Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Friday, 14 February 2020

Committee:
Communities Overview Committee

Date: **Monday, 24 February 2020**
Time: **11.30 am**
Venue: **Ludlow Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND**

You are requested to attend the above meeting.
The Agenda is attached

Claire Porter
Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

Members of Communities Overview Committee

Cecilia Motley (Chairman)	Roger Hughes
Nick Hignett (Vice Chairman)	Vivienne Parry
Clare Aspinall	Keith Roberts
Ted Clarke	Leslie Winwood
Nigel Hartin	Tina Woodward

Your Committee Officer is:

Julie Fildes Committee Officer
Tel: 01743 257723
Email: Julie.Fildes@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1   Apologies for absence and substitutions

2   Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members are reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

3   Minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2019 (Pages 1 - 4)

To consider the Minutes of the Communities Overview Committee meeting held on 25th November 2019.

4   Public Question Time

To receive any public questions or petitions from the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. The deadline for this meeting is 2.00pm, Thursday, 20th February 2020.

5   Member Question Time

To receive any questions of which members of the Council have given notice. Deadline for notification for this meeting is 5.30pm, Wednesday, 19th February 2020.

6   Working with Shropshire Communities - Communicating with Shropshire People (Pages 5 - 16)

To identify where Shropshire Council reaches into households and the opportunities that exist to share or signpost information, attached

Contact: Danial Webb, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, tel 01743 258509

7   Supporting Vulnerable Adults in Shropshire (Pages 17 - 26)

To understand how the Local Authority supports vulnerable adults who do not meet the threshold for a package of support, report attached

Contact: Danial Webb, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, 01743 258509

8   **Future Work Programme** (Pages 27 - 36)

To consider the future work programme of the Committee. [Report to follow]

Contact Danial Webb   Tel 01743 258509

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Shropshire Council

Communities
Overview Committee

24th February 2020

11.30am

Item

Public

MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25
NOVEMBER 2019
2.00 - 3.30 PM

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes
Email: Julie.Fildes@shropshire.gov.uk   Tel: 01743 257723

Present
Councillor Cecilia Motley (Leader)
Councillors Nick Hignett (Vice Chairman), Ted Clarke, Roger Hughes, Vivienne Parry,
Keith Roberts and Leslie Winwood

18   **Apologies for absence and substitutions**

Apologies were received from Councillor Tina Woodward, Councillor Roy Aldcroft
attended as substitute.

19   **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None were declared.

20   **Minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2019 were confirmed as a
correct record.

21   **Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

22   **Member Question Time**

No questions were received from Members.

23   **Food Poverty**

The Committee received the report of Chris Westwood, Customer Services and
Welfare Support Manager – copy attached the signed Minutes – which was prepared
on behalf of Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance, which set out the situation in
Shropshire in relation to food crisis and food poverty.

The Customer Services and Welfare Support Manager explained that food poverty
was a national issue and its causes were complex and a combination of factors.

Food crisis could be short term and caused by unexpected events and resolved by short term intervention through the provision of food through a food bank, but food poverty was an indication of deeper problems of chronic poverty and tended to be long term and needed a wider solution. Food banks alone were effective for food crises but not food poverty. Supporting people in food poverty required funding which was not secure. Where food poverty was not addressed it often led to more problems such as homelessness.

In response to a Member's question the Customer Services and Welfare Support Manager explained that there were several definitions of food poverty but in this context, it could be defined as an individual's or family's inability to access a nutritional diet.

Members noted that the Social Metrix Commission were exploring new ways of measuring both relative and absolute poverty. The levels of poverty in Shropshire varied according to area with the poor in rural areas having problems accessing cheap nutritious food due to lack of appropriate shops and lack of transport. Shrewsbury and North Shropshire were found to have a greater choice of cheaper stores.

In response to a Members question, Emily Faye, the Food Alliances Co-ordinator advised that 18 supermarkets distributed food to food banks and communities in Shrewsbury, and it was anticipated that the scheme would be extended to East Shropshire.

The Customer Services and Welfare Support Manager explained that the new Universal Credit system had initially increased the number of families using food banks but changes to the system were now in place which assisted claimants through the problematic new claim period.

Members discussed the steps that could be taken to address the issue of food poverty, such as debt advice, the role of housing associations, allotment provision and the availability of schemes to help people learn basic cookery skills to enable them to make the most of cheaper raw ingredients. The Customer Services and Welfare Support Manager explained that this was where the Food Bank Plus model was of benefit. In this model as well as providing food, the foodbanks were equipped to provide advice and training. This model was restricted by budgetary constraints and access to appropriate premises. The Food Bank Plus model put the food bank at the centre of a community resource which was available to the whole community and destigmatised the use of food banks. They could also provide a hub for mental health professionals and social workers.

The Food Alliances Co-ordinator confirmed that three food banks in the north of the county were members of the Trussell Trust, all others were independent organisations. Independent organisations often struggled to provide their volunteers with the support and training that was needed to deal with the often-harrowing situations they were exposed to. It was recognised that more support for food bank managers and volunteers was needed.

Members noted that the Shropshire Food Alliance was a partnership organisation of a variety of organisations who had an interest in addressing food poverty but struggle to maintain funding to continue its work and continue financing the co-ordinator role.

Members commented that the Welfare Task and Finish Group final report had found that available resources were not always strategically directed. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer was asked to circulate a copy the Welfare Task and Finish Group final report to Members of the Communities Overview Committee.

RESOLVED:

    i)   The report be noted;
    ii) That Food Poverty be added to the work programme and further information be received in the summer 2020; and
    iii) That Shropshire Council's Property Services Department be approached to explore the possibility of providing suitable vacant accommodation to host Food Bank Alliance events and training

24   Working with Shropshire Communities

The Committee received the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Officer – copy attached to the signed Minutes which set out the draft terms of reference for a review of working with Shropshire Communities.

Members noted that the request to undertake this work had originated from a motion supported by Council at its meeting on 20th September 2018. The Committee had previously agreed to add the item to the work programme, and the establishment of a task and finish group to undertake the work was approved. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer explained that there had been insufficient interest in joining the group from members and so the task and finish group had not been able to form.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer suggested that the Rural Strategy Group might be approached to add this work to its work programme and that he should be authorised to raise the matter with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Place Planning and Regulatory Services on behalf of the Committee and report back to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the item be considered at future meetings as outlined in terms of reference..

25   Future Work Programme

Members agreed the future work programme of the Committee.

26   Date/Time of next meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held at 2pm on Monday 27th January 2020.

Signed ……………………………………………………… (Chairman)

Date:

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Committee and Date	Item
Communities Overview Committee **24 February 2020**	(leave blank) **Public**

Working with Shropshire communities: Communicating with Shropshire people

Responsible Officer

Danial Webb – overview and scrutiny officer

danial.webb@shropshire.gov.uk

01743 258509

1.0   Summary

1.1   This report outlines the different ways that Shropshire Council communicates with people in Shropshire. It also discusses different models for organising communications in a large, customer-facing organisation such as Shropshire Council.

2.0   Recommendations

2.1   Members should:
- read this report
- prepare any questions they may have with regard to communications
- request further information and an update on progress in using the digital transformation programme to enhance customer communications and
- consider how the council might develop its communications strategy further.

3.0   Opportunities and risks

3.1   As Shropshire Council is a highly customer-facing organisation, how we communicate with people is critical to the effectiveness of our work.

3.2   The rapid developments in information technology provide considerable opportunities to provide timely, responsive, personalised communications with people in Shropshire.

3.3   A single strategy for communications could help to ensure that people in Shropshire receive relevant information about services, as well as supporting closer working between services to enable joined-up services for people who need them.

4.0   Financial assessment

4.1 There are no direct financial implications to making recommendations to services. However there may be financial implications to any recommended courses of action that Shropshire Council agrees to put into place. These implications should be considered by Cabinet or Council when agreeing any course of action.

5.0 Report

5.1 As a customer-facing organisation, Shropshire Council communicates with people in Shropshire in a number of ways.

6.0 Social Media

6.1 Shropshire Council currently has 98 approved social media accounts across the council at this time, covering Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn (limited use). We also have one-off accounts with Nextdoor (representing the council on the platform, but the account is not in active use), Glassdoor (used by HR), and Flickr (used by Communications).

Over three months (1 November 2019 to 1 February 2020), the main council Facebook and Twitter accounts put out 918 posts, equating to just over one post per hour. These are a mixture of campaign messages and alerts, cross-promotion of other accounts. The accounts had 4,538 interactions with customers over this period, covering customers either commenting on these posts or directly contacting us through the accounts.

The main council website is largely maintained by a central team (Digital Services), with content updated by request from service areas. This allows for a tighter control over the writing style and "voice" of the content, using Plain English instead of potentially confusing terminology.

News is a mixture of service-specific content and the broader council news that is presented on the separate Newsroom website, with the latter managed by the Communications team. Both news feeds are presented on the homepage of the website and drive the public to the relevant section of the website or Newsroom as appropriate. Work is underway to consolidate this further by having all news presented via the main Newsroom website, and fed back into the council website on the relevant services.

Some services have their own website, usually for more commercial and marketing needs, such as Shrewsbury museums, Theatre Severn, Shropshire Fostering, Shropshire's Great Outdoors amongst others. These are expected to follow our branding requirements (i.e. a council logo must be clearly visible) and clearly state they are operating within Shropshire Council.

Services also have their own social media in order for them to provide more targeted messages and engagement for their particular target audiences. The avatars for these accounts follow a set design scheme with the council logo visible above their own service logo.

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7.0   Customer services

7.1   The Customer Service function includes the Customer Service contact centre (CSC), our face to face offices in our largest market towns and the Welfare Support/Homelessness contact team which between them handle around 280,000 contacts via phone, e mail, webchat and in person. Customer Services also handle the corporate social media accounts through Facebook and Twitter.

Facebook has 12,500 followers; Twitter has 22500 followers however the ripple effect of posting messages on can reach a far greater audience particularly with good news stories. The competition to name Shropshire's gritting lorries ended up reaching millions of people.

There are two other contact centres in the council, in Revenues and Benefits and Public Protection, these services handle their own phone, e mail or webchat contacts but their in-person customer contact is handled by Customer Services through our offices in the community.

The extent to which Customer Services fulfil the customer's need at first contact varies according to the service that the customer needs. As a result, the customer's experience also varies.

For example, concessionary travel applications are devolved entirely to Customer Services and processes for the customer have simplified to the extent that 70% of renewals for older people happen automatically, without application. Likewise, digital transformation has enabled Customer Services staff to directly access Veolia's IT systems to fulfil waste service requests with no further action required.

In contrast, there are still some services that retain responsibility for initial contact meaning customers need to contact them directly and separately from other needs they may have.

There is real opportunity for more collaborative working between services to shape the customer's experience of contacting the council. Key to this is the willingness of services to review their work processes and move more of their functions and resource into front door operations. A good example is the model developing between the Welfare Support Team and Housing Options homelessness team which is seeing increased front-end triage resulting in more being done at initial contact across both services, making our welfare fund part of the solution but most importantly, sees staff not just co-located but working together cross-service both with information taking and sharing and with access to systems for joint solutions.

Such developments are key to making things easier for our customers and are part of the end-to-end service redesign of the Customer Experience Project.

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The project aim is to make the customer transaction easier and do more for them in that one contact, however that is made.

Early achievements for this project include a very smooth transition onto the new single contact platform for customer enquiries that brings together contact through telephone, e mail and webchat. This platform is used by all three of our contact centres which eases transfer between these services a little.

The project is also handling the design and implementation of the new Dynamics Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which handles front-end customer information for the CSC. This is the way into services that gathers the information needed, pushing it through to back office systems. Implementation of this front-end system is a key step to being able to redesign and simplify the end-to-end processes that services use, all of which have developed in isolation, thereby improving the experience for the customer and maximising what is achieved through that contact however made.

The project is currently concentrating on transfer of services from the old CRM system onto the new so that the old system can be retired as soon as possible to release savings. Some redesign has resulted naturally along the way, most noticeably with Waste and Highways services and for the customer, the development of the MyShropshire portal which will build into a simpler and more interactive way for residents to do business with us.

The ideal remains for the customer to have to make only one contact, give information only once (with permission to share information across services) in order to either provide for those needs there and then or at the very least, trigger all the actions required to fulfil them.

System redesign, working hand in hand with Business Analysis, could design the customer facing end for collaborating "clusters" of similar services and provisions so that information and customer needs are viewed across those services and not singly within our traditional work "silos". For the customer, more is dealt with in one go, for the council, lines between traditional services are blurred, and provision concentrates instead on what the customer needs, with teams using one another's systems for joint solutions across services and not simply within their own. The prototypes of these already exist in both our First Point of Contact for Adult's Services and the Welfare/Homelessness team.

The ability to develop and configure the new Dynamics CRM using our own in-house developers gives us flexibility to develop what we need as well as respond and change and involve our customers as stakeholders in future development.

The same cross-service provision can be mirrored through face to face access to services in our communities, where working together as much as possible from one place means customers have just one place to access as well as giving the Council the opportunity to introduce new technology that would cost-effectively

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broaden the offer of such venues. This would include using innovative technology for example using video link technology allowing smaller, centrally located teams to still have face to face contact with their customers in the community.
For this reason, and as the trusted front door into most Council services, Customer Service Points are now starting to co-locate with clusters of other provisions including adult services Let's Talk Local meetings and Early Help Hubs, Mental Health social work drop in sessions and some NHS health teams. Examples of this are in Market Drayton's Raven House and shortly at Old Street in Ludlow.

8.0   Digital Transformation

8.1   Shropshire Council's digital transformation programme provides opportunities to automate personalised customer service messages, particularly with regard to

- MyShropshire
- Highways incident reporting
- Street scene and waste
- Complaints

8.2   At a meeting of the Place Overview Committee in November 2018, officers provided examples of how this technology could be used, for example providing updates to customers who had reported potholes, or broadcasting messages to customers living near to planned roadworks or street works.

9.0   News and campaigns

9.1   Shropshire Council's communications team issue daily press releases on the Shropshire Council Newsroom.

Press releases are then picked up by media organisations and residents and organisations that sign up to our Newsroom. News stories are also automatically tweeted out to over 22.5k followers via the Council's Twitter account. We encourage communities to sign up to the Newsroom at https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKSHROPSHIRE/subscriber/new
We also encourage all councillors and staff to adhere to the council's Media Protocol

Planning News output
There are various approaches to why and when we issue news. Press releases are issued as part of a planned campaign we're promoting for a particular service, event or project.

We also issue press releases in response to council decisions (eg Cabinet, scrutiny, change in service etc).

Press releases are also issued in response to emergency situations.

Disseminating news to town and parish councils

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News stories are often sent to SALC to distribute to Town and Parish Councils.

We have also encouraged town and parish councils (via Shropshire Association of Local Council (SALC) to sign up to the Shropshire Council Newsroom. This enables them to get up to date news on what's happening across the council so they can cascade to their local communities.

There are further plans to develop a campaign to encourage more communities to sign up to the council's Newsroom.

Using communications in campaigns
We try to adopt a proactive 'campaign-led' approach. This is where we work with the service areas to identify their key objectives, outcomes and communication needs (both current and long term), and ensure that these all link back to the council's vision and priorities.

From this, we produce communication plans in collaboration with our services, which detail how we will effectively communicate campaigns and projects.

Communication officers also attend DMTs to receive regular updates from management and discuss any communication requirements.

How does the communications team and the customer service centre work together to ensure consistency of message?
The communications team have a close working relationship with customer services and the digital services team. This joined up approach offers a more holistic approach to how we communicate to our communities.

All the teams liaise daily with regards to campaigns, reactive communications and, if need be, will provide copies of our campaign plans and communication toolkits, which will include key messages and timings.

Weekly meetings are held with team managers to discuss current projects/campaigns and issues that need addressing.

What we do

Shropshire's communications team provide help and advice on:

Internal communications
- Prepare content for staff newsletter, councillors bulletins, all-staff emails, Intranet, computer lock screens and TV screens

Campaign planning
- Creating communications and marketing strategies and plans (including social media campaigns)

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- Campaign evaluation
- Social marketing and insight

Media and PR
- PR advice and support
- Preparing press releases and press packs
- Organising media briefings
- Responding to media enquiries
- Media training
- Media monitoring
- Emergency/crisis communications
- Editorial articles for newsletters, magazines, journals and specialist publications

Branding and marketing
- Brand development
- Development/creation of print and digital material which is on brand
- Creation of organisational annual reports and strategic documents
- Copywriting
- Proof reading

Photography/videography
- Event photography and videos
- Live video feeds
- Documentary video and photography
- Promotional and editorial photography
- Motion graphics and animation

Our approach

We need to ensure the way we communicate with the people and organisations we come in to contact with is effective, and that all communications activity we do supports the delivery of the council's vision and Corporate Plan, as well as the needs of our local communities.

To help us achieve this, we need to consider the following principles

- One Organisation, **One Voice**

  We have a clear and consistent brand and tone across the council so we communicate in **one** voice as **one** organisation.

- Communicating our **Vision**

  Internal and external stakeholders understand and believe in our vision and how we are going to achieve it.

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- Communications is **Everyone's** responsibility

  Staff understand that we **ALL** have a responsibility for communications, and that we have the right tools to deliver them.

- Communication is **Two-Way**

  We need to demonstrate we are a 'listening' and 'responsive' council, where our communications presents opportunities for conversation and engagement.

- Our communications are **Fit for the Future**

  Our communications should continually adapt to new challenges and technologies. We should also consider cost effectiveness and ensure that our communications practices are in line with the council's Climate Change Strategy.

Code of practice

Like all councils we must adhere to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011. It states that publicity, local authorities should:

- be lawful
- be cost-effective
- be objective
- be even-handed
- be appropriate
- have regard to equality and diversity
- be issued with care during periods of heightened sensitivity.

You can read the full Code here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/recommended-code-of-practice-for-local-authority-publicity

Intelligence, data and technology

As a council, we gather data about our customers every day. And the digital transformation programme has now given us the tools to be able to decipher this into usable, tangible and evidence based information. Using tools like Power BI, we can channel this information to develop and deliver proactive outcome- based campaigns that provide a real difference and contribute to the successful delivery of the Corporate Plan and other key high-level strategies.

We now have access to a great range of technology solutions that enable to us to change how we use data to inform and drive our communications. For example:
- Microsoft packages
- The new CRM system

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- Integrated Business Solutions
- Single point of entry for the customer

Access to this vast intelligence, aligned with the technology we now possess can help us run campaign that are based on local trends. We can more highly refine them, target them better and pre-empt customer engagement to help and encourage our customers to self-serve, achieve channel shift and become a digital council.

Communication channels

Below is an example existing communications channels and networks we use This isn't an exhaustive list, as we always continue to review and look at more effective channels. We understand that staff know their customers best, and we encourage staff who have an alternative and effective way to reach communities to let us know.

Internal
- Staff newsletter
- Intranet
- Yammer
- Microsoft Teams
- Microsoft Stream
- All-staff emails
- Lock screens
- TV screens in Shirehall and other council buildings
- Councillors bulletins
- Council buildings

External
- Shropshire Council Newsroom
- Local, regional and national media, including specialist publications.
- Shropshire Council website
- Branding all of the services we deliver as Shropshire Council
- Printed material – such as posters, leaflets, brochures, livery etc
- Social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn
- MyShropshire
- Partners – we have a comprehensive list of partners and stakeholders that we cascade information to share via their comms channels and networks. This helps us reach those who otherwise may not come into contact with the council. Partners include, but are not limited to:-

  - Town councils and parish councils
  - Voluntary and community sector
  - NHS, police, ambulance service, fire service
  - Business communities

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- Housing associations
- Interfaith/ethnic groups
- Community and hyper-local groups

10.0 Print, design and post

10.1 BluPrint is Shropshire Councils internal print & design and post team that are key enablers for the production of digital and physical marketing and promotional materials as well as documentation and information for Shropshire Council events, promotions, awareness campaigns and initiatives. The team are there to support Shropshire Council service areas and partners with the creation and production of physical products. These include posters, leaflets, signage, branding, bespoke personalised materials, banners and display exhibition stands for a number of activities and events.

BluPrint are able to co-ordinate cross-promotional literature to maximise effectiveness and efficiency in terms of both budgets constraints, methods for delivery and reach i.e. a posted physical item, or an emailed document, which allows the Council to communicate with residents in their preferred format.

A key service that BluPrint provide is the support to Revenue & Benefits. For example the annual statement is sent to over 150,000 households and businesses in Shropshire. It is processed from raw data and BluPrint create multi-channel (postal and electronic) output so this is a mix of print and post bespoke bills, as well as emailed bills with encrypted attachments only accessible by the intended recipient. Part of this allows us the opportunity to promote other services and initiatives, for example the Police and Crime Commissioner include a leaflet. This year we have also included a section to promote the Digital Skills for Shropshire initiative.

Another example is Right Home Right Place where BluPrint created the document and mailout to residents in specific areas of housing development. The service supported the engagement of residents by producing various marketing formats including competitions, posters and questionnaires for use within the communities. This has proven to be very successful in its levels of engagement and a notable outcome was a prize giving ceremony for a community Bake off event, again where BluPrint provided branded marketing materials.

11.0 Communicating with town and parish councils and councillors

11.1 Shropshire Council's principal vehicle for communicating with town and parish councils is Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC), a not for profit membership organisation representing, training, informing and advising parish and town councils in both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin local authority areas.

SALC manages a database of parish and town clerk contact details for all of the 153 town and parish councils in Shropshire and the 27 councils in Telford & Wrekin. In addition there are 9 Parish Meetings in Shropshire and 2 Parish

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Meetings in Telford & Wrekin. This database forms the primary means by which Shropshire Council communicates with the town and parish councils within its local authority area.

Its main means of communicating are:

- A weekly newsletter to all councils. This contains a mixture of national and local news pertinent to councils. The newsletter is kept short and is edited heavily to ensure that the news is directly relevant to councils and councillors. Topics include pay negotiations, emergency planning, finance settlements plus community news.
- Executive and area committee meetings. These are mainly information meetings, and are a useful opportunity for Shropshire Council officers to brief town and parish councils on issues such as highways and planning pertinent to their area. These meetings are also a useful opportunity to town and parish councils to express concerns directly to senior officers from the council. These committees also occasionally carry out task and finish group work to co-ordinate joint work, such as tree planting or maintaining public rights of ways in a local area.
- Ongoing review of the Shropshire Council Charter for town and parish councils.

SALC maintains good working relations with officers and elected members of Shropshire Council, which helps with enabling direct contact between officers, Shropshire Council elected members, and town and parish councils. This has become more important following the reduction in financial and staff support for local joint committees.

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)
All
Local member
All
Appendices
None

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Committee and Date	Item
Committee and Date **Communities Overview Committee** **24 February 2020**	**Item** (leave blank) **Public**

Supporting vulnerable adults in Shropshire

Responsible Officer

Danial Webb – overview and scrutiny officer

danial.webb@shropshire.gov.uk

01743 258509

1.0 Summary

1.1 This report outlines the different ways that Shropshire Council supports vulnerable adults.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members should:
- read this report
- prepare any questions they may have with regard to supporting vulnerable adults and
- identify specific topics for further scrutiny.

3.0 Opportunities and risks

3.1 Effective support for vulnerable adults, who do not meet the threshold for a package of care to meet their care needs, can prevent an escalation of those vulnerabilities. This is not only better for the person concerned, it can also eliminate the need for more costly interventions.

3.2 Although Shropshire Council is ambitious in supporting vulnerable adults, it will have to ensure that any support that it offers can be properly funded.

4.0 Financial assessment

4.1 There are no direct financial implications to making recommendations to services. However there may be financial implications to any recommended courses of action that Shropshire Council agrees to put into place. These implications should be considered by Cabinet or Council when agreeing any course of action.

5.0 Background

5.1 At the meeting of the Communities Overview Committee in November 2019, members considered a report from the Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance. In this meeting, members requested further information about how we support vulnerable adults in Shropshire who do not meet the threshold for a package of care.

6.0 Types of vulnerability

6.1 There is a growing recognition that professionals and practitioners will be more effective identifying vulnerable people, if they move from a position of investigating a specific area, e.g. is this young person at risk of being excluded from school, to a position of assessing whether an individual or family or generally vulnerable, and if so, what could they be vulnerable to and what are the interventions required to prevent this. If a young person has been excluded from school, they are increasingly vulnerable to a number of risks, e.g. drug use, sexual exploitation, exploitation county lines criminal activity and physical violence. Often these areas of vulnerability will be outside the practitioner's particular responsibility and a multi-disciplinary approach will be needed to build the resilience needed to counteract the vulnerability.

In the longer term a primary vulnerability is likely to create more with significant and life-changing impact. If your health is poor and you don't feel in control of this or able to take steps to make improvements, you are more likely to experience anxiety, low mood or depression, which could then lead to relationship breakdown, unstable home life and losing your job. Any loss of income could then result in debt and a loss of housing. The failure to address one vulnerability could then result in a cascade of additional vulnerabilities with significant consequences for an individual and their family.

People can experience multiple vulnerabilities emanating from -
- adverse childhood experiences
- educational achievement
- employment situation
- financial situation
- disability
- poor mental health
- housing situation
- social isolation
- being a victim of crime

These vulnerabilities can fluctuate and escalate unless a holistic approach is taken to providing the support that will build resilience and make a difference to the way someone lives their life.

7.0 Identifying vulnerable adults

7.1 It is necessary to recognise that contact with the council is not all in one place. There are three recognised contact centres in the council:
- The Customer Service Centre (CSC),
- Revenues and Benefits
- Public Protection.

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The CSC and customer service function, set up when the council became a unitary authority in 2009, also incorporates the various face to face offices across Shropshire. The CSC is the main access route to over 50 services, however some services opted out which is why customer contact routes are split. By comparison, face to face offices handle issues for practically all services, predominantly for our older residents. Once initial contact has been made, residents may have direct routes into services themselves.

The CSC has seen some unique developments. It now provides "First Point of Contact", which is the front end of Adult Social Services, and adult and child concerns calls. It also has the Welfare Support Team that administers the Council's Local Welfare Fund as well as handling the front end of the homelessness process. These teams work alongside duty social workers from adults, safeguarding, occupational therapy and mental health who handle incoming issues for their teams. This arrangement provides very useful mutual support for one another.

Because of the nature of the contact, combining these teams in one place means we not only identify vulnerable customers, we collaborate cross-service to find solutions. Identifying and addressing the underlying issues is future prevention and signposting customers to community and voluntary providers for wider needs, and following up the outcomes, is an essential part of this.

Customer Services also handle many "ordinary" transactional contacts and these can either mask or reveal vulnerability. Often it is the attitude and skills of the adviser that makes the difference and an example would be missed bin collections which, with thoughtful questions, have identified an underlying vulnerability that can then be supported. Short but meaningful conversations, focussed on the person and not just the service transaction, can be very preventative.

The more vulnerable a person is, the less likely it is that they will manage making multiple contacts and this is partly why the collaborative models developing in customer services are proving successful. The challenge going forward is therefore twofold:

- How to bring other council services together to add to this model. This would achieve greater value for money, identify customer vulnerability across traditional service silos and maximise the effectiveness of our own support by working collaboratively, again across services. For the resident, more would be in one place and available through one contact.
- How to ensure we do not "lose" people signposted to external community providers and that they get the help they need with underlying issues.

8.0 *Prevent* contracting

8.1   Shropshire Council funds a wide range of support for vulnerable adults from a number of VCS organisations. The nature of the funding arrangements varies – some support is funded through grant-funding arrangements; some support is

funded through contracts following a procurement exercise. It is also important to note that many VCS organisations are supporting vulnerable adults without funding from the local public sector (Shropshire Council or CCG); funding may come from public donations, national government, grant-giving bodies or trust funds for example.

In late 2017, the Council's Adult Services commenced a review of preventative services for adults. The review considered current funding arrangements; engagement feedback from service users, providers and the VCS generally; changes in demand; changes in availability of funding; and optimum funding arrangements for the future.

Commissioning Intentions were developed and shared with participants in the review, resulting in a set of proposals for commissioning preventative services. The proposals were:

- Much of the support for vulnerable adults commissioned by the Council falls into the following 3 categories:
    - Wellbeing and Independence – practical support in the home; getting and keeping active in the community; developing and sustaining networks and friendships
    - Advice, Advocacy & Welfare Benefits – specialist advice and advocacy around issues affecting people's wellbeing; welfare benefits support
    - Housing Support – support to help people sustain a home of their own by addressing the issues affecting their ability to do so
- Retain individual grant funding arrangements for specialist provision or very local support groups

The Council ran procurement exercises for each of the three main categories noted above. Contract lengths vary but do include options to extend the term of each contract according to need and contract performance. For example the Wellbeing and Independence contract term is an initial three years plus the option to extend for a further two years.

Individual grant funding arrangements tend to be reviewed and renewable on an annual basis dependent on funding requirements and continued contribution to the Council's priorities.

8.2   The importance of identifying people who are vulnerable to poor mental or physical health outcomes at a point where it is possible to provide support that avoids them using acute services is an increasing feature of NHS long-term plans and local initiatives. These initiatives are a good example of social care, health services and the voluntary and community sector working together in a place-based way, e.g. Social Prescribing, Shropshire Care Closer to Home and

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Integrated Approaches to Volunteering. The challenge is that whilst there is funding available for the delivery of the initiatives themselves, they are drawing on existing resources within communities and the voluntary sector to identify support for the people they are working with without additional funding for these. It is of tremendous benefit that vulnerable people are proactively identified and supported, but there is a risk that collectively we will be unable to provide an adequate or consistent response.

9.0   Welfare reform

9.1   In 2018, the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee's welfare reform task and finish group conducted a review of how Shropshire Council supports people who receive benefit payments. It looked in particular at the council's contracts with the voluntary and community sector, including housing associations, to support people. It noted that:

"The group felt that having a large number of organisations supporting people had both its strengths and its risks. A contracted approach to support allowed the council considerable flexibility with its support, as well as helping to ensure that such support remained affordable to the local authority. Furthermore providing welfare support among numerous organisations provided considerable overall resilience, with expertise, capacity and access to different means of funding spread among different organisations. However the group also expressed concern that people might receive piecemeal or disjointed support as a result of engaging with several organisations."

9.2   It also noted that:
"Throughout the course of its meetings, the groups discussed the lack of a common strategy from Shropshire Council to co-ordinate welfare support. Although the organisations that the group spoke share broadly similar aims, members felt that a single strategy would help facilitate closer working. More than one person that the group spoke with told them that there had been previous efforts to agree a joint strategy, but this had failed to come to fruition.

The group believes that although the different organisations had different purpose, they ought to be able to agree a common strategy for supporting vulnerable tenants. Shropshire Council, as a significant funder of tenancy support, was in a suitably central position to be able to co-ordinate this work. Indeed Shropshire Council had already created de-facto common objectives through its contract specification for preventative services. For example, the specification for the Information, Advocacy & Advice for Adults service requires targeted support for key groups, with the explicit aims of increasing independence, maximising income and reducing benefits dependency."

9.3   It recommended that the committee:
"explore how Shropshire can develop a common strategy for welfare support, and implement any supporting actions from that strategy."

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10.0 Working with voluntary and community sector

10.1 Understanding the role, and value of the Voluntary and Community Sector is important in recognising why its work with vulnerable adults is beneficial compared to other delivery models. The VCS is:

- Independent – non-political.
- Community based – grow skills and knowledge in the area, employ locally, spend locally – good for the economy.
- Non-profit making – generate social value, re-invest in area.
- Responsive – generally small in size with governance structures that mean decisions can be taken more quickly than in large organisations.
- Person centred – often building relationships over a long time – know families and establish trust.
- Collaborative – certainly pretty good in Shropshire – develop sub sectors with strong relationships between bodies.

Shropshire Council has significantly reduced the support it provides the Voluntary and Community Sector over the last 10 years. All that remains is a core offer. If Shropshire can maintain the foundations of partnership working it developed over many years, it will be able to re- build on those foundations should fortunes improve. Support that remains includes:

- Networking and information sharing through Shropshire VCS Assembly Membership and its weekly newsletter.
- Information exchange and idea sharing through VCSA workshops and events.
- Strategic influence and partnership through the VCS Assembly Board.
- VCS representation on all the local partnership Boards, committees and working groups (Shropshire Council and beyond to our partner led groups).
- Commissioning relationships where contracts are in place or are being developed such as social prescribing.

Due to the council's budget constraints we have ceased to provide some services that the VCS now provide:

- We have stopped resourcing support services such as developing bids for funding/funding advice, small grants for project based/short term or core funding etc. for volunteering brokerage and other forms of infrastructure support for the sector.
- We have lost local VCS services and support groups due to loss of support because of the economic changes that have seen loss of support from other bodies such as central government, reduced lottery income/grants, more defined/restricted grant giving from other funders, changes in charitable giving/donations and generally less funding in total. This combined with social changes that mean people possibly won't be giving as much of their time to the community in the future.

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Types of losses seem to be largely in these areas (while demand hasn't reduced):

- Open access, community based social activities and meetings.
- Family support/ parenting.
- Youth services and work with vulnerable young people (impacting on vulnerable parents of those young people).
- Fewer health prevention services (examples include loss of CCG funding for things like counselling, fitness groups, cookery/healthy eating initiatives, dementia/Alzheimer's etc.). Example of this is the Healthy Living Centres funding that used to be in place and was lost.
- Reduction in arts/cultural funding – e.g. disability arts/music.
- Reduction in low-level mental health support – reduced numbers of general counselling services and support groups (recent example was the loss of Wyldwoods – farm based outdoors support for people who were vulnerable).
- Engagement/participation groups – used to have more groups targeting their support towards particular 'hard to reach' or minority groups in the community. Reduction in some advocacy services too.
- VCS training/support to develop community champions, groups and social action within communities.

The 2017 VCS Assembly Prevention Impact Assessment considered the work of 15 VCS organisations and highlighted:

- Approximately 79 different services and activities were provided by the 15 organisations.
- 498 paid members of staff from the 15 VCSE organisations, supported each of the 18 areas of prevention activity covered within the impact assessment (e.g. social activities, mildfulness, drop ins/open access, training/learning, information, advice, advocacy, benefits advice, support in the home, physical activity etc.).
- In total, the 15 organisations provided 29,990 hours of staff time per month and the remainder of service provision is carried out by volunteers.
- The volunteer time contributed by the 15 organisations was worth £165,262 every month and approximately £1.98 million a year based on the national minimum wage.
- Five of the 17 VCSE leads involved in the project (2 provided organisation level data only) believed that it is very likely or likely their whole service could end in the next 12 months if just one contract was lost.
- 57% of all the preventative activities and services delivered (approximately 45 activities) were considered to be at risk of reduction or closure within the next 12 months. The types of prevention most at risk were social activities, advocacy and information provision. At the time, the 15 organisations believed any reduction in funding would impact with 58 activities/services seeing reduced opening times, 20 a reduction in range/scope and 15 a change in eligibility criteria.

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- The 15 organisations supported 41,339 beneficiaries (although some beneficiaries were likely to benefit from multiple services so double counting was likely).
- The 15 organisations supported 26,588 people living in Shropshire who were frail, vulnerable and considered at high risk.
- The ratio of paid staff to beneficiaries was 1:83, highlighting the demand VCSE services experience.

The voluntary and community sector is facing significant challenges and cannot be expected to take on additional work without income to address losses in public services or meet increasing demands. It faces the same challenges other businesses and organisations face, such as rising costs of running services, rising employment contributions, increases in regulations and required administration

The voluntary the voluntary and community sector has seen significant changes over the last few years due to social and economic changes and the impact of austerity.

The size of the sector is shrinking
The rate of VCS registered organisations being dissolved is greater than the rate of newly registered charities. On average, over last 10 years, 23 more Shropshire charities are removed than registered every year. Local research suggests that the number of charities has reduced by 8% in 2 years (4% on average per annum).

VCS income is reducing
Considering open data available for some of the UK's top funders10 shows average reduction in VCS income over the last 3 years of an average loss per year of 69% in Shropshire and 40% in Telford and Wrekin. Shropshire VCS organisations attracted £19,332,926 in 2016 and £1,195,677 in 2018 (in Telford & Wrekin this pattern was £6,688,285 in 2016 to £401,858 in 2018). National research backs up these findings. The amount of money donated to good causes by the National Lottery fell £600,000 between 2017/18 and 2018/19 despite its games bringing in an extra £250million (source: 'Charity Donations from the national Lottery fell by £600,000 last year' (2019) Daily Mail Https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7105593/Charity-donations-National-Lottery-fell-600-000-year.html). The income that the voluntary sector as a whole receives from government has fallen, and smaller organisations have been hit particularly hard. For example, between 2008/09 and 2012/13, charities with annual incomes of £100,000–£500,000, and of between £500,000 and £1 million, experienced large falls in their income from contracts (of 32 and 37 per cent respectively), while larger charities fared much better. (source: Hunter J and Cox E, with Round A (2016) Too Small to Fail: How small and medium sized charities are adapting to change and challenges, IPPR North and Lloyds Bank Foundation http://www.ippr.org/publications/too-small-to-fail)

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Smaller VCS organisations receive less

Small and Medium sized charities constitute 52 percent (64,000) of all registered charities in England and Wales but only 19% (£7.2 billion) of charitable income. Small and medium charities receive 16% of local government funding with larger charities attracting 84%. The difference is most pronounced in comparison with the very largest charities (income over £10m); the large majority of which (76 percent) are non-local and receive 55% of all local government funding1. Similar research from NCVO4 highlights that 81.5% of charities have an income of £100k or less and receive 4.6% if all charity income.

Costs and regulation have increased

Increases in the cost of living, employer contributions, expenses rates and other costs mean the costs of running VCS organisations are rising while income is falling. Whilst increased regulation also adds additional pressure (e.g. GDPR).

Few people donate money to charitable causes

The Community Life survey 2018/19 found that 75% of people aged 16+ gave money to charitable causes in the last 4 weeks, a reduction compared to 2013/4 when 82% gave money. The proportion of people giving money to charity either by donating or via sponsorship has seen a steady decline between 2016 and 2018 (69% to 65% in 2018). (source: Charities Aid Foundation (May 2016) CAF UK Giving 2019: An overview of charitable giving in the UK, Charitable Aid Foundation, West Malling, Kent.). Despite the value of the voluntary sector to the UK, there has been a 15.4% decline in the total number of frequent hours volunteered, between 2005 and 2015 – a drop from 2.28 billion hours to 1.93 billion13.

The number of people participating in charitable or social activities has decreased

The Charities Aid Foundation reports that the number of people who participated in charitable or social activities in the previous four weeks has decreased over the last 3 years. 64% of people now take part in charitable activities. Women and older people are the most likely to engage in charitable and social activities. Men are twice as likely as women to say that they rarely or never give to charity (26% vs. 13%).16

Donations are made to specific causes

Children or young people (26%), animal welfare (26%), medical research (25%), hospitals and hospices (20%) and homeless people, housing and refuge shelters in the UK (18%) were the most popular causes to donate money to. With fewer donating overall, this suggests that charities supporting children, young people or animals are taking a greater share of the number of donations rather than more charities supported overall.1

The funding environment has changed

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The public sector has responded to austerity by searching for efficiency and/or economies of scale, through streamlining and scaling up contracts. Contracts are larger, and more tightly defined, which favoured large charities over small. Grant schemes have, in many cases been lost. In-kind support from the public sector has also been lost.

Demand for services has increased
Local delivery models have directed more people to use VCS services and community support to reduce pressure on statutory services. At the same time more people have more complex needs.

it is important to really define where Shropshire Council can have an influence and where it can't. What could be achieved and how will any actions be resourced? The partnership with the VCS means that there is influence and joint working but there is still a limit – they are independent organisations after all.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) All
Local Member All
Appendices

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Committee	Item
Communities Overview Committee	
	Public
24 February 2020	

Place Overview Committee Work Programme 2019 – 2020

Responsible officer
Danial Webb, overview and scrutiny Officer
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1.0 Summary

1.1 This paper presents the Communities Overview Committee's proposed work programme for the year ahead. The committees has based its programme on topics from Shropshire Council's Strategic Action Plan. During the course of its work programme, the committee will also
- scrutinise thematic priorities
- respond to emerging issues and
- follow up on previous work.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Committee members to:
- confirm the proposed committee work programme attached as **appendix 1.**
- suggest changes to the committee work programme and
- recommend other topics to consider

3.0 Background

3.1 The Communities Overview Committee bases its work programme on topics from Shropshire Council's Strategic Action Plan. It also
- scrutinises thematic priorities
- responds to emerging issues
- follows up on previous work
- carries out cross-committee work through task and finish groups.

3.2 A refreshed overview and scrutiny work programme for this committee is attached as **appendix 1**. A list of all current task and finish groups is attached as **appendix 2.**

4.0 Next steps

4.1 Overview and scrutiny updates this report on an ongoing basis and presents it to each overview and scrutiny committee. This will allow members the opportunity to contribute to its development at each committee meeting.

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)   All
Local Member   All
Appendices   Overview and scrutiny work programme   Overview and scrutiny task and finish groups

Appendix 1
Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2019 to 2020

Communities Overview Committee

Topic	Intended outcomes or objectives	What output is required?	Who needs to be heard from?	Expected impact or added value	Work date
Third sector support for vulnerable adults	• To understand how the local authority works with the third sector to support vulnerable adults • To make recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the support that we provide.	Committee overview report	Director of Adult social care	Shropshire Council makes effective use of its funding of third-sector agencies who support vulnerable adults	24 Feb 2020
Working with Shropshire communities (2)	• To identify where Shropshire Council reaches into households e.g. Council Tax emails or paper bills, and what opportunities exist to share messages or signpost to messages • To seek feedback from communities, Voluntary Community and Social Enterprises and Town and Parish Councils on their views of effective engagement that reaches all areas of communities	Committee overview report	Director of Place	Shropshire Council engages effectively with town and parish councils.	24 Feb 2020

Communities Overview Committee

Topic	Intended outcomes or objectives	What output is required?	Who needs to be heard from?	Expected impact or added value	Work date
Homepoint	• Understand how Homepoint meets the needs of people in Shropshire seeking housing • Explore how Homepoint could meet the needs of young adults seeking housing.	overview report presentation	Director, Adult Services	Homepoint provides an effective service in providing housing for those in greatest need.	16 Mar 2020
Working with Shropshire communities (3)	• To research and evaluate different models of engaging communities • To learn from other similar councils and from neighbouring councils in Wales about their approaches to engaging communities and their learning	overview report presentation	Director of Place	Shropshire Council engages effectively with town and parish councils.	16 Mar 2020
Rural Strategy	• To scrutinise Shropshire Council's draft rural strategy	overview report presentation	Director of Place	Shropshire Council provides effective services to rural communities.	16 Mar 2020
Public transport funding	• To receive an update on funding for public transport	overview report presentation	Director of Place	Shropshire Council supports a well-integrated public transport network	16 Mar 2020

Communities Overview Committee

Topic	Intended outcomes or objectives	What output is required?	Who needs to be heard from?	Expected impact or added value	Work date
Working with Shropshire communities (4)	• To identify a preferred model for Shropshire Council • To recommend a framework for engaging communities based on evidence of what works and is best for Shropshire.	Committee overview report	Director of Place	Shropshire Council engages effectively with town and parish councils.	April 2020 (additional Meeting)
Local representation	•				June 2020

Appendix 2
Current and proposed task and finish groups

Title	Objectives	Reporting to
Financial Strategy and Innovation and Income Generation	• To understand the process and activity stages for developing the Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2022/23 and how these translate into the Council's annual budgets • To consider and scrutinise the proposals and emerging plans for the whole Financial Strategy and 2019/20 budget, including how they align to the four pillars. This will be through their development and their implementation, in particular for innovation and raising income. • To consider the alignment of the Financial Strategy and the new Corporate Plan being developed autumn 2018. • To consider the recommendations and areas for action identified in the Corporate Peer Challenge report relating to the Financial Strategy, and how they are being addressed. • To consider the direct and indirect impacts, including risks, of 2019/20 Budget proposals on current services and customers. • To complete specific pieces of work to identify and work up alternatives to emerging plans, including the feasibility of any alternative proposals • Make evidence based recommendations in relation to plans and approaches for innovation and income generation, and alternative proposals for future budget setting.	Performance Management Scrutiny Committee
Road casualty reduction		

Title	Objectives	Reporting to
Community Transport	• To understand how community transport operates in Shropshire, and the demand for community transport services. • Identify how the community transport groups, the council, and other partners can work together to provide community transport to people in Shropshire who do not have access to public or private transport.	Communities Overview Committee
Engaging Diverse Communities	• To review and propose the scope of Place Plans including their geography and subject areas • To propose options to ensure Place Plans are developed from the bottom-up • To understand how rural enterprise features in our procurement / commissioning processes. • To proposed opportunities to engage with Strategic Levels within the Council and partners in Place Planning • To engage with Town and Parish Councils on options to reset their relationship with Shropshire Council • To identify appropriate and effective mechanisms to communicate with and engage with diverse communities that can be used to inform co-design and collaboration on a range of matters • Make evidence based recommendations	Communities Overview Committee

Title	Objectives	Reporting to
Brexit	- To consider the information brought together to develop a view for Shropshire of the possible implications of Brexit for the Shropshire economy and the achievement of the Economic Growth Strategy. - To identify, with the relevant officers, the key evidence and related requirements of what Shropshire would require from a future UK funding approach. - To make evidence based recommendations to Cabinet.	Performance Management Scrutiny Committee
Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy	- To understand how Shropshire Council currently uses Section 106, CIL and NHB and the impact that this has had - To understand how Section 106, CIL and NHB could be used in Shropshire to enable or encourage projects or initiatives for economic growth and prosperity - To learn from other places how they have used Section 106, CIL and NHB to enable or encourage projects or initiatives for economic growth and prosperity - To make evidence based recommendations on how Section 106, CIL and NHB could be used in Shropshire to enable or encourage projects or initiatives for economic growth and prosperity	Performance Management Scrutiny
Climate Change	- To review Shropshire Council's existing work to reduce its CO_2e output. - To scrutinise existing council policy and practice and recommend policy changes that would support further carbon reduction. - To identify and evaluate opportunities to reduce spending and generate income by adopting low-carbon technology and practices.	Place Overview Committee

Title	Objectives	Reporting to
Dog fouling and dangerous dogs	- To scrutinise how the local authority tackles - dog fouling - dog attacks - stray dogs - licenced dog breeding	Performance Management Scrutiny Committee
Signs, banners and street furniture	- Understand existing policies, charges and administrative arrangements - Scrutinise existing policy and suggest draft policy. - Identify opportunities to set and administer policy and licencing arrangements with town and parish councils. - Look at how other local authorities set and administer policy, to identify potential ways to improve arrangements in Shropshire.	Place Overview Committee

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