



Committee and Date

Transformation and
Improvement Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

9 February 2026

TRANSFORMATION AND IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2026

**In The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10am**

Responsible Officer: Ashley Kendrick Democratic Services Officer

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Present

Councillor David Minnery (Chair)

Councillors Dawn Husemann (Vice-Chair), Ed Bird, Rosemary Dartnall, Malcolm Myles-Hook, Chris Naylor, Charles Shackerley-Bennett, Jon Tandy, Beverley Waite and Sam Walmsley

In attendance

Councillor Heather Kidd - Leader, Councillor Roger Evans - Portfolio Holder for Finance, Councillor Ruth Houghton – Portfolio Holder for Social Care (via Teams), Councillor Andy Hall – Portfolio Holder for Children & Education (via Teams), Councillor Greg Ebbs (Chair of CIL Task and Finish Group)

Tanya Miles - Interim Chief Executive, Rachel Robinson - Executive Director for Public Health, Mannie Ketley – Finance Director (Deputy S151) (via Teams), Duncan Whitfield – Interim Director for Finance for Improvement, Claire Braddock – Overview & Scrutiny Officer, Tom Dodds – Scrutiny Manager, Amanda Holyoak – Committee Services Team Leader, Ashley Kendrick – Democratic Services Officer.

44 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Gary Groves and James Walton, Executive Director (S151).

45 Disclosable Interests

No declarations were received.

46 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Chairman proposed an amendment to the minutes to read:

“One public question had been received from John Palmer regarding Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). A copy of the question and the response from the Chairman can be found on the webpage for the meeting.

The Executive Director (S151) provided further information which can be found in the recording of the meeting.”

RESOLVED:

That subject to the amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2025 were approved.

47 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

48 Member Question Time

There were no members' questions.

49 Draft Financial Strategy 2025/26 - 2029/30

The Finance Director presented an overview of the draft budget, highlighting a significant shortfall in resources, applications for exceptional financial support (£71.4m for 25/26 and £130m for 26/27), and the impact of government funding reductions. The report included details on budget pressures, savings targets, and benchmarking reviews.

In response to a query, the Finance Director offered to remove the internal references if needed to improve clarity around unachieved savings and what they relate to.

Concerns were raised about optimism bias, noting that previous savings were not achievable and questioning the evidence-based changes made to the transformation programme to ensure future savings targets are realistic, especially given staffing reductions. In response, the Chief Executive emphasised the need to remove optimism bias from budgeting, referencing recommendations from the corporate peer challenge. The budget for 26/27 would exclude savings without a plan and ensure service areas have realistic budgets based on available information, aiming to stabilise the Council's finances and reserves. The next 12 months would focus on stabilising the budget, with future years dedicated to building capacity for true transformation and sustainable change, supported by the exceptional financial support application.

The Chair indicated that the question of responsibility for unachieved savings would be addressed in a future separate review as agreed in the committee's work plan.

Members requested a detailed breakdown of borrowing costs for past and future years which the Finance Director agreed to circulate after the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the committee supported the MTFS recommendations progressing to Cabinet.

50 Capital Strategy 2026/27 – 2030/31 - In-Year Review

The Finance Director presented an update on the capital programme and strategy, outlining the review of priority schemes, the principles guiding capital investment, and the need for an accelerated and independent review of Council assets.

Members expressed concern about the potential for 'fire sales' of assets due to accelerated disposal requirements. Members were assured that an independent review will be conducted to avoid rushed sales and to ensure assets are either generating income or disposed of efficiently, considering historical and maintenance factors.

Questions were raised about the comprehensiveness of the Council's asset register and the cost of due diligence. It was confirmed that while an asset register existed, it required enhancement for informed decision-making, and that due diligence will be conducted in-house where possible, with external support used selectively and time-limited.

RESOLVED:

That the committee supported the recommendations in the report and agreed to forward them to Cabinet for decision.

51 Work Programme

- i) Members received an update on the progress of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Task and Finish Group. The group requested an expansion of the Terms of Reference to allow full examination of the entire SIL system, not just allocation.

Members agreed this was necessary to understand the full picture and support strategic use of CIL.

RESOLVED:

To approve the request to widen the terms of reference.

- ii) Members then received an update from the Partnerships Task and Finish Group. Members noted that Workshops had been held with Bridgnorth and nearby parishes, with further sessions planned for Ludlow and a northern rural cluster.

The Chair warned the committee that the terms "partnership" and "devolution" were being incorrectly conflated by the public and some parishes, which risked undermining the important work on future partnership arrangements. She requested that scrutiny establish a separate Task and Finish Group specifically for reviewing the devolution process, with its own membership and remit. This would allow the Partnerships working group to stay focused and avoid mixed expectations.

RESOLVED:

That a proposal to create the separate Task & Finish Group would be added to the agenda for 9 February. It was also agreed that a letter would be sent to members explaining the distinction between partnership work and devolution.

52 Date of Next Meeting

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Monday 9 February 2026.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: