



Committee and Date

Cabinet

13th December 2023

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023

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

Responsible Officer: Ashley Kendrick

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Present

Councillor Lezley Picton (Chairman)

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

64 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

65 Disclosable Interests

No declarations were received.

66 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

67 Public Question Time

The following public questions had been received:

Dr Jamie Russell, in relation to the North West Relief Road.

Mr Malcolm Andrew, on behalf of Trefonen Rural Protection Group Management Committee, in relation to the Local Plan.

The questions asked and written responses are available from the web page for the meeting [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 22nd November, 2023, 10.30 am — Shropshire Council](#)

68 Member Question Time

Members' questions had been received from the following:

Councillor Kate Halliday, read aloud by Councillor Julia Buckley, with regards to on-street parking in Coleham. Following the response by the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Councillor Buckley asked for confirmation that residential parking schemes were no longer being considered in Coleham. The Portfolio Holder advised that he was not able to confirm or deny this.

Councillor Rob Wilson, in relation to the North West Relief Road, which was asked by Councillor Roger Evans in his absence. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Evans sought reassurance that no officers will meet with the public and share confidential information without notifying elected members.

Councillor Peter Broomhall, in relation to planning applications in Wem. By way of supplementary question, Councillor Broomhall requested the data from the visitor survey which had been commissioned by the Council and questioned whether any other sites had been surveyed. Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services advised that a response would be made in writing after the meeting,

Councillor Rosemary Dartnall, in relation to the North West Relief Road, which was asked by Councillor Julia Buckley in her absence. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Buckley questioned how many of the Northern Planning Committee members had received the carbon literacy accreditation and of those with the accreditation, how many voted to approve the application. It was confirmed that the response was not known but could be provided after the meeting. In response to a further question regarding the full business case, the Portfolio Holder advised that it would be brought forward to full council where he looked forward to the process being debated.

Councillor Kevin Parry, in relation to SEND Discretionary School Transport. In response to a supplementary question on the new transport policy, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council is honouring their statutory right to transport those who need it and work is ongoing to support school leavers. It was confirmed that further information could be provided outside the meeting.

Councillor Andrew Sherrington, read by Councillor Roger Evans, in relation to Fix My Street. By way of supplementary, Councillor Evans sought confirmation as to whether the Highways Asset Management Policy determined where and how often roads are maintained and prioritised. The Portfolio Holder would provide a response after the meeting but was pleased to report that Shropshire has been allocated £3.5m for road repairs this year.

The questions asked and written responses are available from the web page for the meeting [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 22nd November, 2023, 10.30 am — Shropshire Council](#)

69 Scrutiny Items

There were no scrutiny items.

70 Annual H&S Performance Report 2022/23

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the report which reviewed the Health and Safety performance of the Council for 2022-2023. It detailed the key Health and Safety challenges for the Council, progress on last year's Annual Report and identified key priorities for 2023-2024.

Members of staff were thanked for keeping the Council safe and maintaining a healthy organisation.

It was noted that there were no financial implications this year but there may be future implications in respect of the actions for 2023/2024. Assurance was sought that no policy would be put in place without the consultation of members. It was confirmed that this would fall within the remit of the executives and would only be brought back to Cabinet if it fell outside of this remit.

Concern was raised regarding the persistent high level of staff who are suffering with anxiety, stress and depression and it was questioned what was being done to address this. Members were advised that managers were being encouraged to refer staff for support at the earliest opportunity.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet note the Council's health and safety performance over the preceding year as set out in the Appendix to this report and raised any issues as appropriate.

71 Financial Monitoring 2023/24 Quarter 2

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities introduced the report which was the largest mid-term outturn report ever reported to the authority and contained a vast amount of detail, giving confidence in the journey and preparation for the challenges ahead.

Members noted that it was difficult for officers to see what the position will be at the financial year end as the figures were projections which can change. It was felt that the Council had to have a plan in place to cover every eventuality, including the use of reserves in the short term, and that the Portfolio Holder was content that 90-95% of the total savings will be delivered.

It was stated that the spending pressures in demand-led services of £22.2m was not an overspend but a shortage in the budget to deal with the level of statutory demand.

Concern was raised over the increasing amount of overspend on staffing due to agency social workers and that alternative budget proposals had been put forward to address this. Members noted that there was a national issue with the recruitment of social workers.

In response to a query regarding the projected outturn for the approved capital programme and the 2023/24 actual YTD spend as percentage of budgeted YTD spend, the Portfolio Holder advised that he would monitor the figures and provide further information to Councillor Dean.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet note the following:

- a. That at the end of Quarter 2 (30 September 2023), the current expected level of savings delivery is £38.0m
- b. That savings not yet confirmed, and so under further review to assess deliverability, amount to £13.4m.
- c. That demand-led services are forecasting significant budget pressures of £22.2m in the year, which are likely to continue into the coming year.
- d. The result of A-C above with no further actions is a forecast overall overspend of £32.393m.
- e. That it is assumed for planning purposes that
 - 90% of the total savings will be delivered (so £8.2m further delivery expected) and
 - short-term funding will be identified to enable sustainable demand management approaches to be implemented in social care services (total: £20.5m), with necessary plans prepared to enable this.
- f. The resulting forecast at quarter 2 is therefore a likely overall overspend of £3.6m once key management actions, set out above, are implemented. This will leave the General Fund balance at £23.4m, within the target range of £15m- £30m.

72 Treasury Management Update Quarter 2 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the report which outlined the treasury management activities of the Council in the second quarter of 2023/24. It highlighted the economic environment in which treasury management decisions had been made and the interest rate forecasts of the Council's Treasury Advisor, Link Asset Services. It also updated Members on the internal treasury team's performance.

Members noted the investment portfolio was approximately £58m and the spending for the NWRR was £22-25m would not leave much in reserves. The Portfolio Holder advised that the capital balances were boosted by Covid and government funding and that much of the capital had been ringfenced for certain projects.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet reviewed the position as set out in the report –

1. Noting the summary of the wider economic environment and the Council's borrowings and investments set out in Appendix A

2. Noting the performance within prudential indicators for quarter 1, 2023/24 (Appendix B)

73 Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital introduced the report which highlighted three exceptions within public health, education and environment. 81% of identified KPIs of the Shropshire Plan now featured on the performance dashboard with 25% not yet having a RAG rating as this is baseline data.

Concern was raised around certain KPIs not having targets, such as road maintenance, as well as a high number of complaints that were being upheld by the Ombudsman. In response to the ombudsman complaints, members were reminded that a report was presented to Cabinet previously and figures had been discussed. Complaints were sometimes being mislabelled and were solvable via other routes, such as requests for service delivery. In response to the targets, the Portfolio Holder advised that he would approach the insight team to speak to the service department with a view to including targets in the future but it was reliant on the data being provided. Councillor Macey would investigate and report back.

Members were encouraged to give as much notice to the Portfolio Holder as possible to ensure any concerns can be addressed at the meeting. They were also advised that the insight team would be happy to work with members to improve performance reporting.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet Members:

1. Reviewed and considered performance dashboard information alongside this exception report.
2. Noted progress to date in achieving the outcomes of The Shropshire Plan (TSP) and comment as appropriate.

74 Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing: Performance Update

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets presented the report which provided Cabinet with an update on the activities, operations, and performance of the Council's Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO), Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing (STAR) and provided a summary of the ongoing activities being undertaken to reset the relationship between the Council and STAR.

Members welcomed the report and were encouraged by the performance under the new leadership. The high satisfaction rates from residents were acknowledged and praise was given to the support staff and the cross-party partnership in supporting the residents' needs.

It was noted that an action plan had been implemented to deal with void housing stock and the work to do with old housing stock with a high carbon footprint. It was noted that

STAR wanted to ensure that the maximum number of affordable housing is available for the residents of Shropshire.

Members expressed their confidence in the Board and Management Team who are aligned with the priorities of the Shropshire Plan and wished to pay tribute to the staff involved in the turnaround.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet received the report and raised any issues as appropriate on the performance, activities and operations of Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing and proposals for refreshed governance arrangements.

75 SAND Covenant Proposal

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Strategy, Improvement and Communications introduced the report which sought Cabinet agreement for a protocol for determining whether to approve proposals to sign up to specific covenants and campaigns. If approved Cabinet was asked to sign up to the Safe Ageing No Discrimination (SAND) Covenant, the first to then be considered using this protocol.

Members noted that SAND CIC is a group working to improve the experience of older and old lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people as they access health and social care services. Groups and organisations in Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin local authority areas had been invited to sign up through a Covenant to five broad commitments, agree an annual action plan for change, and then report progress and share their next year plan at an annual event.

Members wholeheartedly supported the proposals and it was

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet –

1. Adopted the proposed protocol attached at Appendix 1 t
2. Signed up to the Safe Ageing No Discrimination (SAND) Covenant, as the first to be considered under this protocol, with the following provisos:
 - that assurances be given by SAND to seek to support work across the Protected Characteristic groupings of Age and Sexual Orientation, recognising depth and diversity within these groupings as well as their particular field of working with older people;
 - that officers engage with SAND itself and share and develop joint good practice with other advocacy organisations, to complement engagement efforts with and for all Protected Characteristic groupings.

76 Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital presented the report which sought Cabinet approval for the council’s draft response to the LGSCO’s consultation.

Members noted that one of the key changes was reducing response times for Stage 1 from 30 to 10 working days and Stage 2 from 30 to 20 working days which may have resource implications for the council. The Team and Service Managers who deal with most Stage 1 responses will be placed under increased pressure with this challenging requirement. The Complaints Monitoring Officer will also be under increased pressure given the reduced time to respond to Stage 2 review requests. For context, in 2022/23 the average response time for Stage 1 complaints across the Council was 26 days, underlining the scale of challenge to meet the 10- day response time propose by the LGSCO, considering other service pressures.

The other key changes were to appoint one Member who would be responsible for complaints, who must receive regular updates, performance, and trends (complaints are currently covered as part of the Cabinet member for Culture and Digital portfolio); and where we ask for feedback on a service, councils must include details of how an individual can complain.

Members acknowledged the additional expectations included in the Code, which rather than simplify, will add additional administrative burdens for Shropshire Council.

A query was raised regarding the financial implications as stated in the report as there will be increased pressure on resources and therefore a likely cost implication.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) Cabinet noted the implications of the new code for the Council’s complaint handling process and identified a Member specifically responsible for complaints
- b) Cabinet approved (with amendments if appropriate) the draft response to the LGSCO consultation set out at Appendix B.

77 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting would take place on Wednesday 13 December 2023.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: