Shropshire Council

Committee and Date

Finance and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12 October 2026

FINANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2026
In the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.00 am - 12.40 pm

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward Committee Officer
Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257713

Present
Councillors Chris Naylor (Chair), Dawn Husemann (Vice-Chair), Ed Bird, Rosemary Dartnall, Gary Groves, Malcolm Myles-Hook, Mark Owen, Charles Shackerley-Bennett and Sam Walmsley

In Attendance

Councillor Heather Kidd (Leader), Councillor Roger Evans (Portfolio Holder for Finance), Councillor James Owen (Portfolio Holder for Housing), Tanya Miles (Chief Executive), Rachel Robinson (Interim Deputy Chief Executive), Paul Clarke (Service Director – Strategy & Change), Richard Phillips (Service Director – Legal & Governance), Kassandra Polyzoides (Interim Service Director Place Shaping – Remote) Duncan Whitfield (Interim S151 Officer), Tom Dodds (Overview & Scrutiny Manager), Claire Braddock (Overview & Scrutiny Officer), Tim Ward (Democratic Services Officer).

16 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bernie Bentick and Duncan Borrowman

17 **Disclosable Interests**

Councillor Mark Owen informed the meeting that with regard to Item 7 he was a member of the board of STAR Housing

18 **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record.

19 Public Question Time

Two public questions had been received:

John Palmer, in relation to the disposal of council assets.

Andrew Sceats, in relation to Cornovii. In response to a supplementary question the Chair noted that the current report focused on future options rather than the company's history but agreed the points raised should inform any retrospective review. It was agreed that the Interim S151 Officer would provide a fuller response to the points raised outside of the meeting

The full questions and responses can be found on [Response to Public Questions - 7 September 2026.pdf]

20 Members' Question Time

There were no questions from Members

21 Exceptional Financial Support: External Assurance Review

The Committee considered the Exceptional Financial Support: External Assurance Review report which shared the report of an 'Assurance Review' undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in April 2026 as part of the arrangements associated with the Council receiving Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from the Government, identified significant challenges facing the Council, and made a series of recommendations intended to support financial recovery and long-term sustainability.

Members welcomed progress but remained concerned that the council still lacked a clear, financially credible route to close the long-term budget gap. Particular concern was expressed about the need to move beyond process and demonstrate measurable delivery, sustainable savings, and transparent public assurance.

The committee broadly supported the report and agreed that recommendations to Cabinet should include strengthening the finance function, receiving a concise traffic-light summary of progress against the CIPFA recommendations, and improving the public accountability of the Improvement Board.

22 Cornovii Developments Ltd

The Committee considered the Cornovii Developments Ltd report which set out options for the Council's future relationship with Cornovii Developments Ltd (CDL). The report recognised that the company had delivered high-quality homes on difficult sites but concluded that its business model depended on council borrowing that was no longer affordable in the context of the financial emergency and exceptional financial support and it was recommended that Option 6, a structured closure over a managed period, was the least disadvantageous and lowest-cost option.

Members generally supported this approach, while stressing the need to protect tenants and to understand the full financial implications for taxpayers. The committee asked that Cabinet consider a member-led mechanism to review the history of Cornovii and capture lessons learned, while minimising additional cost and officer resource demands.

23 **Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2026/27**

The Committee received the Financial Monitoring Report for Quarter 1 of the 2026/27 financial year. Officers described the position as cautiously positive, with the council broadly tracking the budget set for the year but emphasised that this was an early position and that risks remained, particularly around demand-led services and the need for stronger accountability and forecasting.

Members raised issues including the treatment of parish and town council contributions to services, recruitment difficulties across key professional areas, the need for clearer transformation business cases, and the overspend risk in children's services. The Chair proposed that these issues be reflected in recommendations or follow-up requests to Cabinet.

24 **Q1 Performance Report**

The committee received the Q1 Performance report. They welcomed the revised performance reporting format, which brought together delivery commitments, traffic-light ratings and key performance indicators. Members felt the report was a significant improvement and provided a better basis for assessing progress against the corporate plan.

Some concern was expressed that the tone of the financial sustainability section might appear more positive than the position felt in scrutiny discussions, given the continuing scale of the council's financial challenge.

25 **Assets Member Briefing**

The committee agreed that members needed a clearer understanding of the council's asset base before scrutinising asset disposal strategy. Members requested more accessible information on the categories, scale, value and use of council assets, as well as the criteria and governance arrangements for identifying disposals.

It was agreed that a revised briefing should be prepared, potentially for an all-member session or a future scrutiny meeting, with greater granularity and clearer definitions of asset categories and terminology.

26 **Work Programme**

The Committee considered its future work programme and potential areas for further development.

The Scrutiny Officer suggested that instead of having 2 meetings in November a meeting be held in October to look at items such as Adult Social Care

Transformation, the Devolution of Strategic Partnerships paper and possibly the Assets briefing.

27 **Date of Next Meeting**

Members were advised that the next scheduled meeting was due to take place on Monday 16th November but that this may be brought forward to October and that they would be advised of the new date as soon as it was to hand.

Signed .... (Chairman)

Date: ....