

**Committee and Date**

Cabinet

5 March 2025

CABINET**Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2025****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 (Deputy Leader), Robert Macey, Gwilym Butler,
Dean Carroll, Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Mark Jones and Chris Schofield*Before the meeting commenced, the Leader advised that items 15 and 19 on the agenda would be moved after item 6.***250 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Councillor Dan Morris.

251 Disclosable Interests

No declarations were received.

252 Minutes**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

253 Public Question Time

Prior to this item, the Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment and Transport made a statement notifying members that from next week, all users of household recycling centres will need to be able to show proof of residency in Shropshire (Driving Licence, Council tax or utility bill). Cars will no longer need to book to use the facility, however vans and trailers must continue to book.

Public questions were received from:

Keith Trubshaw, in relation to household recycling centres.

Graham Betts, in relation to Red Deer Road.

Emma Bullard, in relation to active travel.

Albrighton Village Action Group, in relation to the Local Plan.

Mike Streetly, in relation to the full business case for the North West Relief Road. It was noted that another question had been received at the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee, however it was deemed this question was not suitable and was a question for Cabinet. However, as only one question can be asked per meeting, this would be considered at the next Cabinet meeting.

Jamie Russell, in relation to climate change.

The full questions and response provided can be found on [Response to Public Questions - Cabinet 12.2.25.pdf](#)

254 Member Question Time

Members questions were received from:

Councillor Joyce Barrow, in relation to Oswestry Innovation Park.

Councillor Alex Wagner, read aloud by Councillor Roger Evans, in relation to Oxon Primary School pedestrian crossing. In response to a supplementary question requesting a meeting with the local member and the school, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that this could be arranged.

Councillor Tracey Huffer, read by Councillor Andy Boddington in relation to the resurfacing of Gravel Hill Road, Ludlow. In response to a supplementary question, the Leader confirmed that she would speak with Andy Wigley to seek an urgent repair of a pothole on the corner of Downton View.

Councillor Roger Evans, in relation to the garden waste subscription. In response to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the scheme has been well advertised and that anyone wishing to join the scheme after 31 March 2025 would be considered on a case by case basis through the normal application process.

The full questions and responses provided can be found on [Response to Member Questions - Cabinet 12.2.25.pdf](#)

255 Scrutiny Items

a Recommendations - Economy & Environment OSC 14 November 2024

The Chair of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented the recommendations made at its meeting on the 14 November 2025, and requested a response from the executive.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the recommendations on the strategic developments relating to water management and River Water Quality follow-up agenda item made by the Economy and Environment OSC at its meeting on 14 November 2024, be noted.
- b) That a response from Cabinet to the scrutiny recommendations be prepared using the template in appendix 1, and be brought back to the next Cabinet meeting for approval if possible within the short timescale, before sharing with the Economy and Environment OSC at their next meeting.

256 Whitchurch Civic Centre - Options Appraisal

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets presented the report which provided an update on the actions taken to address issues related to the RAAC following the decision to decommission and close most of the complex for safety reasons. It outlined subsequent steps and recommendations based on further evaluations and work to date.

Local members spoke in support of the recommendations and thanked officers for their work in supporting this vital community building.

In response to a query, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that if members accepted the recommendation to incorporate £4million into the capital strategy, there was nothing to bind any future administration into proceeding with the project, although there would have to be a conscious decision to remove the funding from the strategy.

RESOLVED:

- 3.1 Based on the outline feasibility investigations and assessments, Cabinet agreed that the RAAC affected areas of the Civic building and Library continue to remain permanently closed due to its critical condition and delegated the following:
 - I. To the Executive Director of Resources to amend the capital strategy to reflect the revised implications set out within the report, to incorporate £4 million into the capital strategy to provide for the following:
 - a. Should central government funding or other external funding be secured this would form the Council's match funding (if required) for Option 2 – construction of a new replacement facility based on the findings of a needs assessment.
 - b. Should external funding not be secured then the proposed £4 million would be considered for Option 1 - replacement of the structural RAAC roof, consequential works, and priority capital condition improvements
 - II. To the Head of Property and Development to oversee appropriate funding bids and the production of a detailed strategic needs assessment and analysis to establish the need of the people of Whitchurch for facilities at WCC so the future configuration of WCC is best suited to the needs of the town and its surrounding area.

Subject to recommendations in 3.1 I and II and the successful confirmation of appropriate funds to bring a further report back to full Council with a final recommendation

257 Proposed Response to Government Consultation - Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities

The Leader introduced the report which set out the proposed response to the Government Consultation -" Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities" prepared by an informal meeting of the Standards Committee.

The proposed response had cross-party support and it was

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet considered and approved, with amendments, if necessary, the proposed consultation response as set out in Appendix 2.

258 Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the quarterly report which provided a detailed review of the Council's financial position as at the 31 December 2024. Members noted that the projected overspend was £35.561m.

Concern was raised regarding the projected overspend and the failure to deliver the proposed savings. The Portfolio Holder highlighted the impact of the government's funding decisions, including the removal of the rural services grant and reductions in social care grants.

The Portfolio Holder and finance team were thanked for ensuring financial information was better available to members.

RESOLVED:

That:

- A. Cabinet Members continue to work closely with the Chief Executive and senior officers to urgently take the necessary actions to improve further the Quarter 3 forecast of a projected spend over budget of £35.561m
- B. Cabinet Members discussed the impact of the projected expenditure forecast on the General Fund Balance and note the risk of further service pressures (savings required) in next year if financial performance in the current year is not improved.
- C. Cabinet Members noted the projected deficit on the Dedicated Schools Grant and the approach to reviewing this.

259 Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital presented the report, who advised that at quarter 3, a total of 18 out of the newly updated 52 performance indicators showed an improvement and were above their target.

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Education provided an update on the completion rate for social workers assessments and the stability of placements for looked after children.

Concern was expressed with regards to sickness absence this quarter, with rises in absence due to stress. The importance of supporting staff under pressure was emphasised.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- Reviewed and considered performance dashboard information alongside this exception report.
- Noted progress to date in achieving the outcomes of The Shropshire Plan (TSP) and comment as appropriate.
- Confirmed that the KPIs currently agreed remain the same for Q4 of 2024/2025 and thereafter be aligned to the refresh of TSP in 2025/26.

260 Treasury Management Update Quarter 3 2024/25

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the quarterly update. He explained the prudent financial management approach, including the use of internal borrowing and the timing of borrowing to manage interest costs effectively.

RESOLVED:

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

- a) Noted that new borrowing of £25m has been taken out during quarter 3, in line with the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25. This is part of the replacement of internal borrowing (using internal balances) with external borrowing (as internal balances have been reduced).
- b) Noting the summary of the wider economic environment and the Council's borrowings and investments set out in Appendix A
- c) Noting the performance within prudential indicators for quarter 3, 2024/25 (Appendix B)

261 Estimated Collection Fund Outturn For 2024/2025

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the report with set out the expected outturn position for the Collection Fund for 2024/25. It showed that collection was overall £2.9m above target in the year, which was a benefit into next year and would be used to help manage our overall financial position in the interim.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet

1. Noted the overall Collection Fund estimated surplus of £4.279m for the year ending 31st March 2025, comprised of an estimated surplus of £1.676m for Council Tax and an estimated surplus of £2.603m for Non-Domestic Rates (NDR).
2. Noted the distribution of the Collection Fund estimated surplus for Council Tax and NDR to the major/relevant precepting authorities and the Secretary of State.
3. Noted Shropshire Council's share of the overall estimated surplus of £2.927m, comprised of an estimated surplus of £1.378m for Council Tax and an estimated surplus of £1.549m for NDR.
4. Noted the inclusion of Shropshire Council's share of the overall estimated deficit for Council Tax and NDR in the 2025/26 budget.

262 Financial Strategy 2025/26 - 2029/30

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources & Communities presented the report, which was an updated report to that taken to Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 January 2025 as it included the details published by government as the final Local Government Financial Settlement for 2025/26.

Members thanked the finance team for working diligently to finalise the budget, but acknowledged that there were still uncertainties and details that need to be clarified before the full Council meeting.

Concerns were raised about the level of reserves and the inability to achieve 43% of the planned savings, especially in light of the audit report which highlighted the need for realistic budgets and resilience in future financial planning.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet noted:
 - i. The alignment of this report with other reports on this agenda, including the Fees and Charges proposals, the proposed Capital Strategy, and the proposed Treasury Strategy; also the alignment to the position reported for the current financial year, set out in the Q3 Financial report and the Q3 Treasury Management report.

- ii. The analysis of the financial position of the council set out in this report and confirmed the alignment of the new proposals to the outline of the necessary actions for 2025/26 already set out in the December update to the MTFS.
 - iii. The proposed spending reductions for 2025/26.
 - iv. The proposed capital investment programme including the commentary on priority schemes and updates to possible future scenarios for the North West Relief Road
 - v. The levels of reserves in recent years, the forecast levels of reserves at the end of the current year, and the plans set out to ensure the adequacy of the reserves in future years.
 - vi. The approach of combined spending reductions and replenishment of general reserves.
2. That Cabinet continues to work with the Collaborative Budget group to recommend to Council Approval of the budget proposals, including revenue and capital budgets, and the associated strategies, subject to further amendments required by Cabinet, or identified as necessary by the Chief Finance Officer (“CFO”).
 3. That Cabinet delegate to the Chief Executive acceptance of the PSDS Phase 4 grant and conclusion of necessary agreements for this. This can then be included in the Capital Programme for Council. (Set out in section 8.)

263 Treasury Strategy 2025/26

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities presented the report which proposed the Treasury Strategy for 2025/26.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet recommends that Council:-

- a. Approve, with any comments, the Treasury Strategy for 2025/26
- b. Approve, with any comments, the Prudential Indicators, set out in Appendix 1, in accordance with the Local Government Act 2003.
- c. Approve, with any comments, the Investment Strategy, set out in Appendix 2 in accordance with the DLUHC Guidance on Local Government Investments.
- d. Approve, with any comments, the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement, set out in Appendix 3.
- e. 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.
- f. Authorise the Section 151 Officer to use other Foreign Banks which meet Link’s creditworthiness policy as required.
- g. Authorise the Section 151 Officer to increase the PRS Loan Facility from £10m to up to £30m, pending Housing Supervisory Board consultation and cabinet approval.

264 Fees and Charges 2025/26

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities introduced the report which presented the budgeted income to be received and proposes the level of fees and charges to be applied by Shropshire Council in 2025/26.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet members agreed and recommended to full Council the recommendations below. Subject to agreement by Cabinet, full Council are asked to approve these recommendations.

1. To note the breakdown of the total income for 2024/25 and 2025/26 and that the proposed 2025/26 charges for discretionary services represent £55.117m of the £103.858m of income derived from Fees and Charges
2. To approve the charges for 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix 3 to be implemented from 1 April 2025.
3. To 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. To note that the proposal in adult social care services for Assistive Technology and Maintenance Charges is under consultation.
5. To revise housing rents as follows (subject to restrictions or exemptions identified in the Welfare Reform and Work Bill):
 - I. Social Housing rents for 2025/26 are increased by 2.7% from 7th April 2025
 - II. Affordable rents for 2025/26 are increased by 2.7% from 7th April 2025.
 - 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
 - IV. All accommodation charges for 2025/26 are increased by 2.7% from 7th April 2025.
 - V. Service charges continue to be set based on actual cost.

265 Determination of Admission Arrangements 2026/27

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Education presented the report which sought Cabinet approval to determine admission arrangements 2026-27 for Shropshire Council's community and voluntary controlled schools.

Members noted that the local admissions forum had discussed the arrangements in detail and supported bringing them forward to the cabinet.

Members expressed their gratitude to the team for their improvements in safeguarding, school readiness, and ensuring that children in Shropshire go to their first-choice school.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet determined the proposed admission arrangements 2026 - 2027 for Shropshire's community and voluntary controlled schools as set out in Appendix A to this report and further approved the publication of those arrangements in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2021 and to the notification of this to parties specified in the Code.

266 Shropshire Council consultation response to the Planning Reform Working Paper: Planning Committees..

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services introduced the item, highlighting the pragmatic response to the government's consultation on planning reform. The response was developed with cross-party agreement and members noted the significant impact of the paper on parish and town councils, especially for Shire counties like Shropshire, which have unique community needs.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet considered and approved submission of the response to the Government's consultation on the proposals contained within the Planning Reform Working Paper: Modernising Planning Committees, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
2. That authority be given to the Assistant Director – Growth and Infrastructure, 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.

267 Shropshire Schools Funding Formula 2025-26

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Education presented the report which sought Cabinet approval for the proposed Shropshire Schools Funding Formula 2025-26. Members noted that the proposal had been discussed and agreed by the Schools Forum.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet accepted the recommendation of Shropshire Schools Forum (as outlined in Appendix A and B) on the funding formula for Shropshire schools for the financial year 2025-26 for maintained schools, and the academic year 2025-26 for academies.

268 Shropshire Local Plan and NPPF Position Statement

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services presented the report which provided an update to Cabinet on the implications of the updated National Planning Policy Framework and recommended an approach regarding the current Local Plan Review for the purposes of the examination and decision making on planning applications.

He highlighted the significant impact of the new national standard methodology on Shropshire's housing need and the immediate impact on the Council's ability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

Concern was raised regarding the delays in the local plan process and the need for sufficient resources to address the inspectors' concerns within the six-month deadline was expressed.

A representation from Malcolm Andrew, Chair of the Trefonen Rural Protection Group, was received emphasising the need for an up-to-date local plan and adequate resources for the planning policy team.

The planning team were thanked for their work.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Noted the implications of the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in particular regarding the increased local housing need in Shropshire as a result of the associated updated national standard methodology; the implications for managing development in the Green Belt; and the transitional arrangements for plan making.
2. Noted that as a result of the new local housing need figure calculated as required by the updated NPPF, Shropshire cannot currently demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites.
3. Agreed that following receipt of the Local Plan Inspector's letter (ID47), and having considered the options outlined in Section 7 of this report, that the letter detailed in Appendix 1 is sent to the Inspectors as a response, and that subject to the agreement of the Inspectors the assessment processes referenced in this response are progressed in accordance with the stated Project Plan.
4. Agreed the new Local Development Scheme (LDS) included as Appendix 2. 5. Agrees that the evidence base supporting the draft Local Plan (2016-2038) is a material consideration in decision making on relevant planning applications, to support the implementation of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This will include planning applications for new development on sites proposed to be allocated in the submitted version of the Local Plan (2016- 2038)

269 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 5 March 2025 at 2pm.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: