



Committee and Date

Cabinet

18 October 2023

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2023

In the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

10.30 am – 1.04 pm

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak

Email: amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: 01743 257714

Present

Councillor Lezley Picton (Chairman)

Councillors Cecilia Motley, Ian Nellins, Robert Macey, Gwilym Butler, Dean Carroll, Mark Jones, Dan Morris and Chris Schofield

30 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Kirstie Hurst-Knight.

31 Disclosable Interests

None were declared.

32 Minutes

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

33 Public Question Time

Public questions were received from the following:

Dr Jamie Russell, in relation to funding of the North West Relief Road. A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Highways

Emma Bullard, in relation to budget for the North West Relief Road and costs and funding of it. A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Highways

Fleur Mcindoe in relation to the Council's support for Right to Grow and requesting an update on progress for a site on Rocke Street/Old Potts Way and an application in Oswestry. A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets.

Charles Green, regarding the Supplementary Planning Document on Sustainable Design and the completion of a sustainability checklist for planning applications. A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services.

Nicola Squire, regarding the Footbridge Farm intensive poultry application heard on appeal and technical assessments. A response was provided by the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services.

The full questions and the responses provided to them are available from the [public question item](#) on the web page for the meeting.

34 Member Question Time

Councillor Rosemary Dartnall asked when the set of wooden steps which were the responsibility of Shropshire Council Highways, leading down from Mansel Williams Way to the Reabrook Nature Reserve, would be repaired and why they could not become the responsibility of the Rights of Way Team.

By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Dartnall said that the initial report had been logged correctly but since this had been corrected a substantial amount of time had passed and she wished to know when repairs would be completed. She also asked if there were other anomalous cases where responsibility would be better lodged with Rights of Way rather than highways.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways said that he would look into both matters and report back to Councillor Dartnall.

Councillor Julia Buckley read out a series of question on behalf of Councillor Rachel Connolly relating to 'Fix My Street' and the length of time between reporting an issue and a repair taking place.

Responding to a supplementary question the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Director of Place explained the prioritisation process, that use of white paint meant that an assessment had been made, and if the contractual requirements on Kier were not met, then penalties were in place. He encouraged any member who had examples where contractual requirements were not being met to highlight and report them to the team or himself.

The questions asked and written responses are available from the [member question heading](#) on the web page for the meeting

35 Scrutiny Item - Social Housing and Renewing the Housing Strategy

Councillor Claire Wild, Chair of the Transformation and Improvement Scrutiny Committee provided a brief report of the committee's meeting held on 4 September 2023. The Committee had been able to consider the Quarter 1 financial and performance monitoring reports ahead of their presentation of cabinet and she thanked Portfolio Holders and Directors for attending the meeting. She reported that the committee was in the process of setting up 3 task and finish groups and confirmed that the remits of some would include partnership working and pressures in social care.

Councillor Joyce Barrow, Chair of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee explained that the report of the Task and Finish Group on Social Housing and

Renewing the Housing Strategy had been considered at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 20 July 2023. The Committee had been very pleased to endorse all recommendations made by the Group and now asked that Cabinet take them forward. There had been very good cross party attendance for the work of the group and she thanked all those who had participated

She went on to explain the background to the report and work of the Task and Finish Group which initially been established by the then Communities Overview Committee, the nature of the work undertaken, evidence and recommendations to Cabinet which were:

1. Following the implementation of the revised allocations policy and scheme, the Council should ensure that this is adhered to by all registered providers through regular monitoring to guarantee those in the highest need are allocated housing.
2. The Council should recognise the importance of the strategic housing function and how housing is integral to planning policy, social care and economic development, and therefore the need to strengthen the relationship between these functions.
3. The Council should promote a place-based approach to housing and economic development, which includes commissioning affordable and supported housing based on evidenced need so as to ensure that housing priorities are delivered in the right place. Thus, responding to the fact that Shropshire is made up of any different communities across a large geographic area with different needs.
4. Investment in social housing must acknowledge the specific needs of rural settlements, therefore products need to be tailored accordingly. For example, intergenerational supported housing, which could include staff accommodation, would help to promote a preventative agenda in villages and small towns (e.g., preventing admissions to hospital and care homes, and supporting people with learning disabilities and mental health problems to live independently).
5. The Council should explore and pursue opportunities to attract funding, such as Community Land Trusts, and lobby for new products specifically to support the rural economy which will not only deliver the preventative agenda, but also balance the housing market and help to ensure that people can continue to afford to live in communities in Shropshire. For example, innovative funding products to fund intergenerational living and for sub-market private rented accommodation for key workers who are not necessarily able to access social housing, as they are not in a high priority reasonable preference category.
6. The Council should review and implement any new legislation on short-term lets, helping to ensure that the balance is struck between the economic gain to communities and places through increased visitor spend, against the availability of homes to buy and rent where there is local concern.
7. That feedback is shared with the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on the 9 November 2023. This should confirm

which recommendations have been accepted and which have not. An action plan should set out what will be done by when to deliver the accepted recommendations, and where recommendations have not been accepted an explanation should be provided.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets and other members of the Cabinet warmly welcomed the report and expressed enthusiasm for the recommendations. The Portfolio Holder drew attention to work already underway and to the intention to develop meaningful key performance indicators to measure progress. Group Leaders present at the meeting also endorsed the work undertaken and the recommendations within the report. The Portfolio Holder agreed to attend the meeting of the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Committee on 9 November to provide an update report on progress on recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet consider the recommendations of the report and provide a response to the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 November 2023 confirming which recommendations have been accepted, and which have not, accompanied by an action plan setting out what will be done by when to deliver the accepted recommendations. Where recommendations have not been accepted an explanation will be provided.

36 Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2023/24

Councillor Rob Macey – Portfolio Holder for Culture & Digital, introduced the report, reminding all members of the council of the need to review and consider performance dashboard information alongside it. He referred to the close focus on the alignment of finances to the Shropshire Plan and the need for evidenced decision making to ensure a sustainable future for the Council. He drew attention to the four KPIs currently highlighted as exceptions, explained that this was starting point and that work was underway to review targets, tolerances and benchmarks. The work of the Transformation and Improvement Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on development of further KPIs. Group Leaders were asked to draw attention to the availability of Power BI datasets

Discussion of the report covered the need to compare performance with similar authorities rather than geographical authorities, for example in relation to school preferences and admissions. It was reiterated that there was more work underway to establish meaningful targets and baseline figures.

Responding to comments on meeting secondary school preference, the Executive Director of Place reported that a briefing for all members was planned on school placement and commended the school admissions team who had worked tirelessly during a difficult year due to the unusually large size of the year group.

The Portfolio Holder Culture and Digital thanked the Head of Service Improvement and team for the hard work to date in establishing the system for creation and update of KPIs.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet reviewed and considered performance dashboard information alongside this exception report and noted progress to date in achieving the outcomes of The Shropshire Plan (TSP) and commented as appropriate.

37 Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2023/24

In presenting the Financial Monitoring report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Support said that performance in Quarter 1 had exceeded expectations and he thanked the finance team and officers for tirelessly working to achieve this result. He acknowledged that there remained much to do, but reiterated that there was no indication of any imminent financial crisis. He reported on the emergency planning exercises; stress testing of the plans and identified contingency arrangements in the event of unforeseen challenges, or under delivery on known challenges.

Responding to questions regarding outstanding savings required, what was meant by 'demand management' and for reassurance and further detail moving forward, he encouraged members to attend meetings of the newly established scrutiny task and finish groups which would be considering this information in detail. Reports for periods 4, 5 and 6 would also be with members as soon as they were ready, ahead of the report on Quarter 2.

Referencing other Councils that had recently issued Section 114 notices, the Portfolio Holder and Leader reiterated that although difficult decisions lay ahead the Shropshire Plan was firmly established and would deliver the savings needed.

RESOLVED:

- A. To note that at the end of Quarter 1 (30th June 2023), the expected level of savings delivery is £34.3m, representing more than the sum total of the last 3 years, and a level of delivery equal to that in recent years.
- B. That savings not yet confirmed amount to £17m.
- C. That demand-led services are forecasting significant overspending of £20.5m in the year, which is likely to continue into the coming year.
- D. The result of those points (A-C above) is a current forecast of overspend of £37.590m
- E. That it is assumed for planning purposes that
 - a. 65% of the remaining savings will be delivered (total: £11.9m) and
 - b. short-term funding will be identified to enable sustainable demand management approaches to be implemented in social care services (total: £20.5m), and that necessary plans are prepared to enable this.
- F. The resulting forecast at quarter 1 is therefore a likely overall overspend of £5.2m once key management actions are implemented. This will leave the General Fund balance at £21.8m, within the target range of £15m-£30m.

38 Treasury Management Update Quarter 1 2023/24

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources introduced the report referencing the impact of interest rates increases.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the summary of the wider economic environment and the Council's borrowings and investments set out in Appendix A
2. To note the performance within prudential indicators for quarter 1, 2023/24 (Appendix B)
3. To approve the delegation to the Section 151 Officer to finalise financial arrangements for investment via CDL in the private rental sector.

39 Capital Strategy 2022/23 – 2027/28 Mid-Year Review

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Corporate Resources introduced the report, explaining that a mid-term capital strategy had been brought forward for the first time to allow all members to be engaged in the development of opportunities across the county. This would facilitate any requests for reassessment through the task and finish group where it would be possible to see the implications to revenue of alternatives. He said that maintenance of a Capital Strategy and associated costs within revenue budgets would be stringently monitored moving forward in relation to cost of delivery and borrowing if required.

The Portfolio Holder and Leader went on to answer questions in relation to appendix C of the Strategy - Amendments to Priority Scheme Schedules, including: the Target Operating Model - Shirehall refurbishment; plans for Shrewsbury Town Centre and a move of a civic hub from Shirehall to Riverside as part of the redevelopment; the North West Relief Road; and LEP funding connected to the Oxon Link Road.

Responding to comments, the Portfolio Holder emphasised that the purchase of the Shrewsbury shopping centres had been about place shaping and the long term vision and future of Shrewsbury, not short term income benefit. The planned town centre redevelopment had generated a significant amount of external interest as well as government investment, would enhance a thriving county town which would in turn, help the rest of the county to flourish. A new civic hub would be designed for multiple use and act as an anchor point, not just functioning as a hub for Shropshire Council, but other organisations as well.

The Portfolio Holder said he looked forward to further discussion at the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED:

- 3.1 To approve the updated priority and aspirational capital scheme schedules for inclusion in the draft Capital Strategy, ahead of wider Member engagement.
- 3.2. To approve progression of the schemes detailed in the priority capital scheme schedule to business case to develop and assure the associated costs and funding

proposed.

3.3. To recommend to Council the approval of additional funding of £2.228m in relation to the Multi Agency Hub and the Pride Hill capital schemes which form part of the Shrewsbury Town Centre Redevelopment Programme.

3.4. To recommend to Council the approval of additional match funding of £0.647m in relation to the Council's LUF Round 2 grant award which requires total match funding of £5.043m, £4.396m of which has been previously secured / approved.

3.5. To note the considerations raised in respect of the future direction of the North West Relief Road (NWRR) and the Oxon Link Road (OLR) detailed at section 9.

40 Annual Customer Feedback (complaints) Report

The Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital introduced the annual report drawing attention to the 2702 cases of customer feedback.

The average time taken to respond to stage 1 complaints had been challenging in the past, at 32 days, and he was pleased to report that the council's target of 30 days had now been surpassed and was now at 26 days. While the long-term trend was of increasing numbers of complaints received, up by 36% since 2016/17, year on year the volume of customer feedback has stabilised, showing a very slight year-to-year reduction for 2022/23.

The number of complaints progressing beyond Stage 1 through either the council's own processes or to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) remained small at 5% of total complaints, of these, 20 (33%) were investigated and of those 16 were upheld by the Ombudsman, representing 0.01% of total complaints investigated. The Ombudsman had recommended a meeting with Shropshire Council to discuss the annual report and the year ahead and this discussion would be helpful to develop a more robust understanding of the ombudsman's recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder for Highways drew attention to the marked reduction in the volume of complaints about highways and transport, which now accounted for 19% of complaints down from 27% the previous year, he thanked the Highways team for the marked improvement in the way it was operating.

RESOLVED:

To note the recommendations and actions in the Annual Customer Feedback Report designed to support and improve robust customer feedback performance.

41 Cross Border Marches Strategic Partnership Memorandum of Understanding

The Leader explained the proposed establishment of a collaboration framework for neighbouring local authority areas with shared characteristics, needs and interests, providing a flexible basis for joint working without the need for formal governing structures and without impacting existing strategic partnerships or individual local authority working arrangements. She reported that the proposed collaboration had received a positive reaction from both Westminster and the Welsh Government. Members referred to numerous potential benefits including areas such as health and social care, public transport and infrastructure and all welcomed the proposal.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet agree to recommend to council:

1. The establishment of a Marches Forward Partnership with neighbouring local authorities.
2. The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the local authorities to reflect the spirit of cooperation and joint working between them.
3. Support the development of the Marches Forward Partnership through representation on a joint local authority Leaders Group.
4. Delegate to the Chief Executive and Executive Director of Place to proceed with development of a work programme to meet the objectives within the Memorandum of Understanding, in consultation with relevant Portfolio Holders (depending on the service under consideration).

42 Shropshire Destination Management Plan 2023- 2025

The Portfolio Holder Culture and Digital introduced the report, explaining that the Shropshire Destination Management Plan would be the blueprint for how the county intends to manage its visitor economy between 2023 and 2025. Shropshire has not had a whole county plan for some years and it would provide impetus and direction for all with a stake in the sector, and help the sector to gain credibility and recognition as an important driver of the county's economy.

The Plan would be used as a reference document for future funding and a basis for future bids into government programmes and could be used by developers and tourism businesses to shape their investment and inform, guide, and influence how resources are used and allocated. It was intended to be a living document that is periodically reviewed and adjusted to take account of the operating environment, the needs and expectations of consumers, businesses and communities, as well as opportunities to develop new products and propositions.

Discussion covered the importance of sustainable transport in supporting the visitor economy, the need to encourage day visitors to stay longer, and the population of around 4.5 million people who lived within an hour and a half of the county. It was confirmed that opportunities for working with Telford and Wrekin would be fully explored and the Plan was welcomed by all.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve and publish the Destination Management Plan.
2. To approve the Council facilitating the creation of a new tourism partnership, with clear governance and terms of reference, comprised of private and public stakeholders including Visit Shropshire, the county DMO, to manage delivery of the DMP action plan.

Responsibility for this work is delegated to the Director for Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Digital and Culture.

3. To approve that Shropshire Council work closely with Telford & Wrekin Council, who are about to commence work on a DMP for their unitary area, and to identify where the obvious points of contact and opportunities for cross-border working will be

43 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED

That, in accordance with the provisions of schedule 12A 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

44 Exempt Minutes

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

45 Recommendation to Award a Contract for the Integrated Community Equipment Loan Service (ICELS)

RESOLVED

That the recommendations in the report be approved.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: