



Committee and Date

Cabinet

17 January 2024

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2023

In the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

10:00am

Responsible Officer: Ashley Kendrick

Email: ashley.kendrick@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 250893

Present

Councillor Lezley Picton (Chairman)

Councillors Ian Nellins, Robert Macey, Gwilym Butler, Dean Carroll, Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Mark Jones, Dan Morris and Chris Schofield

78 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor Cecilia Motley.

79 Disclosable Interests

No interests were declared.

80 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

81 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

82 Member Question Time

Members' questions had been received from the following:

Councillor David Vasmer, read on his behalf by Councillor Roger Evans, in relation to part-night lighting. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Evans asked what the process was for taking a complaint forward to improve the safety for residents. The Portfolio Holder would speak to Andy Wilde and provide a response after the meeting.

Councillor Ruth Houghton in relation to road safety around Norbury Primary School. By way of supplementary question, she asked whether there was adequate revenue resources in the budget to maintain any 20mph measures that are installed.

Councillor Joyce Barrow, in relation to Oswestry Innovation Park. In response to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that infrastructure would be in place by 2025 with spine roads being in place in the next 12 months.

Councillor Nick Bardsley, in relation to trees affected by the North West Relief Road development. By way of supplementary question, Councillor Bardsley sought clarification as to whether oak trees are endangered as had been stated. It was stated that the Ecology Team would provide a response.

Councillor Julian Dean, in relation to the North West Relief Road. Following the response from the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Dean requested confirmation that the Council would commit to having funding and a business case in place before any damage was done to trees on the site. The Portfolio Holder advised that correct procedures would be followed and although it was regretful that nine trees would be lost, they would be replaced with ten times as many.

The questions asked and written responses are available from the web page for the meeting [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 13th December, 2023, 10.30 am — Shropshire Council](#)

83 Economy and Environment OSC – River Water Quality Task and Finish Group

Councillor Joyce Barrow, Chair of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the report and the following recommendations from the task and finish group:

1. That Shropshire Council, as the Local Planning Authority, should
 - Adopt Grampian Conditions in Shropshire to ensure that new developments will be joined to appropriate infrastructure and access to treatment works with the sufficient current and future capacity in place.
 - Promote the requirement for grey water systems and rainwater capture as part of new housing developments, reducing the use of drinking water to water gardens and clean cars. As part of this, Members recommend that the feasibility of introducing supplementary planning documents (SPD) should be explored and progressed.
2. That Shropshire Council, as the highways authority, should proactively engage with and encourage Severn Trent Water in their progression of works that will increase the separation of rainwater run-off from wastewater, including highways runoff, thereby helping to reduce the risk of overwhelming sewage infrastructure and treatment works.
3. That more monitoring of the health of rivers and waterways needs to take place:
 - Severn Trent Water should increase the frequency of monitoring and reporting to once a week and ensure that testing occurs before and after releases. This data needs to be made available and the results made visible and easily accessible and understandable e.g. using trend charts and maps.

- System partners, including Shropshire Council, should work with citizen scientists to identify and put in place mechanisms that will allow them to continue to deliver and develop testing and monitoring that enhances the picture of what is happening beneath the surface of rivers and waterways.
4. That Shropshire Council is a 'Place Leader'. Within this there are a number of roles and actions that the Council should take to enable communities to help contribute towards improving river water quality:
 - Identify and provide access to small grants or accessible funding such as through initiatives like civic social crowdfunding that can be used to enable communities to take forward work that results in improved river water quality e.g. funding equipment and lab testing of citizen scientists work, and funding the River Health Checker app.
 - Supporting and enabling initiatives and applications for Bathing Water Status.
 - Assessing the feasibility of managing the River Health Checker App and promoting its use locally with stakeholders in the system and communities. Softer recommendations
 5. That system partners confirm shared outcomes and objectives in relation to river water quality and the environment and use these to jointly and consistently lobby Government to realise a regulatory framework and requirements that encourages water companies and other stakeholders who are part of the system, to target and achieve the best environmental outcomes.
 6. That local representatives, including Shropshire Council, should work closely with Severn Trent Water to inform how and where the recently announced investment to reduce sewage pollution takes place. This should include enabling and ensuring the engagement between agencies and with local communities and help to realise the greatest benefit for the environment of the resources being brought to bear.
 7. That system partners work to support increasing the visibility of the data and enabling greater understanding of what is actually happening in Shropshire rivers and water ways.
 - Support the adoption of the River Health Checker App
 - Enable and promote consistency of recording, data structures and access to the data, using those nationally described and adopted by other areas of the country.
 - Encouraging effective use of the data, and promoting the development of visualisation, including engaging with local further and higher education colleges.
 8. That, once a reduction of sewage releases has been put in place, Shropshire Council progresses activity, directly through its own services and responsibilities, and through its partnership working as a Place Leader, to reduce the flow of other pollutants from agricultural and highways run-off.

Members and officers were thanked for their input into the task and finish group's work. It was felt that the rivers were an important asset in Shropshire and that the engagement with Severn Trent had been productive.

RESOLVED:

To accept the recommendation 1 to 8 set out in section 7 of the report and provide a response and action plan for their delivery, to the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

84 Transformation and Improvement OSC – Capital Strategy Task & Finish Group

The Chair of the Capital Strategy Task and Finish Group presented the report and the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1 – Realistic Capital Project Timelines, avoiding slippage and improved reporting of delivery, progress and impact

- That the planned timescales for the delivery of capital projects should be made on robust forecasts to help identify realistic programme and project plan timescales to deliver the Shropshire Plan priorities and the transformation of the council.
- That measures (including KPIs) which evidence capital being used to meet the revenue challenge and demonstrate the impact of slippage of capital projects and programme on the council's budget and future service delivery, should be developed and reported as part of the quarterly financial reporting.
- The importance of accurate planned timescales for capital projects and the avoidance of slippage in their delivery and the realisation of related financial and non-financial benefits should be reinforced.
- That this focus should form part of Getting Leadership Right.

Recommendation 2 – Local member awareness and input.

- Local Members should be notified, at the earliest possible stage, by the relevant senior manager in the operational directorate about emerging proposed capital projects in their area, helping to utilise their knowledge of the communities they represent, and identify issues and delays that could be avoided at the earliest opportunity.
- That the collation and presentation of the Capital Strategy and Programme should include the confirmation that Local Members have been notified about the projects proposed for their Electoral Division or their electoral area, where projects might be in a neighbouring division but potentially impacts on theirs.
- That a mechanism for issues to be raised with the relevant Portfolio Holder should be also put in place, providing a member-to-member route.

Recommendation 3 – Systematic review and learning from capital project delivery.

- That there is a systematic and robust process of review for capital projects to ensure that learning is identified that can be used to inform future projects. This review should be undertaken by Officers directly involved in the capital project, with input from local members and the Cabinet Member, and take place at the appropriate time to ensure that both the process and the realisation of the planned benefits can be taken account of. There needs to be transparency through a more open process which includes this assessment and feedback loop.

Recommendation 4 – Establish an 'opportunity register' and central external funding team.

- That the council should establish an opportunity register that sets out a pipeline of projects that enable the delivery of the council's priorities, including projects identified by communities and partners such as the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

There should be a corresponding register of known grant funding opportunities that can be used to match with projects.

- That the council should establish a corporately located External Funding Team that looks across all funding opportunities to the council and local stakeholders, with the expertise and capacity to identify the relevant funding opportunities to deliver the projects in the pipeline.

Recommendation 5 – Geographic visualisation of capital projects.

- That, for transparency, the criteria to identify and prioritise capital projects should be set out alongside a geographic presentation of the places where these projects are being delivered. This information and understanding should be used by local members to inform their answers to questions from their communities.

Recommendation 6 – Highways Capital Programme

- That there should be an all-Member briefing on how the highways capital programme is managed, covering:
 - identification and prioritisation of projects,
 - local member awareness and engagement, and
 - the delivery of the projects including contract management and how they deliver investment into council assets to save on future costs e.g. of repair and maintenance, as well as social, economic and environmental benefits.

Recommendation 7 – Responding to recommendations and delivery actions

- That an action plan setting out all of the accepted recommendations should be presented to the meeting of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 19 February 2024, including an update on any actions already taken.
- That the members of the task and finish group should be used as a reference/testing group to inform the development of actions.
- That the approaches for the delivery of the accepted recommendation should be in place by April 2024 to ensure that the delivery of the capital programme in 2024/25 and the development of subsequent capital strategies and programmes is in line with the recommendations.
- That the delivery of the recommendations should be reviewed and reported annually to the Transformation and Improvement OSC as part of mapping of capital spend including against the Shropshire Plan and the tracking of projects.

The Portfolio Holder thanked the Chair for the report and requested further information on a number of the recommendations to ensure that they did not conflict with the Target Operating Model and that they were deliverable.

The Task and Finish Group were congratulated on the report, which was welcomed by all members.

RESOLVED:

To prepare a report from Cabinet to the next meeting of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee setting out its responses to the various Recommendations made by the Capital Task and Finish Group.

85 **Setting the Council Tax Taxbase for 2024/25**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the report which outlined the Council Tax discount policies, Council Tax Support Scheme and the Collection Rate and the impact of these on the taxbase.

RESOLVED:

To agree and recommend to full Council the recommendations below. Subject to agreement by Cabinet, full Council are asked to approve these recommendations.

3.1. To approve, in accordance with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 the revised discretionary power to levy a Council Tax premium of 100% in relation to dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than one year (but less than five years) i.e. reduce the minimum period for the implementation of the premium for long term empty premises from two years to one year and the resulting inclusion of 798.32 Band D equivalents in the taxbase calculation. This includes an additional 456.55 Band D equivalents as a result of the amendment to reduce the minimum period to one year and 341.77 Band D equivalents in relation to the existing policy for dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than two years (but less than five years).

3.2. To approve, in accordance with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 the revised discretionary power to levy a Council Tax premium of 100% in respect of second homes from 1 April 2025.

3.3. To approve the publication of a notice regarding the new discretionary Council Tax policy awarded in respect of unoccupied and substantially unfurnished dwellings and second homes within 21 days of the determination

3.4. To approve, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Shropshire Council as it's Council Tax taxbase for the year 2024/25, as detailed in Appendix A, totalling 119,191.17 Band D equivalents.

3.5. To note the changes to the Council's localised Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme in 2024/25. The scheme is attached at Appendix B.

3.6. To note the Council Tax Support Scheme amendments detailed in Appendix B have no impact on the taxbase determination.

3.7. To note the exclusion of 8,237.19 Band D equivalents from the taxbase calculation as a result of localised Council Tax Support.

3.8. To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy of 0% in respect of second homes (other than those that retain a 50% discount through regulation as a result of job related protection) and note the inclusion of 759.79 Band D equivalents in the Council Tax taxbase calculation as a result of this discount policy.

3.9. To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to not award a discount in respect of vacant dwellings undergoing major repair, i.e. former Class A exempt properties.

3.10. To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy in respect of vacant dwellings, i.e. former Class C exempt properties, of 100% for one month i.e. effectively reinstating the exemption and the resulting exclusion of 132.23 band D equivalents from the taxbase calculation.

3.11. To note continuation of the “six week rule” in respect of vacant dwellings, i.e. former Class C exempt properties.

3.12. To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to levy a Council Tax premium of 200% in relation to dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than five years (but less than ten years) and the resulting inclusion of an additional 215.33 Band D equivalents in the taxbase calculation.

3.13. To note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to levy a Council Tax premium of 300% in relation to dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than ten years and the resulting inclusion of an additional 188.01 Band D equivalents in the taxbase calculation.

3.14. To approve a collection rate for the year 2024/25 of 98.5%.

86 Treasury Strategy 2023/24 Mid-Year Review

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities introduced the report which informed Members of the treasury activities of the Council for the first six months of the financial year.

Thanks were given to the treasury management team.

RESOLVED:

To agree the Treasury Strategy activity as set out in the report.

87 Draft Financial Strategy 2024/25 - 2028/29

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities introduced the report which set out how the estimated budget gap of £49.8m is comprised, and the measures proposed to manage that position effectively, whilst maintaining and improving the valued services we provide for our residents.

Members' attention was drawn to the increased in-year demand, particularly within the People directorate, where demand cost and mitigation works are to take place over the next 12-18 months. Members emphasised that colleagues within the directorate were in no way being blamed for the present financial challenges and expressed confidence in their ability to continue to deliver.

A request was received for further information on the demand mitigation measures to allow for them to be seen and debated.

Concern was raised regarding recruitment and retention of staff in social care. Although this was a national issue, the Council had been increasing person productivity with schemes such as two carers in a car, and would look to invest in preventative care as well as improving the experience of recipients of care.

Members noted that the budget consultation would give an opportunity for residents, partners, businesses and council employees to comment on the budget proposals; the results of which would be reported to Cabinet and Council alongside the final budget proposals, to help inform Councillor's discussions.

RESOLVED:

3.1. To approve the recommended budget strategy for 2024/25, with council-wide target levels of spending reduction for pay and non-pay, noting that the identified targets are a minimum requirement, and that consideration must be given to exceeding these wherever possible.

3.2. To note the focus on improved efficiency in all areas to minimise the resident impacts; and to use sources of customer contact information to identify if and when residents are adversely impacted and what can be done to minimise this.

3.3. To note the outlook to 28/29 for revenue budgets and agree the measures proposed to manage within available revenue resources.

3.4. To note the reserves position to 25/26 and approve an approach prioritising corporate management of all reserves including replenish general reserves whenever possible, with a target minimum level of £20m.

3.5. To agree the proposed format set out in the appendix to this report for the budget consultation with residents and instructs Officers to proceed with the consultation.

3.6. To note the benchmarking information provided.

88 Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services introduced the report which provided the developer contributions (Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 Planning Obligations) which Shropshire Council has received, allocated and spent during the reported year (between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023), and provided an Infrastructure List which sets out the infrastructure projects or types of infrastructure which Shropshire Council may fund wholly or partly by the CIL.

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager advised members that the revised Place Plans would be coming back to Cabinet in the new year. An exercise had been carried out with town and parish councils to consider their aspirations for future infrastructure projects which have influenced the infrastructure list provided. It was noted that there was strict criteria for the use of CIL monies.

Members were advised that projects within parishes could now be tracked on the member portal and it was hoped this could be rolled out to town and parish councils shortly.

Members noted that town and parish councils were able to use their neighbourhood funds through the crowdfunding scheme to double their money which could give further opportunities for projects. Members were encouraged to contact Sarah Dodds if their parishes wanted further information.

RESOLVED:

That

3.1 Cabinet agrees the Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement included as Appendix 1 to this report for publication before the end of 2023.

3.2 If required, delegated responsibility be given to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services, to agree any necessary amendments to the Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement before its publication.

89 Community Asset Transfer - The Old Abattoir, Bishops Castle

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets presented the report which sought Cabinet approval for a revised Community Asset Transfer of The Old Abattoir, Bishops Castle to The Bishops Castle & District Community Land Trust for use as a community food bank.

Members' attention was drawn to an error in the preliminary section where the proposed transfer duration is noted as 125 years, and not the correct proposed term which is 90 years.

Members welcomed the proposal which would benefit many people in the Bishops Castle area.

RESOLVED:

That

3.1. Cabinet approves the principle of a 90 year lease.

3.2. Cabinet grants delegated authority to the Head of Property and Development to finalise terms of the lease and complete the transaction.

90 Exclusion of Press and Public

Members were advised that the exempt report had been deferred and therefore there was no requirement to exclude the press and public.

91 Parking Tariffs, Operations & Development

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

92 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting was Wednesday 17 January 2024.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: