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Shropshire Council

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

Committee: Council

Date: Wednesday, 22 March 2023

Date: Thursday, 30 March 2023
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

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

Members of the Council – a briefing note will be circulated by e-mail prior to the meeting with important housekeeping details and arrangements for the meeting.

Members of the Public – If you wish to attend the meeting, please e-mail democracy@shropshire.gov.uk to check whether a seat will be available for you.

Please click here to view the livestream of the meeting on the date and time stated on the agenda

The recording of the event will also be made available shortly after the meeting on the Shropshire Council Youtube Channel Here

Tim Collard
Assistant Director - Legal and Governance

Vince Hunt (Chairman)	Rachel Connolly	Kirstie Hurst-Knight
Brian Williams (Vice Chairman)	Gerald Dakin	Mike Isherwood
Lezley Picton (Leader)	Rosemary Dartnall	Mark Jones
Ian Nellins (Deputy Leader)	Steve Davenport	Simon Jones
Roy Aldcroft	Mary Davies	Duncan Kerr
Jeff Anderson	Julian Dean	Heather Kidd
Caroline Bagnall	Geoff Elner	Christian Lea
Nicholas Bardsley	David Evans	Hilary Luff
Joyce Barrow	Julia Evans	Nigel Lumby
Bernie Bentick	Roger Evans	Elliott Lynch
Thomas Biggins	Paul Gill	Robert Macey
Ed Bird	Rob Gittins	Richard Marshall
Andy Boddington	Nat Green	David Minnery
Peter Broomhall	Kate Halliday	Dan Morris
Julia Buckley	Simon Harris	Pamela Moseley
Garry Burchett	Nigel Hartin	Alan Mosley
Gwilym Butler	Nick Hignett	Cecilia Motley
Dean Carroll	Ruth Houghton	Peggy Mullock
Steve Charmley	Richard Huffer	Kevin Pardy
Ted Clarke	Tracey Huffer	Vivienne Parry

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Tony Parsons	Robert Tindall	Claire Wild
John Price	Edward Towers	Mark Williams
Ed Potter	Kevin Turley	Rob Wilson
Chris Schofield	David Vasmer	Paul Wynn
Dan Thomas	Alex Wagner	

<u>Your Committee Officer is:</u>

Tim Ward Committee Officer
Tel: 01743 257713
Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1   Apologies for Absence

2   Disclosable Pecuniary 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 (Pages 1 - 16)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 March 2023

4   Announcements

To receive such communications as the Chairman, Leader and Head of Paid Service may desire to lay before the Council.

5   Public Questions

To receive any questions from the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. Deadline for notification is 5.00 pm on Friday 24 March 2023

6   ICT & Digital Strategy   (Pages 17 - 52)

Report of the Executive Director, Resources is attached

Contact: James Walton. Tel. 01743 258915

7   Local Government Act 1972, Section 101 Formal application to add bridleways in the parish of Claverley and parish of Bobbington in Staffordshire - Delegation to Staffordshire County Council to Investigate and Determine this Cross Border Claim (Pages 53 - 60)

Report of the Executive Director of Place is attached

Contact Mark Barrow Tel: 01743258919

8   Scrutiny Improvement Review 2022 (Pages 61 - 84)

Report of the Assistant Director – Legal and Governance and the Statutory Scrutiny Officer is attached

Contact Tim Collard Tel: 01743 252756 / Tom Dodds Tel: 01743 258518

9   Communities Overview Committee Annual Report 2021/22 (Pages 85 - 90)

Report of the Executive Director, Resources is attached

Contact: James Walton. Tel. 01743 258915

10   Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22 (Pages 91 - 96)

Report of the Executive Director, Resources is attached

Contact: James Walton. Tel. 01743 258915

11   People Overview Committee Annual Report 2021/22   (Pages 97 - 102)

Report of the Executive Director, Resources is attached

Contact: James Walton. Tel. 01743 258915

12   Place Overview Committee Annual Report 2021/22 (Pages 103 - 108)

Report of the Executive Director, Resources is attached

Contact: James Walton. Tel. 01743 258915

13   Performance Management Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22 (Pages 109 - 114)

Report of the Executive Director, Resources is attached

Contact: James Walton. Tel. 01743 258915

14   Report of Chairman of Standards Committee (Pages 115 - 118)

Report of the Assistant Director Legal and Governance is attached

Contact: Tim Collard, Tel 01743 252756

15   Changes to Committee Membership

<u>Housing Supervisory Board</u>

Councillor Robert Tindall ceases to be a member of the Housing Supervisory Board
Councillor David Minnery ceases to be a substitute member of the Housing Supervisory Board

Councillor Ruth Houghton is appointed as a member of the Housing Supervisory Board
Councillor Roger Evans is appointed as a substitute member of the Housing Supervisory Board

<u>Southern Planning Committee</u>

Councillor Roger Evans to replace Councillor Mark Williams as a substitute member of the Southern Planning Committee

16   Motions

The following motions have been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 16:

a   **Motion received from Councillor Julian Dean supported by the Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups**
Water Quality, Sewage and Planning

This Council notes:

Residents are deeply concerned about water quality and the impact of regular wastewater discharge, which includes untreated sewage, into our rivers, and the impact this has on wildlife and on human health.
Releasing sewage into rivers is no longer an emergency-only situation occurring as a result of severe storms, but a regular occurrence even in 'normal' rainfall, and that we are in a situation of cumulative overload on the sewage and wastewater system.
Whilst there are long term commitments, there are no plans in place which will address the immediate unacceptable situation either locally by Severn Trent Water or Wales Water or by national government.
Both the emerging Local Plan and national planning policy requires a robust approach to both water quality and pollution and a recent legal opinion from the Environmental Law Firm confirms the need to consider cumulative impact. To date, it has not been the practice of council planners to ask water companies to report on cumulative impact i.e., whether or not development may lead to any potential increase in 'emergency' discharge into rivers and seas. The Shropshire Water Cycle Study 2020 identified relevant issues.

This Council resolves to:

1. Recognise this Council's obligation to protect its rivers and watercourses, including from the cumulative impacts of pollution, in line with the existing and emerging Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. Recognise that deterioration of water quality occurs due to cumulative impact of multiple sewage discharge events, or "sewage overload".
3. Ensure that an evidence base is compiled that assesses the cumulative impact of sewage discharge so that this is factored into decisions made in new iterations of the local plan, including the overall level of future development.
4. Seek to better understand the cumulative impact of wastewater discharge including untreated sewage on our local rivers, wildlife and the health of our residents, with regular overview and scrutiny by Shropshire Council.
5. Continue to take a lead on addressing this issue, working constructively with other agencies. In particular, we request the relevant Overview and Scrutiny committee to review and challenge Severn Trent Water on its investment plans as laid out in their Drainage and Waste Water Management Plan.
6. Ask Severn Trent Water, from this date onwards, in its planning consultation responses for major development, to clarify which treatment works will be managing the sewage; whether it has the information available to assess the impact on the number or duration of sewage discharges into local rivers, and if it does have this information to share it (noting that this can only be requested not required), and to consider requiring as a condition for support that Grampian conditions are applied to allow time for upgrades in waste water systems to be completed where appropriate.
7. Require planning officer reports relating to major development to include specific sections on the impact on watercourses, including the potential for the

development to affect sewage outflow into watercourses (i.e. cumulative impact), or to flag if this information is not fully available so that this information (or the lack of it) is clearly and transparently set out.

8. In pursuit of existing and emerging planning policies, in particular DP19 in the draft Shropshire Local Plan, to make use of Grampian Conditions which can delay completion or occupation of new developments until specified infrastructure - in this case; appropriate upgrades to the sewage management system – are completed.

b   **Motion received from Councillor Andy Boddington and supported by the Liberal Democrat Group**

On 9 March, Transport Secretary Mark Harper announced that overall active travel funding for the current parliamentary term is being reduced from £3.8 billion to £3 billion. The active travel budget allocated in the October 2021 was £710m of which £480m is yet to be spent. The £100m budget over two years announced by Transport Secretary on 9 March represents a spending cut of £380m on the 2021 plans. This calls into question whether the government can achieve the ambitions of its Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS2), which aims at promoting cycling and walking across the country. This cut makes it unlikely the government will achieve its target of 50% of all journeys in English towns and cities being walked or cycled by 2030.
The benefits of active travel have been widely recognised:

- **Climate change**: Active travel promotes the objectives of the council and the government in meeting the net zero 2050 target.
- **Health**: Active travel is a low cost way to improve health, reducing the costs of poor health to the NHS.
- **Value for money**: Active travel schemes are more cost effective with cost benefits ratios up to six time great than road schemes
- **Personal costs**: Active travel reduces the costs of travel to work and other destinations.

The cut in national funding has implications for the council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which is currently out for consultation. Implementation for any schemes that might be agreed under LCWIP is currently unfunded.
Given these priorities, we urge the council to make clear the importance of national funding for active travel and urge it to reverse the cuts announced on 9 March. We also urge it to allocate ringfenced local funding.

This council agrees:

1. It confirms its commitment to supporting active travel and achieving a modal shift from cars to walking and cycling.
2. To request the Leader to follow the lead of the Mayor of the West Midlands and others in writing to ministers to express concerns about the cuts to active travel funding.
3. To allocate a budget within its own resources for active travel from 2024/25.

17   Questions from Members

To receive any questions from Members, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.2.

No Member questions have been received.

18   **Report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority** (Pages 119 - 122)

To receive the report of the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority arising from its meeting held on 15 February 2023

19   **Exclusion of Press and Public**

To resolve that, in accordance with the provisions of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4 [3] of the Council's Access to Information Rules, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items

20   **Exempt Minutes** (Pages 123 - 124)

To approve as a correct record the exempt minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 March 2023

21   **Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme** (Pages 125 - 146)

Exempt report of the Executive Director of Place and the Executive Director of People is attached

Contact Mark Barrow Tel: 01743258919 / Tanya Miles Tel: 01743 255811

22   **Letting of Former Morrisons Supermarket, Station Road, Oswestry** (Pages 147 - 156)

Exempt report of the Executive Director of Place is attached

Contact Mark Barrow Tel: 01743258919

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	Committee and Date
Shropshire Council	Council
	30 March 2023

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2023
In the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND
10.00 am

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward
Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk   Tel: 01743 257713

Present
Councillors Vince Hunt (Chairman), Lezley Picton (Leader), Brian Williams (Vice Chairman), Ian Nellins (Deputy Leader), Roy Aldcroft, Jeff Anderson, Caroline Bagnall, Nicholas Bardsley, Joyce Barrow, Bernie Bentick, Thomas Biggins, Ed Bird, Andy Boddington, Peter Broomhall, Julia Buckley, Garry Burchett, Gwilym Butler, Dean Carroll, Steve Charmley, Ted Clarke, Rachel Connolly, Gerald Dakin, Rosemary Dartnall, Mary Davies, Julian Dean, Geoff Elner, David Evans, Julia Evans, Roger Evans, Rob Gittins, Simon Harris, Nigel Hartin, Nick Hignett, Ruth Houghton, Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Mike Isherwood, Simon Jones, Duncan Kerr, Heather Kidd, Christian Lea, Hilary Luff, Nigel Lumby, Elliott Lynch, Robert Macey, Richard Marshall, Pamela Moseley, Alan Mosley, Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock, Kevin Pardy, Vivienne Parry, Tony Parsons, John Price, Ed Potter, Chris Schofield, Dan Thomas, Edward Towers, Kevin Turley, David Vasmer, Alex Wagner, Claire Wild, Mark Williams and Rob Wilson

85   **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Steve Davenport, Paul Gill, Kate Halliday, Tracey Huffer, Richard Huffer, Mark Jones, David Minnery, Dan Morris and Paul Wynn

86   **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Members were 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.

With regard to Motion 4 - Annual Cost of Care Fee Review – Revised Methodology Linked to Providers' Actual Increased Costs, Councillor Ruth Houghton declared that she was a trustee of an organisation that provided care and that she would leave the room and take no part in the debate and vote.

With regard to Item 9 – Local Authority Housing Fund, Councillor Julia Buckley declared that she was a Board Member of STAR Housing.

87 **Minutes**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2022, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

88 **Announcements**

Chairman's Engagements

The Chairman referred Members to the list of official engagements carried out by himself and the Vice Chair since the last meeting of the Council on 15 December 2022, which had been circulated by email.

89 **Public Questions**

The Chairman advised that public questions had been received from Mike Streetly, Hannah Peters, Emma Bullard and Chris Naylor. A copy of the questions and the responses provided are attached to the signed minutes and available from the web page for the meeting.

[Agenda for Council on Thursday, 2nd March, 2023, 10.00 am — Shropshire Council](#)

90 **Financial Strategy 2023/24 - 2027/28 and Setting the Council Tax Resolution 2023/24**

It was proposed by the Leader Councillor Lezley Picton and seconded by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources, Councillor Gwilym Butler, that the report of the Executive Director of Resources, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

By way of amendment Councillor Julia Buckley proposed that the following should be added to the resolution: -

5B - Council to offer a Council Tax rebate equivalent to the rise (effectively a Council Tax freeze) to all those residents currently in receipt of benefits and living in properties whose Council Tax is banded A or B for 2023/24

This was seconded by Councillor Caroline Bagnall

On being put to a recorded vote with 27 Members voting for, 36 against and no abstentions as follows:

FOR:

Councillors Bagnall, Bentick, Boddington, Buckley, Clarke, Connolly, Dartnall, Davies, Dean, J Evans, R Evans, Hartin, Houghton, Isherwood, Kerr, Kidd, Moseley,

Mosley, Pardy, Parry, Parsons, Towers, Turley, Vasmer, Wagner, M Williams and Wilson

AGAINST:

Councillors Aldcroft, Anderson, Bardsley, Barrow, Biggins, Bird, Broomhall, Burchett, Butler, Dakin, Elner, D Evans, Gittins, Harris, Hignett, Hunt, Hurst-Knight, S Jones, Lea, Luff, Lumby, Lynch, Macey, Marshall, Motley, Mullock, Nellins, Picton, Potter, Price, Schofield, Thomas, Wild and B Williams.

The amendment fell

On being put to a recorded vote with 38 Members voting for, 25 against and no abstentions as follows:

FOR:

Councillors Aldcroft, Anderson, Bardsley, Barrow, Biggins, Bird, Broomhall, Burchett, Butler, Dakin, Elner, D Evans, Gittins, Harris, Hignett, Hunt, Hurst-Knight, S Jones, Lea, Luff, Lumby, Lynch, Macey, Marshall, Motley, Mullock, Nellins, Picton, Potter, Price, Schofield, Thomas, Towers, Turley, Wild and B Williams.

AGAINST:

Councillors Bagnall, Bentick, Boddington, Buckley, Clarke, Connolly, Dartnall, Davies, Dean, J Evans, R Evans, Hartin, Houghton, Isherwood, Kerr, Kidd, Moseley, Mosley, Pardy, Parry, Parsons, Vasmer, Wagner, M Williams and Wilson

It was **RESOLVED**

That members:

A. Approve a 4.99% Council tax rise (a 2.99% increase to Council Tax and a 2% increase to Adult Social Care Precept) resulting in a basic amount of council tax for a Band D property of £1,639.01 in the billing authority's area, calculated in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (section 42b).

B. In accordance with the provisions of Section 40 (2) of the 1992 Act, approve the amount of Council Tax calculated for each category of dwelling in the billing authority's area to be as follows:

Property Band	2023/24 Charge £
A	1,092.68
B	1,274.78
C	1,456.90
D	1,639.01
E	2,003.24

F	2,367.46
G	2,731.69
H	3,278.02

C. Approve that a total precept of £193,577,046.

D. Approve the formal council tax resolution as set out in Appendix 4 to determine the levels of Council Tax for Shropshire Council for 2023/24.

E. Approve the 2023/24 budget of £645.741m outlined in the Budget Book at Appendix 3.

F. Note the key changes to the MTFS as outlined in Appendix 1 since the December update of the MTFS and the advice relating to those changes, in particular

- The public consultation and related findings

- The Alternative Budget process and findings

- The Financial Settlement and implications for the Council

- The Collection Fund outturn and the impact on next year

- The latest budget forecast for the current year and the resulting likely impact on reserves in this year and next (also included in the MTFS assumptions)

G. Note the revised funding gap for the years 2024/25 to 2027/28.

H. Note the Statement of the Chief Financial Officer on the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves as set out in Sections 6.1 – 6.3 of the MTFS at Appendix 1.

I. Approve the recommended level of general fund balances to support the 2023/24 revenue budget of £40.458m, noting that the projected balance is presently significantly below this for 2023/24.

J. Note the projected recommended level of general reserves for the following four years at £33.278m in 2024/25, £33.096m in 2025/26, £32.366m in 2026/27 and £32.875m in 2027/28.

K. Note the continued use of the Policy for Flexibility around the use of Capital Receipts as detailed in section 8.1 of the MTFS at Appendix 1.

L. Agree the adoption of the Capital Strategy 2022/23 – 2027/28 attached as Appendix 2.

M. Note the prioritised capital schemes identified at Appendix 2 section 8 including the need to identify and confirm funding sources for these schemes.

N. Agree the Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 2 section 6 and Annex B to the Capital Strategy.

O. Agree the Pay and Rewards Policy for all Council staff for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 5.

91 Fees and Charges 2023/24

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources, Councillor Gwilym Butler, and seconded by Councillor Chris Schofield that the report of the Executive Director of Resources, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That members:

1.   note the breakdown of the total income for 2022/23 and 2023/24 and in particular that the proposed 2023/24 charges for discretionary services represent £45.052m of the £86.918m of income derived from Fees and Charges.

2.   approve the charges for 2023/24 as detailed in Appendix 3 to be implemented from 1 April 2023.

3.   note that as previously agreed, any changes to fees and charges proposed by Shropshire Community Leisure Trust Ltd. in relation to the outsourced leisure facilities will only be referred to Cabinet and Council for approval if the proposed increases exceed Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the preceding November.

4.   Revise housing rents as follows (subject to restrictions or exemptions identified in the Welfare Reform and Work Bill):

   i.   Social Housing rents for 2023/24 are increased by 7% from 3rd April 2023.

   ii.   Affordable rents for 2023/24 are increased by 7% from 3rd April 2023

   iii.   Shared Ownership rents continue to be set at 2.75% of the outstanding capital value of the home at the time of sale and thereafter increased each April in accordance with the terms specified in the lease agreements. For 2023/24 the increase is capped at 7% in line with the cap imposed on social housing rents.

   iv.   Service charges continue to be set based on actual cost.

92 Treasury Strategy 2023/24

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources, Councillor Gwilym Butler, and seconded by Councillor Nick Bardsley that the report of the Executive Director of Resources, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Full Council

i. Approve, with any comments, the Treasury Strategy for 2023/24, set out in appendix 1 (parts 1-3).
ii. Approve, with any comments, the Investment Strategy, set out in Appendix 1 (part 4) in accordance with the DLUHC Guidance on Local Government Investments.
iii. Approve, with any comments, the Prudential Indicators, set out in Appendix 1 (part 5), in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003.
iv. Approve, with any comments, the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement, set out in Appendix 1 (part 6).
v. Authorise the Section 151 Officer to exercise the borrowing powers contained in Section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003 and to manage the Council's debt portfolio in accordance with the Treasury Strategy.
vi. Authorise the Section 151 Officer to use other Foreign Banks which meet Link's creditworthiness policy as required.
vii. Authorise the Section 151 Officer to progress and finalise the restatement and amendment of Cornovii Development Ltd loan agreements.

93   Local Authority Housing Fund

It was proposed by the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Regeneration and Housing, Councillor Dean Carroll, and seconded by Councillor Roy Aldcroft that the report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That Members

1. Agree to enter into the MoU with DLUHC, on the basis that the Council will use best endeavours to acquire the full target of dwellings to which the allocation of grant funding relates and delegates authority to the Executive Director of Resources to agree, sign and return the MoU by the deadline of 15 March 2023.

2. Approve that capital investment of up to £0.750m of Section 106 commuted sums and prudential borrowing of up to £3.2m in the HRA is used to match fund the DLUHC grant funding of £3.2m to acquire up to 30 dwellings into the HRA.

3. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Resources, the Assistant Director of Homes and Communities, and Head of Property and Development to approve

a final business case and financial appraisals setting out the financial arrangements to support the acquisitions of dwellings into the HRA.

4. Delegate to the Head of Property and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Growth, Regeneration and Housing, the authority to agree and complete appropriate freehold acquisitions.

94 Appointment of Independent Co-Opted Member of the Audit Committee

The Chairman Councillor Vince Hunt advised the meeting that in accordance with the decision of Council at its meeting held on 15 December 2022, applications were invited for an Independent co-opted member of the Audit Committee. Following the selection process, Council was recommended to approve the co-option of Jim Arnold to the Council's Audit Committee.

It was proposed by the Chair of the Audit Committee, Councillor Brian Williams and seconded by Councillor Simon Harris and duly **RESOLVED**:

That Jim Arnold be appointed as an Independent co-opted member of the Audit Committee

95 Changes to Committee Membership

It was proposed by the Chairman Councillor Vince Hunt, and seconded by the Vice Chairman Councillor Brian Williams that the following amendments to committee membership be agreed

Performance Management Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Steve Charmley ceases to be a member of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee

People Overview Committee

Councillor Roy Aldcroft to replace Councillor Steve Davenport as a substitute member of the People Overview Committee

Place Overview Committee

Councillor Dan Morris ceases to be a member of the Place Overview Committee

Communities Overview Committee

Councillor Elliott Lynch ceases to be a member of the Communities Overview Committee

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Chris Schofield ceases to be a member of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Andy Boddington to replace Councillor Roger Evans as a member of the Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Richard Huffer to replace Councillor Nigel Hartin as a member of the Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Nigel Hartin to replace Councillor Vivienne Parry as a substitute member of the Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Rachel Connolly to replace Councillor Kevin Pardy as a substitute member of the Southern Planning Committee

RESOLVED:

That

Performance Management Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Steve Charmley ceases to be a member of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee

People Overview Committee

Councillor Roy Aldcroft to replace Councillor Steve Davenport as a substitute member of the People Overview Committee

Place Overview Committee

Councillor Dan Morris ceases to be a member of the Place Overview Committee

Communities Overview Committee

Councillor Elliott Lynch ceases to be a member of the Communities Overview Committee

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Chris Schofield ceases to be a member of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Andy Boddington to replace Councillor Roger Evans as a member of the Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Richard Huffer to replace Councillor Nigel Hartin as a member of the Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Nigel Hartin to replace Councillor Vivienne Parry as a substitute member of the Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Rachel Connolly to replace Councillor Kevin Pardy as a substitute member of the Southern Planning Committee

96 Motions

The following motion was received from Councillor Julian Dean and supported by the Green Group

Council notes and supports:

The following statements from the Department for Transport's "Decarbonising Transport – A Better, Greener Britain" report:
"Buses are the easiest, quickest, and cheapest way to improve public transport."
"As well as decarbonising private and commercial road vehicles, therefore, we must increase the share of trips taken by public transport, cycling and walking."
The temporary £2 national bus fare limit.
The expectation that government will require a 'vision led approach' to for the new Local Transport Plan to specifically target carbon emissions through modal change and "that LTAs will need to define Quantified Carbon Reductions (QCRs) for any proposed interventions included within the LTP" (taken from UPDATE ON LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN FOR SHROPSHIRE report to Place Overview Committee February 2023).

We further note recent expressions of support for better public transport by the local Federation of Small Businesses and the Shropshire Business Chamber, pointing to recruitment challenges due to young people who either choose not to drive, or can't afford to, not being able to access work opportunities.

Council expresses its disappointment at the rejection of the Levelling Up Fund bid to support public transport but remains committed to an improved bus service as a key element in providing improved connectivity without further damage to environment. We welcome, as an example, the aspiration of the MP for North Shropshire and the Portfolio holder for Climate Change, The Environment and Transport for express bus services connecting Market Drayton to Shrewsbury.

Council believes:

Preferential access to the town centre for bus services is key to attracting people out of cars into the most space efficient mode of transport, the urban bus.
A well designed and conveniently located transport hub is a pre-requisite for an effective bus network, serving the needs of both passengers and drivers.
The current bus station site, which is in the public realm and has easy access to the train station and the Darwin Shopping Centre remains the ideal location. Alternatives discussed so far, such as suggestions for a range of bus stops around the railway station instead of a bus station would be a poor substitute for a modern bus

interchange station and would fail to signal our commitment to excellent public transport for the future.

The redevelopment of the riverside area provides an opportunity to install a new and attractive bus interchange and transport hub on this location, integrated with other developments. We note that other towns of similar size to Shrewsbury have installed new bus station interchanges in recent years.

Therefore council resolves:

To commit to ensuring that the county town of Shrewsbury retains a proper Bus Station by requiring that the masterplan brief for the Riverside redevelopment includes the requirement for an attractive bus station with excellent links to rail and town centre, making best use of the current location.

Councillor Julia Evans seconded the motion

By way of amendment Councillor Rosemary Dartnall proposed that

Council believes:
Preferential access to the town centre for bus services is key to attracting people out of cars into the most space efficient mode of transport, the urban bus.

A well designed and conveniently located transport hub is a pre-requisite for an effective bus network, serving the needs of both passengers and drivers.

The redevelopment of the riverside area provides an opportunity to install a new and attractive bus interchange and transport hub on this, or an alternative town centre location, integrated with other developments. We note that other towns of similar size to Shrewsbury have installed new bus station interchanges in recent years.

Council resolves to:

Confirm that the existing bus station location remains an option for an improved bus station with facilities for passengers and drivers, of a standard likely to increase public transport use across Shropshire, in accordance with our shared ambition for transport modal shift.

Make explicit to the those developing the delayed BTP Movement Strategy that the revised Smithfield Riverside Strategic Development Framework requirement for the movement strategy to "Consider the reconfiguration or relocation of the existing bus station" still stands.

Clarify that the brief for the Smithfield Riverside masterplan tender should follow the BTP Movement Strategy, as was envisaged by the original timeline which would have seen the Movement Strategy already published and, which could include an improved bus station at the existing location.

Ensure that throughout all stages of the Smithfield Riverside development, provision of a Shrewsbury central bus interchange must be provided, as the minimum requirement, for bus passengers and drivers.

Councillor Vasmer indicated that he would accept the amendment.

By way of amendment Councillor Dean Carroll proposed

This Council resolves:

To reaffirm its commitment to including a bus interchange within the Riverside/Smithfield Road redevelopment site in replacement of the existing bus station to ensure retention of excellent links between bus and rail and transport and Shrewsbury Town Centre.

This was seconded by Councillor Lezley Picton

On taking a vote the amendment was supported and it was **RESOLVED:**

This Council resolves:

To reaffirm its commitment to including a bus interchange within the Riverside/Smithfield Road redevelopment site in replacement of the existing bus station to ensure retention of excellent links between bus and rail and transport and Shrewsbury Town Centre

The following motion was received from Councillor David Vasmer and supported by the Liberal Democrat Group

This Council:

- Notes that new Voter ID requirements, introduced by the Elections Act 2022, involve voters having to show photo ID before being issued with a ballot paper at all elections from May 2023 onwards.
- Notes with concern that this new requirement creates a new barrier to residents exercising their democratic right to vote and may lead to some Shropshire residents being disenfranchised.
- Notes that a list of 'accepted' forms of photo ID has been published and that this includes fewer forms of ID held by younger and marginalised people.
- Notes that voters can obtain a 'Voter Authority Certificate' from the Council if they do not have an 'accepted' form of photo ID.
- Notes with concern the additional costs and administrative burden this will place on Electoral Services, and the risk of abuse towards poll workers from anyone denied a vote due to lack of ID.
- Believes that this legislation is unnecessary, undemocratic and an example of attempted voter suppression

Council therefore:

- Calls on Cabinet to review current electoral registration letters and public information campaigns to ensure that every effort is made to communicate these new requirements, to avoid any resident being disenfranchised.
- Calls on Cabinet to include reference to the need to show voter ID and how to claim a Voter Authority Certificate on all forms of written communications including emails, letters and social media posts.
- Calls on the government to urgently expand the list of 'accepted' forms of photo ID and to fully fund the costs to Councils of implementing this policy.
- Requests that the Leader communicate Council's views to Government and to our local MPs

Councillor Andy Boddington seconded the motion

Following advice from the Monitoring Officer Councillor Vasmer altered the motion to the following: -

Council therefore:

- Calls on the Electoral Registration/Returning Officer to arrange a presentation to Members to explain his intentions regarding a communications strategy to ensure that every effort is made to communicate these new requirements, to avoid any resident being disenfranchised. Such a presentation should include reference to electoral registration letters and how the need to show voter ID and to apply for a Voter Identity Certificate will be highlighted on relevant written communications including emails, letters and social media posts
- Calls on the government to urgently expand the list of 'accepted' forms of photo ID and to fully fund the costs to Councils of implementing this policy.
- Requests that the Leader communicate Council's views to Government and to our local MPs

On taking a vote the motion was not supported

The following motion was received from Councillor David Vasmer and supported by Councillors Julia Buckley, Roger Evans, Mike Isherwood, David Minnery, Tony Parsons, Edward Towers, Alex Wagner and Mark Williams

More Member Involvement in Planning Decisions

This Council Notes

1) The concern of many members of all Groups about the decisions of the Agenda Setting meetings that take place before meetings of both the Northern and Southern Planning Committees
2) That Members are not informed about the decisions of the Agenda Setting meetings and often only find out after a decision notice has been issued.
3) That a record of decisions taken by Agenda Setting meetings is made but not circulated to councillors nor is it published on the Council's website.

4) That Members cannot attend Agenda Setting Meetings
5) That there is no provision for Members challenge planning enforcement decisions as exist in other planning authorities.

This Council Agrees

1) That there is a need to review Shropshire's scheme of delegation for planning decisions in the light of controversial decisions taken by both the Northern and Southern Planning Committees when Members do not believe that their views were properly considered before decisions were taken.

This Council Resolves

1) That the Place Overview Committee conduct a review of Shropshire's Scheme of Delegation for planning decisions taking into account:

   a. Schemes operated by other planning authorities
   b. The views of Members
   c. The views of Parish and Town Councils

2) That such a review and recommendations for change be considered in time for implementation at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2023

Councillor Tony Parsons seconded the motion

On taking a vote the motion was not supported.

The following motion received from Councillor Julia Buckley and supported by Councillors Caroline Bagnall, Ted Clarke, Rachel Connolly, Rosemary Dartnall, Kate Halliday, Pam Moseley, Alan Mosley, and Tony Parsons

Annual Cost of Care Fee Review – Revised Methodology Linked to Providers' Actual Increased Costs

This Council Notes:

1. That the Annual Care Fee Review process seeks to allocate a fair uplift to cover increased costs for social care providers on a 12-monthly basis, to reflect accurate cost changes within multi-annual delivery contracts
2. The concern of many members and residents regarding the ongoing viability of non-profit organisations to deliver key adult social care provision in Shropshire, given current financial pressures
3. The appreciation and gratitude towards social care staff who work in incredibly demanding and important roles across our county, often without the full financial recompense and recognition they deserve
4. That the increase in the National Minimum Wage goes some way to redress that balance, but does also add an additional 6.6% of cost pressure to care provider organisations

5. That the current inflationary pressures also add 10.1% additional costs for heating, utilities and transport fuel

6. This would create an average cost increase for care providers in 2023-24 of 8.35%

This Council Agrees:

1. That there is a need to ensure we support and retain our non-profit providers within the sector to help deliver our services

2. That whilst there is a wide variance in types of provision with different cost models, increases could still be captured accurately

3. If we fail to set accurate cost increases we could lose several providers of vital care; so it is crucial to examine this issue

4. That a review of the mechanism for cost review uplifts is needed

This Council Resolves:

1. To review the calculation formula used to arrive at Care Fee agreements with providers.

2. A fairer mechanism could be to seek evidence from providers that accurately captures price increases and use the % increase as a base for settlement increases

3. To work with all providers, including non-profit organisations, to retain and nurture provision for our most vulnerable residents.

Councillor Rachel Connolly seconded the motion.

By way of amendment Councillor Cecilia Motley proposed that

This Council Notes:

1. That the Annual Care Fee Review process seeks to allocate a fair uplift to cover increased costs for social care providers on a 12 monthly basis to reflect accurate cost changes within multi-annual delivery contracts.

2. The appreciation and gratitude towards social care staff who work in incredibly demanding and important roles across our county often without the financial recompense and recognition they deserve

This Council Agrees:

1. That there is a need to ensure we support and retain our valued providers within the sector to help deliver our services. To that end we will support a market where demands are more aligned to strategies such as the Shropshire Plan and supporting people as appropriate to remain at home.

2. That the work put into the Fair Cost of Care exercise has provided the Council with a valuable template for determining future regular funding rounds, whilst

recognising that the Cost of Care policy places further pressure on the Council's resources.

This Council Resolves:

1. To work with all providers, including non-profit organisations, to retain and nurture appropriate provision for our most vulnerable residents

2. Further, to work with providers to redesign the domiciliary care market to ensure growth, flexibility and coverage; and consideration of a 'rural rate'.

3. To recognise the complication of the time lag using the previous year's costings, and impact of inflation, and how this has added additional pressure where the discrepancy is unusually high such as in the 2023/24 negotiations. This should be given due consideration, and where possible, costs calculated as an average of the 2 years, and to also take account of inflation projections into the future.

Councillor Buckley indicated that she would accept the amendment and on taking a vote it was **RESOLVED:**

This this Council Resolves:

1. To work with all providers, including non-profit organisations, to retain and nurture appropriate provision for our most vulnerable residents

2. Further, to work with providers to redesign the domiciliary care market to ensure growth, flexibility and coverage; and consideration of a 'rural rate'.

3. To recognise the complication of the time lag using the previous year's costings, and impact of inflation, and how this has added additional pressure where the discrepancy is unusually high such as in the 2023/24 negotiations. This should be given due consideration, and where possible, costs calculated as an average of the 2 years, and to also take account of inflation projections into the future.

97 **Questions from Members**

The Speaker advised that the following questions had been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 15. A copy of the report containing the detailed questions and their formal response is attached to the signed minutes.

Received from Councillor Roy Aldcroft and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Regulatory Services in relation to mitigations to address the impact of HS2 works on the parish of Woore, By way of supplementary question Councillor Aldcroft asked for an update on any recent meetings the Council had had with HS2. The Portfolio Holder for Highways and Regulatory Services that the Council had and would continue to work closely with Woore Parish Council. He stated that Shropshire Council was only a consultative authority as the primary authority was Staffordshire but that during the process to date the Council had negotiated 32 mitigations worth in the region £114,000.00 worth of works to be put in place.

Received from Councillor Ruth Houghton and answered by the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital in relation to help for leisure centres with sustainability plans. By way of supplementary question Councillor Houghton asked for information around the timescales for the feasibility plan and the carbon reduction plans. The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital advised her that the plans would take some time to formulate and that the Council was looking at different management options for leisure centres. He added that currently it was not known what government grants and subsidies would be available.

Councillor Roger Evans stated that he had submitted an urgent question. The Chairman advised the meeting that the Chief Executive had concluded that the question was not urgent, that he agreed with that assessment and that he would not therefore be taking it. He further advised that a response to the question would be given at the forthcoming meeting of Cabinet.

98   Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with the provisions of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4 [3] of the Council's Access to Information Rules, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item

99   Exempt Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2022, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved, and signed as a correct record

100   Chief Officer Pay Award 2022

It was proposed by the Leader Councillor Lezley Picton and seconded by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources, Councillor Gwilym Butler, that the exempt report of the Executive Director of Resources, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations contained in the report be approved

Signed .... (Chairman)

Date: ....

Committee and Date	Item
Cabinet 15th February 2023	
Council 30th March 2023	Public

ICT & Digital Strategy

Responsible Officer:	James Walton	
email: james.walton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258915
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Rob Gittins, Culture & Digital	

1.   Synopsis

Part of The Shropshire Plan, the Council has described a 'digital county'. This includes maximising digital and automated processes; supporting all residents and staff to benefit from this; and safeguarding and protecting the data and equipment needed to do this.

2.   Executive Summary

2.1.   The ICT and Digital Strategy (Appendix A) brings the previous strategy up to date and aligns with the objectives of The Shropshire Plan (agreed by Council in May 2022). It also takes the lessons we learnt from the pandemic about how the council can harness digital technology to enable quicker, safer, and more transparent communication with residents and local businesses.

2.2.   Digital improvements and innovations are also a crucial element of the MTFS (elsewhere on this agenda), further enabling the delivery of the Shropshire Plan.

2.3.   An infographic has been included (Appendix B). This infographic overlays the key strategic aims of the ICT and Digital Strategy over The Shropshire Plan and establishes clear links with the 4 healthy priorities.

2.4.   The key elements of the ICT and Digital strategy are:

A.   **Safeguard and Protect** - Ensure that the data the organisation holds, the software it operates, and the transactions it enters into are protected as effectively as possible against continually escalating cyber threats.

B.   **Digitise and Automate** – Pursue and promote a 'digital county' in which as many transactions as possible are done through digitally enabled routes, while also accepting that some transactions and individuals will be better served in the traditional manner.

C.   **Enable and Develop** – Encourage and support residents and council staff to develop their ability to use technology and to be comfortable doing so.

D.   **Healthy People** – Working with the NHS and partners, digital technology will assist people throughout their lives, remotely monitoring their health, allowing participation in online consultations, enhancing data sharing and ultimately creating more personalised medical care. Having a better-connected county and a population that understands and is enabled to use digital technology will help people to remain healthy for longer, while remaining in their own homes.

E.   **Healthy Environment** – Shropshire's natural beauty and strong green credentials give it a head start in this area, but the technology-enabled move to remote working has been a bonus in reducing road use and hence pollution. The continued move to cloud technologies will reduce energy use by the council and creating paperless transactions will reduce the impact on the environment.

F.   **Healthy Organisation** – ICT and Digital technology is essential to any efficient organisation, and the improvements planned in this strategy will take council efficiency and the quality of the services it delivers to a new level. Digitising end-to-end services, ensuring the appropriate structure and skills to deliver quality and innovation, having a more digitally skilled workforce, making better use of data, and further adopting standards of good IT service delivery via the ITIL framework.

G.   **Healthy Economy** – A strong local economy will depend on Shropshire being a well-connected county with digitally skilled workers. The council's work in improving connectivity, improving digital skills in the population, providing support to digital start-ups, and working to make the county an attractive place for high-tech businesses will play strongly into this agenda.

3.   Recommendations

3.1.   Cabinet and Council are recommended to adopt the ICT and Digital strategy (Appendix 1) and to endorse the core objectives of the digital county.

4.   Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. The digital strategy manages the risk that ICT investment and development is not aligned to the overall Council objectives set out in the Shropshire Plan.

4.2. The digital strategy also supports the delivery of those objectives within the constraints set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), promoting process efficiency and economy, and enabling the council to do more with less.

4.3. The digital strategy sets out key elements of the vision for use of ICT in the council and in the county in the coming years, harnessing the opportunities that this technology offers.

4.4. A critical consideration is that due regard is paid to the escalating threat of cyber-attack, and that all systems are effectively protected from this; also, that all system data is managed and safeguarded in line with best practice. The strategy helps set out how this will be achieved.

5.   Financial Implications

5.1. Digital technology can save money, the Government Digital Service (GDS) reported saving central government £1.7Bn per year in 2015. It is important that we differentiate any savings between hours freed up to do other work, cost avoidance, efficiencies, and cashable savings.

5.2. No direct financial implications arise from this strategy. As actions and plans are implemented in line with the strategy these will be subject to separate decisions as necessary.

6.   Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. Adopting a strategy to enable digital interactions as being the preferred (but not only) way for the council to do business will reduce the Council's carbon footprint and have several environmental benefits including but not limited to:

- Reducing paper usage through digital end-to-end services.
- Reducing travel and pollution by taking part in virtual meetings, accessing services and data remotely.
- Saving energy by utilising cloud services or using the Internet of Things (IoT) to monitor building usage, intelligently controlling the lights and heating.

The Strategy is not expected to have any direct implications for:
- Renewable energy generation
- Climate change adaptation

7.   Background

7.1. Advances in technology over recent years have transformed how organisations in both the private and public sector deliver better services while also reducing their costs.

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7.2. Technology is continually changing the way people go about their daily lives, how they interact, learn, play, and work, offering new and exciting opportunities for the way Shropshire Council connects and interacts with citizens and staff.

7.3. Technical progress is predicted to continue for years to come, and it allows Shropshire Council to help ensure that both citizens and visitors to the county enjoy the benefits of the digital age, while working to ensure that those in 'digitally poverty' are not left behind.

7.4. The ICT and Digital Strategy explores these technological advances, trends and opportunities while seeking to support the Council's strategic objectives by establishing clear links to the healthy priorities expressed in The Shropshire Plan.

7.5. It looks to pursuing and promoting a 'digital county' in which as many transactions as possible are done through digitally enabled routes, while also accepting that some transactions and individuals will be better served in the traditional manner.

7.6. Encouraging and supporting both residents and Council staff to develop their ability to use technology and to be comfortable doing so.

7.7. A challenge with implementing any type of digital service is digital inclusion, ensuring that citizens are not excluded or left behind. Our approach is to create compelling digital services, pursuing as many transactions as possible through digital routes. An important part of our approach is that traditional methods are not precluded as a potential delivery channel, ensuring that there are always non-digital means for citizens to interact with the council. We will promote and support existing council initiatives addressing digital exclusion including the bid to expand the digital skills programme and Shropshire Local. Our Shropshire Local customer service points offer a place for our citizens to talk to friendly council staff face to face and get support with a range of services, if citizens don't have a computer at home, they can use our public access computers.

7.8. Understanding that while technology can transform the way we live and work for the better, it's not without its risks. Cyber threats are very real and the damage they can cause can be devastating. It is vitally important that we ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of systems and data from both internal and external threats.

8. Additional Information

8.1. There are three core elements in establishing organisational efficiency, people, process, and technology. People do the work; processes make this work more efficient, and technology helps people do their tasks and automate the processes. It is important to have a balanced relationship between the three elements for any efficiencies to be realised. We will be using the Getting Leadership Right program to help ensure the right leadership approach with our people and ensuring buy in across the organisation when introducing new technologies and processes as part of the strategy.

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

Local Member: All

Appendices

Appendix A ICT & Digital Strategy 2022-2025

Appendix B ICT & Digital Strategy Infographic

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Appendix 1 - ICT & Digital Strategy 2022-2025

January 2023

Foreword

Following engagement with the public, our partners, and local businesses, Shropshire Council agreed 'The Shropshire Plan' at its meeting in May 2022. This plan sets out the Council's vision, purpose and priorities, grouped into 4 themes:

- healthy people,
- healthy economy,
- healthy environment, all via
- a healthy organisation.

This update to the Council's ICT & Digital Strategy describes how Shropshire Council is continuing to develop its use of technology, and outlines the changes planned to ensure that Shropshire maximises its use of the benefits of the digitisation in delivering the Shropshire Plan.

A clear strategy helps us all to stay ahead of emerging issues and to be agile in our response to new challenges, as we have during the pandemic. It helps us to plan ahead, by connecting our overall objectives as set out in the Shropshire plan with how we will ensure that technology not only enhances the efficiency of council operations, but also aligns to our vision – which is that residents and visitors alike are "Living the Best Life".

As the introduction to the Shropshire plan concludes: *"The challenges and experiences we have shared over recent years put us in a strong position to step up and move forwards together and adapt our plans to meet the changing situations we face."*

This ICT & Digital strategy is part of that 'stepping up' to meet those challenges.

Lezley Picton
Leader of the Council

Andy Begley
Chief Executive

Introduction

This ICT & Digital Strategy takes note of the advances in technology in recent years that have transformed the way that society operates and have allowed many organisations in both the private and public sectors to deliver better service whilst also reducing their costs. This technical progress is predicted to continue for years to come, and it allows Shropshire Council to help ensure that both local residents and visitors to the county enjoy the benefits of the digital world. Many already do so, and we will support that majority to continue to interact with us and our partners digitally, while we ensure others are not left behind – so while keeping up with those most at home with technology, we will also commit to 'digital inclusivity' to ensure that all communities are supported to use simple and effective digital options when they choose to.

Our headline priorities support a vision of an inclusive 'digital county', where we -

- **DIGITISE AND AUTOMATE -** To pursue and promote a 'digital county' in which as many transactions as possible are done through IT and digitally-enabled routes, rather than being on paper or face to face, while also accepting that some interactions, and some individuals, will be better served in the traditional manner.
- **ENABLE AND DEVELOP -** To encourage and support residents and Council staff to develop their ability to use technology and to be comfortable doing so.
- **SAFEGUARD AND PROTECT -** To ensure that the data the organisation holds, the software it operates, and the transactions it enters into are protected as effectively as possible against continually escalating and evolving cyber-threats.

We look forward to working with staff, residents and partner agencies in the coming years to realise the benefits of digital technology while also protecting the technology that enables that and the data it retains.

Rob Gittins
Cabinet Member for Digital, Data, Insight & Built Housing

James Walton
Executive Director of Resources

Supporting the Council's Strategic Objectives

The council's four top level aims, expressed in the Shropshire Plan, are:
- Healthy people
- A healthy economy
- A healthy environment
- A healthy organisation

How does this ICT and Digital Strategy support these aims? Irrespective of the fact that ICT supports the council in virtually everything it does, it is possible to be more specific in demonstrating links to these core aims:

Healthy People: Working with the NHS through the ICS, the digital technology outlined here will assist people throughout their lives, through remote monitoring of their health, online consultations with medical practitioners, enhanced data sharing, and ultimately more personalised medical care. This in turn will be enabled through having a better-connected county, and a population that understands and is enabled to use digital technology.   Older people in particular will benefit in the coming years, as digital technology helps them to remain healthy for longer, while remaining in their own homes.

A Healthy Economy: It is clear that the UK and the wider world's economy is becoming increasingly dependent on digital technology, and that future prosperity and a strong local economy will depend on Shropshire being a well-connected county with digitally-skilled workers. The council's work in improving connectivity, improving digital skills in the population, providing support to digital start-ups, and working to make the county an attractive place for high-tech businesses will play strongly into this agenda.

A Healthy Environment: Shropshire's natural beauty and strong 'green' credentials give it a head start in this area, but the technology-enabled move to remote working has been a bonus in reducing road use and hence pollution, while the continued move to the cloud will reduce energy use by the council. Indeed, major cloud providers compete in terms of their green credentials, with one of the council's leading providers promising to be not merely carbon-neutral but carbon-negative by 2030[1].

A Healthy Organisation: ICT and Digital Technology is the life-blood of any efficient organisation, and the improvements planned in this strategy will take council efficiency (and the quality of the services it delivers) to a new level, with digital end-to-end services, a more digitally-skilled workforce, and significantly better use of data.

Target Operating Model: The council continues to develop a new Target Operating Model, which focuses on improving our overall operational efficiency and effectiveness, in support of the four key aims of the Shropshire Plan. This is documented elsewhere, but a key part of it is the vision of a 'Digital County', and encompasses a range of

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[1] https://blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2020/01/16/microsoft-will-be-carbon-negative-by-2030/

projects that will ensure that both the council and the wider community are able to make the best use of digital technology. Projects (currently being finalised) will include:

- Enhancing connectivity, including broadband, 5G, gigabit, and low-bandwidth IoT;
- Ensuring 'digital inclusivity' throughout the community by understanding the needs of different communities, aligning our offer around those needs, and supporting them to make use of those options in ways which make sense to them;
- Improving internal and external council services so that they are easier to access on-line, and operate digitally and with maximum automation, end-to-end;
- Ensuring that council information technology is secure, available, and that the organisation is resilient in the face of ever-growing cyber threats;
- Ensuring that the council's workforce is well-educated in digital technology, and embraces its use throughout the organisation and is able to promote it within the community.
- Ensuring that the council makes the best possible use of its data, unlocking its power to make better informed decisions.
- Extending the use of technology in social care, and in particular in supporting older people to stay in their homes as long as is possible.
- Supporting digital start-ups with accommodation, connectivity and business advice.
- Ensuring that digital options are available to support moves towards more digital (non-cash) transactions, and that we reduce enhance our capacity to manage the business of the council with little (or no) reliance on paper documents.;
- Ensuring that digital technology enriches and inspires the cultural life of the county.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport predicts a "golden age for technology" in the UK[2]. Shropshire is well-placed to enjoy its place in the sun, provided the council plans its technology investments carefully, drives project delivery through to benefits, and ensures the population are encouraged, equipped, skilled and connected, so that they can enjoy the bounties of the digital age.

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[2] https://dcms.shorthandstories.com/Our-Ten-Tech-Priorities/index.html
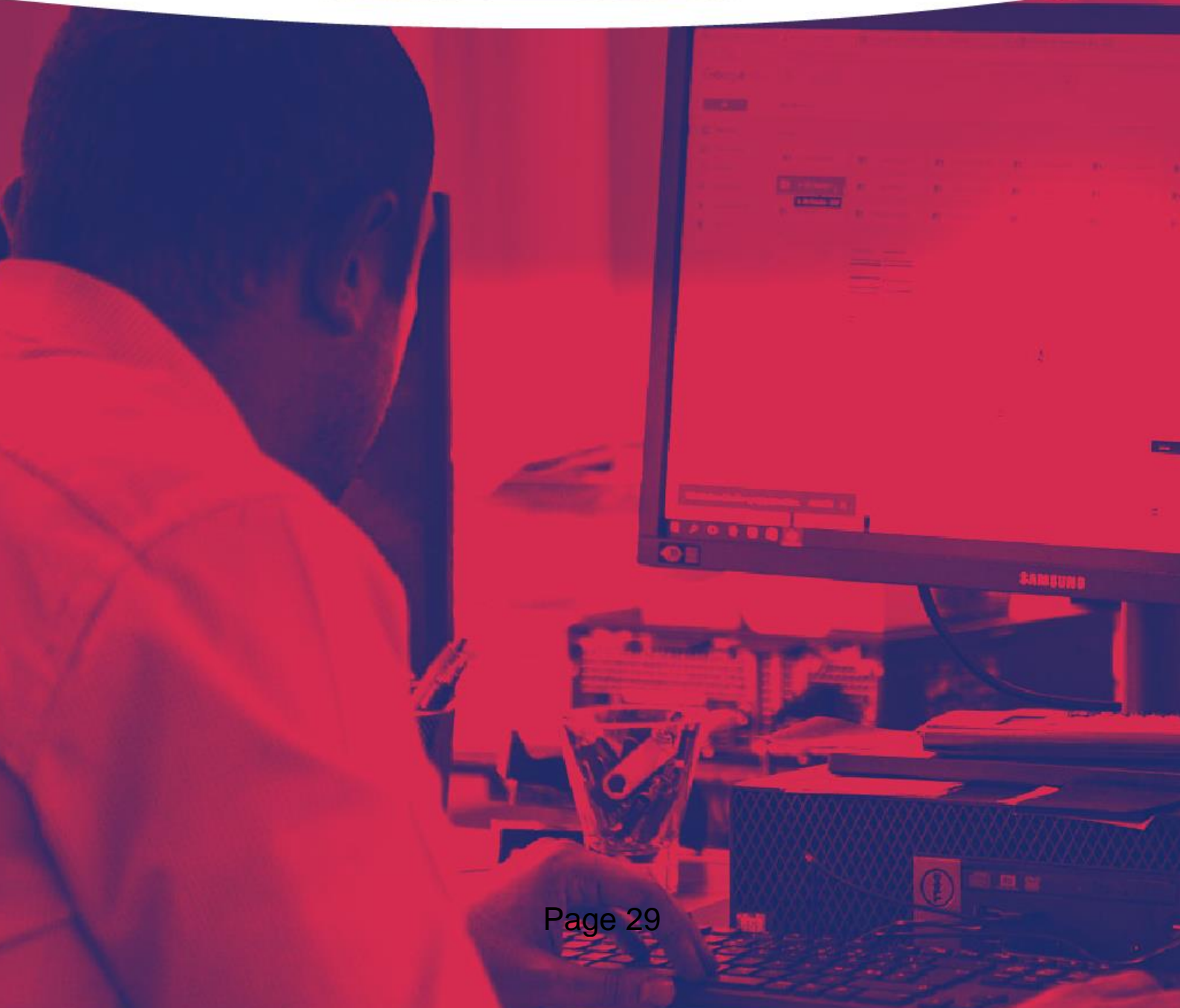
Our Digital County

The Council has developed a number of key proposals it intends to realise over the coming years, which are part of this strategy. Together, these initiatives set out a vision for a 'digital county', where services are automated and on-line as much as possible and where it makes sense to do so.

This digital strategy sets out the overall rationale and vision for delivery of these digital county proposals (separate decisions will be required by Councillors as they are developed and before full implementation).

These county-wide initiatives include a range of proposals. Some are specific items to be delivered, others relate to ongoing pieces of work that will continue to evolve over time. The broad headings and subjects of these are set out below.

	Immediate development and delivery	Later development, once 'enabling' actions are completed
	DIGITAL ACCESS - Promotion of digital advice, support, and information provision (and enable reduction of paper-based and face-to-face or telephone transactions).	Develop **further digital tools** and resources to be made available and reduce the need for human intervention in routine processes as much as possible. Embed and support their use.
	ON-LINE FINANCE - Promotion of on-line payments (and enable reduction of cash transactions).	
	AUTOMATED PROCESSES - Increased extent of automated processes to increase staff efficiency; change, reduce or remove inefficient activity.	
Ongoing activities	**INFRASTRUCTURE -** Work with broadband engineers and others to maximise overall coverage within the county; update our website to ensure it will accommodate more on-line activity and is suitable for a range of users and technologies (e.g. low bandwidth, smartphones, and broadband connections).	
	DIGITAL CONFIDENCE - Working with residents and businesses and others to maximise their use of digital and on-line resources and to grow their confidence in doing so.	
	RESILIENT – Ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of systems and data from both external and internal threats	

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Applying Digital Technology within the Council
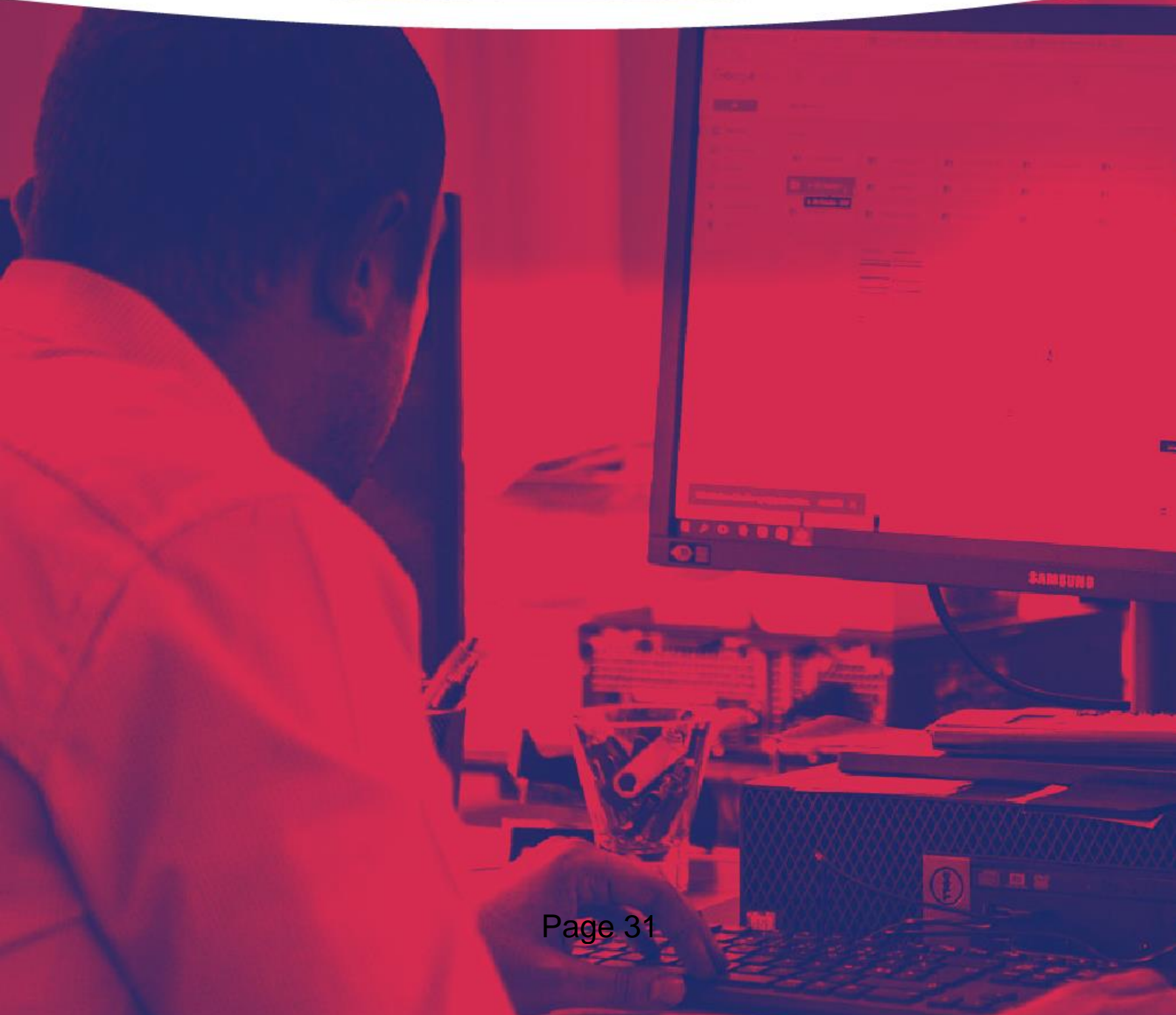
Digital delivery of the council's transactional services (where appropriate - some may never be digitised) is expected by our customers. We will be able to provide better service and achieve lower costs if services are digital and largely automated end-to-end, but it will be a substantial task to achieve this for the majority of existing services. We must prioritise in the first instance, based on:

- The volume of transactions;
- Transaction complexity, including the proportion of non-standard cases requiring human intervention and judgement;
- The complexity of the back-office processes that sit behind it;
- Interdependence with other processes/systems;
- The scope for process redesign and automation, including the inevitable change management issues involved;
- The potential for cashless and paperless ways of working. These are already a priority for the council, and should be pursued as part of process redesign;
- The environmental benefits, and alignment with the council's climate strategy[3].

The 80:20 principle should be applied, rather than trying to cover all circumstances. Local government has faced the digitisation challenge for over 25 years: the first ambitions to bring local services online appeared in a Green Paper in 1996[4]. Some processes in Shropshire Council are now fully digitised, such as paying a parking fine, while some are part-digitised, requiring the completion of an online form, which users download, complete and submit. There remains too much reliance on telephone contact with the council, and as digital services improve, the council's customers should be 'nudged' into interacting digitally rather than by telephone – an approach used with success by central government[5].

The way ahead is to catalogue the council's services, evaluate them in terms of the parameters outlined above, undertake a prioritisation exercise, and plan a thorough **programme of service digitisation**. This should not necessarily be seen primarily as a cost-cutting exercise: past digital investments promising major savings have not always succeeded. The benefits include:

- providing better services to the council's customers;
- creating more efficient back-office processes with shorter turnaround times;
- reducing errors and failure demand;
- moving staff to different and more fulfilling work;
- promoting income generation by offering new and exciting tech-based products and services;
- ultimately – if staffing requirements are reduced and IT systems rationalised – financial savings.

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[3] https://shropshire.gov.uk/shropshire-climate-action/what-have-we-achieved/policies-strategies-and-guides/climate-strategy-and-action-plan/
[4] https://www.paperbackswap.com/Government-Direct-Prospectus-Great-Britain/book/0101343825/
[5] https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/nudge-unit

Digital transformation can save money – GDS reported in 2015[6] saving central government £1.7Bn per year. We must however distinguish between hours freed up to do other work, cost avoidance, and genuine cashable savings.

Data: Valuable information is held all over the organisation, and if properly collated could lead to better decision-making. Many commercial organisations now collect large amounts of data and interpret it to make better business decisions, and for some it is fundamental to their business operations[7]. These techniques can be applied in local government. One important goal is to create a 'single view' of, for instance, a child – such as the LGA report[8] that other councils are now doing, to:

> *…facilitate an integrated multi-agency approach based on targeted, early interventions. Such a proactive, rather than reactive, model should improve both efficiency and outcomes.*

Better data-based decision-making can be applied across many of the services the council supplies, to become a 'data-led organisation'. There are of course challenges in achieving this; if it were simple, it would have been done long ago:

- Data may be in formats that makes it difficult to collate;
- Data may be wrong, incomplete, or duplicated ('dirty' data which needs 'cleansing');
- Two sets of data may refer to the same thing – for instance, the name of a person may be captured in two different systems differently, leading to ambiguity;
- Data may be in free-text form, requiring encoding in standard data formats;
- Data may sit in spreadsheets or locally-crafted databases, used by individuals or small groups, and not known about more widely;
- Data is sometimes not readily shared: some staff are reluctant to share data, fearing that it may not be treated securely, or that sharing it may infringe data protection rules;
- There may be reservations in terms of ethics: some may fear that a government knowing too much about its population could infringe privacy, or lead to excessive control.

If these reservations can be overcome, we could over time achieve sound business intelligence, a single version of the truth, and eventually predictive analytics. The council should make the most of its data, while acting ethically, basing the most difficult decisions on the strongest analysis, and using data-driven technology to transform its services to the benefit of those it serves. This area is of such importance that it is the subject of a separate strategy now in preparation.
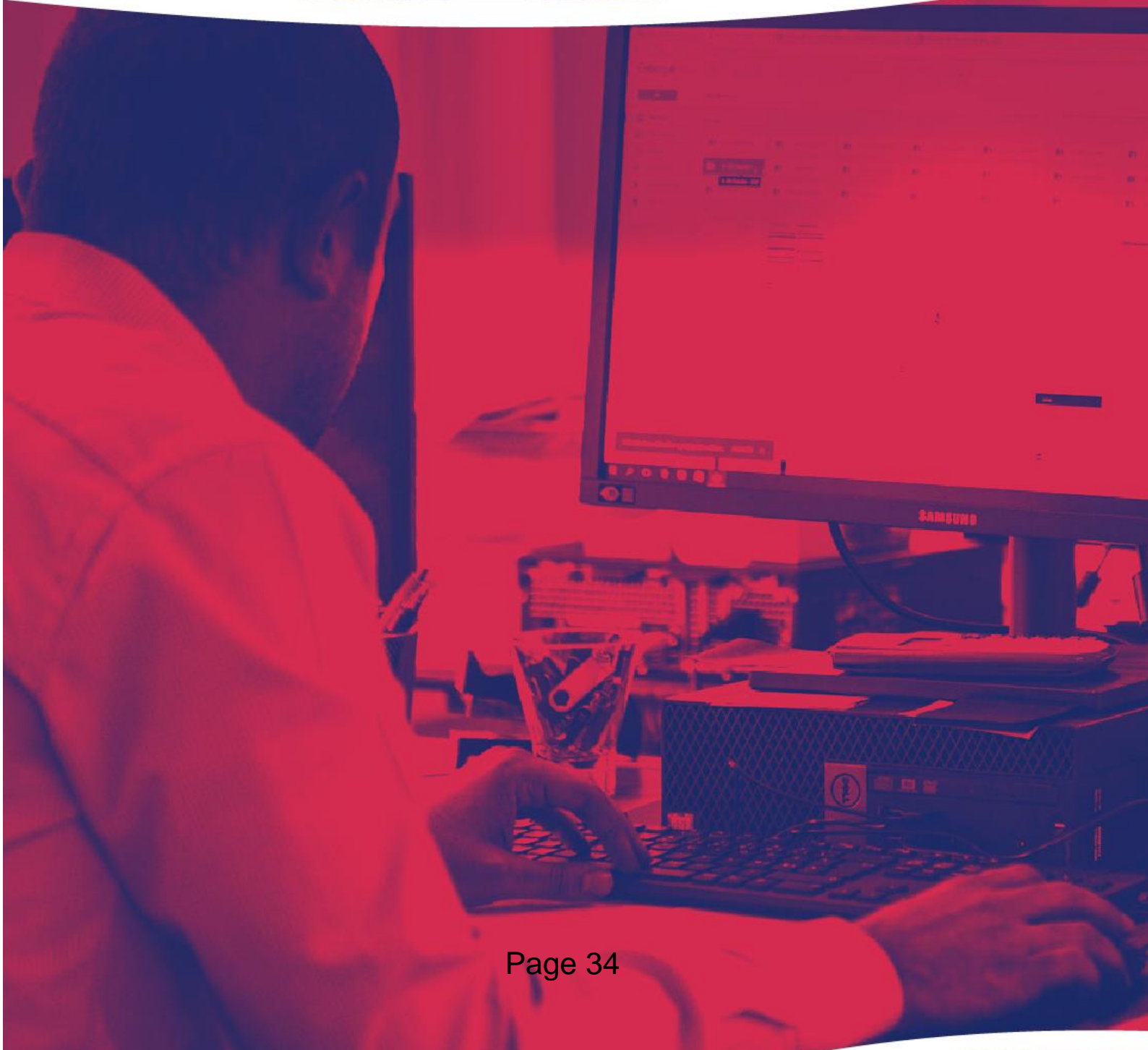
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[6] https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2015/10/23/how-digital-and-technology-transformation-saved-1-7bn-last-year/
[7] https://www.businessmodelsinc.com/exponential-business-model/netflix/
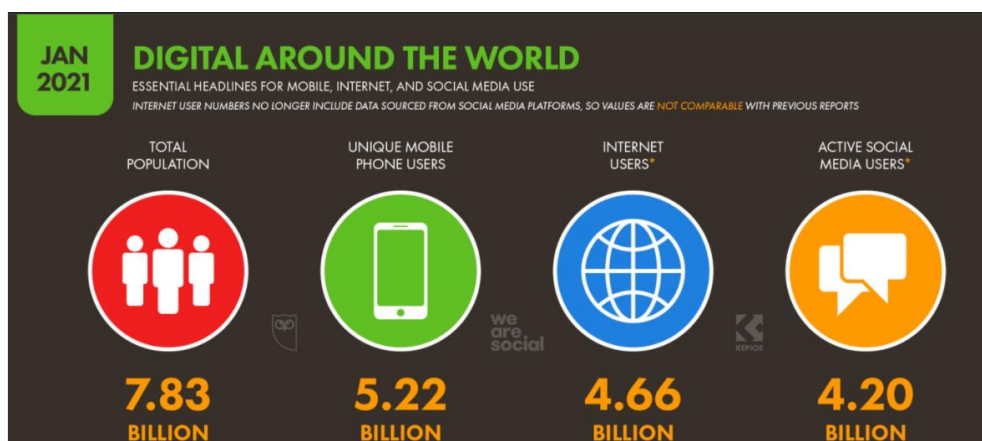[8] https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/single-view-childs-record

Page 33

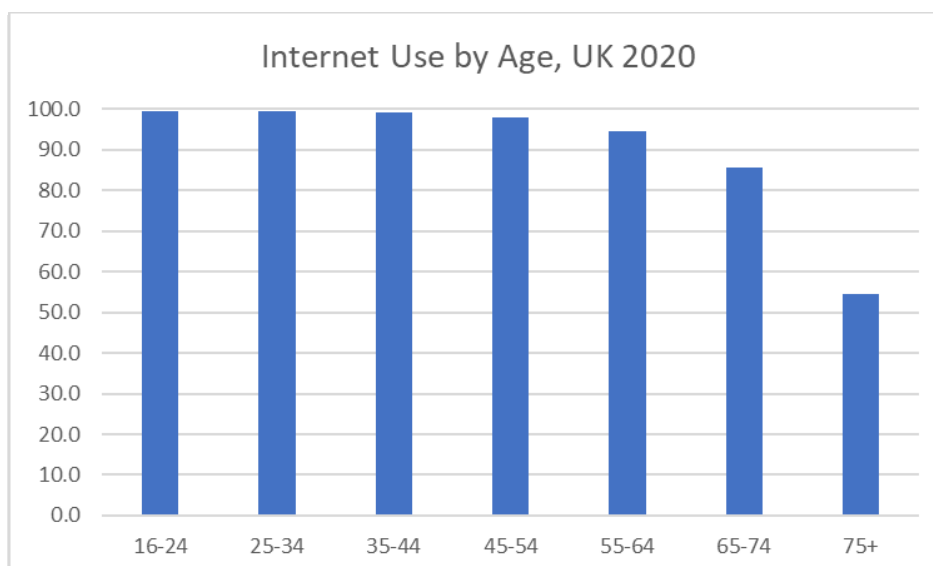# The Digital Opportunity and Digital Inclusion

It's a Digital World: We now live in the digital era, and this is changing our lives in many ways. This is happening universally[9], as the illustration below shows:

Worldwide Digital Statistics

The UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS)[10] records that 92.2% of UK adults were internet users in 2020, with most up to their mid-50's using the internet regularly. The graph below shows usage by age. Correcting for Shropshire's age distribution, local usage is estimated as 89.9% in 2020, but will have grown a little since then. The UK has shown clear growth trends in internet use among older age groups: use by over-75's grew from 29% in 2013 to 54% in 2020. Specific Shropshire figures are not available but can be assumed to be following national trends.


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9 https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-global-overview-report
10 https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2020

Internet Use by Age Group

ONS figures[11] state that there were 36,956 people in Shropshire aged 75+ in 2019 (and that number will have grown slightly since then). If we assume that 46% are not on-line, that equates to approximately 17,000 older people in Shropshire who are not interacting with the rest of the world via the internet. This must be born in mind in future planning, and the issue of 'digital poverty' needs to be properly addressed.

The graph below shows how one typical internet activity, online shopping, has grown in the UK since 2008[12]. Note the growth among the older age groups, rising steadily but still well behind younger people.
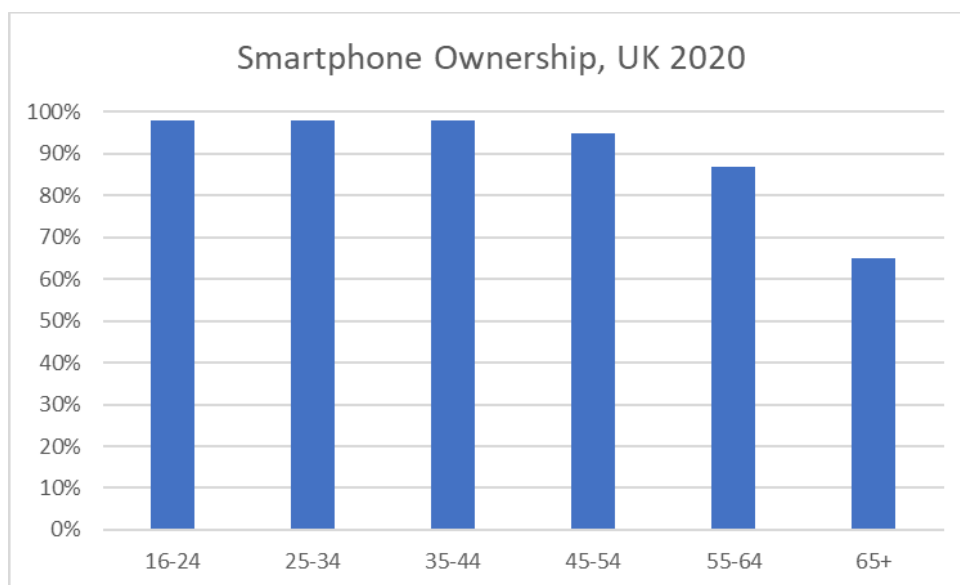

Percentage Online Shopping by Age
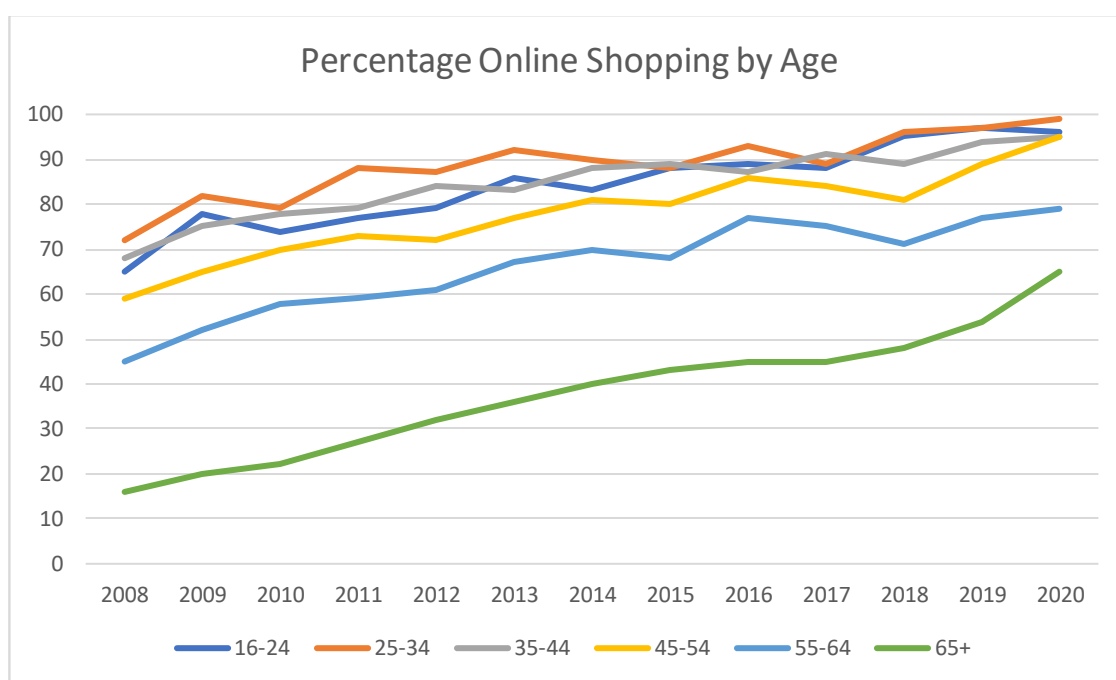
UK Statistics for Online Shopping

It is clear that users within the council and the public have high and rising expectations of technology, from positive experiences in their everyday lives. Digital technology has transformed society, through online news, shopping, banking, social media, entertainment, access to information and much more. The enforced move to home working during the Covid-19 pandemic would not have been possible without it. Happily, most users across the UK enjoy good internet connectivity and cheap, powerful end-user devices.

Smartphone ownership in the UK is high, as the graph below shows. Aggregating across all over-16's, the total for the UK was 88.3% in 2020, and may have grown a little since then. The estimated figure for Shropshire (based on local demographics) is lower at 85.3%, due to the greater proportion of those aged 65+ in the county.

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[11] https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2020
[12] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2020

14

Smartphone Ownership by Age, UK-Wide[13]

Digital Inclusion: There are those who cannot or choose not to use the internet, and reasons cited in a 2020 study by AgeUK[14] include: difficulties in keeping up with changing technology, not having anyone to help when problems arise, health-related issues, lack of interest, and cost. Nevertheless, as the ONS[15] put it:

> *The internet is being used increasingly across all areas of life. Digital technology offers a number of benefits to the individual, which those who are digitally excluded are missing out on.*

The Healthy People aim of the Shropshire Plan includes the strategic objectives of tackling inequalities and self-responsibility, and the Healthy Economy aim includes the strategic objective of supporting people and our communities with the right skills and access to lifelong learning; our digital approach will support these objectives. We will respect the wishes of the individual, always ensuring that there are non-digital means for them to interact with the council, it will be important to reduce digital exclusion within the community, which seems to be focussed mostly in the older age groups. There are already multiple initiatives addressing digital exclusion within the council and the wider community, and these are to be supported and promoted as widely as possible. There is a bid to expand the Digital Skills Programme, supporting a further 3,000 digitally excluded Shropshire residents aged 55 or over to interact with the Council digitally.

Digital users need more than just encouragement and education, they need affordable connectivity, they need devices, and in some instances, they will also need specialist

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[13] https://www.statista.com/statistics/300402/smartphone-usage-in-the-uk-by-age/
[14] https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/lapsed_users_report_march-2020.pdf
[15] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/articles/exploringtheuksdigitaldivide/2019-03-04#how-does-digital-exclusion-vary-with-age

software that supports those with disabilities. Our Shropshire Local customer service points offer a place for our citizens to talk to friendly council staff face to face and get support with a range of services, if citizens don't have a computer at home, they can use our public access computers.

With devices, councils elsewhere have participated in schemes to redistribute unwanted but serviceable laptops, tablets and smartphones. The source of these can be the general public and as well as organisations (including the council itself) which regularly replace their equipment. A good example is the Community Calling initiative in London, which local councils support, working with charities and a leading network provider[16].

Although we increasingly live in a virtual world, communities need physical spaces to come together, and the council will in the future provide these as multi-functional facilities, serving as physical and digital libraries, community support facilities, locations for partner agencies and charities to operate from, and so forth. From a technology viewpoint, they could serve as places for improving digital literacy, and locations where digital start-ups could be allocated space and connectivity – along with support from appropriately-qualified volunteers offering technical, financial, marketing and other business advice.

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[16] https://www.hubbub.org.uk/communitycalling

Technology and Health & Social Care

Digital technology is increasingly being brought to bear in healthcare in general, and is thought to offer huge potential for the future, although as the King's Fund[17] recently reported:

> *The potential of digital technology to transform the health and social care system has still not been realised, though the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a rapid shift towards the remote delivery of care through online technologies.*

Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council work closely with NHS colleagues through the Integrated Care System, and this collaboration will grow in the coming years. The council rather than the NHS, though, has the primary responsibility for social care in the county. A large proportion of the council's net budget was spent on social care in 2021/22, and this will continue to rise as the proportion of older people in the county increases. Nationally, social care spending on adults is much higher than on children: £21.2Bn was spent on adults in 2020/21[18] vs £10.9Bn on children[19]. Shropshire has a higher proportion of older people than the national average, and this will become more pronounced over the coming years. The figure below shows the age distribution predicted by the ONS for Shropshire in 2039 (the left-hand profile) compared to the UK[20] average.

ONS Predictions of Age Distributions in 2039, Shropshire vs UK

This ONS dataset shows that, from 2022 to 2039, there will be a **58% increase** in Shropshire of people aged 75 and over. (Care homes are mostly populated by those aged 75-plus[21], hence the focus on this age group). Even over the three years of this ICT and Digital strategy, the growth will be 10%, as the figure below shows.
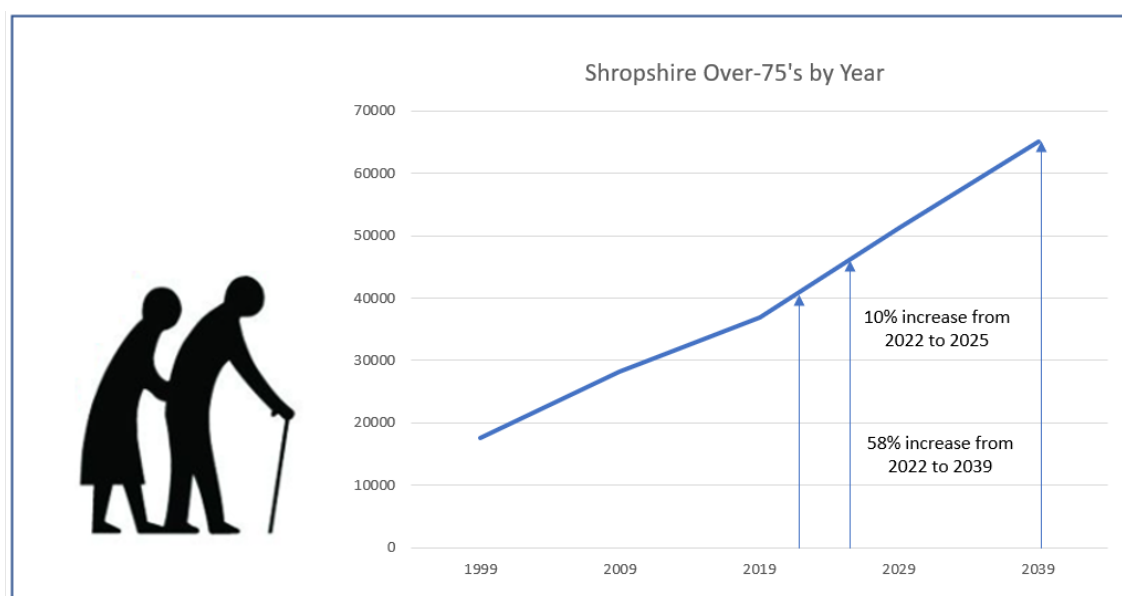
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[17] https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-04/Shaping%20the%20future%20of%20digital%20technology%20in%20health%20and%20social%20care.pdf
[18] https://digital.nhs.uk/news/2021/latest-key-statistics-on-adult-social-care-include-council-spending-in-2020-21
[19] https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2021/10/25/english-councils-need-2-7bn-more-for-childrens-social-care-by-2025-lga-warns-government/#:~:text=The%20LGA%20estimates%20that%20costs,over%20the%20three-year%20period.
[20] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/articles/overviewoftheukpopulation/january2021#the-uks-population-is-ageing
[21] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/changesintheolderresidentcarehomepopulationbetween2001and2011/2014-08-01

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The Number of Over-75's in Shropshire, by Year (ONS data)

Local authority costs for social care are high: Shropshire's spend is a substantial proportion of net income and rising. As older people move into residential care or nursing homes, the costs are partially or wholly met by the local authority. Government policy seeks to limit personal care costs to £86,000, with the balance being met by the local authority. The average cost of a residential care home across the UK is £2816 per month, and a nursing home £3552 (Sept 2021 figures[22]). Shropshire costs are higher, typically £4000+ per month at this time.

Most older people prefer to remain in their own homes, and social services already help them to do so, contributing to the costs of homecare (subject to a means test). Digital technology has an important part to play here, in extending that at-home period. There are now systems that monitor movement around the house, bathroom usage, time spent in bed, etc, plus wearables that monitor vital signs, and allow users to summon help if they fall. There are medication dispensers, home temperature sensors, monitors for fires or floods, gas or smoke, and doors left unlocked at night. Pilot trials have been conducted in the UK (including in Shropshire) to address not merely medical wellness but also problems of loneliness - which in turn impacts on health - and this technology holds real promise[23]. Assistive technology is already used to some degree and is part of Shropshire's Adult Social Care Strategy[24] (published in 2018 and due to be updated).

The challenge is how to move to the next stage. The benefits of using telecare at scale must start to be realised over the next few years, to avoid the growing costs of adult social care causing major financial challenges in the future. A recent Northumbria University report described a critical barrier as "the lack of evidence in business cases

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[22] https://www.carehome.co.uk/advice/care-home-fees-and-costs-how-much-do-you-pay?faq=1
[23] https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/assistive-technology/article/telecare-information-for-the-elderly-adCkx1V2ifWh
[24] https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/10674/adult-social-care-strategy-aug-2018.pdf

that would create sufficient value for the stakeholders involved"[25]. A London School of Economics-led study concluded that (in the case of those suffering dementia – and 70% of those in care homes have dementia[26]), "assistive and safety technologies postponed care home admission by eight months", and "the technology would be cost-effective from a health and social care perspective if it postponed care home admission by at least three months"[27]. The study also said: "for these devices to reach the full spectrum of people who could potentially benefit from them there must be better internet access, improved technological literacy and a change in perception". Research by local universities could assist: this area needs specialist academic analysis. Meanwhile tracking the activities of other councils will be helpful. For instance, Dorset Council are using simple sensors in older people's homes, connected via IoT, to detect changes in behaviour patterns that then trigger alerts via text or email to nominated people. Life-saving interventions have already been reported[28].

The challenges are therefore clear for Shropshire Council:
1. To determine the costs and benefits of these technologies, to inform the business case for investment and the avoidance of future financial challenges;
2. To achieve further improvements in internet access;
3. To further address technological literacy among older people;
4. To address the human factors: how to use the technology, how to afford it, and the potential stigma (for some) of having it in the home. These concerns will not be insurmountable, but will require education, support, help from younger relatives, the involvement of social workers and more, until it becomes the acceptable norm. All change is hard, and perhaps more so for older people.

It is therefore recommended that further investigation takes place, working with academics and ICS colleagues[29], to explore the business case for investment, to plan how to overcome the other barriers, and to achieve expanded use of this vital technology across the county.

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[25] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09540962.2021.1992123
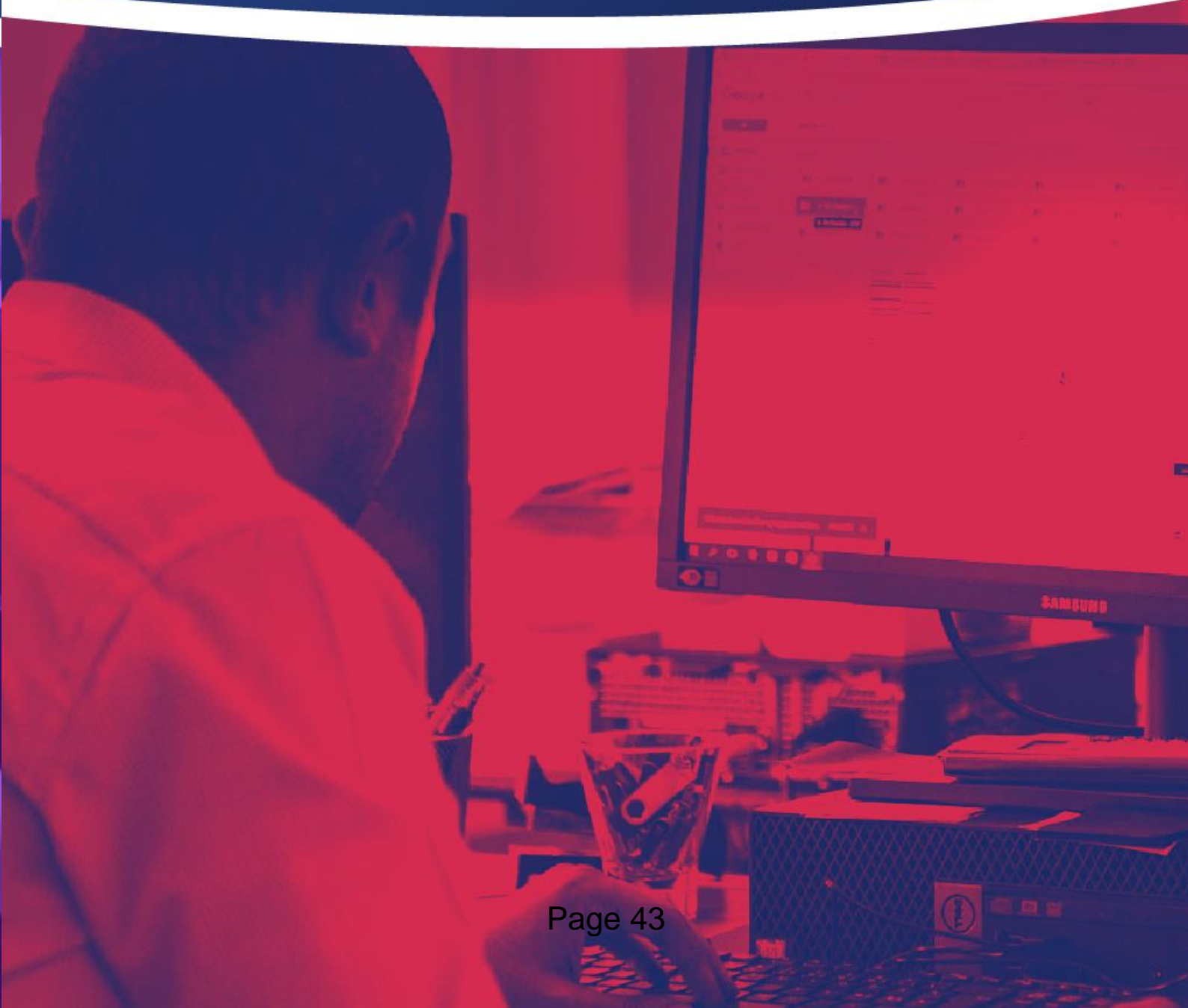[26] https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/news-and-media/facts-media
[27] http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/66482/1/__lse.ac.uk_storage_LIBRARY_Secondary_libfile_shared_repository_Content_LSEE_The%20case%20for%20investment%20in%20technology.pdf
[28] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-dorset-59077412
[29] https://www.england.nhs.uk/tecs/

ICT Best Practice: Moving and Improving

The ICT Department's role may be summed up as 'Moving and Improving'.

Keeping the council moving requires that systems are available as needed by staff and residents, that adequate security and resilience is in place to mitigate threats emerging from the wider digital environment.

Supporting the ongoing improvement journey of the council requires a clear pipeline of improvement activities, adequately resourced and effectively managed and delivered. This is highlighted by the requirements of digital county vision and the operating model proposals.

Best Practice in ICT is well understood, and it is important that it is applied within the council. Areas of focus for the period of this strategy include (and these are standard within the industry):

- Further adoption of ITIL, the universal standard in IT service delivery.
- The creation of an overarching programme of ICT & Digital projects, covering both the essential infrastructural improvements that are part of the department Service Plan, but also supporting departmental initiatives (such as upgrades to their line-of-business systems), and the cross-organisation Target Operating Model programme (see below), which will include many technological aspects. Careful planning here is vital, to understand dependencies between the many projects, and ensure that scarce IT resources are deployed as needed, and do not impede progress on important cross-organisational work.
- A strong focus on cyber security and cyber-incident preparedness, given the enhanced threat level being experienced, with the ambition of future compliance with ISO27001. ICT has a particular responsibility in terms of Safety and Resilience, keeping the organisation's data secure, and ensuring that vital systems remain operational in the face of external cyber-threats. (Note that the responsibility in this area does not sit purely with ICT – every department and all users of ICT have a vital role to play too).
- With both new and existing systems, it is proposed that there be a System Owner. For a cross-council system this would normally be a named person in ICT, but if within the business, a named person there. They would cover the whole lifecycle, and serve as sponsor of the original business case, the Executive on the project board implementing it (if a project were formed), and the contract manager (if an external contract were required). They would monitor the lifecycle of the system, planning for when it needed to be upgraded, replaced or ceased, and take responsibility for the data within it, as the Information Asset Owner[30].

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[30] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/information-asset-owner-role-guidance

ICT Department Structure: Form follows function, and the ICT department will need to have an effective staff structure and be ready to adapt that as our operating environment evolves.:

- The skills and roles needed for the future should be identified, and a skills audit of the current team undertaken to identify gaps.

- There is no universal template for an ICT structure, they vary from one council to another. A review will be undertaken to ensure that the teams are arranged in the best way to meet the needs of the council, with a structure accommodating the process improvements outlined, the goals of the strategy, current financial constraints, and the council's strategic aims.

- The structure should reflect major functions, with each team led by someone who is technically skilled and commands the respect of their staff. Management and leadership training is essential: technical skills alone do not an effective manager make.

- Most ICT departments include an Enterprise Architect who ensures compliance with good architectural principles and the strategic direction of travel, while following a widely adopted framework such as TOGAF[31];

- Some role gaps have been identified by Internal Audit, and these must be addressed.

- Adoption of an appropriate skills framework will be important. One option is the SFIA*plus* framework from the British Computer Society. It defines ICT and digital skills and the levels which each person must achieve to further their careers. ICT staff should be constantly undertaking formal training and self-study to achieve appropriate qualifications, whilst learning on the job from more experienced colleagues, all as part of their Continuing Professional Development.

- Once the new structure has been designed there should be consultation with staff to further refine it as appropriate, followed by implementation in accordance with HR processes.

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[31] https://www.opengroup.org/togaf

Background:
Technology Trends

Important Trends in Technology

It is helpful to be aware of some trends in technology which will affect ICT and digital activities within the county and the council in the next few years. At its heart, computer development is driven by the exponential growth in microprocessor power, which has continued for over 50 years. Put simply, the microchips at the heart of all our digital technology just keep on getting more powerful, as can be seen from the graph below.
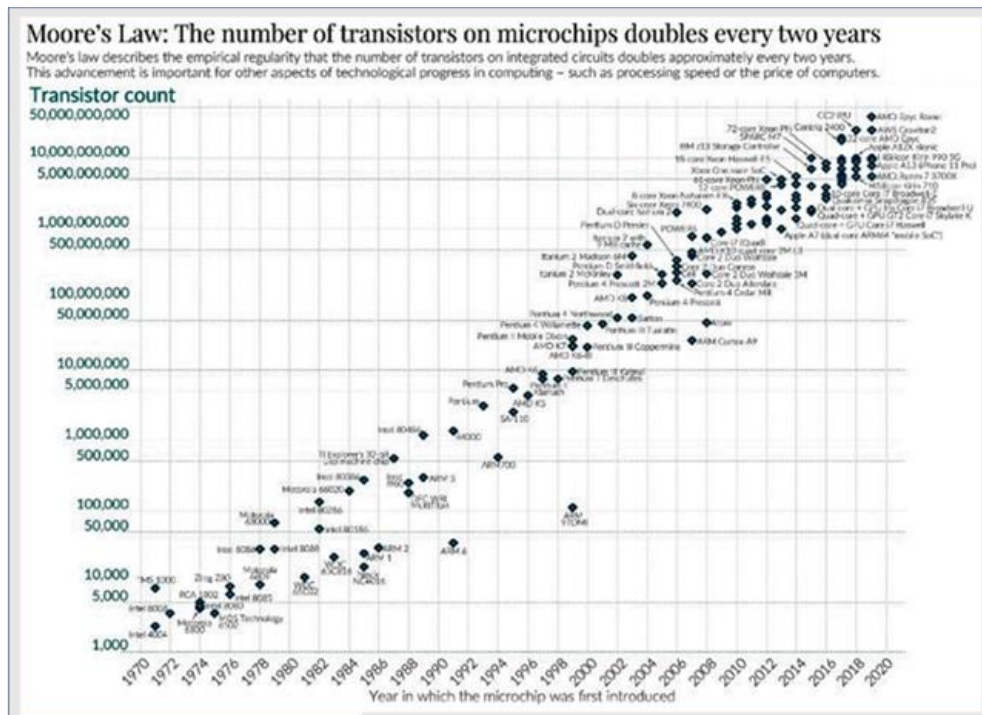
The Growth in Computing Power: Moore's Law[32]

Obsolescence: Thus, computer hardware inevitably has built-in obsolescence, because today's 'state of the art' electronics will soon be replaced by something better, hence equipment is rarely built to last – there is no point in doing so. This means that constant investment, by organisations and individuals, is required to stay up-to-date. Software has similarly short life-cycles. We cannot simply decide to stand still, because as suppliers cease to support older hardware and software, they become vulnerable to cyber-attack, and incapable of repair when they fail.

Internet Speeds: The demand for internet bandwidth is also growing exponentially[33], which is a reflection of the digital revolution in action. The graph below shows the growth. Many important trends in technology, and indeed developments in society, flow from these two trends: the growth in microchip power and the demand for ever-better connectivity.

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[32] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moore%27s_law
[33] https://www.nngroup.com/articles/law-of-bandwidth/
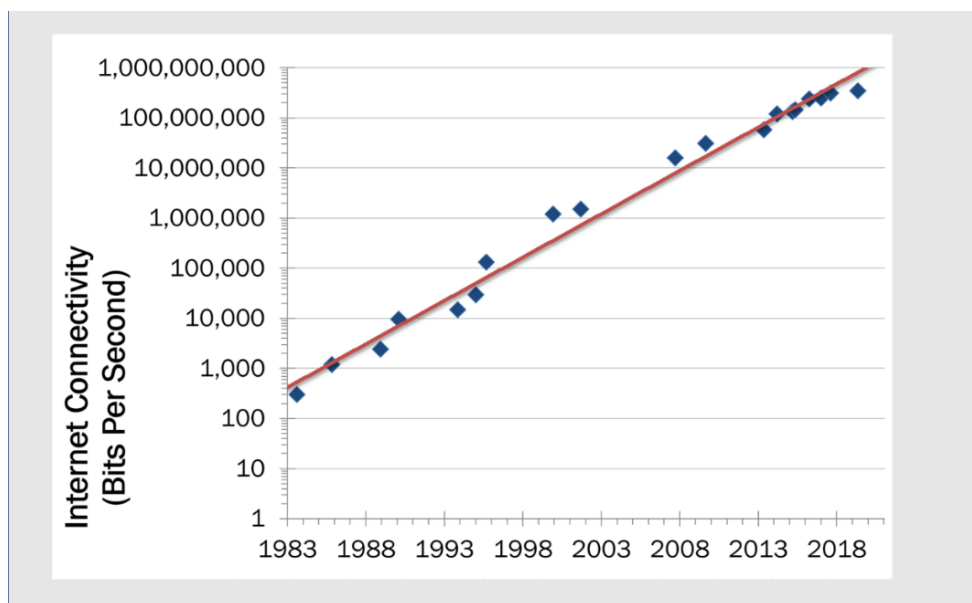
Nielsen's Law of Internet Bandwidth

Automation: Councils around the country are increasingly using Robotic Process Automation software, which replicates the simple, repetitive, computer-based activities that form much of our everyday work. Looking to the future, advances in artificial intelligence, machine vision, etc. will impact both manufacturing and service industries significantly. Around half of all lower-skilled work may be automated over the next decade[34]. The effects for Shropshire could be profound: the previous Corporate Plan[35] pointed out the high levels of employment in lower-skilled jobs within the county. This reinforces the need for investment in education and training, already a part of the council's economic strategy[36].

Connectivity: In Shropshire 98% of premises can get high-speed broadband, but uptake is only around 70% (although many will be relying on mobile broadband via their smartphones). Clearly, efforts should continue to enable the remaining 2% of premises to access broadband, while helping those not yet accessing the internet to do so. This is a key enabler of the digital revolution, vital to the future prosperity and health of the county. Meanwhile, gigabit broadband is planned for rollout across the UK in the coming years.

5G Mobile Data: Giving higher data speeds and lower latency than 4G, 5G will roll out over the next few years, but will supplement rather than replace 4G, with coverage limited to denser population areas. There are opportunities to use 5G for mixed-reality user experiences, smart cities, autonomous vehicles, drone deliveries, and more.

The Internet of Things: This refers to the growing use of simple electronic devices, mostly sensors, that transmit their data using internet technology to bigger machines that process it. IoT use worldwide is predicted to grow rapidly, with today's 9 billion devices

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[34] https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2021/02/23/11-jobs-that-may-be-automated-in-the-next-decade/?sh=30570d57972c
[35] https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/12344/corporate-plan-2019-20-to-2021-22.pdf
[36] https://shropshire.gov.uk/media/6087/economic-growth-strategy-for-shropshire-2017-2021.pdf

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potentially growing to 1 trillion by 2030[37]. Uses include wearables, health monitoring, traffic monitoring, fleet management, agriculture, environmental monitoring, smart grid & energy saving, water supply, maintenance management, visitor experience and more. Eventually this will all be taken for granted, but connectivity for IoT devices will be vital for Shropshire-wide benefits to accrue. Given Shropshire's highly rural nature, IoT connectivity is not a given. Technologies are however now emerging to provide it in remote areas, where broadband and 4G/5G will not achieve 100% coverage.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): The UK Government has created an Office for AI[38], and a National AI Strategy[39]. AI-based self-learning systems will have increasing impact in the future. For instance, smart speakers, which use AI, are popular in the UK where 52% of households now own one[40]. Their ease of use suits the less-technically-skilled and the elderly[41], and they could also be helpful in assistive technology, an application being explored by some local authorities[42].

Telephony: The current public telephone system (the PSTN) will be taken out of service in December 2025[43], being replaced by IP (internet) technology. This has not yet been widely publicised. In the words of Ofcom[44]:

> *"Some final migrations may need to be compulsory….customers, particularly those who are elderly….may need additional support during the change."*

Some services also require a landline to work during power-cuts: fire alarms, lift phones, etc. Unlike the PSTN, IP does not do this, hence special arrangements will be required.

Cloud: Large-scale commercial data centres now sell services to replace on-premise data centres. Many applications are now being delivered as Software as a Service (SaaS), which means that the consuming organisation is freed of most of the burdens of software ownership. Whilst a move away from data centres to the cloud is well under way, many councils use specialist applications not yet available as SaaS, and so in-house data centres (steadily shrinking), or the use of Infrastructure-as-a-Service (renting cloud servers but managing the software yourself) will represent the medium-term future.

Biometrics: This technology will become mainstream, replacing traditional passwords on computers, but extending into domestic life as it has with fingerprint recognition (and now, facial recognition) on smartphones.

Other emerging technologies will impact beyond the timescale of this strategy, including blockchain (allowing secure, distributed contracting and transacting), virtual reality (with potential in training, visitor economy, equipment maintenance, entertainment and gaming, and planning visualisation), and quantum computing[45] (the next frontier in IT, bringing massive increases in computing power - but probably 10 years out)

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[37] https://www.pluralsight.com/blog/career/tech-in-2025
[38] https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-artificial-intelligence
[39] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-ai-strategy
[40] https://www.digitaltveurope.com/2021/06/08/voice-assistants-in-more-than-half-of-uk-homes/
[41] http://www.activageproject.eu/blog/2020/01/03/Smart-Speakers-can-they-make-life-of-the-elderly-easier/
[42] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7832831/
[43] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2021/upgrading-landlines-to-digital-technology
[44] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0032/137966/future-fixed-telephone-services.pdf
[45] https://www.sciencealert.com/quantum-computers

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Healthy People

Working with the NHS through the Integrated Care System, digital technology will assist people throughout their lives, remotely monitoring their health, allowing participation in online consultations, enhancing data sharing, and ultimately creating more personalised medical care. Having a better-connected county, and a population that understands and is enabled to use digital technology, will help people to remain healthy for longer, while remaining in their own homes.

Internet of Things Maintain Independence

Online Consultations

More Personalised Care

Healthy Organisation

Appropriate Structure and Skills

Further Adoption of Good IT Service Delivery Standards

Digital End-to-End Services and Data Insight

ICT and Digital Technology is the life-blood of any efficient organisation, and the improvements planned in this strategy will take council efficiency (and the quality of the services it delivers) to a new level, with digital end-to-end services, a more digitally-skilled workforce, and significantly better use of data.
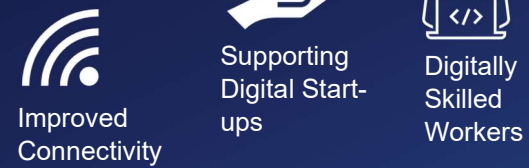
Safe Secure

To ensure that the data the organisation holds, the software it operates, and the transactions it enters into are protected as effectively as possible against continually escalating cyber threats.

To encourage residents and Council staff to develop their ability to use technology and be comfortable doing so.

To pursue and promote a 'digital county' in which as many transactions as possible are done through digitally enabled routes, while also accepting that some transactions and individuals will be better served in the traditional manner.

Digitise Automate

Enable Develop

Healthy Environment

Shropshire's natural beauty and strong 'green' credentials give it a head start in this area, but the technology-enabled move to remote working has been a bonus in reducing road use and hence pollution. The continued move to cloud technologies will reduce energy use by the council and creating paperless transactions will reduce the impact on the environment.

Adoption of Cloud Reduces Energy Use

Reduce Travel

Reduce Paper

Healthy Economy

A strong local economy will depend on Shropshire being a well-connected county with digitally skilled workers. The council's work in improving connectivity, improving digital skills in the population, providing support to digital start-ups, and working to make the county an attractive place for high-tech businesses will play strongly into this agenda.

Improved Connectivity

Supporting Digital Start-ups

Digitally Skilled Workers

Shropshire Council

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Committee and Date	Item
Council	
30 March 2023	Public

Healthy People

Healthy Economy

Healthy Environment

Healthy Organisation

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 101
FORMAL APPLICATION TO ADD BRIDLEWAYS IN THE PARISH OF CLAVERLEY AND PARISH OF BOBBINGTON IN STAFFORDSHIRE
DELEGATION TO STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL TO INVESTIGATE AND DETERMINE THIS CROSS BORDER CLAIM

Responsible Officer:			
email:	Mark.barrow@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258919
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Rob Gittins		

1. Synopsis

Claims have been made to add a public bridleway under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 crossing the border between Shropshire and Staffordshire. Authority is therefore sought for Staffordshire County Council to undertake the investigation and determination of this cross border route.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. Claims have been made for a continuous bridleway to be added to the Definitive Map of public rights of way within both Shropshire Council and Staffordshire County Council areas. Authority is sought to delegate the power to investigate and determine the claimed bridleways to Staffordshire County Council under the Local Government Act 1972, Section 101.

2.2. Staffordshire have been directed to determine the claim on their side therefore, it would be sensible for one authority to deal with the entirety of the route. Staffordshire County Council has agreed to do so

2.3. Authority is sought to delegate the power to investigate and determine the claimed bridleways to Staffordshire County Council under the Local Government Act 1972, Section 101.

3. Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that Shropshire Council delegates the function of determining the formal applications for bridleway additions in the Parish of Claverley in Shropshire and Bobbington in Staffordshire, to Staffordshire County Council, as the claimed routes link with each other.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. The main risk to Shropshire Council would be if Staffordshire determine their part of the claimed route in advance of Shropshire determining the connecting claim as this would create an anomalous route on the map. As the evidence supplied in support of both the applications is either the same or similar it is sensible for one authority to determine both claims. Staffordshire have authority to determine the claim in its entirety if Shropshire formally delegates the function to them, to investigate the connecting section within Shropshire Council's area.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. Shropshire Council has a statutory duty to keep the Definitive Map under review and undertake the making of legal orders when required. Reasonable costs will be met by Staffordshire County Council from their existing budgetary provision to investigate and determine these claims. Shropshire Council may be asked to contribute to advertising costs if an order is subsequently published and provide officer support should any resulting order require determination this would be managed through existing revenue budgets.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. It is recognised that the use of the public rights of way network supports local active travel reducing the effect of motorised vehicles within local areas. These claims if successful will add to the network in this area that the general public can use. There is no effect on renewable energy.

7. Background

7.1. An application has been made to Shropshire Council under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for the addition of an alleged public bridleway from Bobbington to the County Road near Home Farm via Gatacre and for the addition of an alleged public bridleway from Public Bridleway 106 Claverley- near the Rookery through Gatacre Park Farm to join the alleged public bridleway from Bobbington. The application was submitted by a Ms A Williams. The application falls within the Parish of Claverley, Shropshire.

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7.2. An application has also been made to Staffordshire County Council under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for the addition of a Public Bridleway from the junction of PF6 with Six Ashes Lane to the County Boundary in the parish of Bobbington. The application was submitted by a Mr M Reay.

7.3. A copy of the plan showing the alleged public bridleways, in both Shropshire and Staffordshire is attached at Appendix 1. A plan showing the general location of the claimed routes is attached at Appendix 2.

7.4. The applications lodged with Staffordshire County Council and Shropshire Council form one continuous route.

7.5. An anomaly, therefore, would occur if Staffordshire County Council were to determine the application lodged with them in favour of the applicant which would result in the addition of a public bridleway before Shropshire Council were able to make a decision on the application for the addition of public bridleways on Shropshire Council's side of the county border.

7.6. Staffordshire County Council have been directed by the Secretary of State to determine the application, which is within their area, following a directions request made by the applicant, Mr Reay. The Inspector acting on behalf of the Secretary of State acknowledged that the alleged route is a cross border route and therefore stated: "it would be sensible for one authority to deal with the entirety of the route". Shropshire Council have not specifically been directed to determine the application routes made on Shropshire Council's side of the county border.

7.7. Historical evidence has been submitted in support of both applications. Whilst the applications have been submitted by two separate members of the public, on review, the historical documentation submitted by both parties is very similar and some pieces of documentation are identical.

7.8. Therefore, officers are recommending that the Council delegates the function to investigate and determine the formal application on the Shropshire side to Staffordshire County Council. This is considered to be the most practicable and efficient way of dealing with the claims which if successful form a continuous cross border route.

7.9. Under Article 11 of Shropshire Council's Constitution, The Council or Cabinet, in order to promote the economic, social, or environmental well-being of its area, may:

(a) enter into arrangements or agreements with any person or body;
(b) co-operate with, or facilitate or co-ordinate the activities of, any person or body; and
(c) exercise on behalf of that person or body any functions of that person or body.

7.10. The power to delegate non-Cabinet functions (which these are) is reserved to Council under Article 11.4 of the Council's Constitution.

7.11 This report is to delegate to Staffordshire County Council the function relating to the Formal Application in the Parish of Claverley in the interests of expediency, so that the claim, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, can be determined at the same time as the connecting claim in Staffordshire.

8. Conclusions

8.1. The most expedient way to progress these cross border bridleway claims, is for one, authority to undertake the full procedure. This report seeks a formal delegation to Staffordshire County Council to be able to determine the above mentioned s.53 applications, as the applied for routes form a continuous route across the Staffordshire/Shropshire border and Staffordshire County Council has been directed by the Secretary of State to determine their application.

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

Local Member: *Cllr Elliott Lynch*

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Plan showing routes claimed

Appendix 2 – Location Plan

Legend

- – – Footpath
- – – Permissive Footpath
- – – Bridleway
- – – Permissive Bridleway
- —— Restricted Byway
- —— Byway Open to all Traffic
- ☐ County Boundary

Lodge

Bra Wood

Gatacre Green

tle Sytch use Farm

126

Home Farm

Hem Coppice

80

79

Gatacre

Rookery Farm

0118/8/1

0118/48/1

0118/48/2

Spr

Rookery

0118/42/2

0118/112/1

0118/106/1

107

159

145

140

155

135

125

120

110

105

100

95

90

146

Oak od

Gatacre Park

0118/109/2

0118/111/1

Gatacre Park Farm

Rickthorn House

107

Colleg

Brantley Brook

0118/111/4

0118/111/3

0118/109/1

0118/111/2

0118/109

urdeford

Broad Oak

This is not the legal definitive map. It is a working copy only. For information purposes only.

Shropshire Council

Scale: 1:10,000

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Claimed Routes

map produced by SB

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Legend

- - - Footpath
- - - Permissive Footpath
- - - Bridleway
- - - Permissive Bridleway
- - - Restricted Byway
—— Byway Open to all Traffic
☐ parish

Scale: 1:30,000

Location Plan

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Shropshire Council

The Shirehall, Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

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Committee and Date	Item
Council 30th March 2023	
	Public

Scrutiny Improvement Review 2022

Responsible Officer:	Tom Dodds (Statutory Scrutiny Officer) Tim Collard (Monitoring Officer)	
email:	tom.dodds@shropshire.gov.uk tim.collard@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel: 01743 258518 01743 252756
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	All	

1. Synopsis

During 2022/23 the Council invited the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to undertake a review of Overview and Scrutiny. Opportunities to inform improvements include reviewing the committee structure and remits and the number of Members per committee.

2. Executive Summary

2.1   The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny ("CfGS") to carried out a Scrutiny Improvement Review ("SIR") in September and October 2022. The review highlighted that whilst there were strengths and good practice in how the Council undertook overview and scrutiny, these were not always consistently applied, and that there were opportunities to make further developments and improvements.

2.3   This paper shares the report of the SIR (see appendix 1) and reflects the emerging high-level actions being taken and the associated timeframe that will be followed to implement the learning from the review. The review report is structured around 4 headings and 10 sub-headings:

Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose
- Clarity on scrutiny's role and purpose
- Scrutiny resourcing
- Potential of greater pre-decision scrutiny, welcoming scrutiny input

Prioritising work and using evidence well
- Meeting efficiency and Scrutiny challenge

Members leading and fostering good relationships
- Relationship between Executive and Scrutiny
- Relationships between officers and Members
- Structure

Making an impact
- Annual report
- Task and Finish groups
- Public engagement

2.4 The SIR report makes 13 recommendations across these areas for the Council to consider to further develop how it undertakes Overview and Scrutiny. These are listed under the 4 report headings below:

Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose
- Developing regular communication and information sharing so that Scrutiny can be a resource that can inform Executive decision making.
- Regular Communication and information sharing should also include the extension of the practice of Green Papers with scrutiny members to further develop pre-decision scrutiny.
- Training to develop an appreciation of the Scrutiny function and potential
- Greater prominence given to scrutiny and democratic representation on the Council's website.

Prioritising work and using evidence well
- Greater visible alignment with the ambitions in the Shropshire Plan
- Building upon the approach taken to work programming
- Tracking and follow up of recommendations
- A dedicated programme for member training and development.

Members leading and fostering good relationships
- The Council changes the current scrutiny committee structure.
- Involve all members of scrutiny, regardless of party, in direction setting and scrutiny leadership. This should include consideration of opposition Vice Chairs and a wide range of members chairing task groups and leading on scrutiny work.
- Development of a Cabinet-Scrutiny Protocol.

Making an impact
- A more thorough methodology applied to investigative work, including triangulation of evidence and undertaking of primary research.
- A refreshed approach to the annual report focussing upon impact of scrutiny work.

2.5   Responding to the review report and the identification and development of the actions to address them is being taken forward in a cross party and collaborative manner. Group Leaders have been meeting and will continue to meet to discuss options, the Chairs if the Overview and Scrutiny committees have met, and the CfGS will be invited to facilitate a workshop on the report that all members will be invited to attend.

2.6   The SIR report identified that there was the opportunity to review the structure of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to strengthen the links to the priorities in the Shropshire Plan and to the directorates of the Council. As there are four priorities and four 4 directorates it is proposed that there be four Scrutiny Committees. It is further proposed that each of the Scrutiny Committees consist of 11 members of the Council.

3. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

3.1.   Support, through their involvement and commitment, the collaborative approach to developing Overview and Scrutiny at the Council in response to the review and on an ongoing basis

3.2.   Confirm the proposed change to the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees 4 committees that will take effect from the Annual meeting of the Council in May 2023. (See Appendix 2 for the proposed committees)

3.3.   Confirm that there will be 11 Members on each Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.4.   Agree that the Monitoring Officer makes all necessary changes to the Constitution that are required to reflect the new Overview and Scrutiny Structure.
        .

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1.   Effective Overview and Scrutiny is a feature of the Council's governance arrangements, where the Council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range factors that could result in risks to Council of not doing Overview and Scrutiny effectively. These include the failure to
- challenge and hold decision makers to account.
- link O&S work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management – failure to demonstrate added value
- carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations.

- engage partners and providers.
- ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources.
- ensure that O&S can operate as the voice of communities.
- draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

4.2. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- Operating in an apolitical manner.
- Clarity of vision and purpose
- Overview and Scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
- Effective engagement and commitment by Members and officers at all levels, including Cabinet, Opposition Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs and Senior Officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
- Robust Work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
- Ensuring that Overview and Scrutiny work will add value to the Council and communities e.g. through strong links between work programme topics and the integrated strategic plans that set out the actions and timescales to deliver the priorities in the Shropshire Plan
- Access to and availability of robust data and intelligence
- Good relationship with partners and providers

4.3. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have remits that cover the breath of the work of the Council, as well as looking externally including Health Services and provision through Health Overview and Scrutiny requirements.

4.4. The proposed structure for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees provides the opportunity to put in place strong links to the priorities in the Shropshire Plan to support an outcome focus to their work, as well as ensuring that, where required, the committees can be sighted on a directorate.

4.5. Topics for Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes are identified based on a number of different considerations which include an understanding of risks to the Council (e.g. failure to deliver the Shropshire Plan), employees, to service users themselves, and to communities. These may be identified through reviewing performance information and comparing with others, changes to national and local policies, budget information, feedback from customers/service users, feedback from partners/providers, and reports from regulators.

4.6. During overview and scrutiny work evidence will be gathered that builds on this understanding to inform the development of conclusions and evidence-based recommendations.

4.7. The use of external peer challenge such as that offered by the CfGS provides objective review and feedback about what is working well and the opportunities to develop the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. Effective overview and scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of "what works" at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation is locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.

5.2. There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. However, opportunities to develop how the Council undertakes overview and scrutiny in the future may benefit from a small budget. Whilst this will depend on how the development takes place this may include seeking input from external experts, carrying out meetings and engagement in communities and at venues relevant to topics, overview and scrutiny specific training and development, and accessing additional data and information that may need to be purchased.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. All reports to Overview and Scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change.

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

6.3. Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore focus of the Place Overview Committee i.e.
   - delivery of the agreed lower carbon footprint and emissions targets, including air quality, by the Council and its partners;
   - actions to protect, enhance and value Shropshire's our natural resources and respect the historic environment;
   - arrangements to safeguard and promote a clean and green environment;
   - the delivery of work to reduce landfill and waste;
   - management and development of the physical and digital infrastructure

7. Background

7.1. During 2022 some Members constructively challenged the Council on whether it was being as effective as it could be carrying out overview and scrutiny. The challenge was received positively and options to look at opportunities to make improvements were identified and put in motion.

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7.2.   The Council took the step to increase capacity in the resource committed to support Overview and Scrutiny committees in the planning, delivery and reporting of their work. This involved identifying an Overview and Scrutiny Manager and advertising to fill the second Overview and Scrutiny Officer post.

7.3.   In addition, the Council also invited the CfGS to carry out a SIR of the Council's overview and scrutiny arrangements. The purpose of the review was to invite objective external challenge that would draw on best practice and learning from other Local Authorities and combine this an understanding of Shropshire Council to make recommendations for improvement.

7.4.   The review was carried out in the Autumn 2022 with the review report being received in the new year. To date it has been made available to all Members through their Group Leaders and discussed with Group Leaders and Scrutiny Chairs. The CfGS have been invited to facilitate a workshop session for all Members to consider the report.

7.5.   A collaborative approach is being taken to develop the response to the report and the recommendations within it. It is important to ensure that overview and scrutiny is owned by the Members who are also central to how effective and successful it will be. This starts with the identification of the actions that will be taken, and then in the ongoing activity as the committee's carry out their work, make their evidence-based recommendations, and follow-up on the progress and impact where their recommendations had been accepted.

8. Centre for Governance and Scrutiny – Scrutiny Improvement Review 2022

8.1   The Scrutiny Improvement Review was structured around 4 key areas identified from the feedback and challenge provided by Members. These were:

1. Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose.
2. Members leading and fostering good relationships.
3. Prioritising work and using evidence well.
4. Making an impact.

8.2   The review was carried out using online face to face interviews and onsite interviews at the Shirehall that took place across 18 meetings involving 29 officers and Members including the group Leaders and Scrutiny Chairs. The review was also informed by desktop research looking at key documents and viewing recordings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings, and a survey of Members, with the results included in the review report.

8.3   The review identified that the Council has good foundations to build-on how it delivers overview and scrutiny and recognised that the timing is good for the Council to look at developing and strengthening arrangements and approaches.

"Shropshire has many of the elements present to achieve an effective scrutiny function. There are already pockets of good practice … "

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"Members and Officers tend to have good relationships based on trust. This is a strong base from which to develop Scrutiny."

"... there is a real sense of the opportunity … to achieve an effective Scrutiny function for the benefit of the residents of Shropshire."

It highlighted areas of focus for the Council to take forward and address.

"… there are underlying political tensions"

"Scrutiny is not universally understood or able to make the contribution to good governance and Council direction setting that it could do."

"… more work could usefully be undertaken to align the Scrutiny work programme with issues that matter to the people of Shropshire and the Shropshire Plan. "

It also recognized that the Council had been taking action after Members shared their challenge, before the review took place.

"Resourcing has been an issue, but is now well on the way to being resolved."

8.4   The review made 13 recommendations under the four areas of focus which are set out in paragraph 2.4. Work is underway to respond to findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Improvement Review. This is at an early stage and has started with engagement with Group leaders, Scrutiny Chairs and Senior Officers. This will be followed by a session for all Members which the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny will be invited to facilitate.

8.6   The response to the findings and recommendations has been progressed in two stages. The first stage has involved looking at options for the structure of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and the second stage will address how overview and scrutiny will operate.

8.7   The work to identify a future structure has considered how the function could add most value and achieve a best fit with the Shropshire Plan priorities and with the organisational structure of the Council. The proposed structure of 4 Overview and Scrutiny Committees would take effect from Annual Council. Additionally, it is proposed that there are 11 Members on each committee. More information on the committees, including their proposed remits, is set out in Appendix 2.

8.8   Seeking agreement of structures and the number of Members on each committee at an earlier stage to the operational developments will allow the membership of committees to be developed ready for Annual Council in May 2023. This also provides more time and greater opportunity for operational development to be identified and shape the Overview and Scrutiny improvement plan.

8.9   A key milestone and an underpinning activity for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be carrying out the work programme development for 2023/24 and into 2024/25. The consistent approach for this is expected to be a feature if the improvement plan including the prioritisation of topics and how

overview and scrutiny investigations are carried out and will add value. The target for the development of the work programmes by each committee will be in May and June to follow shortly after Annual Council.

8.10   The proposal, identification and prioritisation of topics will also identify topics that will be better delivered through the Member training and development programme recommended by the review.

9. Conclusions

9.1   The SIR provides a springboard from which the Council can revisit it's plans and approach to Overview and Scrutiny. It gives the opportunity to ensure that structure follows strategy in the form of the Shropshire Plan and reflects the way the council works through its directorate structure.

9.2   The review has also reinforced the importance of all members being engaged in overview and scrutiny work, seeing and feeling the added value that is achieved and can be achieved. The success of overview and scrutiny will be heavily influenced by Member ownership and leadership.

9.3   Overview and Scrutiny Committees can add significant value for the organisation, the delivery of the priorities in the Shropshire Plan and for Shropshire Communities. They have a unique position being able to make evidence-based recommendations to inform decision making and look at the progress and impact of implementing decisions. This is particularly relevant at a time when the Council is working hard to ensure that it is making its resources go as far as possible.

9.4   The SIR report recognised that the Council is in a good position to move Overview and Scrutiny forwards and ensure that it is realising its potential and the benefits it can deliver. Overview and Scrutiny has an important role to play contributing to good governance and taking positive action and development work will help to avoid the likelihood that it drifts.

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

Local Member:

All

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, Scrutiny Improvement Review Report 2022

Appendix 2 – Proposed structure and remits of Shropshire Council Overview and Scrutiny Committees

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Chief Executive
Shirehall,
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND
November 2022

Preview copy

Dear Andy Begley,

Scrutiny Improvement Review Shropshire Council

I am writing to thank you for inviting the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) to carry out an evaluation of Shropshire Council's scrutiny function. This letter is our feedback on our review findings and offers suggestions on how the Council could develop its scrutiny process further.

As part of this feedback stage, we would like to facilitate a workshop with members and officers, in order to reflect on this review and to discuss options for improvement.

1.   Review Background

Shropshire Council commissioned CfGS to advise and support its members and officers in the review of the Council's scrutiny function. The aim is to ensure that scrutiny is effective in delivering accountability, improving policy and decision making, and that the scrutiny function makes a quality contribution in the delivery of Council plans and overall improvement. The review investigated four specific areas of scrutiny:

1. Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose.
2. Members leading and fostering good relationships.
3. Prioritising work and using evidence well.
4. Making an impact.

The Council had a peer review in 2017 which made a number of recommendations for Scrutiny. This review has built upon this previous work. Out of the six recommendations, the first three are particularly still relevant.
1. Develop a shared vision of what overview and scrutiny means for Shropshire.
2. To drive cultural change and a broader cultural acceptance of scrutiny's role, member and officer champions for scrutiny should be identified.
3. A comprehensive training programme around scrutiny for members and officers should be planned and delivered.
4. A dedicated Officer Scrutiny resource should be put in place.
5. New structures, processes and protocols should be put in place to deliver improvements.
6. These changes will need to be carefully planned and implemented at pace.

Shropshire's political structure is based on Leader and Cabinet-Executive with five Scrutiny Committees. The current Scrutiny Committees have the following roles.

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- Communities Overview Committee.
- Health & Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- People Overview Committee.
- Performance Management Scrutiny Committee.
- Place Overview Committee.

Shropshire also is part of a Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

CfGS undertook a review of these scrutiny arrangements. This involved evidence gathering through conversations with members and officers from September to November 2022. We met with 29 officers and elected members across a total of 18 meetings, including group leaders, scrutiny chairs, members of the scrutiny committees, the senior management team, and officers supporting scrutiny.

The review was conducted in person at Shire Hall for two days on Wednesday 28th September and Thursday 29th of September 2022, and also via MS Teams before, during and after this time. In addition, we observed webcast recordings of scrutiny meetings and reviewed key documents on the Council's website. We also conducted an online survey with councillors, twenty-seven members responded, which equates to a 20% response rate.

The review was conducted by:

- Camilla de Bernhardt Lane – Senior Governance Consultant, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

2. Review Summary

The findings and recommendations presented in this report letter are intended to advise the Council on strengthening the quality of scrutiny activities, increasing the impact of its outputs, and through its members, developing a strong and shared understanding of the role and capability of the scrutiny function.

This review is timely and there is a real sense of the opportunity and need to make the changes outlined in this report to achieve an effective Scrutiny function for the benefit of the residents of Shropshire.

Shropshire has many of the elements present to achieve an effective scrutiny function. There are already pockets of good practice and the Cabinet and senior leaders we spoke to were welcoming of a greater scrutiny contribution to good governance. Likewise, we observed knowledgeable and passionate chairs. Members and Officers tend to have good relationships based on trust. This is a strong base from which to develop Scrutiny. However, we heard that there are underlying political tensions, and Scrutiny is not universally understood or able to make the contribution to good governance and Council direction setting that it could do. Without positive action and development work the contribution of Scrutiny to good governance is likely to drift. Specifically,

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Improvement
Review

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more work could usefully be undertaken to align the Scrutiny work program with issues that matter to the people of Shropshire and the Shropshire Plan. In addition, resourcing has been an issue, but is now well on the way to being resolved.
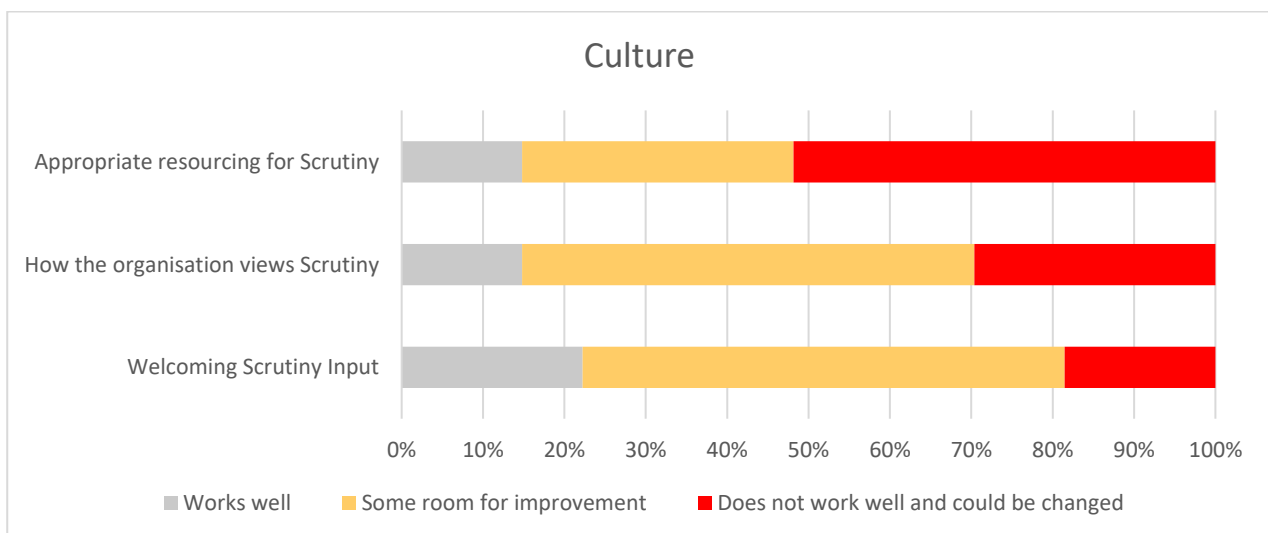
3. Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose

There is a strong organisational commitment to good scrutiny at Shropshire. This is clear from the additional resource commitment that has recently been dedicated to the Scrutiny function. It is also clear from the interviews and conversations with senior leaders where Scrutiny was described as a 'critical part of the machinery of the organisation.' There is a hope that this can be better realised in the future. The fundamental question for the Scrutiny function is how it can align with the Shropshire plan and add value to good decisions? It is vital that Cabinet sets the tone for positive scrutiny and welcomes the contribution made by non-executive councillors.

3.1. Clarity on Scrutiny's role and responsibilities

A clear theme of this review is the current, generally accepted, disconnect between the potential of Scrutiny and the contribution that it currently makes. Scrutiny is expected to use its delegated authority, soft powers of access and influence to hold the Executive to account, support policy development, contribute to improved decision-making, and channel the voice of the public. This is achieved through collaboration and strong constructive challenge, based on quality information and robust questioning strategies. A good scrutiny function is one that provides not only effective challenge but is recognised and valued as a body that positively informs policy development. To this end, the Council's website could be updated to give a greater visible presence to democratic accountability.

The chart below demonstrates the aggregated responses to questions about culture, presented with the most negative statements first:

Culture

| | Works well | Some room for improvement | Does not work well and could be changed |

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3.2. Scrutiny resourcing

The question with the most negative statements; 'does not work well and could be changed' is appropriate resourcing for Scrutiny, with more than half of respondents saying this. It was clear in our investigation that there have been challenges with a stretched Democratic Services Team. At times, minutes have not been published in a timely way and there has been drift on the effectiveness of the Scrutiny function. The one Scrutiny Officer that the Authority has, had in recent years, has been undertaking a heroic amount of work, in order to try to make the Scrutiny function a success.

We were pleased to see that at the same time as conducting this review that the Council has made arrangements for additional support for Scrutiny. These have taken the form of appointing a Scrutiny Manager and sharing the intention to recruit for another Scrutiny Officer. This would bring the Scrutiny team to a compliment of three, up from one individual. It is clear that there is potential to extend the reach and impact of Scrutiny with this additional resource. We hope that this will support the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

3.3. Potential of greater pre-decision Scrutiny, welcoming Scrutiny input

From the survey results there was also room for improvement about how the organisation views Scrutiny and welcoming Scrutiny input. There is a commitment to publish 'Green Papers' in advance of policy decisions, with the intention of engaging with Scrutiny at an earlier stage of the policy development process. This is a strong practice, and one that works well with Scrutiny. Senior officers and members saw the potential useful steer on direction in engaging with Scrutiny in this way. However, there had been limited numbers of Green Papers to date, so it was difficult to ascertain the extent to which the practice is working.

We recommend:

- **Developing regular communication and information sharing so that Scrutiny can be a resource that can inform Executive decision making.** This could be achieved through holding triangulation meetings between scrutiny chairs, executive members and relevant directors, to consider future issues and the part which scrutiny could play in testing and shaping these forward plans. It would also present an opportunity to share and discuss opportunities to involve scrutiny as an improvement asset, this should be done transparently, with consideration given to how this could move beyond politics.

- **Regular Communication and information sharing should also include the extension of the practice of Green Papers with scrutiny members to further develop pre-decision scrutiny.** This practice represents a clear and transparent opportunity for non-Executive Members to make the biggest difference to policy direction.

- **Training to develop an appreciation of the Scrutiny function and potential** at both member and officer level, looking at how to get the best from scrutiny. Including agreeing a shared purpose and questioning skills.

> ▪ **Greater prominence given to scrutiny and democratic representation on the Council's website.** Currently it is difficult to find, and greater prominence would support a higher profile for Scrutiny with members of the public.

4. Prioritising work and using evidence well

We heard that Scrutiny has been 'coasting' for a couple of years without a clear direction or purpose. There is a need to take a coherent and structured approach to work programming to achieve the best use of resources. Scrutiny has a tendency to be more retrospective, rather than forward looking. It is important that scrutiny carries out reviews and assesses performance, but there is a missed opportunity for it to add value to council policy and strategy through greater emphasis on the big challenges and opportunities ahead.

There is a need to develop agendas that connect with the issues of the moment, rather than an immediate adoption of any issue that is suggested from the meeting. There are comprehensive tools that other local authorities apply to work programming, and we would suggest adopting something of this standing to support a clear evaluation of which topics to focus upon. This will also support greater member-ownership of the scrutiny agenda. The following check list could help to prioritise items to add to the work programme:

- ▪ Performance consistent concern, or unexplained spike
- ▪ High Risk - with concern that mitigations are not sufficient
- ▪ Complaints - Serious or high volume
- ▪ In the Public Interest—affecting the rights, health, finances or services for Public at large
- ▪ Pan-Area impact, affecting people across the whole area
- ▪ Impact – what difference can Scrutiny add by looking at the issue?

Scrutiny should also consider that fewer, meaningful items to be actively considered at Committee is better practice than receiving information briefings or noting many reports.

4.1. Meeting efficiency and Scrutiny challenge

There are some clear areas where improvements can be made. We have heard that some Councillors, particularly newer ones, may lack understanding and as a result parts of agendas are given over to information. It is essential that scrutiny meetings do not become classrooms for learning and information up-dates, but remain focused on the scrutiny task, challenge, and improvement. This is likely linked to the practice of noting reports which we have heard does happen at some meetings. Policy briefings, service overviews and the like should be planned and scheduled and could even be open to all councillors. This might help to enable wider member engagement in Council business and streamline scrutiny workloads.

In practice, the strategic challenge of Cabinet Members needs to be strengthened. Within meetings, we found that scrutiny tends to focus on officers and officer reports. Where Cabinet Members are involved in Scrutiny it can be light touch, rather than an exploration of current policy, or decisions where Scrutiny can play a valuable role in shaping and improving. Scrutiny of
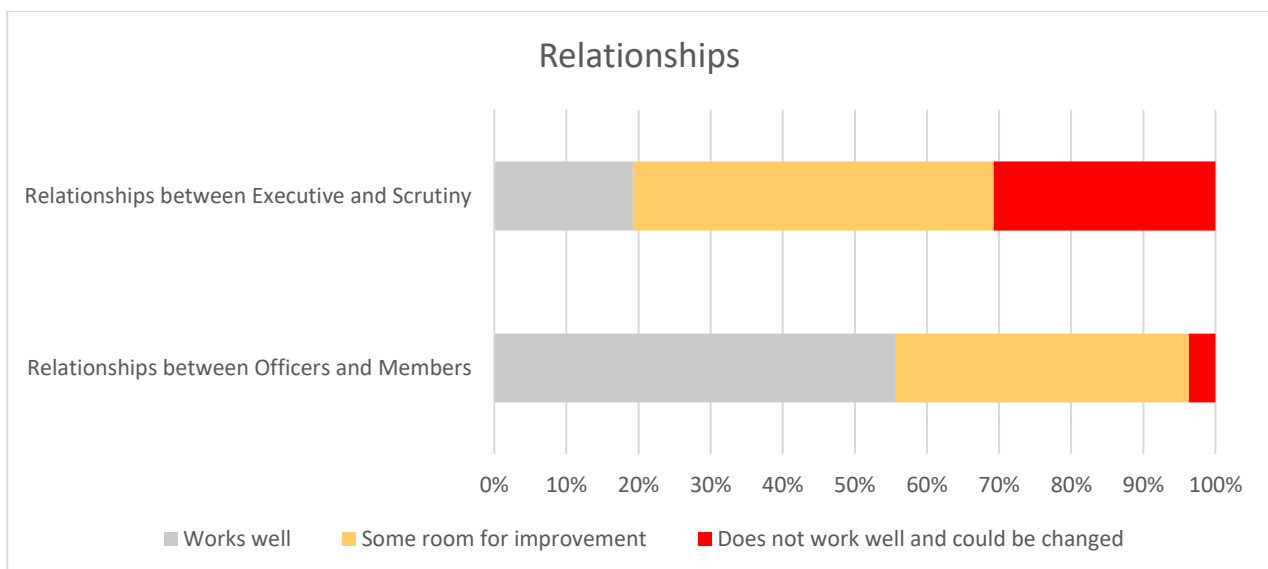
Cabinet Members should form a key part of Committee business, and Cabinet Members regularly attending scrutiny to answer questions on items within their portfolio responsibilities is vital.

> **We recommend:**
>
> - **Greater visible alignment with the ambitions in the Shropshire Plan;** with clarity over lines of enquiry which in turn will lead to the ability to see Scrutiny's impact and connections. This includes the selection of items and issues to look at as well as those put forward for task and finish groups.
> - **Building upon the approach taken to work programming** by applying a prioritisation tool and approaching this with dedicated time at yearly intervals.
> - **Tracking and follow up of recommendations** made to each Scrutiny Committee. Each Committee should be clear about the impact that they have had, and greater tracking of recommendations will support this.
> - **A dedicated programme for member training and development**. This must be Member-led to support increased awareness and understanding for each Committee. This should also reduce the need for items for information and noting at Committee.

5. Members leading and fostering good relationships

The survey results suggest that there are areas for improvement in relationships, particularly those between the Executive and Scrutiny and in the set up and execution of Scrutiny.

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5.1. Relationship between Executive and Scrutiny

Scrutiny's success is dependent on the right members, with the right capabilities and attributes, leading and managing the scrutiny function. Scrutiny chairs have a vital task in leading the committee, ensuring that it builds and maintains strong relationships with the Cabinet, officers and relevant external partners. Chairs can also lead on setting the working culture of Scrutiny, helping it to set and uphold high standards of behaviour, engagement, and debate, ensuring good cross-party working.

The lack of opposition members involved in Scrutiny chairing roles was raised as an issue in our evidence gathering. This issue was raised by almost all opposition members who answered the survey. Although there is no single 'right' approach to selecting chairs - the emphasis ought to be on selecting chairs based on skill set and capability and providing ongoing training and support. There is clearly an undercurrent of dissatisfaction in this area. In our experience opposition Chairship does not automatically lead to better Scrutiny.

This is closely related to another issue raised by members of the Opposition, that of political proportionality on Scrutiny Committees. Some members reported concern that the majority of seats on Scrutiny are held by the Administration. Committee allocation of sets must reflect council political balance in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. However, the number of seats on each Committee is entirely determined by the Council. Currently there are ten seats on each Scrutiny Committee, with some members holding seats on more than one Scrutiny Committee.

We heard that proactive engagement between Scrutiny and the Executive could be improved before scrutiny meetings. We understand that development work has been done with the leadership team including Cabinet e.g., on away days, and we would suggest that this is extended to Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs. Members of the Administration should work with the Opposition to move beyond politics and political point scoring. Effective working and impact can often achieve this where the focus is upon issues, rather than grabbing headlines or point scoring. To enshrine a positive way of working it may be helpful to develop a Scrutiny-Cabinet protocol in the constitution. It would also be advisable to share the chairing of task groups to members from any group, as well as to consider allocating Vice Chair positions to Members from different political parties than the Chair positions.

5.2. Relationships between officers and members

This was an area that both officers and members praised. It was felt that in the large part Shropshire is a welcoming council to both officers and members. The word 'trust' was used in several interviews, suggesting that there is a strong trust relationship between officers and members. This was echoed in the members' survey with most respondents saying that relationships between officers and members works well, and less than 5% saying that it does not work well.

This is positive, but scrutiny members should also make sure that they are asking for evidence behind assertions. There was support for scrutiny being more challenging, particularly from officers. Scrutiny should not be challenging for the sake of it, but it should sense check the data

upon which assumptions rest. This does not mean difficult, or hostile. However, it should be asking forensic questions and building upon understanding to ask questions which are illuminating. Scrutiny should be looking to understand the evidence behind presentations and reassurance given by officers.

5.3. Structure

On structure and behaviours, the results on the graph below have been presented according to the most positive 'works well' response'. Across all of these areas about twenty percent of responded feel that the areas 'do not work well and should be changed'. This is consistent with frustrations mentioned by opposition councillors.

The number of Committees and what they cover is the area with the most negative feeling, although 40% of members felt that this worked well. It is for local authorities to determine the structure that works best for them, and there are examples of good scrutiny with a range of number of committees. The structure of scrutiny should provide clarity, currently it is extremely unclear where some issues should be discussed, and this was raised in many of the conversations we had with members and officers. In particular we heard that there are confusions over what issues should go to Health & Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and which to the People Overview Committee and likewise items could also legitimately be considered at the Place Committee and at the Communities Committee. There is currently no effective mechanism to avoid duplication of similar or overlapping reports coming to these Committees.
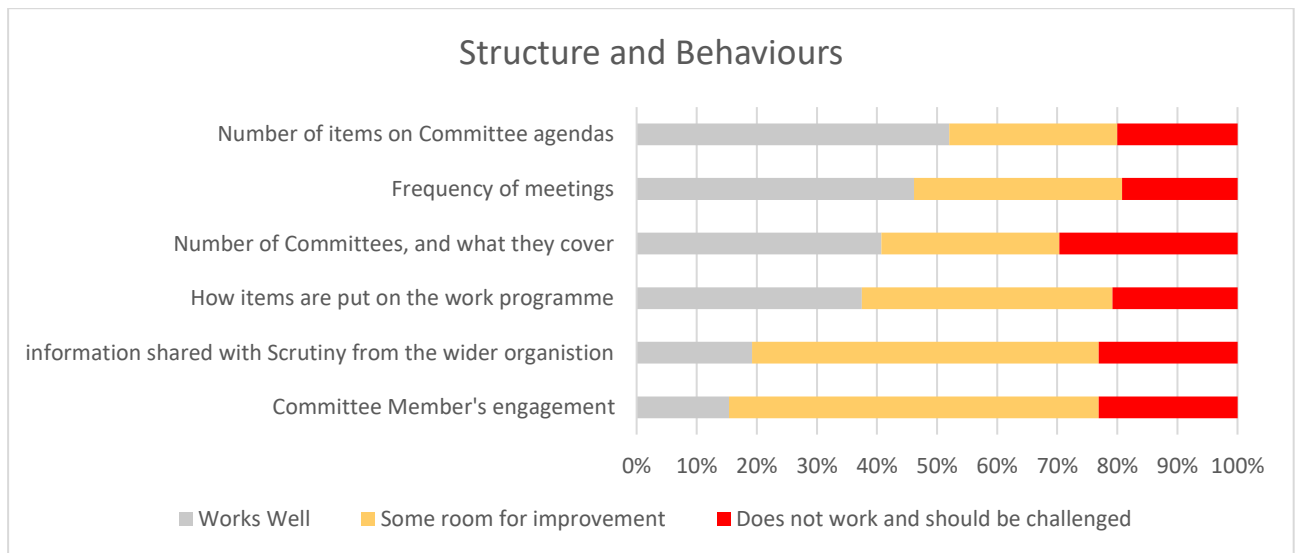
In addition, the engagement of committee members was an area that 85% of the survey respondents believe could be improved, or does not work. In our conversations, several members said that they could not identify the value of Scrutiny. In our experience this is linked to engagement; if councillors feel like they are making an impact, they are more likely to be engaged.

We were told that there is a mixed level of engagement from those who sit on Scrutiny, with some members having poor attendance and others showing minimal levels of involvement within

committee meetings. Although this is not the case across the board, and some members are very conscientious. It was suggested that some members may feel disenchanted with the impact that they can make through scrutiny. However, engagement, contributions, and challenge from all members of Scrutiny is essential if individual members wish to have an influence on shaping decisions, and if Scrutiny is to fulfil its role in being a space for cross-party inquiry. This not only requires attendance, but background preparation for meetings.

> **We recommend:**
>
> - **The Council changes the current scrutiny committee structure.** This would support more focused work programming and clarity about where issues should be considered. The current makes up of 5 Committees is confusing and unhelpful and not aligned to either the elements of the Shropshire Plan or Directorates. The Council could use either of these structures to better organise scrutiny work.
> - **Involve all members of scrutiny, regardless of party, in direction setting and scrutiny leadership. This should include consideration of opposition Vice Chairs and a wide range of members chairing task groups and leading on scrutiny work.** It should also include a transparent approach to work programming so that all Scrutiny Members feel ownership of the issues on the work programme.
> - **Development of a Cabinet-Scrutiny Protocol.** The exercise of development of this protocol may help formalise how Cabinet and Scrutiny work together for the benefit of the people of Shropshire. Conversations to develop such a protocol should involve members of all political parties.

6. Making an impact.

The survey of members found that evaluation of impact should be challenged or has room for improvement for almost 90% of councillors. Likewise, the follow up of recommendations needed to be changed for more than half of respondents, with less than 20% saying that this worked well. The survey results found that there were high levels of dissatisfaction across many areas of impact. In discussion many members were unclear about how to achieve impactful scrutiny; '*a lot of the time I feel scrutiny is a pointless talking shop'*. Some Members were also open about a lack of understanding about the specific areas they are asked to scrutinise. Members felt that more briefings to provide them with core knowledge, especially on more complex or technical issues would be welcome and equip them better as scrutineers.
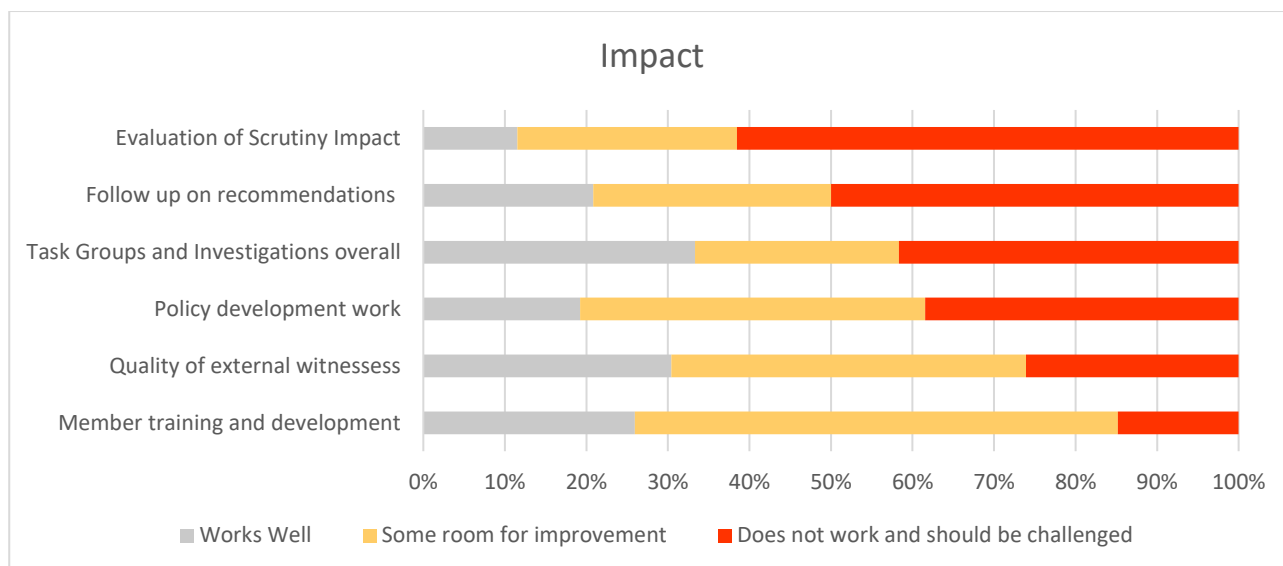
Impact

6.1. Annual report

More than 60% of respondents thought that evaluation of scrutiny impact had significant room for improvement. We heard that there was not an annual report produced last year. However, it has been the practice to do so in previous years. However, these were reported to have been more focussed upon describing process rather than majoring upon the value that scrutiny has added.

Best practice in this area is for an annual report that gives a clear narrative about the contribution that scrutiny has made to good decision making at the Council. This might include an evaluation of the impact of resolutions and changes that have been made as a result of scrutiny work, as well as a high-level description of activities that Scrutiny has undertaken. This is a useful platform for non-scrutiny members to understand the work of the Scrutiny function, as well as for those members involved in scrutiny to present their successes.

6.2. Task and finish groups

On task groups and investigations overall, a third of members believed they worked well. However, this is set against more than 40% saying that they do not work and should be changed. This reflects our findings, where there are some areas of effective work, but this is inconsistent.

We understand that some task and finish groups are set up because of an absence or a lack of information about a particular area, rather than to develop policy or review an issue or service. Whilst we would expect learning to be a central feature of a task and finish group, we would look for a more active element as well. There are other approaches which would more usefully be used to ascertain information. Briefing papers and sessions as determined by councillors would help to focus task and finish group topics on areas where scrutiny members could make the greatest contribution.

The membership of task and finish groups was also mentioned in several interviews. We have heard that task group membership tends to be made up of the same 4-5 councillors. The chair is also usually the chair of the committee itself. They are also usually sought to be politically

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balanced. Often in councils, in investigative work of this kind, political proportionality is not required, and members can choose to be involved in issues that interest them. This in turn often means that Members are more committed to seeing the work have impact.

There should be a clear approach and evaluation of what each scrutiny project is hoping to achieve before it begins. This in turn may lead to fewer, more focussed investigative areas of work. Members on the committee need to be more challenging to require their colleagues to give anticipated benefits of carrying out work of this nature. In conversations, many of the officers and members we spoke to were unclear about the contribution of scrutiny to policy development. Follow up of recommendations to look at impact is also essential to develop an understanding of what Scrutiny has achieved.

6.3. Public engagement

Two thirds of respondents to the survey felt that there was room for improvement in the involvement of external witnesses. This was also a theme that was mentioned in interviews. Scrutiny should explore and experiment with ways to allow greater access, openness, and engagement with the public. This could include scrutiny going on more site visits in the community, inviting the public to offer ideas for work plans, and greater use of social media channels for resident input, and communicating the progress and impact of scrutiny work. We heard that this had happened in the past, but less so recently.

We recommend:

- **A more thorough methodology applied to investigative work**, including **triangulation of evidence and undertaking of primary research.** This begins with the selection of topics for task and finish groups and should also include more forensic lines of enquiry and a broader witness base, including benchmarking with other local authorities. It should also include an evaluation of the value to undertaking the work and looking at alternative approaches to get information.
- **A refreshed approach to the annual report focussing upon impact of scrutiny work.**

Thank you and acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Chairs, Members of the Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet Members and Officers who took part in interviews for their time, insight, and open views.

Yours sincerely

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Proposed Overview and Scrutiny Committee Struicture and Remits 2023

Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee	People Overview an Scrutiny Committee	Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Overall Council Performance (including financial, quality and activity) Effectiveness and delivery of the Improvement and Transformation programme Support Services including: Finance, ICT, HR, OD, Legal and Member Services Priority: Healthy Organisation Directorates: Resources Directorate Chief Executive's Office	The Council's duty of health and wellbeing Including needs assessments, strategies, prevention, and commissioning) Planning and delivery of Health Services (HOSC) Integrated Care System (including Council services) Priorities: Health People Healthy Economy Directorates: Health and Wellbeing People (ASC services interfacing with the NHS e.g. for safe discharge of patients) External focus: Health Trusts which are based in, impact on or provide services in the Shropshire Council Area Integrated Care System in the Shropshire Council Area	Services for adults including: Social Care, Safeguarding, Special needs services, Services for children including: Social Care Safeguarding Special needs services Schools and learning Priority: Healthy People Directorate: People Directorate	Economic growth Highways infrastructure and connectivity Housing (including affordable and social housing) Climate strategy and action plan Culture and Leisure Flooding and water management 16+ Education and learning and skills Community Safety Priorities: Healthy Economy Healthy Environment Directorate: Place Directorate

All Overview and Scrutiny Committees will:

- Start from a position and a focus on the delivery of outcomes for Shropshire communities and the Council's priorities
- Set their own work programme based on their remit and a clear view of the value that they will add through their work
- Work together on topics that cut across more than one committee's remits
- Identify the approaches that they want to take to carry out their work e.g. task and finish groups, thematic committee meetings, whole committee investigations
- Conside how the Council is working with partners at all levels to deliver the priorities and strategic objectives
- Make evidence-based recommendations, triangulating the intelligence and insights gathered through their investigations
- Investigate topics before decisions have been made by the decision makers
- Review the impact and progress following the implementation of decisions
- Respond to Call-ins for topics that are within their remit
- Report on the impact and added value their have achieved each year to Council

	Committee and Date	Item
	Council 30th March 2023	
		Public

Communities Overview Committee Annual Report 2021/22

Responsible Officer:	James Walton		
email:	James.walton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258915
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	All		

1. Synopsis

Communities Overview Committee looked at a range of key topics in 2021/22 which are summarised in this paper.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Shropshire Plan includes 'Healthy Organisation' as a priority outcome and the Strategic Objective that "We will ensure councillors are supported to advocate for their constituents but to also be ambassadors for the council". This report shares the annual statement for 2021/22 for the Communities Overview Committee.

2.3 The annual statements for each overview and scrutiny committee for 2022/23 will be reported to Council during 2023/24

3. Recommendations

3.1. Members are asked to consider and comment on the 2021/22 annual statement for Communities Overview Committee.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. Effective Overview and Scrutiny is a feature of the Council's governance arrangements, particularly where the Council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range factors that could result in risks to Council of not doing O&S effectively.
- Failure to challenge and hold decision makers to account.
- Failure to link O&S work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management – failure to demonstrate added value
- Failure to carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations.
- Failure to engage partners and providers.
- Failure to ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources.
- Failure to ensure that O&S can operate as the voice of communities.
- Failure to draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

4.2. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- Operating in an apolitical manner.
- Clarity of vision and purpose
- Overview and Scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
- Effective engagement and commitment by Members and officers at all levels, including Cabinet, Opposition Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs and Senior Officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
- Robust Work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
- Access to and availability of robust data and intelligence
- Good relationship with partners and providers

4.3. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have remits that cover the breath of the work of the Council, as well as looking externally including Health Services and provision through Health Overview and Scrutiny requirements.

4.4. Topics for Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes are identified based on a number of different considerations including an understanding of risks to the Council, employees, people who use services, to service themselves, and to communities. These may be identified through reviewing performance information and comparing with others, changes to national and local policies, budget information, feedback from communities and

customers/service users, feedback from partners/providers, and reports from regulators.

4.5. During overview and scrutiny work evidence will be gathered that builds on this understanding to inform the development of conclusions and evidence-based recommendations.

4.6. The use of external peer challenge such as that offered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny provides objective review and feedback about opportunities to develop the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. There are no direct financial implications associated with the annual statements of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees set out in this report.

5.2. Effective overview and scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of "what works" at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. All reports to Overview and Scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change.

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

6.3. Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore focus of the Place Overview Committee i.e.
- delivery of the agreed lower carbon footprint and emissions targets, including air quality, by the Council and its partners;
- actions to protect, enhance and value Shropshire's our natural resources and respect the historic environment;
- arrangements to safeguard and promote a clean and green environment;
- the delivery of work to reduce landfill and waste;
- management and development of the physical and digital infrastructure

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7. Background

7.1.   Overview and Scrutiny Committees report to Council annually as part of the organisation's governance arrangements. This includes the work that they have completed in the previous 12 months and the impact they have had through their evidence-based recommendations.

7.2.   This report sets out the annual statement for 2021/22 for Communities Overview Committee.

8. Annual Scrutiny Statement

8.1 Communities Overview Committee

- **Burial Capacity**
The committee received two updates on work to ensure sufficient cemetery capacity in Shropshire. It agreed that this was an ongoing issue that needed to be kept under review and asked that regular updates be provided to the committee in future.

- **Public Rights of Way**
Committee members expressed concern at the reduction in accessibility of public rights of way caused by the pandemic and the inability of volunteer groups to operate and maintain the paths. The committee also noted that the service was hampered in its ability to do more work to maintain paths by an inability to keep and use income it had generated. It called on the council to explore how the service could retain this money for this purpose in future.

    In a further meeting the committee also raised concern at the staff shortages in the service, as well as ongoing requirements to bridge repairs to keep rights of way open. It sought assurance that the council would recruit to fill these posts, and that funding would be made available to effect repairs to address compromised safety.

- **Rural transport**
The committee heard how the council was seeking new ways to deliver public transport in rural areas. It aimed to move from limited scheduled services to a demand-responsive service that would serve more destinations more frequently and could link better to scheduled rail services. The committee supported the proposals and asked that any changes to services and plans be brought to the committee in due course.

- **Libraries Strategy**
The libraries service provided the committee with initial thoughts that it proposed to develop into a formal strategy in due course. The committee members recommended that any future strategy recognised the pivotal role libraries played in communities, particularly in rural communities. They also

recommended that the strategy made full use of commercial opportunities to ensure the long-term sustainability of facilities.

- **Community and Rural Strategy**
  The committee received a draft of the strategy. Members suggested that the strategy needed to be brought to grass roots level and recognise the huge resources available in rural parishes and towns. It advised that ongoing development of the strategy should be undertaken with parishes as they had a good understanding of their own needs. It recommended that low level financial input may be needed in order to enable them to provide support in their own locality.

- **Armed Forces Covenant**
  The committee endorsed the covenant and agreed that it would recommend that ex-service staff should receive greater priority for consideration in the housing allocation policy. It agreed to make this recommendation when it considered a revised Housing Allocations Policy later in the year.

- **Domestic Abuse**
  Following the publication of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, the committee was keen to learn how the council intended to put its new legal duties into place. It asked that a draft strategy for the council was produced and published for agreement in due course, and recommended that the council seek White Ribbon Campaign accreditation.

- **Flooding**
  The committee asked for an update on previous recommendations and other learning resulting from flooding throughout Shropshire in late 2019 and early 2020. It was assured that much of the learning from that flooding had been put into place, in particular a new Severe Weather Plan and Flood Action plan. It noted that considerable volunteer effort that had been deployed to mitigate the impact of flooding and recommended that Shropshire Council create a reserve of volunteers, from inside and outside of the council, who could be deployed to respond to other incidents or emergencies.

- **Strategic Housing Review**
  The committee scrutinised a review of the housing revenue account management function. It agreed with the review that STAR Housing be retained and not merged with the council's Cornovii Developments.

- **Blue Badge Scheme**
  Committee members raised concerns that efforts to digitalise council functions had made it considerably more difficult to apply for a Blue Badge for some people, particularly older residents. The committee recommended that the service work with AgeUK locally to identify ways to support applicants who were unable to use digital services.

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

Communities Overview Committee agendas, papers and minutes for May 2021 to March 2022.

Local Member:

All

Appendices

None

Committee and Date	Item
Council 30ᵗʰ March 2023	Public

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22

Responsible Officer:	James Walton	
email:	James.walton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel: 01743 258915
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	All	

1. Synopsis

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee looked at a range of key topics in 2021/22 which are summarised in this paper.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Shropshire Plan includes 'Healthy Organisation' as a priority outcome and the Strategic Objective that "We will ensure councillors are supported to advocate for their constituents but to also be ambassadors for the council". This report shares the annual statement for 2021/22 for the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.3 The annual statements for each overview and scrutiny committee for 2022/23 will be reported to Council during 2023/24

3. Recommendations

3.1. Members are asked to consider and comment on the 2021/22 annual statement for Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. Effective Overview and Scrutiny is a feature of the Council's governance arrangements, particularly where the Council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range factors that could result in risks to Council of not doing O&S effectively.
- Failure to challenge and hold decision makers to account.
- Failure to link O&S work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management – failure to demonstrate added value
- Failure to carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations.
- Failure to engage partners and providers.
- Failure to ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources.
- Failure to ensure that O&S can operate as the voice of communities.
- Failure to draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

4.2. To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- Operating in an apolitical manner.
- Clarity of vision and purpose
- Overview and Scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
- Effective engagement and commitment by Members and officers at all levels, including Cabinet, Opposition Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs and Senior Officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
- Robust Work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
- Access to and availability of robust data and intelligence
- Good relationship with partners and providers

4.3. Overview and Scrutiny Committees have remits that cover the breath of the work of the Council, as well as looking externally including Health Services and provision through Health Overview and Scrutiny requirements.

4.4. Topics for Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes are identified based on a number of different considerations including an understanding of risks to the Council, employees, people who use services, to service themselves, and to communities. These may be identified through reviewing performance information and comparing with others, changes to national and local policies, budget information, feedback from communities and customers/service users, feedback from partners/providers, and reports from regulators.

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4.5. During overview and scrutiny work evidence will be gathered that builds on this understanding to inform the development of conclusions and evidence-based recommendations.

4.6. The use of external peer challenge such as that offered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny provides objective review and feedback about opportunities to develop the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. There are no direct financial implications associated with the annual statements of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees set out in this report.

5.2. Effective overview and scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of "what works" at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.

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6.1. All reports to Overview and Scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change.

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- delivery of the agreed lower carbon footprint and emissions targets, including air quality, by the Council and its partners;
- actions to protect, enhance and value Shropshire's our natural resources and respect the historic environment;
- arrangements to safeguard and promote a clean and green environment;
- the delivery of work to reduce landfill and waste;
- management and development of the physical and digital infrastructure

7. Background

Page 93

7.1.   Overview and Scrutiny Committees report to Council annually as part of the organisation's governance arrangements. This includes the work that they have completed in the previous 12 months and the impact they have had through their evidence-based recommendations.

7.2.   This report sets out the annual statements for 2021/22 for Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. Annual Scrutiny Statements

8.1 Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- **Delivering Public Health Outcomes**
  The committee continued to monitor closely the change in strategy in how public health funding is spent. The council had moved to tackle the wider determinants of health, in particular housing, allowing it to focus on providing more comprehensive services for its most vulnerable residents. The committee challenged the council's approach and scrutinised its performance monitoring and project spend. The committee recognised that this constituted a long-term strategy whose benefits would become apparent many years later and agreed to focus future scrutiny onto the projects and services directly.

- **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**
  The committee was critical of the failure of the council, through the Health and Wellbeing Board, to commission and complete the local authority's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), a key statutory document on which partnership health planning should be based. The committee continued to monitor progress as the council completed its Special Educational Needs JSNA and developed its proposals for place-based assessments to mirror the council's place-based planning.

- **Adult Mental Health Services**
  The committee received a programme of briefing on the range of support services for mental health across adult services. These included housing for adults with significant and enduring mental health problems, and adults with learning difficulties with individual capacities for independent living. The committee heard how mental health teams were working more closely with drug and alcohol teams to provide holistic care and agreed to focus a future work programme item on this vital component of service support.

- **111 Services**
  Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) provided the committee with the results of their review of the triage of 111 non-emergency services. A programme to offer GP appointments directly had not achieved its intended level of uptake. Members sought assurance that the CCG considered the demographic profile and associated age-related changes in demand when assessing service capacity. The committee learned that a review of high-intensity service users had provided an opportunity to identify and provide more appropriate care to these users, reducing the burden on the service in turn. Member referred this matter to the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny

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Committee, asking that it also scrutinise ambulance response times.

- **Independent Living**
  Members took part in two online briefings on how the council promoted independent living through assistive technology and new housing developments that catered for the needs of adults with additional support needs. The committee supported the focus on promoting independent living and using technology to achieve that.

- **Health in All policies**
  Following its decision to focus on the delivery of projects and services to realise the public health outcomes framework, the committee placed its focus on emerging Health in All Policies approach, embedding the council's public health duty into all of its policy and priorities. Public Health were working closely with the development of Local Transport Plan 4, the first major council policy to embed this approach. The committee endorsed this approach to setting policy.

- **Winter Plan**
  The committee scrutinised the learning at the end of the operation of the council's winter plan, seeking to identify areas of focus as the local authority prepared for the coming year's winter pressures. The committee received reassurance around effective and close working with the voluntary and community sector. And heard that the additional winter bed capacity worked very well in increasing transfers of care from hospitals.

  Members felt that the public perception of the discharging process was that it was slow, and it would be appropriate for this to be scrutinised. Members were advised that the team would be looking at the journey to discharge, which was complex, and that there was a lot of work taking place surrounding this which could be presented in the future to give the committee and communities more assurance.

- **Joint commissioning**
  The committee looked at the emerging integrated approach to commissioning with health partners. Members raised concern that partnerships cannot be successfully formed when data is not being shared. Members were advised that joint dashboards had been set up and data sharing protocols were being developed. This would enable scrutiny of progress and impact and the holding of decision makers to account. It was noted that local decisions would be considered by a local board before being implemented and that the council had a strong voice when it came to decision making.

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

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee agendas, papers and minutes for May 2021 to March 2022.

Local Member:

All

Appendices

None

Committee and Date	Item
Council 30ᵗʰ March 2023	
	Public

People Overview Committee Annual Report 2021/22

Responsible Officer:	James Walton		
email:	James.walton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258915
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	All		

1. Synopsis

People Overview Committee looked at a range of key topics in 2021/22 which are summarised in this paper.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Shropshire Plan includes 'Healthy Organisation' as a priority outcome and the Strategic Objective that "We will ensure councillors are supported to advocate for their constituents but to also be ambassadors for the council". This report shares the annual statement for 2021/22 for the People Overview Committee.

2.3 The annual statements for each overview and scrutiny committee for 2022/23 will be reported to Council during 2023/24

3. Recommendations

3.1. Members are asked to consider and comment on the 2021/22 annual statement for People Overview Committee.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1.   Effective Overview and Scrutiny is a feature of the Council's governance arrangements, particularly where the Council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range factors that could result in risks to Council of not doing O&S effectively.

- Failure to challenge and hold decision makers to account.
- Failure to link O&S work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management – failure to demonstrate added value
- Failure to carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations.
- Failure to engage partners and providers.
- Failure to ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources.
- Failure to ensure that O&S can operate as the voice of communities.
- Failure to draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

4.2.   To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:

- Operating in an apolitical manner.
- Clarity of vision and purpose
- Overview and Scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
- Effective engagement and commitment by Members and officers at all levels, including Cabinet, Opposition Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs and Senior Officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
- Robust Work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
- Access to and availability of robust data and intelligence
- Good relationship with partners and providers

4.3.   Overview and Scrutiny Committees have remits that cover the breath of the work of the Council, as well as looking externally including Health Services and provision through Health Overview and Scrutiny requirements.

4.4.   Topics for Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes are identified based on a number of different considerations including an understanding of risks to the Council, employees, people who use services, to service themselves, and to communities. These may be identified through reviewing performance information and comparing with others, changes to national and local policies, budget information, feedback from communities and customers/service users, feedback from partners/providers, and reports from regulators.

4.5. During overview and scrutiny work evidence will be gathered that builds on this understanding to inform the development of conclusions and evidence-based recommendations.

4.6. The use of external peer challenge such as that offered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny provides objective review and feedback about opportunities to develop the effectiveness and impact of overview and scrutiny.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. There are no direct financial implications associated with the annual statements of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees set out in this report.

5.2. Effective overview and scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of "what works" at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. All reports to Overview and Scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change.

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

6.3. Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore focus of the Place Overview Committee i.e.
- delivery of the agreed lower carbon footprint and emissions targets, including air quality, by the Council and its partners;
- actions to protect, enhance and value Shropshire's our natural resources and respect the historic environment;
- arrangements to safeguard and promote a clean and green environment;
- the delivery of work to reduce landfill and waste;
- management and development of the physical and digital infrastructure

7. Background

7.1. Overview and Scrutiny Committees report to Council annually as part of the organisation's governance arrangements. This includes the work that they

have completed in the previous 12 months and the impact they have had through their evidence-based recommendations.

7.2. This report sets out the annual statement for 2021/22 for People Overview Committee

8. Annual Scrutiny Statements

8.1 People Overview Committee

- **Young People's Substance Misuse Services**
  Following the committee's scrutiny of criminal exploitation, it scrutinised more closely services supporting vulnerable children and young adults. The committee were assured that the service worked closely with other agencies, highlighting the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

- **School Places**
  Members of the committee raised concerns that future housing growth in areas of the county could result in a lack of school places for those communities. Following their work over several meetings they were reassured and concluded that school place planning processes were robust and embedded into strategic planning for housing growth.

- **Covid19**
  During the year the committee explored the short and longer-term impact of the Covid19 pandemic on the lives of children and young people. The members supported the council's work to commission out of term support to vulnerable families. The committee tracked the increase in children becoming looked after, as well as the drop in attainment in some children who had attended school remotely during the pandemic. These concerns informed the committee's work programme.

- **School exclusions**
  This topic was a priority identified from the committee's earlier work into criminal exploitation. The committee members were concerned by the rising number of children being expelled from school and that their increased vulnerability to exploitation. Members focussed on the high prevalence of children with a special education need and recognised the benefits of keeping these children in mainstream education where possible. The committee recognised the central role that Early Help service played in supporting children who were at risk of being expelled from school, and in doing so welcomed the increased budget allocated to the service.

- **Stepping Stones**
  Shropshire Council's Financial Strategy task and finish group asked the committee to scrutinise the implementation and performance of Stepping Stones, the council's holistic, psychologically informed service, providing wrap around, customised support for looked after children, young people and adults. The committee welcomed a project that had demonstrated creativity

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and focus to deliver better care for children by moving them from residential care, often some distance from Shropshire, into home environments.

- **Recruitment**
  A recurring theme throughout the year, and a focus of the Financial Strategy task and finish group, was how Shropshire Council responded to the national shortages in critical staff such as social workers and youth workers. The committee endorsed both services commitment to their workforce by developing apprenticeships and graduate training development programmes. As a result of this the youth service had been able to be fully staffed.

- **Youth Work**
  The committee praised the service on its commitment to developing its work force, filling all the posts despite a shortage of qualified workers. It pressed the service to seek clarity on funding through town and parish council services, who were central to services throughout Shropshire.

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

People Overview Committee agendas, papers and minutes for May 2021 to March 2022.

Local Member:

All

Appendices

None

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Committee and Date

Council
30th March 2023

Item

Public

Place Overview Committee Annual Report 2021/22

Responsible Officer:	James Walton	
email:	James.walton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258915
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	All	

1. Synopsis

Place Overview Committee looked at a range of key topics in 2021/22 which are summarised in this paper.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Shropshire Plan includes 'Healthy Organisation' as a priority outcome and the Strategic Objective that "We will ensure councillors are supported to advocate for their constituents but to also be ambassadors for the council". This report shares the annual statement for 2021/22 for the Place Overview Committee.

2.3 The annual statements for each overview and scrutiny committee for 2022/23 will be reported to Council during 2023/24

3. Recommendations

3.1. Members are asked to consider and comment on the 2021/22 annual statement for Place Overview Committee.

Contact: Tom Dodds, 01743 258518   1

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1.   Effective Overview and Scrutiny is a feature of the Council's governance arrangements, particularly where the Council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range factors that could result in risks to Council of not doing O&S effectively.
- Failure to challenge and hold decision makers to account.
- Failure to link O&S work to the delivery of the council's priorities and risk management – failure to demonstrate added value
- Failure to carry out thorough and appropriate research to make evidence-based recommendations.
- Failure to engage partners and providers.
- Failure to ensure that structures and models of operation are fit for purpose and match ambition and available resources.
- Failure to ensure that O&S can operate as the voice of communities.
- Failure to draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

4.2.   To mitigate, tolerate or eradicate these risks, enablers for effective scrutiny include:
- Operating in an apolitical manner.
- Clarity of vision and purpose
- Overview and Scrutiny support availability, capability and capacity
- Effective engagement and commitment by Members and officers at all levels, including Cabinet, Opposition Leaders, Scrutiny Chairs and Senior Officers who play a central role in setting the tone and direction
- Robust Work programming and prioritisation of topics with clear objectives and expected impacts
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- Good relationship with partners and providers

4.3.   Overview and Scrutiny Committees have remits that cover the breath of the work of the Council, as well as looking externally including Health Services and provision through Health Overview and Scrutiny requirements.

4.4.   Topics for Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programmes are identified based on a number of different considerations including an understanding of risks to the Council, employees, people who use services, to service themselves, and to communities. These may be identified through reviewing performance information and comparing with others, changes to national and local policies, budget information, feedback from communities and customers/service users, feedback from partners/providers, and reports from regulators.

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5. Financial Implications

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5.2. Effective overview and scrutiny produces evidence-based recommendations. These can be informed by learning from best practice and an understanding of "what works" at other similar local authorities, as well as developing a robust picture of what the situation locally based on data, intelligence and insights. Where adopted recommendations can help with the efficiency and effectiveness of services that can be delivered differently, as well as informing the development of current and new policies.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. All reports to Overview and Scrutiny committees, as with all council committees, include appraisals of the impact of the report content on climate change.

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

6.3. Climate change and carbon reduction related issues are directly identified in the remit and therefore focus of the Place Overview Committee i.e.
- delivery of the agreed lower carbon footprint and emissions targets, including air quality, by the Council and its partners;
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- management and development of the physical and digital infrastructure

7. Background

7.1. Overview and Scrutiny Committees report to Council annually as part of the organisation's governance arrangements. This includes the work that they have completed in the previous 12 months and the impact they have had through their evidence-based recommendations.

7.2. This report sets out the annual statements for 2021/22 for Place Overview Committee

8. Annual Scrutiny Statement

8.1 Place Overview Committee

- **Highways Improvement Plan**
  The committee were broadly supportive of the plan but raised numerous concerns about its implementation. They expressed dissatisfaction with the MyShropshire portal for reporting highways repairs and repeated their earlier concerns about gulley cleansing. Since the committee considered this topic Shropshire Council has adopted a new portal for repairs, (FixMyStreet) and has increased the amount of gulley cleansing that it carries out.

- **Winter Maintenance**
  The committee formed a working group to look in detail at the council's current winter maintenance service. The group made numerous recommendations, particularly around better communication with town and parish councils and empowering local communities to manage their own gritting outside of the council's strategic gritting routes. As a result of this work, the council has improved the availability and replenishment of gritting bins and has improved its communication with town and parish councils through the Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC).

- **Road Traffic Collisions**
  At the request of the Head of Transport and Environment the committee scrutinised an analysis of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions. It recommended that the Public Health team be involved from the outset in developing the Local Transport Plan. Since then, Public Health have been pivotal in developing the health impact assessment informing development of the plan.

- **Fireworks**
  The committee considered in depth the role the local authority could take in restricting the sale and discharge of fireworks. It instructed officers to write to Government to urge further restrictions on the sale of fireworks, and to reduce the maximum permitted noise level of fireworks intended for public displays.

- **Kier and WSP contracts**
  The committee continued to monitor the council's contracts with Kier and WSP to provide highways professional and operational services. The committee was positive about the evolution of the contract with Kier, in particular the adoption of a hybrid contracted/in-house services. The committee believed that this would deliver a more responsive service while

reducing costs.

- **Highways diversions**
Following concerns from councillors, the committee scrutinised current arrangements for putting into place highways diversions. Following their concerns, Kier recruited a communications officer to work with local communities when a diversion needed to be put into place. The committee also supported a move to longer-term certainty of funding for highways, which would allow the service to plan work better and therefore have more time to support works with effective communications.

- **Signs and banners task and finish group**
On behalf of a previous task and finish group, the committee continued to press Cabinet for a response to some of the group's recommendations around on-street advertising. The committee also asked the council to review its charges for housing development signs.

- **Planning Committee Structures**
Council asked the committee to carry out a review of the impact of the reduction in number of planning committees from three to two. It carried out a survey of unitary and town and parish councils, as well as a desktop review of structures in other local authorities. The committee rejected the assertion that the reduction has degraded the quality of planning decisions, but made recommendations about ensuring regular training for Members about how to respond to planning applications.

- **Planning enforcement**
Members of the committee wished to scrutinise the impact of changes to the planning enforcement service. The committee made recommendations that it believed would improve communication of successful planning enforcement activity to the public and to elected members.

- **Local Transport Plan 4**
Scrutiny of the development of the plan resulted in members recommending that continued LTP development ensures that council decisions in February including the sustainable transport hierarchy principles, the involvement of public health and pathways to net zero including interim targets, are fully embedded.

- **Post Covid-19 Economic Renewal**
The committee focussed on the impact of the pandemic on retail centres in Shropshire, noting that Shrewsbury in particular had experienced a strong recovery in footfall and spending following the easing of pandemic regulations. Members agreed that future scrutiny of the Economic Growth Plan should focus on supporting those sectors that had been most severely impacted by the pandemic.

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

Place Overview Committee agendas, papers and minutes for May 2021 to March 2022.

Local Member:

All

Appendices

None

Committee and Date	Item
Council 30th March 2023	
	Public

Performance Management Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22

Responsible Officer:	James Walton		
email:	James.walton@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel:	01743 258915
Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	All		

1. Synopsis

Performance Management Scrutiny Committee looked at a range of key topics in 2021/22 which are summarised in this paper.

2. Executive Summary

2.1   The Shropshire Plan includes 'Healthy Organisation' as a priority outcome and the Strategic Objective that "We will ensure councillors are supported to advocate for their constituents but to also be ambassadors for the council". This report shares the annual statement for 2021/22 for the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee.

2.3   The annual statements for each overview and scrutiny committee for 2022/23 will be reported to Council during 2023/24

3. Recommendations

3.1.   Members are asked to consider and comment on the 2021/22 annual statement for Performance Management Scrutiny Committee.

REPORT

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1.   Effective Overview and Scrutiny is a feature of the Council's governance arrangements, particularly where the Council is operating executive arrangements. There are a range factors that could result in risks to Council of not doing O&S effectively.
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- Failure to draw on member knowledge and experience to inform policy development.

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6. Climate Change Appraisal

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   - delivery of the agreed lower carbon footprint and emissions targets, including air quality, by the Council and its partners;
   - actions to protect, enhance and value Shropshire's our natural resources and respect the historic environment;
   - arrangements to safeguard and promote a clean and green environment;
   - the delivery of work to reduce landfill and waste;
   - management and development of the physical and digital infrastructure

7. Background

7.1. Overview and Scrutiny Committees report to Council annually as part of the organisation's governance arrangements. This includes the work that they have completed in the previous 12 months and the impact they have had through their evidence-based recommendations.

7.2. This report sets out the annual statement for 2021/22 for Performance Management Scrutiny Committee.

8. Annual Scrutiny Statements

8.1 Performance Management Scrutiny Committee

- **Financial Strategy task and finish group**
  The committee formed a task and finish group to explore in greater depth how services were adapting to rapid changes in service demand and tighter financial constraints. It recognised how the council had responded creatively to deliver better services for less, focussing on the projects and initiatives that would redesign services to meet people's needs and deliver the Council's responsibilities. The committee agreed to forward these priority schemes for scrutiny by the respective thematic scrutiny committees.

- **Financial monitoring**
  As well as scrutiny of the financial strategy through its task and finish group, the committee had regular oversight of quarterly financial monitoring, allowing it to monitor adherence to plan and to hold directors and portfolio holders to account for outcomes. The committee members tracked and monitored the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on budgets, and in doing so considered distortions in service demand and the high levels of emergency funding. It scrutinised the dispersal of emergency funding and highlighted the difficulty in setting budgets in the light of continued uncertainty about future funding or service demand.

- **Performance monitoring**
  Throughout the year the committee received the regular quarterly performance monitoring report. Although this presented a useful snapshot of performance, the committee increasingly asked for more comprehensive performance information. Officers presented proposals for such information to be available online, updated in as the data became available, to allow all elected members to appraise performance and raise issues of concern. The committee continues to press the move at pace to deliver tools and access to the data vital to their delivering good oversight and scrutiny in holding decision makers to account.

- **Shropshire's Economic Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Framework**
  The committee looked at the work of the Economic Task Force, and its twin role of supporting businesses during the pandemic and the orientation of its strategy to adapt to changes arising from the pandemic. The committee were appreciative of the work of the economic growth team in disbursing grant relief to businesses during the pandemic.

  The committee recognised the framework identified both positive and negative impact of the pandemic, using these to inform and adapt its economic strategy.

  It noted the interdependence of key infrastructure projects around Shropshire, and their salience in generating prosperity throughout the area. The

committee looked forward to seeing this work informing the development of the next version of the Economic Growth Strategy.

- **Complaints, compliments and comments**
  The committee received the annual Customer Feedback report 2020/21 which sets out resident feedback to the council through complaints, compliments and comments. The committee noted the high number of complaints concerning highways matters and referred the matter to the Place Overview Committee. The Improvements to highways operations and performance, including better communications with residents became key themes for the Place Overview Committee in its work programme.

- **Climate and Ecology Bill**
  In response to a request from Council, the committee convened a task and finish group to agree a response to the Climate and Ecology Bill on behalf of Shropshire Council. It agreed to endorse most of the Bill but could not support the proposal for a citizens' assembly.

- **The Shropshire Plan**
  The committee endorsed the publication of The Shropshire Plan, the council's corporate plan. It approved of its thematic approach the underlying policy and service plan framework, and the ambition to track and monitor progress against the plan through rigorous, widely available performance management information. The committee stressed the vital importance of timely and comprehensive performance management information relevant to the priorities and the services and developments taking place to deliver them. They highlighted that it would be challenging to monitor and evidence progress and impact with the plan without them.

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

Performance Management Scrutiny Committee agendas, papers and minutes for May 2021 to March 2022.

Local Member:

All

Appendices

None

Committee and Date	Item
Council 30th March 2023	
	Public

Report of Chairman of Standards Committee

Responsible Officer:	Tim Collard	
email:	tim.collard@shropshire.gov.uk	Tel: 01743 352756
Responsible Member:	Chairman of Standards Committee – Councillor David Evans	

1. Synopsis

This report seeks to appraise members of the way in which allegations that Unitary/Town/Parish Councillors have failed to comply with their code of conduct were dealt with in 2022.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. Shropshire Council is required by the Localism Act 2012 to have arrangements in place to receive and, where appropriate, investigate allegations that members of Shropshire Council or the Town/Parish Councils in Shropshire have failed to comply with their code of conduct.

2.2. Upon receipt of an allegation that a member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct the Monitoring Officer has delegated authority to determine the next steps. A meeting of the Standards Sub Committee can be called to consider the next steps if the Monitoring Officer considers that it would not be appropriate for him to make that determination, perhaps because of the seniority of the member complained about or the seriousness of the allegations.

2.3. The initial steps include taking no action or referring the matter for an investigation or other action short of an investigation.

2.4. If the matter is referred for an investigation an officer will be appointed to undertake that investigation and to report back to the Monitoring Officer.

2.5. Where an investigation concludes that there has been a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct of Shropshire Council, the matter will be referred to the Standards Sub Committee with a recommended sanction (following consultation with one of the Independent People appointed in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 by Shropshire Council) for a final determination.

2.6. Where an investigation concludes that there has been a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct of a Town or Parish Council in Shropshire , the matter will be referred to the relevant Town or Parish Council with a recommended sanction (following consultation with one of the Independent People appointed in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 by Shropshire Council) for a final determination.

3. Recommendations

3.1. That the report be considered and debated.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

4.1. The recommendations in this report, if approved, will have no impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community, and other Consultation. High ethical conduct assists to promote confidence in the Council in its delivery of the Shropshire Plan

5. Financial Implications

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

6. Climate Change Appraisal

6.1. The proposals will have no impact on climate change.

7. Background

7.1. Throughout 2022 a total of 27 allegations were received. One was referred for an investigation but this was not completed as the Councillor who was the subject of the allegations resigned before its conclusion. There was no further action taken in respect of any others.

7.2 12 of the allegations related to Shropshire Councillors. The remainder were about Town and Parish Councillors in Shropshire.

7.3 The initial determination was made by the Monitoring Officer in 23 of the allegations received. The Standards Sub Committee considered the remaining 4.

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7.4 A very brief summary of the alleged misconduct and the initial determination follows in respect of a small selection of the allegations:

- Allowed verbal attack on Officer in Council meeting - Councillor resigned prior to initial determination
- Rude and aggressive during visit – apology offered
- Rude at a meeting of the parish council – behaviour not likely to amount to a failure to comply with the code of conduct
- Failed to respond to plea for help – apology offered and assistance provided
- Threatened another with Blackmail – conduct clearly not undertaken in official capacity so code of conduct not relevant. As the allegation might amount to a criminal offence, the complainant was advised to consider a referral to the Police.
- Abusive neighbour – conduct clearly not undertaken in official capacity so code of conduct not relevant.
- Aggressive, abusive & bullying – No action as apology received
- Accused the complainant of bullying him – no evidence of failure to comply with the code of conduct.
- Intimidating and Bullying email - no evidence of failure to comply with the code of conduct.

It should be noted that this is a summary of the allegation and does not represent the initial determination of the Monitoring Officer or Standards Sub Committee.

7.5 Many complaints relate to comments that have been posted on Social Media. In such circumstances it is very difficult to conclude, even on the balance of probabilities, that a Councillor is acting in an official capacity, particularly where the comments have been posted from their own personal social media account.

7.6 Although only one complaint was referred for investigation, most involve an initial exchange with the member complained of and this often leads to an apology. Given that an investigation itself might not lead to much more than an apology even if a breach of the Code is established this is considered a proportionate approach.

7.7 Complaints are often received which allege a failure to disclose pecuniary interests or the participation by a Councillor in a debate which relates to their disclosable pecuniary interests. Such allegations, if proven, could amount to a criminal offence so the Monitoring Officer is reluctant to take any action as to do so risks prejudicing a future criminal investigation undertaken by the Police. In such circumstances, the complainant is advised to refer the matter to the Police for consideration.

7.8 In the event that an allegation is investigated and the investigation finds a failure to comply with the code of conduct, any sanction imposed must fall short of impeding the Councillor from representing the public that elected them. There is currently no power for any action to be taken which has the effect of suspension or removal from office.

7.9 Training has been provided by the Monitoring Office throughout the year for newly elected Shropshire Councillors and also for Town and Parish Councils throughout Shropshire.

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

None

Local Member:	All
Appendices	

None

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Chair's Report of the Meeting held on 15 February 2023

Capital Programmes, Treasury Management Statement and Capital Strategy

The Fire Authority confirmed its 2023/24 to 2027/28 capital programmes, and approved its Capital Strategy for the same period, together with its Treasury Strategy Statement for 2023/24.

Adequacy of Reserves and Robustness of Budget

The Fire Authority agreed the reserves, recommended by its Strategy and Resources Committee, and noted the Treasurer's assurances covering the robustness of the 2023/24 budget and adequacy of the reserves.

Revenue Budget 2023/24

The Fire Authority considered recommendations made by its Strategy and Resources Committee in relation to the revenue budget for 2023/24.

The Committee had recommended, and the Fire Authority approved, a precept increase of 4.6% in 2023/24.

Revenue Budget: 2023/24 Precept

The Fire Authority agreed:

- A net budget requirement of £26,562,703
- A total precept of £19,277,587 to be levied on the billing authorities
- A Council Tax resulting in a basic amount of Council Tax at Band D of £111.16
- The amount payable by billing authorities for 2023/24, as follows:

Council	Precept £
Shropshire Council	13,128,672
Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council	6,148,915
	19,277,587

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Annual Plan 2023/24

The Fire Authority has agreed the proposed format of its Annual Plan 2023/24. Authority to agree the setting of corporate performance indicators and associated tolerances has been delegated to the Fire Authority's Strategy and Resources Committee, which will consider and agree this issue at its meeting on 22 March 2023.

Responsibility for agreeing the final layout and wording of the Annual Plan 2023/24 has been delegated to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Fire Authority.

Annual Review of Charges for Special Services 2023/24

The Fire Authority could not consider any amendments to its special service charges as the uplift to them is based on the firefighter pay award which is still under negotiation.

The Fire Authority delegated agreement of the amendment to the special service charges to the Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Fire Authority and the Chief Fire Officer in order that these can be agreed once the national pay negotiations have concluded.

Amendments to the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24

The Fire Authority has conducted its annual review of the Pay Policy Statement and agreed changes to reflect the non-uniform pay award and the pay increase for senior officers as agreed by the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel in February 2022.

The amended Statement, as agreed by the Fire Authority will now be published as required under the Localism Act 2011, with updates being made as further pay awards are agreed.

Fire Alliance Update

The Fire Authority received an update on the future of the Alliance between Shropshire and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Services.

The initial Alliance Programme contained four specific projects; of these ICT, Community Risk Management Planning and Procurement are now business as usual and are embedded within both Services. The focus of the Alliance will now be on the fourth project: Fire Control.

This is a joint project, based on collaborative and partnership working, to increase resilience and capacity across both Services' Control Room functions. The first phase of the project is the joint procurement of a Command and Control system. The Fire Authority will receive regular updates as the Project progresses.

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Eric Carter
Chair
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
February 2023

Background Papers

Agenda and Papers for the meeting of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority held on 15 February 2023

The agendas and reports (except for exempt or confidential items) for all Fire Authority meetings and those of its committees appear on the Brigade's website:

https://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/

To access reports, go to the Fire Service's website and follow the steps below.

- Click on 'About Us' at the top of the page
- Click on 'Fire and Rescue Authority'
- Click on 'Meetings' in the list on the right-hand side of the screen
- Click on '15 February 2023' and the various reports and appendices will be listed

If you have any difficulty with the website, please contact Lynn Ince, Executive Support Officer, on 01743 260225.

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