

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

Date: Wednesday, 16 March  
2022

**Committee:**  
**Place Overview Committee**

**Date:** Thursday, 24 March 2022  
**Time:** 2.00 pm  
**Venue:** Shrewsbury/Oswestry Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate,  
Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

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

**There will be some access to the meeting room for members of the press and public but this will be limited. If you wish to attend the meeting, please email [democracy@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@shropshire.gov.uk) to check that a seat will be available for you.**

**The meeting can be viewed live via Microsoft Teams using the link below. The recording will be made available on YouTube, this will be made accessible from the web page for the meeting shortly afterwards.**

**<https://shropshire.gov.uk/PlaceOverviewCommitteeMeeting24March2022>**

Tim Collard  
Assistant Director – Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)

**Members of Place Overview Committee**

Joyce Barrow (Chairman)	Roger Evans
Paul Wynn (Vice Chairman)	Paul Gill
Steve Davenport	Dan Morris
Julian Dean	Pamela Moseley
Geoff Elnor	David Vasmer

Your Committee Officer is:

**Sarah Townsend** Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 257721

Email: [sarah.townsend@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.townsend@shropshire.gov.uk)

# AGENDA

## 1 Apologies for Absence

## 2 Disclosable Interests

Members are reminded that they must declare their disclosable pecuniary interests and other registrable or non-registrable interests in any matter being considered at the meeting as set out in Appendix B of the Members' Code of Conduct and consider if they should leave the room prior to the item being considered. Further advice can be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

## 3 Minutes of the Previous Meetings (Pages 1 - 6)

To consider the minutes of the Place Overview Committee meetings held on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021 (Attached) and 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 (To Follow).

Contact: Sarah Townsend (Tel: 01743 257721).

## 4 Public Question Time

To receive any questions or petitions from the public of which notice has been given. The deadline for notification for this meeting is 5.00 p.m. on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

## 5 Member Question Time

To receive any questions of which Members of the Council have given notice. The deadline for notification for this meeting is 5.00 p.m. on Friday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

## 6 Update on Review of Winter Service Plan

To scrutinise performance in carrying out the 2021 / 2022 highways winter service plan and monitor implementation of recommendations arising from the 2021 Place Overview Committee review of the winter service plan. (**To Follow**).

Contact: Andy Wilde (Tel: 01743 255472)

**7 Planning Committee Structures (Pages 7 - 18)**

To scrutinise the findings of research commissioned by the committee into the perceived impact of the 2019 decision to restructure Shropshire Council's planning committees. (Attached).

Contact: Danial Webb (Tel: 01743 258509)

**8 Road Closures - Temporary Traffic Restriction Order Charges**

To examine proposals for charging for events on the highway that require a Temporary Traffic Restriction Order. (**To Follow**).

Contact: Gary Parton (Tel: 01743 258786)

**9 Place Overview Committee Work Programme (Pages 19 - 34)**

To consider the future work programme of the Committee. (Attached).

Contact: Danial Webb (Tel: 01743 258509)

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

The Committee is scheduled to next meet on Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at 2.00 p.m.



Place Overview Committee
24 March 2022
2.00 p.m.

Item
<b>3</b>
Public

## **MINUTES OF THE PLACE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2021**

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

### **Present**

Councillor Joyce Barrow (Chairman)  
Councillors Andy Boddington, Julian Dean, Geoff Elner, Paul Gill, Kate Halliday (Substitute) (substitute for Pamela Moseley), Dan Morris, Peggy Mullock (Substitute) (substitute for Steve Davenport) and Rob Wilson (Substitute) (substitute for David Vasmer)

### **13 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Steve Davenport (Substitute: Councillor Peggy Mullock), Councillor Pam Moseley (Substitute: Councillor Kate Halliday), Councillor David Vasmer (Substitute: Councillor Rob Wilson) and Councillor Paul Wynn.

Councillor Steve Charmley (Portfolio Holder – Physical Infrastructure, Highways and Built Housing) also sent his apologies.

### **14 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None were declared.

### **15 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Members noted that the minutes of the Place Overview Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2021 would be considered at the next meeting of the committee.

### **16 Public Question Time**

A question was received from Mr Graham Bould, Clerk to Sutton Parish Council, asking if farmsteads should be defined as settlements in their own right in the context of local rural housing needs. A full copy of the question and response provided is attached to the web page for the meeting and also attached to the signed minutes.

## 17 Member Question Time

Member questions were received as follows:

- **Councillor Rob Wilson** – regarding what representations have been made by Cabinet Members or Shropshire Council Officers to the Department for Transport, the Member of Parliament for Shrewsbury and Atcham or Government Ministers, in support of Shrewsbury’s bid for mini-Holland funding since the submission of the Expression of Interest on 9<sup>th</sup> August.
- **Councillor Julia Buckley** – regarding the authorities nomination for a national highways award on environmental sustainability.
- **Councillor Julia Buckley** – regarding the closure of two rural highway depots and whether by omitting this information from the Kier contract annual progress report to the Place Overview Committee in April 2021, it breached the legal terms of the Kier contract and governance process with Shropshire Council. Councillor Buckley also asked a supplementary question which further questioned why the decision had not been reported to members of the committee when the Highways Strategic Operational Board had decided in December 2020 to close two rural highway depots. The Assistant Director Economy and Place responded that she would take this back to the Assistant Director to explain in writing why this did not happen.

A full copy of the questions and responses provided is attached to the web page for the meeting and also attached to the signed minutes.

## 18 Post Covid-19 Economic Renewal

The committee received the report of the Assistant Director Economy and Place, which informed members of the work that was on-going and planned to support the Shropshire economy post covid.

It was noted that despite the covid pandemic creating many challenges for the economy in Shropshire, it had responded remarkably well with footfall levels in Shrewsbury now back to the same levels pre-covid pandemic. There had also been the emerging of many new businesses, with people moving their businesses and homes to rural locations such as Shropshire.

In terms of grant funding from the Government, over £160m had been distributed over the last eighteen months to support businesses and keep them afloat in the most difficult times. The Council had decided to hold back £2.7m for the use of developing schemes with businesses that give wider benefits, such as re-skilling and re-training people.

Responding to questions from the committee, the following was explained:

- In terms of economic regeneration in market towns, a bid for Levelling Up Funding had been submitted covering Craven Arms because it was mentioned

within the Local Plan and was an area that wanted to see and support growth. The funding bid was focussed around infrastructure improvements.

- Whilst the Place Plans had been paused due to the covid pandemic, they were now looking to be refreshed.
- Supporting young people to get jobs and to understand how they would travel to them, was currently being looked at. Work was also being undertaken with colleges to establish whether courses and training on offer were still right for now.
- Work was currently being undertaken with the University of Chester to understand how businesses are surviving as a result of Brexit.
- Comments were welcomed on the review of the economic strategy and the consultation workshops were shortly due to commence.
- A comment was made that Appendix C to the report did not contain a review of the last strategy and how effective it was. The Assistant Director Economy and Place commented that she would take this back for consideration, as whilst the economy had changed somewhat, it was still important to learn lessons about the economy over the period of the previous strategy.
- As far as social value issue was concerned, there are recognised links between employment and economic prosperity and better health outcomes for our populations.
- A comment was made that the grant funding distribution that had taken place during the pandemic had been well organised and well received by businesses. When asked about the potential for fraudulent activity, the Assistant Director Economy and Place commented that a strong verification process was in place and she would pass on the comment that had been made to the finance department.
- There was a need to have a greater understanding regarding those sectors that are thriving and those that are struggling and how the Council was supporting struggling businesses to establish what their needs were. In particular, concerns were raised regarding trained labour and the need to properly train people within the food industry to build up the food and drink economy.
- Discussions were being held regarding how the Council attracts bigger businesses into Shropshire.
- Cornovii was looking to deliver about 1000 houses over a four year period and the requirements for affordable housing levels were being delivered.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That members note and endorse the report and provide feedback as appropriate.
2. That members advise on any additional areas that may need addressing as part of the post covid economic renewal work, in particular the workshops planned for the Economic Growth Strategy refresh.
3. That an opportunity be provided for all councillors to feed into the Economic Growth Strategy.

## 19 Roadworks Diversions Working Group Terms of Reference

The committee received the report of the Scrutiny Officer regarding the proposed terms of reference for the Highways' Diversions Working Group which had come about as a result of the August 2021 Place Overview Committee meeting at which committee members considered an overview of how the council manages highways' diversions in the event of roadworks and street works.

The working group would carry out its work at a single meeting on a date to be arranged and would report back on its findings to the November 2021 Place Overview Committee meeting.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the working group consist of Councillors Joyce Barrow, Andy Boddington, Geoff Elnor and Peggy Mullock, with Councillor Joyce Barrow chairing the group.

## 20 Place Overview Committee Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Place Overview Committee's proposed work programme for the 2021-2022 municipal year and explained that following its publication, he had the following updates:

- The Highways' Diversions Working Group needed to be included within the work programme and would report back to the November 2021 Place Overview Committee meeting.
- The Assistant Director for Infrastructure had requested that the Highways Capital Programme update be deferred to the December 2021 Place Overview Committee meeting.
- As discussed earlier in the meeting, a piece of work needed to be undertaken looking in greater depth at sector support within the economic growth strategy, with a view to reporting back to the November 2021 Place Overview Committee meeting.

Members considered the work programme and requested the inclusion of the following items:

- The ongoing work looking at 20 mph speed limits outside schools.
- Biodiversity – to be considered early in 2022.

### **RESOLVED:**

That with the above mentioned amendments and additions, the Place Overview Committee's work programme for the 2021-2022 municipal year be agreed.



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

It was noted that the next meeting of the Place Overview Committee was scheduled to be held on Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021 commencing at 2.00 p.m.

Signed: ..... (Chairman)

Date:

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**Committee and Date**

**Place Overview Committee**

**Item**

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**Public**

**Review of planning committee structures – research findings**

**Responsible Officer**

Danial Webb

Overview and scrutiny officer

**1.0 Summary**

1.1 This report provides the findings of research commissioned by the Place Overview Committee to support its review of the decision by Shropshire Council in 2019 to reduce the number of its planning committees from three to two.

**2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1
- To note the report.
  - To make any recommendations to Cabinet with regards to the service.

**3.0 Opportunities and risks**

3.1 This report is for information and comment only.

**4.0 Financial assessment**

4.1 There are no financial implications from this review report. However any recommendations made by the committee would be subject to financial assessment before being presented to Cabinet or Council.

**Report**

**5.0 Background**

5.1 Until 2019, Shropshire Council carried out its member-led planning function through three area-based planning committees. Broadly speaking these three committees covered the north of the local authority area, the south, with a third 'central' committee, covering the Shrewsbury area and outlying communities. These three committees were politically balanced within their area, which meant that each committee would have a different political balance.

5.2 On 16 May 2019 Shropshire Council officers submitted a report to Council that recommended that it reduce the number of its planning committees from three to two. The membership for these two committees would be politically balanced within the entire local authority area, rather than the area the committee covered. There were several reasons for the recommendation:

- Operating several planning committees risked inconsistency in decision making between committees. The report stated that officer analysis showed differences between the committees in number of applications deferred or recommendations overturned, but did not provide any evidence in the report to support this.
- Maintaining three committees was an ineffective use of resources, and that “...the same number of applications would be considered by committee as at present. “
- A two-committee system would be cheaper, with savings on officer time, travel expenses, allowances, and technical consultee hire.
- A committee covering a larger geographic area would be more likely to ‘adopt a strategic approach to the application of policy and material planning considerations’.
- Any loss of local familiarity with an area was overstated as:
  - committee members would still be drawn from the local area;
  - local members were still consulted on applications in their division; and
  - local members were unable to vote on planning applications in their division.

5.3 Council agreed to the proposals, and to ask an overview and scrutiny committee to review the impact of the changes after their implementation. The Place Overview Committee agreed to carry out this work at its meeting in November 2021.

5.4 In preparing for its review of the decision made by Council, the Place Overview Committee requested that officers carry out two pieces of research on its behalf.

- A comparison of planning committee structures in similar local authorities, to include where possible a comparison of the number of committees, how often they met, and the number of items considered at each meeting.
- A survey of local authority elected members, as well as town and parish councils, on the perceived impact of the changes to the planning committee structure.

5.5 Section 6 of this report provides the requested comparison of planning committee structures in similar local authorities. This comparison also includes the number of committees in each relevant local authority, how they relate to each other, how often they meet and how many applications they consider at each meeting. Section 7 provides an overview and analysis of the questionnaire sent to councillors.

5.6 To bolster this research, a couple of interviews with chairs of planning on other local authorities were carried out. Commentary on these interviews is contained in section 6 of this report. From these interviews it became apparent that key to managing an effective planning service that does not overwhelm planning

committee is a clear set of criteria by which it is determined when applications are decided by committees. However due to the limits of officer time, it proved beyond the workload capacity of officers to be able to meaningfully research the extent to which different local authorities determine which planning items are delegated to officers for a decision, and which are referred to a planning committee, and how this relates to the structure of planning committees at any given local authority.

## 6.0 Comparison with other local authorities

6.1 Committee members wanted to know more about arrangements in other local authorities. To assist with this, officers carried out a desktop research exercise to look at the planning committee structure and activity in other local authorities. We looked at the number of planning committees in each local authority area, and the total number of planning committee meetings held each year by each local authority.

6.2 We restricted our research to similarly large and predominantly rural unitary local authorities such as Wiltshire and Dorset, as well as metropolitan local authorities with significant rural hinterlands such as Calderdale and Kirklees. We discounted local authority areas with a two-tier structure, such as North Yorkshire and Surrey, as in these areas planning typically operates largely at the district council level. We also discounted metropolitan authorities in urban areas, as these were more likely to cover a single coherent area, for example Exeter or Southwark.

6.3 In order to provide some additional context to the information in Table 1 below, we conducted telephone interviews with the chair of planning for Herefordshire and Calderdale councils. Both of these local authorities run a single planning committee, although Calderdale appears to refer more applications to committee than Herefordshire.

6.4 Table 1 below shows a comparison between the selected local authorities. It looks at the number of planning committees managed by each local authority, the number of committee meetings held by those committee meetings, and the number of items considered at each meeting. We looked at these local authorities for the period September 2018-September 2021. We also looked at Shropshire Council for a three-year period from January 2019 to January 2022, as well as for a two-year period until 16 January 219. We did this to see whether the reduction in planning committees from three to two had resulted in those remaining committees picking up additional work.

Local authority	Number of committees	Planning meetings per year*	Average items considered per meeting
Shropshire (17 Jan 17 – 16 Jan 19)	3	32	North: 4 South: 5 Central: 5
Shropshire	2	21	North: 4

(17 Jan 19 – 16 Jan 22)			South: 4
Dorset	3	24	3
York	2	22	3 or 4
Cornwall	4	30	4
Herefordshire	1	15	3
North Somerset	1	11	3
Northumberland	6	65	(see 6.5)
Kirklees	3	26	7
Calderdale	1	13	5
Wiltshire	5	32	3
East Riding of Yorkshire	3	45	4
County Durham	4	30	3

Table 1: Planning committee structure and meeting frequency, 1 September 2018 to 21 August 2021. Selected unitary local authorities.

\*Total is across all the local authority's planning committees.

- 6.5 There does not appear to be any consistent pattern to how other local authorities arrange their planning committees. Some local authorities manage with a single committee and refer few planning decisions to committee. For example, both Herefordshire and North Somerset councils have a single planning committee that meets a few times a year to consider a handful of applications each time.
- 6.6 Some local authorities have both strategic and locality planning committees.
- **Kirklees Council** is a metropolitan authority with two distinct urban areas and a large rural hinterland. It operates an overarching strategic planning committee alongside two locality-based committees that consider applications in the two urban areas.
  - **Northumberland Council** has a single strategic planning committee for the county. It has five local area councils that sit within the Northumberland Council area, that also determine planning decisions for Northumberland Council. These councils also carry out other work aside from planning in their meetings. The extent to which these committees consider planning decisions varies considerably between committees and committee meetings. Some committees consider relatively few applications, if any, and others will consider up to twenty applications in a single meeting.
  - **Wiltshire Council** also operates a central strategic planning committee for large scale or cross-division applications, alongside four area-based committees. Although each committee is scheduled to meet monthly, in practice a majority of meetings are cancelled.
  - **East Riding of Yorkshire Council** has a single strategic committee and two sub-committees that together cover the entire local authority area.
- 6.7 Shropshire Council currently manages two planning committees. This is neither high nor low for a local authority of this size. Unlike other local authorities discussed in paragraph 6.6 above, there is no overarching or 'strategic'

committee; the decision about which committee to refer a planning matter to is based on geography alone.

- 6.8 Perhaps unsurprisingly, councils with two or three planning committees tend to hold more committee meetings overall. However, our research pointed to a remarkable consistency in how often individual planning committees meet and the number of decisions it made. Irrespective of the structure of planning committees or meeting frequency, nearly all of the local authorities' planning committees we looked at met between 10-12 times a year and restricted their agenda to 2-5 items per meeting. A notable exception to this was Kirklees, which typically considers around seven applications per meeting. However closer inspection reveals that many decisions made by its planning committees involve delegation back to planning officers for a final decision. It has not been possible to ascertain the impact this has on the number of items the committees consider.
- 6.9 It is interesting to note that in the report to Council detailed in paragraph 5.2 above, Shropshire Council officers argued that the remaining two committees would be able to cover the work of three committees, by increasing the number of applications considered at each meeting to six or seven. In practice, since the change to two committees, the number of applications considered by the remaining two committees has not changed. Overall, Shropshire Council now refers around a third fewer applications to planning committee than it did before the change.
- 6.10 The conclusion drawn is that some local authorities simply choose to refer considerably more applications to their planning committees than others. North Somerset Council's single planning committee considered an average of just 33 applications a year in the three years to September 2021. In the same period Cornwall Council considered an average of 190 a year.
- 6.11 In carrying out this research, the chair of Herefordshire's planning committee told officers that until around ten years ago, Herefordshire Council had three area planning committees and a single central committee for particularly large or contentious applications, similar to other local authorities listed previously in paragraph 6.5 of this report. Although the decision to move to a single committee met with opposition at the time, there was no demand from elected members to revert to a multi-committee planning process. The chair explained that in order for the single committee to operate without becoming overwhelmed, there is an effective referral process that alerts elected members to applications in their local area, and a delegation process to officers that includes a significant threshold to bringing an application to the planning committee. This was echoed by the chair of Calderdale's planning committee, who told officers that in order to support a single committee at Calderdale there was a robust process in place to allow elected members to challenge applications before requesting the decision be made by committee. The chair of Calderdale felt that this process struck a fair

balance between accountability and efficiency, and that there was no feeling among elected members in Calderdale that the processes bypassed them.

## **7.0 Survey of elected members and town and parish councils**

7.1 To inform this review of the 2019 reduction in the number of planning committees, the committee asked for a wider consultation of elected members on the impact of the changes. Officers drafted and circulated a short questionnaire to the elected members of Shropshire Council and to every town and parish council in the Shropshire Council local authority area. The questionnaire was not overly prescriptive, providing questions more as a prompt to commentary. In total officers received 89 responses, approximately four times the typical response for this sort of quick consultation exercise. Of these responses, 75% came from town and parish councils, with the rest from Shropshire Council members. The questionnaire is included in this report as Appendix 1.

7.2 As the consultation did not ask for answers to specific questions, nor ask for demographic information, it has not been possible (nor was it intended) to provide any sort of statistical breakdown on the responses we received. We had two reasons for this. Any formal survey may have given the impression that there was a vote to be had on the 2019 decision. Instead, the survey wanted to focus on the impact of the change, and to look for recommendations to strengthen the function. An opinion poll would not meet the questionnaire's purpose

7.3 However, there was one stark divide in the responses that we received. Of those we received from Shropshire Council members, every identifiable member of an opposition party opposed the 2019 change and felt that it had had a negative impact on the operation of the council. In comparison, nearly every elected member of the controlling group was either neutral or positive about the change. More than one elected member replied that they felt the decision to reduce the number of planning committees had been a political decision that sought to neuter the power of opposition party councillors through the abolition of a committee that they were most likely to control.

*“the decision to reduce to two committees was more ‘political’ than practical and was little more than a way of preventing what was perceived as a political threat to the administration (I expect I may be the only one prepared to say it!)”*

The committee may wish to note that opinion on this matter, a matter that is related to political power, appears to divide sharply along political lines.

## **7.4 Loss of local connection**

Many Shropshire Council councillors, as well as town and parish councillors, responded that the abolition of the central planning committee had weakened the local connection between decision makers and their communities. This was an issue raised both by town and parish councils and by opposition parties within Shropshire Council, who are concentrated in and around the Shrewsbury area.



*“It is our belief that officers and councillors responsible for decisions affecting our Parish are less informed about how the local infrastructure and community works.”*

*“We need 3 committees so that councillors who know the areas concerned can make decisions informed by their local knowledge.”*

Almost every reply from these groups of respondents claimed a loss of local connection, stating that this would result in poorer decision making.

*“It undoubtedly saves officers time and money servicing committees but that doesn't equate to better decision making.”*

By comparison, councillors from the administration were largely, though not entirely, happy with the current system.

*“Councillors can have a say on applications because they are notified of applications in their division. Parish and Town Councils are also notified if they would like an application to be delimited [sic] by committee they can ask their Councillor to call it to committee on the grounds of material consideration.”*

This questionnaire has been able to determine a key objection to the reduction in the number of planning committees, namely that members feel that a loss of local connection results in poorer decision making. However, what this questionnaire cannot do is determine whether this is actually the case. Although it is a commonly held belief, the questionnaire provides no evidence to prove the point. In order to determine that, the committee will need to identify a metric by which it can measure the effectiveness of decision making over the course of several years, and ideally to be able to compare that with similar local authorities. Although a review of the number of planning decisions appealed successfully may give some indication of the relative soundness of decision making by both officers and committees, this would still not entirely address what is often a subjective personal opinion on decisions being made.

## 7.5 **Strategic planning**

As well as asking about the impact of the planning committee structure on local planning applications, we also asked about how Shropshire Council should manage the large or strategically important planning applications.

Again, elected members, either from town and parish councils or Shropshire Council, suggested a dedicated strategic planning committee, creating a strategic/area structure like that discussed in 6.6 of this report. As said before, the creation of an additional committee would be an additional cost to the council. For some members however, that was a reasonable price to pay:

*“An argument that the Council has used is that 2 committees reduces officer time servicing each committee, reduces training costs of members and reduces room hire costs, whilst also using the argument that reduced travel time for less site visits also reduces costs and speeds up committees. We argue that in terms of Democracy in action, this is fundamentally the wrong approach, we should be increasing Democratic oversight, not reducing it!”*

## 7.6 Information and communication

Although there was some commentary from respondents about the information available to interested parties in a planning application, very few respondents expressed any dissatisfaction.

Instead, respondents were more concerned by how it was determined whether or not a planning application would be sent to a planning committee for a decision. This process is central to the effective operation of planning committees, and any reform to the planning committee structure would be unlikely to succeed without similar reform to the referral process.

Some Shropshire Council members felt that the decision to refer an application to committee should be made by the elected member representing the area in question.

*“Local Members should then have more input into whether a planning application is referred to Committee for determination. It should be the local member’s decision as to whether an application is given a committee hearing, since they will know better than a planning officer when a matter is controversial and the residents need to feel that a decision has been made in public and not “behind closed doors” by a planning officer”*

Town and parish council respondents were more likely than their Shropshire counterparts to be frustrated by the delegation process and felt that their views were not taken into account as a result.

*“We remain concerned that Pre-meetings with the Chair and Vice Chair make decisions about planning applications being considered by committee and there is no opportunity for members/applicants to make a case.”*

Again, this was by no means a universal belief. Some members were quite happy with the process.

Some respondents suggested that some of the dissatisfaction with the process may originate from a lack of understanding of the criteria by which an application may be referred to a planning committee.

## 7.7 Training

Many respondents raised the issue of training., Some did so when discussing a failure to understand the decisions made by planning committees.

*“I have found some of the planning decisions baffling and inconsistent.”*

Other respondents talked about frustration over a failure to have comments about planning applications taken in consideration.

*“Because some comments received from residents and Town/Parish Councils do not always directly relate to material considerations”*

Some elected members wondered whether the problem arose from a lack of understanding about the grounds on which one could bring an application to a committee, and whether more training should be available, not just for Shropshire Council councillors but town and parish councillors too.

A handful of respondents from town and parish councils highlighted their central role in organising responses to planning applications. They argued that more focus on providing training to them was likely to result in more fruitful working relationships between town and parish councils and the planning function.

*“More training for Parish Councils is required, especially on valid reasons for refusal, so that they can engage more effectively with the process.”*

Overall, some 50% of all questionnaire respondents agreed that more training for all elected members could be useful. Suggested topics of training recommended by respondents included:

- The national and local policy framework
- How planning works
- How to respond to planning applications

<p><b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b></p>
<p><b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b></p> <p>Cllr Ed Potter, Deputy Leader, Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning</p>
<p><b>Local Member</b></p> <p>All</p>
<p><b>Appendices</b></p> <p>Questionnaire to elected members of Shropshire Council, and town and parish councils in the Shropshire local authority area.</p>

## **Appendix 1: Questionnaire to elected members of Shropshire Council, and town and parish councils in the Shropshire local authority area.**

What do you think has been the impact of reducing the number of committees from three to two?

- Does this result in less informed decision making?
- Does this result in less representative decision making?
- Does this result in less emotive decision making?

How should elected members determine planning applications with strategic implications across Shropshire, but significant local impact, such as the North West Relief Road? Should this be by a local committee or by a strategic committee covering the local authority area?

Do you think – or do think committee members – are more inclined to go with officer recommendations when they have less knowledge or connection to an area?

Do members feel that they are listened to by planning officers when they request applications go to committee?

What would help local members to be more involved in the decision about whether an application goes to committee?

- Would a pre-meeting with the committee chair and planning officer help?
- Would direct links to planning applications streamline the process of reviewing applications?

Parish and town councils: Do you think you are provided with sufficient planning training to put relevant planning reasons for refusal forward?

Should elected members be required to visit the site of a planning application before they make a decision about it?

Are there any other comments or observations that you'd like to make?

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<b>Place Overview Committee</b>  <b>24 March 2022</b>	<u>Item</u>  <u>Public</u>
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## Place Overview Committee Work Programme

### Responsible officer

Danial Webb, scrutiny officer  
[danial.webb@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:danial.webb@shropshire.gov.uk)  
[01743 258509](tel:01743258509)

### 1.0 Summary

1.1 This paper presents the Place Overview Committee's proposed work programme for the 2021-2022 municipal year.

### 2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Committee members to:

- agree 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 work programme provides the opportunity for the committee to plan its work for the next twelve months. In planning its work, it should aim to produce a programme that features a combination of:

- scrutiny of council priorities, through its corporate plan (The Shropshire Plan)
- forthcoming policy proposals, as listed in the Forward Plan and from discussions with officers and administration members.
- community priorities that the public bring to the attention of elected members.
- priorities for action resulting from the council's financial and capital strategies.
- the work of our partners, for example the Marches Local Enterprise partnership or
- following up on previous recommendations from the committee.

### 3.2 The Shropshire Plan

Shropshire Council's overarching corporate plan, The Shropshire Plan, is currently in draft stage and has yet to be approved by Council. The Plan, when approved, will contain:

- Corporate priorities which the Place directorate will be responsible for delivering;

- Plans and policies which together will deliver the priorities of the corporate plan; and
- A suite of performance management information that will allow elected members to scrutinise both the delivery of plans and policies, but also to determine whether those plans and policies had resulted in the expected change in performance.

3.3 The plan provides a valuable opportunity for the committee to review its work programme, to ensure that it supports the corporate and service priorities and objectives in the plan. To take advantage of this opportunity, officers plan a dedicated committee work programming session in May 2022.

### 3.4 Clean healthy rivers

On 13 January 2022 Council agreed a motion to “*Call on Place Scrutiny and Overview Committee to set up a Task and Finish Group to look into the issue and meet the Environment Agency and Severn Trent Water. Their report should seek to better understand the reporting and reasons for both sewage discharges and farm-related discharges and their impact on the bio-diversity of rivers and the health of those who swim in the river.*” The committee should therefore decide whether or not it wishes to set up this task and finish group. The committee may alternatively decide to carry out this work as part of its programme of work.

3.5 Shropshire Council’s Forward Plan of Key Decisions is attached as **appendix 2**. There will be an opportunity for further scrutiny of the Shropshire Plan when it has been approved by Council in May this year.

## 4.0 Next steps

4.1 Officers will present a refreshed work programme at each committee meeting. In addition the committee will meet informally between committee meetings to discuss which topics they wish to scrutinise at future meetings.

### 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



Place Overview Committee work programme

Forward Plan of Key Decisions – March 2022

## Appendix 1

### Overview and Scrutiny work programme for municipal year 2021-2022

#### Place Overview Committee

Topic	Objectives	Participants	Information required	Date
Roadworks diversions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scrutinise current practice for implementing diversions for roadworks.</li><li>• Make recommendations to strengthen existing arrangements.</li></ul>	Assistant Director, Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National guidance</li></ul>	4 August 2021
Post Covid-19 economic renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand Shropshire Council's strategy for economic renewal following the pandemic</li></ul>	Assistant Director Economy and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Business start-up and closure rates</li><li>• Employment and average wage rates</li><li>• Retail centre occupancy rates</li></ul>	17 Sep 2021
Roadworks Diversions working group terms of reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree terms of reference for agreed working group.</li></ul>	Overview and Scrutiny Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Draft terms of reference</li></ul>	17 Sep 2021

## Place Overview Committee

Topic	Objectives	Participants	Information required	Date
<b>BRIEFING</b> <i>Planning enforcement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of changes to the planning enforcement team.</li> </ul>	Assistant Director for Economy and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of alleged planning breaches reported to Shropshire Council.</li> <li>Time taken to investigate reported breaches.</li> <li>Percentage of reported breaches investigated by Shropshire Council.</li> </ul>	21 Oct 2021
Planning enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scrutinise impact of changes to planning enforcement team.</li> </ul>	Assistant Director for Economy and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of alleged planning breaches reported to Shropshire Council.</li> <li>Time taken to investigate reported breaches.</li> <li>Percentage of reported breaches investigated by Shropshire Council.</li> </ul>	25 Oct 2021
Winter maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand progress in reviewing the winter maintenance policy</li> <li>Ensure council responds to recommendations of task and finish group's report.</li> </ul>	Head of Highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winter service protocol</li> <li>Task and finish group report</li> <li>Service review reports</li> </ul>	11 Nov 2021

## Place Overview Committee

Topic	Objectives	Participants	Information required	Date
Footpath and cyclepath maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine current maintenance regimes for clearing and maintaining footpaths and cycle paths,</li> </ul>	Head of Highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expenditure on footpath and cycle path maintenance.</li> <li>Planned schedules of maintenance and cleansing.</li> </ul>	11 Nov 2021
LTP 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scrutinise findings of thematic consultation on emerging themes underpinning the draft local transport plan.</li> <li>Ensure the plan's priorities align with and support other council corporate priorities.</li> <li>Understand how the plan addresses competing and complementary priorities within the plan.</li> <li>Examine plan priorities and capital investment underpinning the plan.</li> </ul>	Assistant Director, Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draft local transport plan</li> <li>Findings from thematic workshops</li> <li>Regional transport strategies</li> </ul>	11 Nov 2021
<b>BRIEFING</b> Shrewsbury Big Town Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update from officers on work to develop and implement the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan</li> </ul>	Executive Director of Place		6 Dec 2021
Update on review of winter service plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scrutinise performance in carrying out the 2021/2022 highways winter service plan.</li> <li>Monitor implementation of recommendations arising from the 2021 Place Overview Committee review of the winter service plan.</li> </ul>	Head of Highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome of recommendations from the committee's 2021 report.</li> </ul>	24 March 2022

**Place Overview Committee**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Information required</b>	<b>Date</b>
Planning Committee Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scrutinise the findings of research commissioned by the committee into the perceived impact of the 2019 decision to restructure Shropshire Council's planning committees</li> </ul>	Assistant Director for Economy and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of decisions made by existing committees, compared with previous committees</li> <li>Focus groups/questionnaires with elected members, town and parish councils</li> </ul>	24 March 2022
Charges for events on the highway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine proposals for charging for events on the highway that require a Temporary Traffic Restriction Order.</li> </ul>	Network Coordination and Compliance Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule of proposed charges and exceptions</li> </ul>	24 March 2022
Planning Committee Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scrutinise evidence from the planning service</li> </ul>	Assistant Director for Economy and Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delegation processes</li> <li>Appeals made, split by delegation outcome</li> </ul>	28 April 2022
WSP contracting arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scrutinise the plan to review the expiring contractual arrangements with WSP.</li> </ul>	Executive Director of Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of contract with WSP, to include scope and planned budget for contract</li> <li>Performance monitoring of existing contract.</li> </ul>	28 April 2022

**Place Overview Committee**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Information required</b>	<b>Date</b>
Kier Performance Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrutinise the performance reporting framework that underpins the contractual arrangements with Kier</li> <li>• Identify any areas of concern with current performance.</li> <li>• Evaluate the effectiveness of the current balance of planned resurfacing and reactive repairs</li> </ul>	Executive Director of Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kier performance monitoring report.</li> <li>• Overview of current contract management framework.</li> </ul>	28 April 2022
Workshop Work programme review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of 2021-2022 work programme</li> <li>• Update on recommendations made</li> <li>• Priorities for 2022-23 work programme originating from Shropshire Plan</li> </ul>	Overview and scrutiny officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	27 May 2022
Communicating highways works and repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how the council communicates disruptions to the highway.</li> <li>• Make recommendations on future development of communications.</li> </ul>	Assistant Director, Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	June 2022
Further update on signs, banners and barriers task and finish group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive an update on implementing recommendations from the task and finish group, to cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fees for housing development signage</li> <li>○ Policies for banners, bunting and Christmas decorations.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Executive Director of Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task and finish group report</li> <li>• Verbal update from officers</li> </ul>	June 2022

**Place Overview Committee**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Information required</b>	<b>Date</b>
Local cycling and walking infrastructure plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrutinise draft active travel strategy</li> <li>• Examine capital funding underpinning strategy</li> <li>• Explore how the strategy will meet the objective of the draft local transport plan</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	Head of Environment and Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Local cycling and walking infrastructure plan</li> </ul>	June 2022
Highways capital programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the council's capital programme for highways and transport for the period 2021-2025.</li> <li>• Ensure Shropshire Council has the staffing and infrastructure in place to plan and deliver programmes of work made possible by increased capital funding.</li> <li>• Ensure adequate funding is allocated to programme investments within LTP4.</li> </ul>	Executive Director of Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial strategy 2021-2025</li> <li>• Capital investment plan</li> </ul>	June 2022
Roadworks Diversions working group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree terms of reference</li> </ul>	Overview and Scrutiny Officer		TBA
Waste and recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>			TBA

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## THE CABINET FORWARD PLAN

This Notice, known as the Cabinet Forward Plan, sets out the Decisions, including Key Decisions, which are likely to be taken during the period covered by the Plan by either Cabinet as a whole or by individual members of the Executive. The Plan is updated each month and at least 28 clear days before a key decision is to be taken and is available from Council Offices, libraries and on the Council's Internet site ([www.shropshire.gov.uk](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk)). This edition supersedes all previous editions.

### Further Information

Cabinet is comprised of the following members: Councillors L Picton (Leader); S Charmley (Deputy Leader); G Butler, D Carroll, R Gittins, K Hurst-Knight, C Motley, I Nellins and E Potter

To view more details, please click on the following link :

<http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=130>

A Key Decision is one which is likely to result in income, expenditure or savings of £500,000 or greater, or to have a significant effect, on, two or more Electoral Divisions. In two-Member divisions i.e. Oswestry and Market Drayton, these are to be treated for the purpose of a key decision as two divisions.

Members of the public are welcome to attend Cabinet meetings and ask a question in accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules. If you would like further details please email [amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk) or telephone 01743 257714

All Executive decisions (except in extreme urgency) are subject to call-in and Scrutiny.

Documents submitted for decision will be a formal report, which if public, will be available on this website at least 5 clear working days before the date the decision can be made. If you would like to request such a document, please email [amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk) or telephone 01743 257714

Documents shown are listed at Shropshire Council, The Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND.

## CABINET FORWARD PLAN FOR 1 MARCH 2022 ONWARDS

**DECISION MAKER - 9 March 2022 - Cancelled**

Date of Meeting	Purpose and Report title	Key Decision	Portfolio Holder	Report Exempt / confidential	Contact for further information re documents / report to be submitted to decision maker	Date Uploaded onto Plan
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**DECISION MAKER - 23 March 2022**

Date of Meeting	Purpose and Report title	Key Decision	Portfolio Holder	Report Exempt / confidential	Contact for further information re documents / report to be submitted to decision maker	Date Uploaded onto Plan
23 March 2022	<b>Shropshire Library Strategy</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture, Leisure & Tourism, Transport		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	22 September 2021
23 March 2022	<b>Crowmeole Lane Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) controlled Bus Gate</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Natural Assets & The Green Economy		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	17 January 2022
23 March 2022	<b>Update to Private Rented Sector Housing Enforcement Policy</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	17 January 2022
23 March 2022	<b>National Bus Strategy - Shropshire Enhanced Bus Partnership Scheme</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture, Leisure & Tourism, Transport		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	10 November 2021

**DECISION MAKER - 6 April 2022**

Date of Meeting	Purpose and Report title	Key Decision	Portfolio Holder	Report Exempt / confidential	Contact for further information re documents / report to be submitted to decision maker	Date Uploaded onto Plan
6 April 2022	<b>Gypsy &amp; Traveller Transit Site</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Physical Infrastructure		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	18 January 2022
6 April 2022	<b>Consultation on a Draft Policy for the Enforcement and Determination of Financial Penalties for Breaches of Relevant Letting Agency Requirements</b>	Yes	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	23 February 2022
6 April 2022	<b>Ofsted Inspection of Shropshire Council Children's Services</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Children and Education		Tanya Miles, Executive Director of People tanya.miles@shropshire.gov.uk	1 March 2022
6 April 2022	<b>Application by Tasley Parish Council for Tasley Parish to be considered as a Neighbourhood Area</b>	Yes	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	17 January 2022
6 April 2022	<b>Land at Shrewsbury Flaxmill (Road Frontage) Compulsory Purchase Order</b>	Yes	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	10 March 2022

6 April 2022	<b>Project Gigabit</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Digital/Technology/Data and Insight	Exempt	Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	6 September 2021
6 April 2022	<b>Chief Officers Pay Award</b>	Yes	Leader and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Strategy, Improvement and Communications	Exempt	James Walton, Executive Director Resources Tel: 01743 258915 james.walton@shropshire.gov.uk	3 March 2022

**DECISION MAKER - 27 April 2022**

Date of Meeting	Purpose and Report title	Key Decision	Portfolio Holder	Report Exempt / confidential	Contact for further information re documents / report to be submitted to decision maker	Date Uploaded onto Plan
27 April 2022	<b>Whitchurch Swimming Centre Feasibility Survey</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture, Leisure & Tourism, Transport		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	10 November 2021
27 April 2022	<b>Swimming in Shrewsbury</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture, Leisure & Tourism, Transport		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	10 November 2021
27 April 2022	<b>LTP 4 - Approval of Draft Plan and Public Engagement</b>	Yes	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	6 September 2021

27 April 2022	<b>Copthorne and Porthill 20mph Speed Limit Zone</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Natural Assets & The Green Economy		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	17 January 2022
27 April 2022	<b>Draft Housing Allocations Policy for Consultation</b>	Yes	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Public Health		Mark Barrow, Director of Place mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	1 March 2022

Date of Publication - <Date>

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