project were not taken.
- 7.9 Task and Finish Group recommendations as set out in Appendix One include immediate focus upon undertaking a safety audit of this site, to understand next steps, as well as wider learning from this project in order to inform both future and ongoing projects.

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

Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (LUF2): Project 2 - Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury - [\(Public Pack\)To Follow Report - Levelling Up Fund Round 2 \(LUF2\): Project 2 - Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury Agenda Supplement for Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 13/11/2025 14:00](#)

Local Member: Councillor Alan Mosley

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

Appendix One: Report of the Station Gyrotory Task and Finish Group



Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report of the Station Gyrotory Task and Finish Group

December 2025

Acknowledgments

The membership of this Task and Finish Group was formed rapidly following a recommendation made at Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 13th November 2025, which was agreed at Cabinet on the 19th November 2025.

Task and Finish Group members were committed to working with focus and determination to fully explore this topic, dedicating themselves to a full day Task and Finish Group investigation, which took place on the 24th November 2025. The purpose of which was to be able to provide a detailed early response to address public concern regarding the Station Gyratory area in Shrewsbury.

To progress the work of this rapid Task and Finish Group various written submissions, reports, background research, interviews with subject matter experts, and testimonies of local businesses and key stakeholders were essential. These provided the evidence required to formulate a full understanding of the topic and reach the conclusions and recommendations that are detailed within this report.

Members of the Task and Finish Group would like to express thanks to everyone who at short notice was able to provide such a valuable contribution towards this process.

Members of the Task and Finish Group

Councillor Edward Potter (Chair)
Councillor Sam Walmsley
Councillor Jon Tandy
Councillor Chris Naylor
Councillor Harry Hancock-Davies
Councillor Ben Jephcott
Councillor Alan Mosley

Contents

Section	Title	Page no.
1	Context	4
2	Scope of the work	4
3	Objectives	6
4	What the Task and Finish Group have done	6
5	Key Findings	12
7	Conclusions and Recommendations	13

1. Context

Further to public concern, including a live petition with more than 6,000 signatures to date, and after discussions with the Leader and Deputy Leader, the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth asked that the Chair of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider inclusion of the Station Gyratory project, on their committee agenda for Thursday 13th November.

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth also asked that any recommendations or findings be reported back to Cabinet on the 19th November 2025.

On 13 November, the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee employed a select committee style approach to examine the Station Gyratory in Shrewsbury. The following report was shared at this meeting – ‘Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (LUF2): Project 2 - Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury’ [\(Public Pack\)To Follow Report - Levelling Up Fund Round 2 \(LUF2\): Project 2 - Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury Agenda Supplement for Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 13/11/2025 14:00](#)

The report above explains that the first project within this scheme is the regeneration of the former Riverside shopping centre, and the second project entitled Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury relates to the public realm improvements around the area of the railway station and Northern Corridor (widely known as the Station Gyratory). The aim of this element was to improve a key gateway into the town, resident and visitor safety, air quality and enjoyment of these areas through better connectivity. In alignment with the aspirations of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan, the emerging Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy.

The report also notes that managing, developing, and delivering the Station Gyratory project has been complicated, mainly due to technical issues like changing established traffic routes in the town's congested medieval centre. These difficulties were anticipated at the time of the bid application, which stressed the importance of the need for careful oversight and clear communication throughout implementation.

As the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (LUF2): Project 2 - Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury report details, the project currently remains within budget, but cost adjustments have changed the scheme's scope. Ongoing communication with the funding body has helped manage and agree these changes, however it has also highlighted areas for improvement in future project delivery.

2. Scope of the work

As an outcome of their discussion on the 13th November the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to establish a rapid Task and Finish Group to scrutinise the project in detail, this recommendation was agreed by Cabinet on the 19th November.

Additional recommendations taken to 19th November Cabinet were as follows:

- The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Service Director Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Economic Growth considers the commissioning of an independent safety audit review of the current proposals to provide assurance that associated risks, such as congestion and emergency access are robustly addressed.
- That Cabinet be asked to review the Council's Strategic Partnerships.
- That the lessons learned from this process are applied not only to future initiatives but also to existing schemes currently in operation, to ensure robust governance and prevent similar issues from arising. This approach will help to strengthen oversight and promote best practice across all ongoing programmes.

Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members agreed that the rapid Task and Finish Group review should be undertaken as a priority, and that as part of this investigation a number of witnesses would be invited including emergency services, local businesses and key stakeholders.

Those witnesses either attending in person or via a written submission to the Group would be able to provide testimonies to the members of the Task and Finish Group who would consider the evidence received across a full day session dedicated to understanding the project background, design and build phases, wider context and public concerns.

This work would be undertaken with the aim of making recommendations to 3rd December Cabinet meeting.

3. Objectives

- The rapid Task and Finish Group would meet across a full day as soon as possible to develop an understanding of the views and perspectives of commuters, local residents and businesses.
- The rapid Task and Finish Group will conduct a comprehensive review of the project process from the bidding phase through to inception and examine stakeholder relationships and engagement throughout.
- The rapid Task and Finish Group seeks to develop a comprehensive understanding of the risks and opportunities affecting the future of the Station Gyratory area, including understanding any funding implications that might be related to the receipt of grant money.
- Members of the Task and Finish Group aim to understand learning opportunities from this project so that these lessons can be applied to current and future projects, ensuring similar issues do not recur.

4. What the Task and Finish Group have done?

The Task and Finish Group met on 24th November 2025 to spend a day exploring this topic and achieving the objectives set out above. During this session a number of key witnesses were invited to join the Task and Finish Group throughout the day and share their experiences and testimonies relating to the Station Gyratory scheme. There were additional witnesses unable to attend in person who provided evidence to the group in written format which were taken into consideration alongside the verbal feedback.

Having previously received the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (LUF2): Project 2 - Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury report that had been tabled at Scrutiny, the Task and Finish Group resolved to speak first to those officers from Highways, and afterwards those from Economic Growth, to understand some of the project's background challenges and immediate improvements.

Project delivery – Highways, Economic Growth and WSP –

Members learned from Highways officers that the bid submission for this project was undertaken by Economic Growth, and on the point of becoming successful the delivery of the project moved across to Highways to agree, scope and implement. The design phase was undertaken by WSP and delivered by McPhillips.

The project is now in the latter stages of development, the grant money has been spent, and any additional costs would come from Capital funding, however any aborted costs for elements no longer in place may have to be reverted to revenue.

Highways officers explained the reasoning behind the “floating bus stop” and guidance as to its size and location. Members heard how a Steering Group had made the decision to reduce the size of the bus stop, once the ground was broken it became evident that in order to avoid previously unknown underground services in that location, remodelling of the planned bus stop was necessary. Members understood that undertaking more detailed ground investigations early on as part of design work might have avoided this. Highways officers added that a bus stop as part of this scheme was a requirement to meet the active travel elements of the bid, and that early engagement with bus operators, passenger transport and economic growth had taken place, and continued during construction.

Members asked for more clarity around the Steering Group and oversight of the project and were informed that there were two Steering Groups in progress, a wider group and an internal one, these are minuted.

The Task and Finish Group heard that the bid had been submitted without modelling data, however at the point the scheme came across to Highways this was explored and will continue to be required for post scheme monitoring following completion. In recent weeks there have been regular reports of long queues of southbound traffic on St Michael's Street, with some improvements to flow on Coton Hill and Chester Street, however traffic light signalling software has recently been adjusted and changed from 'optimal' operation to 'vehicle detection,' which appears to have had a considerable positive impact.

In their discussions with Economic Growth officers and project advisors PJA, Members heard about how the bid for the grant funding for the Station Gyratory scheme was designed to fit with active travel and the Movement Strategy, which was well in development with sound foundations that would put into place aspirations of public movement.

A significant part of the Movement Strategy is the delivery of one of the three access loops in and out of town, to prevent through traffic whilst protecting access to, and delivery of, a low traffic town centre. The Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury project includes works adjacent to the station gyratory and was set to facilitate the delivery of one of these loops, as one of three key gateways into the town. At the time of the bid submission the project was viewed as a once in a generation opportunity to improve a busy, industrial, polluted and dark entrance into town. Part of this aspiration included improved walking and cycling up Castle Street, shared with a reduced volume of traffic, however the greater volume of traffic without the implementation of the loop meant no provision for cycling up Castle Street. This has led to the adoption of more shared space between cycles and pedestrians than originally proposed.

However, it was reported that work was done at pace, having to be delivered within strict timeframes, on a phased basis, and the loop to be delivered at a later stage. The project focus appears to have shifted from the initial bid, to more around traffic options, engineering and less upon active travel and improvements to the environment and public realm.

Members heard that early engagement had not taken place with regards to the delivery of and changes to the scheme. Challenges to governance and concerns relating to technical competencies and commitment/understanding of the bid award had not been upheld. Officers were left having to make the best of the money awarded, and feeling frustrated that what has been delivered is not reflective of the bid that was submitted.

On speaking with WSP, Members were keen to understand the client / contractor relationship and heard that whilst many of the day to day officer contacts are still in post, most of the senior lead officers have since left the Council.

WSP confirmed that Highways, Economic Growth and Passenger Transport officers had all been engaged with and their feedback was incorporated into the preferred option, which meets legal and technical requirements. WSP explained that changes had been made to the scheme from the inherited concept design to delivery but maintained that there had been a clear path of progression.

WSP added that there seemed to be a disconnect between Council departments at the conceptual stage and as a client there appeared to be no consolidated point of view. Whilst they appeared to have good relationships with key officers, WSP, did feel that validation of a decision made at the front line took a long time to make its way through various steering groups, and this meant delays to progression.

WSP added that, from their perspective, changes could be made to re-engineer the scheme, such as removing the bus stop. However, they were unable to comment on whether implementing these changes would adversely affect or jeopardize the funding, given the scheme's focus on promoting active travel.

Public impact – The Buttermarket, Shrewsbury BID and The Big Town Plan Partnership

=

Members heard from Mr Monahan the owner of music venue The Buttermarket situated near the Station Gyratory, whose petition has reached 6,599 signatories to date. He explained that the biggest concern of petitioners is the single lane for traffic which they would like returned to two lanes. His understanding was that this may be difficult because of funding clawback, and Members confirmed that there are financial risks in doing this, a principal one being that any measures that are removed switch from capital to revenue budget. As it is grant money there is also risk of clawback if the schemes active travel objectives are not achieved. Plus, any costs of additional infrastructure work that may be required to facilitate this.

The group discussed whether the key concern for residents was congestion and therefore asked whether maintaining journey times through improvement to traffic flow might alleviate this issue. However, the main concern appears to be around the safety of cyclists using the new cycle lane, which is thought to be exacerbated by short traffic light time on Howard Street resulting in vehicles travelling fast to cross cycle lanes to get through the lights in time.

Mr Monahan noted that Buttermarket customers can face delays of up to 40 minutes exiting the adjacent car park due to the Howard Street traffic lights, and the Task and

Finish Group agreed to check whether the system can detect queues and extend the green phase during late-evening periods when other roads are quiet.

Mr Monahan presented the Task and Finish Group with a proposed solution that involves the cycle lane being changed to a bus, taxi and emergency vehicle lane and the existing bus stop being moved to the inside lane, with the option to create a new cycle lane on the left hand pavement. Members noted that this would still leave people stepping off of the bus into a cycle lane and could make the pavement area quite crowded.

On speaking with The Big Town Plan Partnership and Shrewsbury BID, Members heard how data had shown that traffic flow was poor a few weeks ago, however there had been a marked improvement in the last few days with enhancements to light phasing - this concurred with the Highways officers' feedback mentioned previously that the software had been changed from 'optimal' to 'vehicle detection' operation.

Members heard how local businesses at the heart of the scheme felt poorly engaged with and although overall footfall data for the town didn't appear to have been significantly impacted, a number of businesses had reported missed customer appointments due to traffic delays at the Gyratory, and that business loading arrangements were either unsatisfactory or unclear. Consultation at various stages of development could have helped inform decision making and better manage public perception.

In a letter received from The Big Town Plan Partnership prior to the Task and Finish Group session, Members were told that "The concerns raised by the Partnership relate not to the bid itself, but to the way the delivery phase diverged from it. A number of the concerns now being widely recognised — including traffic performance, safety considerations, emergency access and active travel effectiveness — were raised repeatedly by the Partnership throughout 2023–24."

The Task and Finish Group were told that what was delivered wasn't as described in the bid or consultation, and any attempts to challenge this were not listened to. Although The Big Town Plan Partnership added that their relationship with the Council was largely a positive one.

Shrewsbury BID were keen that a safety audit needed to take place urgently, and heard that Cabinet were already progressing this, further to recommendations from Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny to Cabinet on the 19th November.

A number of key concerns of Shrewsbury BID and The Big Town Plan Partnership in relation to the Station Gyratory scheme appear to be safety-related, particularly around access for emergency vehicles. Commenting that if safe cycle access to the town centre can be demonstrated then it will be likely to be used, the same applies for buses. Both The Big Town Plan Partnership and Shrewsbury BID confirmed that they remain very supportive of the principles of active travel.

Shrewsbury BID added that through traffic is an increasing issue for Shrewsbury town centre, their aim is to improve town centre economy and businesses and welcome

solutions that address this issue as well as improving the environment of the Castle Street area through a reduction in traffic.

The Big Town Plan Partnership stated that phase 1 of the LUF2 bid: Riverside regeneration was successful, however phase 2: Station Gyratory had a number of challenges stemming from Shropshire Council internal governance, commissioning, and engagement issues rather than partnership failures.

In their letter to the Task and Finish Group, The Big Town Plan Partnership cite the following as key areas for review:

- “• Since the funding award, the Partnership has not been invited to meaningful design reviews, option appraisal sessions, or evidence-based discussions.
- Several senior officers directly involved in initial decisions have since left the authority, and handover arrangements were unclear.
- Critical competencies for a complex place-based scheme — including active travel expertise, urban design, and stakeholder engagement — were either absent or not brought meaningfully into the process.
- The reliance on a strategic partner (WSP) without visible checks, balances or “intelligent client” oversight has contributed to a lack of transparency and accountability”

Emergency Services -

The Task and Finish Group met with the current Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer responsible for delivery, to hear how the work had impacted the fire service and any concerns or recommendations they may have in relation to this scheme.

The Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer played a video from their driver training scheme, of a trial run of a fire engine driving in response through the gyratory system heading towards the west side of Shrewsbury. This was filmed on the 7th November 2025 at 14.50 and gave a good indication of potential challenges within the railway station area, at that time of day.

The Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer acknowledged that work had been undertaken to improve traffic light flow in the last fortnight, and that the fire service response time data received shows that significant improvements have occurred.

Members heard that prior to the Station Gyratory scheme vehicles could move to either side of the road to allow emergency vehicles to progress down the centre. Members confirmed that the distance between each kerb was less than it had been previously and the road width had been narrowed. Members learned that drivers are not encouraged to drive onto pavements to avoid blue light vehicles, acknowledging that car drivers are sometimes seen to be mounting kerbs but are not expected to do so or put themselves or pedestrians at risk.

The Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer added that if the central bollards, dividing the car lane and the cycle lane were removed it would provide sufficient space for a car to move into the cycle lane and allow room for fire vehicles to pass on their right.

The Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer believed that it would not be safe for fire vehicles to use the cycle path, the existing road furniture and height does not allow for it, instead he would advise that cars are able to safely move to the left where the cycle path is, to allow fire engines to make progress through the vehicle lane.

The Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer also suggested that installation of a green wave system which would automatically control traffic lights, activating them to green and allowing traffic to flow and move would be a significant improvement. The green wave could be operated either from the control room, or on siren frequency in which case other blue light services would also benefit. This is something that is not operational in Shropshire currently, and no information was provided as to cost, reliability or ease of implementation, so further work would be required to understand this fully.

Local Members -

The Task and Finish Group invited the Deputy Leader and the Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth to meet with them next and were interested to hear about their understanding of the project delivery, implementation and feedback.

The group heard how delivery of the scheme had varied from what had been envisaged from the bid submission, and how there had not been sufficient oversight to ensure that the original bid submission and resulting deliverables required by Government were aligned. This resulted in a scheme that was different to the initial aspiration. The group were told how there had been significant turnover of officers in positions of responsibility and that those in charge now had been faced with having to make the best of the situation to avoid abortive costs and clawback of funding by the government.

The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth confirmed that stage 3 is expected to continue, and options are being explored around the best approach for cycle access to the North and a joining up of what has already been started, with full light phasing implemented. Task and Finish Group Members learned subsequently that this has now been paused pending an independent safety review of the designs as well as the already built sections of the scheme.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder were both interested in exploring the options around the installation of green wave but were concerned that the removal of the central bollards would impede cyclists' safety with regard to LTN 1/20 – the same guidance which had led to problems with the bus stop. They added that an independent safety review of the Station Gyratory area will be conducted, including the risk to wheelchair passengers alighting the bus onto the floating bus stop. The results of this will inform future options.

The Task and Finish Group discussed with the Deputy Leader and the Portfolio Holder how they had heard a number of competing views, with no clear solution, as well as public and officer concern. Whilst they understood that a settling in period was likely in the case of all new schemes to allow people to get used to it, a clearer communication campaign would have helped in keeping residents, businesses and stakeholders informed from the outset. The Portfolio Holder stated that this was particularly needed in this instance where this is the first use of a cycle path of that kind, and the first use of

a bus stop bypass, therefore there are number of first time elements to be communicated and understood.

5. Key Findings

In addition to the in-person witness interviews conducted above, the Task and Finish Group received a number of written submissions, from Arriva, the Shrewsbury Town Clerk, Julia Buckley MP, local residents and businesses.

Arriva confirmed in writing that the floating bus stop was of significant concern to them and added that they would no longer call at the Station Gyratory bus stop until this was satisfactorily resolved. Members noted that further to the recommendations from Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented to Cabinet on the 19th November, a safety audit was due to be carried out which may help in resolving this.

The Shrewsbury Town Clerk commented that “It was never really seen as a public realm project that enhanced active travel whilst addressing key highways issues in and around the railway gyratory.”

As part of their conclusions the Task and Finish Group members reviewed process flow in order to identify what the problem was that this project was trying to solve, and whether it had met this criteria, but felt that the need had been driven by the receipt of the grant and the need to submit the application quickly and deliver it quickly.

Members understood that this was a large bid based upon a concept without early enough change control, governance, evaluation and consultation. This has resulted in public backlash which could have been avoided. Commitments to outcomes and timelines were very specific and intrinsically woven into the fabric of this bid. As a result, opportunities for pausing, reflection and review were not taken. Project risk was not reviewed and actioned early enough on. Officers reported to the Task and Finish Group that they felt this could have been paused at any point, but these opportunities were missed.

Members concluded that somewhere between project need, concept, design and implementation there had been a breakdown in communications between the various groups involved, including between Highways / WSP and other Council departments and with other partners and stakeholders, resulting in a lack of adequate information. This is evidenced by the absence of necessary groundwork to dig trial holes that would have provided key information early on around the feasibility of the bus stop delivery, and other changes to the scheme as constructed.

Based on conversation with officers, Members understood that the Council had not ended up following its own gateway processes for this project. The perceived need to satisfy grant eligibility requirements, along with time and funding pressures, meant that the Council submitted a bid that left them committed to building something that hadn't been through a full design development process.

Members noted that challenges to governance were not addressed. As a result, officers had to do their best with the funding they received and felt frustrated that the outcomes did not match what was promised in the original proposal.

Task and Finish Group members noted that there was an ongoing theme of concerns being raised throughout, and voices struggling to be heard. Task and Finish Group Members recognised that structural changes to the Council including changes in leadership positions, particularly related to place shaping, contributed to the lack of oversight and coordination. Members were hopeful that the new Place Shaping Service Director role would be key to resolving this issue by having that authority and ability to coordinate.

Members recognised that the Council need to learn from those areas where projects have been successfully delivered such as leisure in Whitchurch and share processes and governance accordingly.

The Task and Finish Group recognised that there wasn't robust political oversight to offer direction throughout the project and felt that strong lines of political oversight were needed on projects in future.

Task and Finish Group members added that the public communication could also have been better so that residents and businesses would have understood what to expect from the outset.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Task and Finish Group members make a number of recommendations to Cabinet; these are as follows -

Recommendation 1 – Safety and Accessibility:

The Task and Finish Group recommend that an independent safety audit is carried out as soon as possible. The audit should be conducted by an impartial, third-party to ensure no conflict of interest. This should have the following key areas of focus:

Firstly, informing whether there can be safe use of the floating bus stop and explore alternatives such as relocation, resizing or different designs to comply with statutory guidance and accessibility needs.

Secondly, the safety audit should include consideration of the options around how the removal or modification of bollards could improve emergency vehicle access, whilst maintaining pedestrian and cyclist safety. A review of the interface between cycles, pedestrians and traffic at the junction with Howards Bank and safe and accessible access and egress at the station forecourt is necessary.

Thirdly, to consider the extent of shared space between Howards Bank and New Park Road and whether parts of the wider pavement in this area could incorporate a designated cycle lane.

Recommendation 2 – Safety and Emergency Services:

The Task and Finish Group recommend regular contact between blue light services and Highways to monitor ongoing issues around traffic volume and signalling, and as a priority assess the feasibility, cost, and logistics of implementing ‘green wave’ technology.

Recommendation 3 – Wider Impacts:

The Task and Finish Group recommend that an independent review is undertaken to consider the wider impact of the Station Gyratory system on the local highway network and local communities in residential areas, in order to take action to minimise unintended consequences. This should include, but not be limited to, consideration that the removal of low bridge constraints on the A528 has opened up Ellesmere Road to through HGV traffic, and the significant consequences for traffic on New Park Road, Beacalls Lane and Howards Bank as motorists use this route as a rat run to avoid congestion on the A5191.

Recommendation 4 - Stakeholder Engagement:

The Task and Finish Group recommend that a more inclusive consultation process is implemented for future schemes, ensuring that all key stakeholders, especially local businesses and particularly residents, are involved from the outset, and at each gateway identified, including any significant late changes during the build out. To ensure such ongoing involvement happens, this should be the responsibility of a specified officer at each stage of the project

Recommendation 5 – Governance and Oversight:

The Task and Finish Group recommend that clear lines of governance and officer oversight are established, with defined responsibilities and gateway review stages to prevent similar issues in future projects.

Recommendation 6 – Financial Management:

The Task and Finish Group recommend that the risks of potential grant clawback and cost shifts are determined, ensuring outputs align with funding requirements.

Recommendation 7 – Active Travel and Connectivity:

The Task and Finish Group recommend that the administration ensure cycle lane and active travel outputs are delivered in line with improved connectivity and public realm developments as proposed.

The Task and Finish group recommend that Shropshire Council and all the partners in the Movement Strategy examine and review the lessons learned to ensure the Strategy’s coherence and practicality.

Recommendation 8 – Data Monitoring:

The Task and Finish Group recommend the collection and analysis of pre- and post-scheme data, including continual monitoring of live traffic flow and safety metrics, utilising traffic data from Shrewsbury BID to inform ongoing adjustments and future project planning. While the BID's contribution is valuable the Council should have comprehensive systems of ongoing monitoring.

We note a paucity of data relating to cycling movements leading to a minimal projection of likely gains in traffic.

Recommendation 9 – Learning & Culture:

The Task and Finish Group recommend that this experience is used as a catalyst for organisational change, fostering a culture of collaboration, accountability, and continuous learning.

Recommendation 10 – Strategic Partnership Arrangements:

There were significant costs associated with project management of the gyratory project by our strategic partner. The case for expanding Shropshire Council's in-house project delivery capability should be investigated. Managing projects from within Shropshire Council has the potential to both reduce costs and increase control.

This review could be included in a broader review of strategic partnerships, to ensure that they are used in a way which brings maximum benefit to the Council.

This page is intentionally left blank