



Committee and Date

Cabinet

16 October 2024

CABINET

**Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2024
In the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND
10.30 am**

Responsible Officer: Ashley Kendrick
Email: ashley.kendrick@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 250893

Present

Councillor Lezley Picton (Chairman)
Councillors Cecilia Motley, Ian Nellins, Robert Macey, Gwilym Butler, Dean Carroll,
Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Mark Jones and Dan Morris

187 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Chris Schofield.

188 Disclosable Interests

There were no disclosable interests.

189 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2024 be confirmed as an accurate record.

190 Public Question Time

Public questions were received from:

Mandy Garrott, read by Jean Childs, in relation to the future of swimming in Shropshire.

The full question and response provided can be found on [Response to Public Questions - Cabinet 11 September 2024.pdf \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](#)

191 Member Question Time

Members' questions were received from:

Councillor Rob Wilson, in relation to the Welsh Bridge, Shrewsbury. By way of supplementary question, the estimated costs required to bring the bridge up to safe standards were requested.

Councillor Andy Boddington, in relation to food waste collections. By way of supplementary question, Councillor Boddington asked that the council revisit collecting food waste alongside garden waste. The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport advised that it was not possible to charge for food waste, however by 2026 it will have to be collected.

Councillor Alex Wagner, in relation to The Square, Shrewsbury. In response to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder for Highways advised that there would be a parking order in place to enable enforcement by next week.

The full questions and answers provided can be found on [Response to Member Questions - Cabinet 11 September 2024.pdf \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](#)

192 **Scrutiny Items**

Councillor Claire Wild, Vice Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Chair of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee, brought forward the following recommendations from each committee.

From the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers

- *That Cabinet should write to the relevant bodies, including the Police, to highlight the impact of delays in completing enhanced DBS checks on key roles and functions, including the recruitment of social workers and foster carers, and ask what actions are being undertaken to address the causes of delays.*

Q4 2024/Performance report

- *That more support staff in the People Directorate should be further enabled in their roles by extending the number of licences for artificial intelligence (AI) software (to increase their productivity by reducing the amount of manual handling of data and information they have to carry out).*

It was confirmed that the Portfolio Holder had been contacted and was happy to take the recommendations forward.

From the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2024/25

- *That the Chief Executive be invited to the first meeting of the Transformation Task and Finish Group with a plan to reduce 3rd party spending by 10% and to provide a plan to deliver the savings within the Place directorate.*

It was confirmed that the recommendation would be taken to full Council on 26th September 2024. The Portfolio Holder welcomed the recommendation and looked forward to the response from the Chief Executive at the first meeting.

193 Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the report which provided a detailed review of the Council's financial position as at the 30 June 2024, which had been discussed at length at the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the week.

Members were advised that the senior officer team had been instructed to take measures to ensure the council lives within its means and brings in a sustainable budget for the long term. A collaborative budget with the opposition has been proposed to work together for the benefit of Shropshire residents, staff, and the council's future.

It was acknowledged that the council has an expenditure of over £700 million a year and is facing a projected overspend against reserves.

Concerns were raised regarding the overspend in various departments, with all 10 portfolio holders exceeding their budgets, some by millions of pounds. In response, it was emphasised that by the difference between overspending and not achieving savings, and the need for strict financial control.

In response to a question regarding what could trigger the 'adverse' financial situation and any unknown pressures which could impact the budget, it was hoped that there would be a mild winter with no rain to avoid additional pressures. The impacts of winter fuel payments, the possibility of taking away bus passes, the single person discount on council tax, and the rising energy cap on the people in Shropshire were highlighted.

Members were advised that the council will bring forward contingency plans to ensure it stays within budget. The importance of unity and working together was emphasized to ensure the council's sustainability.

Members of the opposition were invited to work together with the administration for the benefit of residents, staff and the council. In response, group leaders expressed concerns about transparency and access to information, however would consult with their members.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet Members:

- A. Direct the Chief Executive to lead all Officers in urgently taking the necessary actions to improve the Quarter 1 forecast of a projected spend over budget of £38.5m (30th June 2024), by year end, predominantly focussing on remaining savings or mitigating actions to be delivered in 2024/25.
- B. Discussed the impact of the projected expenditure forecast on the General Fund Balance and noted the risk of further service pressures (savings required) in next year if financial performance in the current year is not improved.

194 Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital introduced the report which was the first report for 2024/25 and sets out the key issue to manage this year; delivering acceptable performance while remaining within our available financial envelope. Members were advised that the new Performance Management Framework (PMF) has been reviewed and strengthened to align with all our strategic objectives to enable the council to become an evidence-led performance managed council.

Members noted that the Q1 report is not fully complete with all the agreed performance indicators due to the time taken to implement the new approach, obtain data and the focus on getting it right. Those outstanding were noted in the report. It was also noted that some of the performance indicators are baseline figures from which targets will be established and then performance monitored against this.

In response to a query regarding the rate of EHCPs being issued, Members were advised that there had been a 154% increase in demand for EHCPs in 2023 and 2024, with 250 requests for EHCPs and 212 plans issued in quarter one. The plan which had been put in place was working, and communication with families was being improved.

The Executive Director for Health, Well-being, and Prevention explained that excess mortality and serious mental illness were system-wide targets that were monitored closely. Actions included improving health checks for people with serious medical illness and mental health outcomes. A detailed piece of work was being done through scrutiny on this area.

In response to a query regarding the progress in developing KPIs for climate change, the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital responded that the lead officer is currently working on this and progress should be made soon.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

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.
3. Considered that the KPIs currently agreed remain the same for 2024/2025.
4. Agreed to individual Portfolio Holders reviewing the targets for the agreed KPIs with the relevant Executive Director.

195 Treasury Management Update Quarter 1 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the report which outlined the treasury management activities of the Council in the first quarter of 2024/25. It highlighted the economic environment in which treasury management

decisions have been made and the interest rate forecasts of the Council's Treasury Advisor, Link Asset Services. It also updates Members on the internal treasury team's performance.

Concern was expressed regarding the council's level of borrowing, short-term liquidity and the level of investments which had fallen by £48.3 million in the last 12 months, indicating a misalignment between spending and income. The Portfolio Holder advised that the Council had historically held large cash balances compared to neighbouring councils, such as Telford and Wrekin, which had significantly higher borrowing levels. The Council had been fortunate not to borrow extensively in the past, but increasing demand had necessitated the use of cash balances. It was emphasised that it was better to use available funds rather than borrow if not necessary.

Members referred to a report stating that short-term funds were secured for a week over the end of the month to manage cash flow, resulting in a payment. Members sought assurance that this was a one-off occurrence, and that the Council's cash flow and liquidity were stable. The Executive Director for Resources explained that the short-term loan was taken to ensure financial security at the end of the financial year due to market uncertainties. He assured members that it was not a regular occurrence and had minimal impact on overall investment delivery.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Noted the summary of the wider economic environment and the Council's borrowings and investments set out in Appendix A
2. Noted the performance within prudential indicators for quarter 1, 2024/25 (Appendix B)

196 Annual Customer Feedback (complaints) Report

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital introduced the report which summarised the customer feedback (compliments, comments and complaints) received by Shropshire Council in 2023/24 as well as the potential impact of the LGSCO Complaint Handling Code from 2026. Overall numbers remain similar for complaints but average time to respond and the proportion of upheld cases have increased.

Members noted that the new complaint handling code from April 26th 2026 will further reduce response times, requiring careful planning and adjustments.

RESOLVED:

1. Members considered the Annual Customer Feedback Report and approved the 15 recommendations within it, and actions to support and improve robust customer feedback performance.

2. Members noted that from April 2026 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman will start to use the complaint handling code within its decisions and reporting (any non-compliance will be highlighted publicly from this time).

197 Draft Independent Living & Specialist Accommodation Strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets introduced the report and advised members that the strategy aimed to improve the life experience of vulnerable people in Shropshire by enabling them to remain independent in their own homes. The report included the outcome and results of the public consultation period, summarised in the main body and Appendix 3. The strategy includes an exhaustive action plan in Appendix 1.

Concern was expressed about how the Council would communicate with residents who do not use the Internet, given that 34% of residents aged over 75 had not used the Internet in the last three months. The Portfolio Holder explained the Council's approach is "digital by default" but not "digital by exclusion." The Council continues to invest in and support the customer care team and customer care centre to ensure that all residents are reached.

Members noted that the Council was working hard to reach hard-to-reach members of the community through public libraries, Community Hubs, and the Shropshire Local initiative. The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital added that the Council is co-chairing the digital inclusion network with Age UK and other organisations to address these challenges.

RESOLVED:

To approve and adopt the Independent Living and Specialist Accommodation Strategy, attached as Appendix I.

198 Shrewsbury Movement & Public Space Strategy

The Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport presented the Movement and Public Space Strategy (MPSS) aimed at improving Shrewsbury's town centre by promoting sustainable transport, reducing reliance on private motor vehicles, and enhancing public spaces. The strategy is a 10-year vision with 21 interventions to make Shrewsbury inclusive, accessible, and economically vibrant. The strategy was developed by the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan partnership, which includes Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Town Council, and the Shrewsbury BID.

Members noted that a nine-week public consultation was conducted to gather feedback from key stakeholders, residents, businesses, and visitors. The results were deemed representative of Shrewsbury's overall characteristics.

Members welcomed the strategy and emphasised the importance of social inclusion aspects, such as providing electric bicycles for low-paid social care workers.

Members highlighted the positive impact on congestion, emissions, and health by offering safe and viable transport alternatives.

The importance of including rural areas in the strategy and providing efficient public transport networks was expressed. The Portfolio Holder assured members that the

strategy takes into account the needs of the entire county and mentioned plans for park and ride, park and stride, and a bus interchange.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet agreed to:

1. Recommend to Council that the Shrewsbury Movement and Public Space Strategy (MPSS) be adopted as a material consideration in the planning decision-making process.
2. Delegate responsibility to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, and the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport, to progress implementation of the MPSS, to include, but not limited to, finalising the 10-year delivery plan, subject to securing funding.

199 Home Adaptations Policy 2024

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets presented the policy which set parameters for dispensing major adaptations and disability facilities grants to enable people to maintain their independence in their homes.

Reservations were expressed regarding limited resources and finances for delivering disabled facilities grants and it was noted that there had been past issues with long waiting times for adaptations. The Portfolio Holder Acknowledged the importance of prioritising projects based on need and waiting times and advised that the major adaptations grant is funded through central government, with £675 million allocated in the previous financial year.

Following a query as to whether the grant from central government was fully spent and if additional funds were needed, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that details would be circulated following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

To approve the Home Adaptations Policy 2024 as set out in Appendix I.

200 Sports Village Transformation: Results of Public Consultation and Authority to Proceed with Proposal

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital introduced the report which presented the results of the recent public consultation on proposals to transform the Shrewsbury Sports Village with new swimming and fitness facilities. Approval was sought to proceed to Full Council to request the project is accepted into the Capital Programme and grant authority to proceed with the design and build. Members noted that the public consultation received over 1300 responses, showing strong community support for the vision to create a state-of-the-art, all-electric facility.

Concerns were raised regarding transport access and the need for improved transport plans, and the financial aspects and funding for the project. The Portfolio Holder

responded that the report recognised the need for improved transport and a transport plan would be written. The project aimed to provide better bus services, safe cycling, and walking facilities to improve accessibility. He also advised that the project included substantial new borrowing and aimed to secure external funding. The initial budget for the design and planning stages would be presented to the full council.

Members noted the new development on the site was committed to being zero carbon. There was an opportunity to convert the whole sports facility to zero carbon, including the installation of PV canopies across the car park to produce clean energy.

Members recognised that the Quarry pool was an essential part of the offer for Shrewsbury. However, the new Sports Village at Sundorne was chosen for its accessibility and potential to attract users from outside the county.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Agreed the results of the public consultation and the business case for the project, as set out in this paper and in Appendix 6, be presented to Council with a recommendation that the design and development of the Shrewsbury Sports Village Transformation be included in the Capital Programme with an initial budget for the design and planning stages of £2.248 million. The project to be funded from Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and any available grants and capital receipts which may be available during the project.
2. Recommended that Council delegates authority to the Executive Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, Culture, Leisure & Tourism, to procure, negotiate and agree the terms of any agreements/contracts necessary for the delivery of the design and planning stages of the project including, but not limited to:
 - Commissioning the UK Leisure Framework to support the procurement strategy.
 - Selection of a prime design and build contractor and other suppliers.
 - Site surveys and investigations and relevant reports.
 - Detailed designs and planning application.
 - Contract preparation for the build stages.
3. Agreed that a report is brought to Cabinet and Full Council after the design stages; following the determination of the planning application and once the project has established the full build costs. This subsequent report will seek a decision on whether to approve the full project budget and to proceed with the build stage.

201 Future Options for Shropshire Schools Library Service

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Education introduced the report which considered the future of the Schools Library Service, responding to the outcome of the schools and public consultations.

Members noted that the School Library Service operated as a traded service which schools can buy into. 65% of schools in Shropshire had bought into the service which allows them to borrow books and artefacts and receive training for staff and pupil librarians. It was acknowledged that the service had been operating at a loss for the last two financial years.

Members were asked to consider the following four options:

1. Close the service.
2. Reset, relaunch, and relocate the service.
3. Resize and reduce the service.
4. Outsource the service.

The Portfolio Holder made a recommendation to approve the second option: reset, relaunch, and relocate the service.

In response to a query regarding the possibility of bringing some of the 35% into the service that are currently using other providers, it was confirmed that the team are optimistic about bringing more schools into the service through tailored changes and ongoing communication. Through individual conversations with Headteachers and staff, they have identified what schools need and want.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approved the implementation of option 2 (restructure/relaunch and relocation of the Service).
2. Delegated the detailed implementation of the agreed actions to the Assistant Director for Education and Achievement, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education. This should include the exploration of appropriate grant funding opportunities that would allow for additional development of the artefact offer with a view to further enhancing the cultural experiences of children and young people in Shropshire. This may include establishing a charitable arm of the Service.
3. Noted that school buy-in will be closely monitored by the Assistant Director for Education and Achievement to inform whether school buy-in is sufficient to enable the Service to be cost-neutral from 25/26 onwards. If it is determined that further action is required to enable the Service to be cost-neutral from 25/26, this may include exploring implementation of option 3, or if necessary, option 1. Should option 1 need to be considered, a report to Cabinet will be drafted setting out the position before any decision is made.

202 Government Consultation on Draft National Planning Policy Framework – Shropshire Council Response

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services, the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital introduced the report which regarding the government's consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and

associated changes to the planning system. The report set out Shropshire Council's proposed response, seeking approval to submit it.

Members noted that the proposed reforms suggest a new standard methodology for calculating housing needs, significantly increasing Shropshire's housing requirement from just over 1000 to over 2000 dwellings per year. Concerns were raised about the capacity to deliver this increase sustainably without undue pressure on infrastructure and the environment.

Concerns were also highlighted about the proposed new Grey Belt designation within Greenbelt areas and the potential impact on planning services, including increased speculative applications and appeals. Members noted that the response stresses the importance of aligning national reforms with local priorities to mitigate these impacts.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the local plan would continue to be developed and adopted, but the proposed reforms may require revisions to housing targets. The response advocated for a planning system that supports sustainable growth while addressing local needs and priorities.

RESOLVED:

That:

1. Cabinet considered and approved submission of the response to the Government's consultation on reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated reforms to the planning system, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
2. Authority be given to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services to agree any additional changes to the Council's response to the consultation ahead of its submission to the Government before 24 September 2024.

203 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 16 October 2024.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: