Committee and Date
Cabinet
9 September 2026

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 August 2026
In the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.30 am – 12.19 pm

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

Present
Councillors Heather Kidd (Leader), Alex Wagner, Roger Evans, Andy Hall, Ruth Houghton, James Owen, Rob Wilson, David Vasmer, David Walker and Sarah Marston
Also
Group Leaders: Councillors Duncan Kerr – Green and Progressive Independents, Dawn Husemann – Reform UK

221 **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies from Cabinet members.

Apologies were received from Group Leaders Cllrs Dan Thomas and Rosemary Dartnall

222 **Disclosable Interests**

No interests were declared.

223 **Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings held on 8 July 2026 and 14 July 2026 be confirmed as a correct record.

At the outset of the meeting, the Leader outlined the serious financial challenges facing Shropshire Council and highlighted the 2027/28 budget-setting process as critical to securing the council’s long-term sustainability. The council faced a funding gap equivalent to around a quarter of its net budget. Rising demand for adult social care and children's services, together with inflationary pressures, was adding more than £66 million to annual costs, creating an unsustainable position without significant change.

A programme of transformation was underway to address these pressures, including reforms to children's services, digital transformation and future changes to adult social care. The focus was on reducing demand through prevention and early intervention, improving outcomes for residents and delivering long-term financial sustainability, while learning from best practice elsewhere and investing in initiatives that would generate future savings.

The Leader emphasised that difficult decisions would continue to be required and that all areas of expenditure would be subject to review. Transparency, pace and cross-party engagement would be essential as the Council worked to reduce its reliance on borrowing and Exceptional Financial Support, which represented additional debt rather than new funding. The overarching aim was to reshape services, live within available resources and create a more efficient and sustainable council for the future.

224 **Public Question Time**

Public questions were received from the following:

John Palmer – in relation to amounts paid by Shropshire Council in fines or financial penalties since 1 April 2025 for non-compliance with statutory legislation.

John Crowe (asked on his behalf by Jonathan Owen) – in relation to the options for telecoms equipment currently based on the roof at Shirehall.

Responding to a supplementary question around timescale for decisions regarding relocation sites, the Portfolio Holder for Finance reported that negotiations were underway and said he would make this information available to the public when known.

Jane Gallagher (asked on her behalf by Jonathan Owen) – asking for a breakdown of the running costs of Shirehall

Responding to a supplementary question about potential for rationalising office based requirements into a refurbished Shirehall, the Portfolio Holder for Finance said that the report to the 14 July 2026 Cabinet had set out that refurbishment would cost many millions, there was no capital available to do this, any capital would need to be used to reduce the amount of Exceptional Financial Report required.

Jonathan Owen – in relation to the availability of the Shirehall Red Book valuation and the assumptions behind it.

Responding to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder said the sales brochure would be published as soon as possible but a precise date was unknown.

The full questions and responses to them are available here.

225 **Member Question Time**

A member question was received from Cllr Viv Parry in relation to cutting of grass, bushes, trees and hedges especially in relation to play areas and measures the Council would take to ensure that this is done.

The full question and response provided is available here.

226 **Scrutiny Items**

There were no scrutiny items.

227 **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Report**

The Portfolio Holder introduced the report following publication of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's findings regarding the Council's handling of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision for a child from an armed forces family. The Ombudsman found fault which had caused injustice to the child and family, particularly in relation to the recognition of the family's military circumstances and the timely transfer and use of information. The Council had accepted the findings, apologised for the distress caused and confirmed that the agreed remedy for the family had been implemented.

Cabinet was advised that a range of actions had been taken to address the issues identified and embed learning across the Education, Health and Care Plan service. These included dedicated Armed Forces Covenant training for staff, inclusion of the training within staff induction, the introduction of a checklist to identify children from service families at an early stage, and strengthened arrangements to support information sharing when families relocate. Members noted that these measures had been incorporated into operational practice and quality assurance processes, and welcomed the Council's transparent approach in acknowledging the findings and implementing improvements to prevent a recurrence.

RESOLVED

To note the contents of the report

228 **Digital Transformation Roadmap**

The Deputy Leader presented the report setting out a phased four year programme 2026 – 2030 to improve customer access, organisational efficiency and financial sustainability through the use of digital technology, automation, data and artificial intelligence. Key priorities include improved customer relationship management, enhanced contact centre services and greater system integration, while maintaining a "digital by choice, but human when it matters" approach.

Questions were raised regarding detail on the overall costs, anticipated savings and governance arrangements associated with the programme. The need to learn lessons from previous transformation initiatives was highlighted alongside the need to ensure clear accountability, quantified benefits, sufficient resources, robust gateway processes and effective public scrutiny.

A request was made for regular progress reports to the Finance and Improvement Scrutiny Committee covering delivery milestones, expenditure, projected costs, benefits realisation, workforce implications, cyber and data risks, and any changes to programme scope. It was also suggested that future major system procurements should be subject to scrutiny prior to approval and supported by comprehensive business cases.

The Deputy Leader explained how the proposed approach differed significantly from previous transformation programmes and had been informed by lessons identified through the PwC review. The roadmap had been developed around the Council's specific requirements rather than a standardised consultancy model and included flexibility to adapt priorities over time. Individual projects and investments would continue to require separate business cases and approval through existing governance arrangements.

Further discussion focused on the cultural and organisational changes required to support successful digital transformation. Recent digital developments were welcomed, including improvements to public information services, but the importance of understanding workflows, reducing avoidable demand, improving first-contact resolution and measuring the impact of change was emphasised. The need for staff training, digital skills development and wider culture change was highlighted.

It was noted that the first phase of the roadmap was focused on establishing the foundations necessary to support future transformation and ensure the successful adoption of new systems and ways of working.

RESOLVED

2.1 To approve the Digital Roadmap 2026–2030, attached at Appendix A. Appendix B (plan on a page) provides details for each workstream the key activities during each phase of the roadmap and benefits over the life of the programme. This supports delivery of the Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan, Digital Strategy and Financial Sustainability Programme.

2.2. Endorse the phased delivery approach set out within the roadmap, comprising:
Phase 1 – Mobilise, Prioritise and Decide (2026/27)
Phase 2 – Foundations and Early Value (2027/28)
Phase 3 – Scale and Transform (2028/29)
Phase 4 – Optimise and Sustain (2029/30)

2.3. Note that the roadmap establishes the strategic direction, delivery priorities and initial funding envelope for digital transformation and that future investment decisions relating to major system replacements, platform licensing, implementation activity and associated procurements will be subject to separate business cases, governance approvals and procurement processes where required.

2.4. Delegate authority to the Service Director for Enabling Services and the Head of Service – Automation and Technology, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Economic Growth, to make amendments to the roadmap, delivery sequencing and associated delivery plans, provided such changes do not materially alter the strategic objectives, scope or overall direction approved by Cabinet.

229 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

Mixed Economy Contract Extension

Before moving into part 2 of the meeting, the Portfolio Holder for Highways referred to the Mixed Economy Contract Extension exempt agenda item. He explained the need for this item to be taken after exclusion of the press and public but was able to say that that proposals would support efforts to address the maintenance backlog and improve the condition of roads across the county following a period of previous under-investment the trebling of potholes over the winter months, and further damage caused by heatwaves.

RESOLVED

That, in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 and Paragraph 10.4 [3] of the Council's Access to Information Rules, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items

230 **Exempt Minutes**

RESOLVED

That the exempt minutes of the 8 July 2026 be confirmed a correct record

231 **Oswestry SUE Corner Site - Asset Decision**

RESOLVED

That the four recommendations in the report be approved.

232 **Mixed Economy Contract Extension**

RESOLVED

That the six recommendations in the report be approved.

233 **Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 9 September 2026 at 10.30 am.

Signed .... (Chairman)

Date: ....