



Committee and Date

Council

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023

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

10.00 am - 2.05 pm

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257713

Present

Councillors Vince Hunt and Lezley Picton (Leader), Brian Williams (Vice Chairman), Ian Nellins (Deputy Leader), Roy Aldcroft, Jeff Anderson, Caroline Bagnall, Nicholas Bardsley, Joyce Barrow, Bernie Bentick, Thomas Biggins, Ed Bird, Andy Boddington, Peter Broomhall, Julia Buckley, Gwilym Butler, Dean Carroll, Steve Charmley, Ted Clarke, Rachel Connolly, Gerald Dakin, Rosemary Dartnall, Steve Davenport, Mary Davies, Julian Dean, Geoff Elner, David Evans, Julia Evans, Roger Evans, Rob Gittins, Nat Green, Kate Halliday, Simon Harris, Nigel Hartin, Nick Hignett, Ruth Houghton, Richard Huffer, Tracey Huffer, Kirstie Hurst-Knight, Mark Jones, Simon Jones, Duncan Kerr, Heather Kidd, Christian Lea, Hilary Luff, Nigel Lumby, Robert Macey, David Minnery, Dan Morris, Pamela Moseley, Alan Mosley, Peggy Mullock, Kevin Pardy, Vivienne Parry, Tony Parsons, John Price, Ed Potter, Chris Schofield, Andrew Sherrington, Colin Taylor, Dan Thomas, Edward Towers, Kevin Turley, David Vasmer, Alex Wagner, Claire Wild, Mark Williams, Rob Wilson and Paul Wynn

54 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Garry Burchett, Mike Isherwood, Paul Gill, Cecilia Motley and Robert Tindall.

55 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

56 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

57 Announcements

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Colin Taylor to his first meeting following his election as the councillor for the Alveley and Claverley Division

Chairman's Engagements

The Chairman referred Members to the list of official engagements carried out by himself and the Vice Chairman since the last meeting of the Council on 21 September 2023, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

58 Public Questions

The Chairman advised that public questions had been received from Michael Hinds, Ruth Cranley, and Chris Naylor. A copy of the questions and the responses provided are attached to the signed minutes and available from the web page for the meeting.

[Agenda for Council on Thursday, 14th December, 2023, 10.00 am — Shropshire Council](#)

59 Report of Returning Officer - Alveley and Claverley

It was proposed by the Chairman, Councillor Vince Hunt, and seconded by the Vice Chairman Councillor Brian Williams that the report of the Returning Officer, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted and approved.

60 Setting the Council Tax Taxbase for 2024/25

It was proposed by the Councillor Gwilym Butler, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities and seconded by Councillor Lezley Picton, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Strategy, Improvement and Communications that the report of the Executive Director of Resources, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

On being put to a recorded vote with 68 Members voting for, none against and no abstentions as follows:

FOR:

Councillors Aldcroft, Anderson, Bagnall, Bardsley, Barrow, Bentick, Biggins, Bird, Boddington, Broomhall, Buckley, Butler, Carroll, Charmley, Clarke, Connolly, Dakin, Dartnall, Davies, Dean, Elnor, D Evans, J Evans, R Evans, Gittins, Green, Halliday, Harris, Hartin, Hignett, Houghton, R Huffer, T Huffer, Hunt, Hurst-Knight, M Jones, S Jones, Kerr, Kidd, Lea, Luff, Lumby, Macey, Minnery, Morris, Moseley, Mosley, Mullock, Nellins, Pardy, Parry, Parsons, Picton, Potter, Price, Schofield, Sherrington,

Taylor, Thomas, Towers, Turley, Vasmer, Wagner, Wild, B Williams, M Williams, Wilson and Wynn

It was **RESOLVED**:

That Council

1. approve, in accordance with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 the revised discretionary power to levy a Council Tax premium of 100% in relation to dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than one year (but less than five years) i.e. reduce the minimum period for the implementation of the premium for long term empty premises from two years to one year and the resulting inclusion of 798.32 Band D equivalents in the taxbase calculation. This includes an additional 456.55 Band D equivalents as a result of the amendment to reduce the minimum period to one year and 341.77 Band D equivalents in relation to the existing policy for dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than two years (but less than five years).
2. approve, in accordance with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 the revised discretionary power to levy a Council Tax premium of 100% in respect of second homes from 1 April 2025.
3. To approve the publication of a notice regarding the new discretionary Council Tax policy awarded in respect of unoccupied and substantially unfurnished dwellings and second homes within 21 days of the determination
4. approve, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Shropshire Council as it's Council Tax taxbase for the year 2024/25, as detailed in Appendix A, totalling 119,191.17 Band D equivalents.
5. note the changes to the Council's localised Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme in 2024/25. The scheme is attached at Appendix B.
6. note the Council Tax Support Scheme amendments detailed in Appendix B have no impact on the taxbase determination.
7. note the exclusion of 8,237.19 Band D equivalents from the taxbase calculation as a result of localised Council Tax Support.
8. note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy of 0% in respect of second homes (other than those that retain a 50% discount through regulation as a result of job related protection) and note the inclusion of 759.79 Band D equivalents in the Council Tax taxbase calculation as a result of this discount policy.
9. note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to not award a discount in respect of vacant dwellings undergoing major repair, i.e. former Class A exempt properties.

10. note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy in respect of vacant dwellings, i.e. former Class C exempt properties, of 100% for one month i.e. effectively reinstating the exemption and the resulting exclusion of 132.23 band D equivalents from the taxbase calculation.
11. note continuation of the “six week rule” in respect of vacant dwellings, i.e. former Class C exempt properties.
12. note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to levy a Council Tax premium of 200% in relation to dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than five years (but less than ten years) and the resulting inclusion of an additional 215.33 Band D equivalents in the taxbase calculation.
13. note continuation of the discretionary Council Tax discount policy to levy a Council Tax premium of 300% in relation to dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for more than ten years and the resulting inclusion of an additional 188.01 Band D equivalents in the taxbase calculation.
14. approve a collection rate for the year 2024/25 of 98.5%.

61 **Annual Treasury Report 2022/23**

It was proposed by the Councillor Gwilym Butler, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities and seconded by Councillor Lezley Picton, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Strategy, Improvement and Communications that the report of the Executive Director of Resources, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED:**

That Council

1. Approve the actual 2022/23 prudential and treasury indicators in the report
2. Note the annual treasury management report for 2022/23

62 **Treasury Strategy 2023/24 - Mid Year Review**

It was proposed by the Councillor Gwilym Butler, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities and seconded by Councillor Brian Williams that the report of the Executive Director of Resources, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed

It was unanimously **RESOLVED:**

That Members agree the Treasury Strategy activity as set out in the report.

63 Statement of Licensing Policy 2024 to 2029

It was proposed by the Councillor Chris Schofield, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services and seconded by Councillor Roy Aldcroft that the report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed

It was unanimously **RESOLVED:**

That the Council adopts the proposed statement of licensing policy ('the policy'), as set out in Appendix A, to take effect from 1 April 2024 and instructs the Transactional Management and Licensing Manager to publish and advertise the policy in accordance with the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003.

64 Polling District, Polling Place and Polling Station Review 2023

It was proposed by the Councillor Gwilym Butler, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities and seconded by Councillor Hilary Luff that the report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED:**

1. That Council approve the following arrangements, in order for them to be implemented on or by 2 January 2024.

DIVISION	PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS
Polling District Reference: LAB Claverley	Delegated authority be given to the Electoral Registration Officer, in consultation with the local member, Councillor Taylor, to agree a replacement polling place for LAB Claverley.
Polling District Reference: LBA Bishops Castle LBB Colebatch LBE Lydham LBF Mainstone	SpArC Leisure Centre replace Bishop's Castle Public Hall as the designated polling place for LBA Bishops Castle, LBB Colebatch, LBE Lydham and LBF Mainstone, until such time as building works have concluded at Bishop's Castle Public Hall.
Polling District Reference: LCE Bridgnorth (Morfe Ward) (part of)	St Mary's Bluebird CE Primary School replace St James Hall as the designated polling place for LCE Bridgnorth (Morfe Ward) (part of). LCE Bridgnorth (Morfe Ward) (part of)

	be reduced to a single station.
<p>Polling District Reference: LHB Church Stretton (North Ward) LHC Church Stretton (South Ward) LHD Church Stretton (Little Stretton Ward)</p>	<p>Church Stretton United Reformed Church Hall replace Silvester Horne Institute as the designated polling place for LHB Church Stretton (North Ward), LHC Church Stretton (South Ward) and LHD Church Stretton (Little Stretton Ward).</p>
<p>Polling District Reference: LRD Rudge LRH Worfield (Hobbins Wood) LRI Worfield (North Ward)</p>	<p>Worfield Cricket Pavilion replace Worfield Village Hall as the designated polling place for LRD Rudge, LRH Worfield (Hobbins Ward) and LRI Worfield (North Ward).</p>
<p>Polling District Reference: NLC Gobowen (part of)</p>	<p>Gobowen Church and Gobowen Church Hall site be designated as the polling place for NLC Gobowen (part of).</p>
<p>Polling District Reference: NGD Oswestry (Carreg Llwyd Ward)</p>	<p>Holy Trinity CE Primary Academy (Main Hall) replace Hope Church Oswestry as the designated polling place for NGD Oswestry (Carreg Llwyd Ward).re</p>
<p>Polling District Reference: NQC Wem Rural (Roden Ward) NQD Wem (East Ward) (part of) NDE Wem (East Ward) (part of) NQF Wem (West Ward) (part of) NQG Wem (West Ward) (part of)</p>	<p>That delegated authority be given to the Electoral Registration Officer, in consultation with local members, Councillor Broomhall and Councillor Towers, to agree a replacement polling place for NQC Wem Rural (Roden Ward), NQD Wem (East Ward) (part of), NDE Wem (East Ward) (part of), NQF Wem (West Ward) (part of) and NQG Wem (West Ward) (part of).</p>
<p>Polling District Reference: SJB Shrewsbury (Harlescott Ward) (part of)</p>	<p>Riversway Elim Church (Severn Room) replace Mount Pleasant Primary School – Studio as the designated polling place for SJB Shrewsbury (Harlescott Ward) (part of).</p>

2. That delegated authority be given to the Electoral Registration Officer to find a suitable alternative, in conjunction with local members, should any polling stations not be available for a particular election.

65 Annual report - People Overview Committee

The Chair of the People Overview Committee, Councillor Peggy Mullock, presented the annual report of the Committee for 2022-23. She outlined the work that had been carried out by the Committee and thanked members of the committee and officers for all their work. She then took questions.

Councillor Moseley commented that she sat on the pupil disciplinary panel at a school where she was a governor and that previously when considering pupil

exclusions, there had either been a member of the local authority inclusion team present, or if not present, they had submitted a report, but that this no longer happened. Cllr Mullock agreed to look into this with the portfolio holder and report back to Councillor Moseley, copying in all members.

Members noted the contents of the report.

66 Annual Report - Communities Overview Committee

Councillor Robert Macey former chair of the Communities Overview Committee presented the annual report of the Communities Overview Committee for 2022-23. He outlined the work that had been carried out by the Committee and thanked members of the committee and officers for all their work. He then took questions.

Members noted the contents of the report.

67 Community Governance Review

It was proposed by the Councillor Gwilym Butler, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Corporate Resources and Communities and seconded by Councillor Nick Bardsley that the report of the Assistant Director – Legal and Governance, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

Several members expressed disappointment that a wider review was not being carried out but recognised that current timescales did not allow for this.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED:**

That the Terms of Reference for the following Community Governance reviews set out in appendices 1 to 5 be approved for consultation:

- a. Albrighton/Donington
- b. Baschurch/Pimhill(Bomere Heath and District)
- c. Ludlow/Ludford
- d. Market Drayton/Adderley
- e. Shrewsbury

68 Adoption of Pontesbury Neighbourhood Plan

It was proposed by the Councillor Chris Schofield, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulatory Services and seconded by Councillor Nick Hignett that the report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED:**

That Shropshire Council, as the Local Planning Authority 'makes' i.e. adopts the Pontesbury Neighbourhood Development Plan (as set out in Appendix 1) and brings it into force with immediate effect as part of the Development Plan for Shropshire.

69 Local Government Act 1972, Section 101 Formal Application to Upgrade Footpaths and add a Section of Bridleway in The Parish of Woore and Parish of Buerton in Cheshire East - Delegation To Cheshire East Council to Investigate and Determine This Cross-border Claim

It was proposed by the Councillor Robert Macey, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Digital and seconded by Councillor Roy Aldcroft that the report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received and agreed

It was unanimously **RESOLVED:**

That Shropshire Council delegates the function of determining the formal application to upgrade footpaths and add a bridleway in the Parish of Woore in Shropshire and Buerton in Cheshire, to Cheshire East Council, as the claimed routes link with each other.

70 Constitution of Committees and the Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

It was proposed by the Chairman, Councillor Vince Hunt, and seconded by the Vice Chairman Councillor Brian Williams that the report of the Assistant Director – Legal and Governance, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

On being put to a recorded vote with 37 Members voting for, 27 against and 5 abstentions as follows:

FOR:

Councillors Aldcroft, Anderson, Bardsley, Barrow, Biggins, Bird, Broomhall, Butler, Carroll, Charmley, Dakin, Davenport, Elnor, D Evans, Gittins, Harris, Hignett, Hunt, Hurst-Knight, M. Jones, S Jones, Lea, Luff, Lumby, Macey, Morris, Mullock, Nellins, Picton, Potter, Price, Schofield, Thomas, Turley, Wild, B Williams and Wynn.

AGAINST:

Councillors Bagnall, Bentick, Boddington, Buckley, Clarke, Connolly, Dartnall, Davies, R Evans, Green, Halliday, Hartin, Houghton, R Huffer, T Huffer, Kidd, Moseley, Mosley, Pardy, Parry, Parsons, Sherrington, Taylor, Vasmer, Wagner, M Williams and Wilson

ABSTENTION:

Councillors Dean, J Evans, Kerr, Minnery, and Towers

It was **RESOLVED:**

That the Council confirms the revised allocation of seats to each of the political groups for the remainder of the 2023/24 municipal year as a consequence of the change in group membership as follows:

- a) That the composition and revised allocation of seats on its committees and other bodies as detailed in the report be approved.
- b) That the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group provides notification of which of its members will be appointed as a member of the Standards Committee.

71 **Appointments to Committees**

It was proposed by the Chairman Councillor Vince Hunt and seconded by the Vice Chairman Councillor Brian Williams that the following amendments to committee membership be agreed.

Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Robert Tindall to replace Councillor Kevin Turley as a member of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Andrew Sherrington to replace Councillor Rob Wilson as a substitute member of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Housing Supervisory Board

Councillor Roger Evans to replace Councillor Heather Kidd as a member of the Housing Supervisory Board

Councillor David Vasmer to replace Councillor Bernie Bentick as a substitute member of the Housing Supervisory Board

Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Roger Evans to be appointed a member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Nigel Hartin to be appointed a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Nick Hignett to be appointed a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor David Evans to be appointed a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Mary Davies to be appointed a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Joyce Barrow to be appointed a substitute member of the Southern Planning Committee

RESOLVED:

That the following changes in committee membership be agreed

Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Robert Tindall to replace Councillor Kevin Turley as a member of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Andrew Sherrington to replace Councillor Rob Wilson as a substitute member of the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Housing Supervisory Board

Councillor Roger Evans to replace Councillor Heather Kidd as a member of the Housing Supervisory Board

Councillor David Vasmer to replace Councillor Bernie Bentick as a substitute member of the Housing Supervisory Board

Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Roger Evans to be appointed a member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Nigel Hartin to be appointed a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Nick Hignett to be appointed a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor David Evans to be appointed a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

Councillor Mary Davies to be appointed a substitute member of the Northern Planning Committee

Southern Planning Committee

Councillor Joyce Barrow to be appointed a substitute member of the Southern Planning Committee

72 Motions

The following motion was received from Councillor Duncan Kerr and supported by the Green Group

Waste Minimisation Strategy

On the 15th July 2021 we presented a motion to this Council calling on the authority to adopt a waste minimisation strategy by Dec 2021. This motion recognised that despite declaring a climate emergency Shropshire Council has the unenviable record of collecting more household waste per household than any other mainland authority in England. The consequences is higher carbon emissions and costs falling on our residents.

Even though the Council had a waste minimisation strategy in 2011 this motion was opposed by the Conservative controlling group who argued that it might result in charging for green waste and that the Government might be removing the powers of Local Authorities to do this. Recently the Government has made it clear that their fears were unfounded.

In the meantime, the Cabinet has received a report from a Scrutiny Committee recommending that a waste minimisation strategy be developed but not producing any timetable.

As a result of this lost opportunity for action our recycling performance has dropped by 2.7% from 2018/9 to 2021/2 relegating us out of the top 50 authorities for recycling; and our total waste arisings have increased by 7%. We are heading rapidly in the wrong direction.

It's time to take some action on a service that the Council has direct control over and is an important contributor to the climate change which is already affecting Shropshire. This motion therefore commits the Council to have a Waste Minimisation Strategy approved by June 2024

This was seconded by Councillor Julian Dean

By way of alterations Councillor Kerr proposed that the final paragraph be amended to read:

It's time to take some action on a service that the Council has direct control over and is an important contributor to the climate change which is already affecting Shropshire. This motion therefore commits the Council to have a Waste Minimisation Strategy approved by 1 September 2024

On taking a vote the amended motion was unanimously supported

The following motion was received from Councillor Mark Williams and supported by the Liberal Democrat Group

Limit Post-16 Student Transport Costs.

With the imminent closure of the Bridgnorth 6th Form, the Post-16 students in my ward will now be disadvantaged by having to travel much further for their compulsory Post-16 education. The significant problem that this causes my and many other rural

wards is that these students will have to purchase at least two bus passes to get to their chosen college.

Using my ward, Highley, as an example; almost every student will need to purchase an annual Diamond Bus Pass costing £800 to get to Bridgnorth and then either a college specific pass at around £600 or an Arriva annual bus pass at £715 to get to their chosen college.

Our current system is forcing the parents and carers of our children to find around £1500 per year to send them to school. This is clearly unfair, if you live within the reach of a single bus service like Arriva which covers most of the county, then you will pay no more than £715 for your annual bus pass, if, like us, you have to use multiple services you have to pay far more.

The Department for education Post-16 transport and travel support to education and training Statutory guidance for local authorities clearly states the Council's responsibilities:

- That those who are vulnerable to becoming not in education, employment or training should be offered any transport support that is necessary to enable them to participate.
- That young people in rural areas should not be worse off financially because they may need to travel further to access education and training provision than their peers in urban areas
- That they ensure that any contribution is affordable for learners and their parents.
- That they ensure that there are arrangements in place to support those families on low income.

Also, to aid transparency, it is good practice for local authorities to set out the average cost per young person of post-16 transport in their area before any are subsidies deducted.

Section 509AB(3)(b)(c)&(d) of the Education Act 1996

I couldn't find this information anywhere in the Council's transport policy

This policy will promote fairness and inclusivity by ensuring that all students, regardless of their economic backgrounds or location, have equal access to education without an unfair financial burden of excessive transportation costs.

Therefore, I propose

- 1) that the total annual cost of a Post-16 student's transport, when using school buses and public transport, shall not exceed the expense of a single annual Arriva student bus pass within Shropshire;

- 2) where a student's total transport costs exceeds this amount, Shropshire Council will issue an Annual Student Transport Pass on payment of the value an Arriva student bus pass;
- 3) that the Annual Students Transport Pass will enable the holder to use all relevant public transport to get to and from their chosen place of education within the approved list of education providers.

This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Sherrington

By way of alteration Councillor M Williams proposed that the final paragraph of the motion be amended to read:

Therefore, I propose that a Task & Finish Group be urgently formed to look at this problem and come forward with a proposal to the next council meeting that will promote fairness and inclusivity by ensuring that all students, regardless of their economic backgrounds or location, have equal access to education without an unfair financial burden of excessive transportation costs.

As a guide to the new Task & Finish Group we propose

- 1) that Section 509AB(3)(b)(c) & (d) of the Education Act 1996 be looked at and its requirement be incorporated into any recommendations.
- 2) that the total annual cost of a Post-16 student's transport, when using school buses and public transport, shall not exceed the expense of a single annual Arriva student bus pass within Shropshire.
- 3) where a student's total transport costs exceeds this amount, Shropshire Council will issue an Annual Student Transport Pass on payment of the value an Arriva student bus pass;
- 4) that the Annual Students Transport Pass will enable the holder to use all relevant public transport to get to and from their chosen place of education within the approved list of education providers.

On taking a vote the amended motion was unanimously supported

The following motion was received from Councillor Ruth Houghton and supported by the Liberal Democrat Group

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is often difficult to develop in many areas of the County. The reasons for this are as follows:

- Limited land availability
- Length of time to reach the development stage and now
- Increasing construction costs.

Shropshire is experiencing a significant shortage of affordable Housing which impacts on our local communities. With this in mind we propose the following :

This Council agrees to develop a strategic policy in conjunction with Housing providers that will help to:

- maintain and improve existing social housing stock across the County
- ensure that existing stock is retained and not subject to disposal
- Upgrade the existing housing social housing stock to an EPC rating of C or above

This was seconded by Councillor Heather Kidd

On taking a vote, with 31 votes for and 36 votes against the motion was not supported.

The following motion was received from Councillor Rob Wilson and supported by the Liberal Democrat Group

Improving Shropshire's Footways

This council notes that:

1. Every journey includes walking or wheeling, therefore good quality, accessible footways are essential.
2. Every councillor is aware of footways in their division of footways that are of poor quality, and are not accessible by all users, often because of overhanging vegetation, a lack of sufficient cleaning, or outstanding repairs.
3. The "highway" is 'hedge to hedge', therefore the highway includes the carriageway, footways and any cycleways.
4. The Council has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure that the highway is not obstructed. Even small overgrowths can be hazardous particularly to blind and visually impaired people who often use property boundaries as a guide, or when a footway is narrow. It is also a requirement that anything overhanging a footway must be at least 2.3m above the footway, cycleway, verge and 5.3m above the road surface
5. It is an offence under the Highways Act 1980 to allow trees, hedges, shrubs and so on to obstruct the highway.
6. Councils can, after an initial informal request, serve a 21 Day Notice on the occupier of a property, to cut back the offending vegetation. If the occupier does not comply with the Notice, Councils may carry out the work themselves and recover costs in doing so from the occupier, through the courts if necessary. ([H Hedge hazards web 18.pdf \(westberks.gov.uk\)](#)).

This council further notes that:

7. Shropshire Council is making an £59m capital investment in improving the quality of Shropshire's highways.

8. A number of Council's, for example Oxfordshire, have formally moved from "Predict and Provide" to "Decide and Provide" ([UK county pivots to 'decide and provide' transport planning - Cities Today \(cities-today.com\)](#)).

The council resolves:

1. To recognise the importance of high quality, accessible footways in all our communities, both rural and urban
2. To request that a report is brought to Cabinet within 3 months explaining how our existing footways will be cleared and cleaned to a higher standard, including (but not limited to):
 - a. A review of the cleaning regime for footways
 - b. A review of the process for cutting back Shropshire council owned hedging and other vegetation
 - c. A review of the process for cutting back privately owned hedging and other vegetation
3. To include in the report to cabinet details of how the £59m capital investment is being divided between carriageways, footways and cycleways, and to comment on this point in any future reports to Council, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.
4. Ensure that LTP4 is based on the principle of "decide and provide" rather than "predict and provide".

This was seconded by Councillor Heather Kidd

On being put to a recorded vote with 32 Members voting for, 36 against and 1 abstentions as follows:

FOR:

Councillors Bagnall, Bentick, Boddington, Buckley, Clarke, Connolly, Dartnall, Davies, Dean, J Evans, R Evans, Green, Halliday, Hartin, Houghton, R Huffer, T Huffer, Kerr, Kidd, Moseley, Mosley, Pardy, Parry, Parsons, Sherrington, Taylor, Towers, Turley, Vasmer, Wagner, M Williams and Wilson

AGAINST:

Councillors Aldcroft, Anderson, Bardsley, Barrow, Biggins, Bird, Broomhall, Butler, Carroll, Charmley, Dakin, Davenport, Elner, D Evans, Gittins, Harris, Hignett, Hunt, Hurst-Knight, M. Jones, S Jones, Lea, Luff, Lumby, Macey, Morris, Mullock, Nellins, Picton, Potter, Price, Schofield, Thomas, Wild, B Williams and Wynn

ABSTENTION:

Councillor Minnery

The motion was not supported

The following motion was received from Councillor Roger Evans and supported by the Liberal Democrat Group

Free School Meals

School budgets are being squeezed in many ways. Family income is also being squeezed.

Wage rises, heating costs and travel to school events all cost more. Parents who are not able to pay for breakfast clubs and after school clubs are now being faced with not being able to work if the school can't afford to support them. This applies to many where both parents are working on low wages especially with high rents and energy costs. Help is available from other sources in certain areas.

One area where help can be given is in the supply of free school meals.

The benefits of introducing free school meals have long been proven. Children who eat healthy, free school meals have lower obesity rates, better academic performance and behaviour and improved lifetime productivity. However, the numbers eligible for free school meals is reducing and is noted in many schools.

The income levels at which claims can be made has not been increased since 2018. In Shropshire Children in KS2 and higher at present cease to be entitled to a universal free school meal.

From KS2 onwards in Shropshire, pupils are only entitled to a free school meal if.

If you're on universal credit then the household earnings threshold is £7400
If you work and claim other benefits like child tax credits or working tax credits, then the threshold is £16190.

The trigger level for wages is so low - household income must be below £22,700/annum.

As of 2023, the UK national minimum wage for workers aged 23 and over is £10.42 per hour, which equates to around £21,630 per year if working full-time hours.

From April 1st, 2024, the UK national minimum wage for workers over 23 will rise to £11.44.

There is still, in many people's minds a stigma attached to claiming these, the school does not hear much from parents who miss out when applying.

For every child who is entitled to a free school meal the school they attend get extra income.

The Primary School gets £1,455 and Secondary School an extra £1035.

In England, every child in Key Stage 1 is automatically eligible for a free school meal, but the school loses out by not getting the extra income if the parent does not also fill in a claim form asking their child to also be registered as being eligible for a free school meal. If registered, as detailed above, the school would receive an extra £1,455.00.

In the majority of England, the universal free school meal ceases from when the child enters Key Stage 2, Other areas in the UK adopt different rules and many extend this to later years.

We on Shropshire Council note the above and the extra benefit for both the child and the school when they are able to eat a healthy midday meal.

The Council asks both the Leader and the Chief Executive to.

- Write to all our MPs and the Department of Education urging them to bring the offer of the universal free meal in England to both KS1 and KS2 pupils.
- To increase the income eligibility level so it is at least equivalent to the national minimum wage for workers over the age of 23.
- Task officers of Shropshire Council to initiate and promote a publicity campaign urging those eligible to fill in and submit a free school meal claim as soon as possible and so enable the children's chosen school will receive the additional income that is on offer from government.

This was seconded by Councillor Mark Williams

By way of alteration Councillor R Evans proposed that the final paragraph of the motion be amended to read: -

We on Shropshire Council note the above and the extra benefit for both the child and the school when they can eat a healthy midday meal.

The Council asks both the Leader and the Chief Executive to write to all our MPs and the Department of Education urging them to:-

- bring the offer of the universal free meal in England to both KS1 and KS2 pupils.
- increase the income eligibility level so it is at least equivalent to the national minimum wage for workers over the age of 23.
- Ask the Department of Education to work with the DWP to commence automatic enrolment of children entitled to free school meals when the appropriate benefit trigger applies.

And to arrange a Shropshire Council publicity campaign urging those eligible to fill in and submit a free school meal claim as soon as possible and so enable the children's chosen school to receive the additional income that is on offer from government.

On taking a vote the amended motion was unanimously supported.

73 Questions from Members

The Chairman advised that the following questions had been received in accordance with Procedure Rule 15. A copy of the report containing the detailed questions and their formal response is attached to the signed minutes.

Received from Councillor Duncan Kerr in relation to domestic abuse as a factor in child protection plans. Councillor Kerr thanked the Portfolio Holder for the comprehensive response and did not have a supplementary question

Received from Councillor Ruth Houghton in relation to environmental issues in the River Clun. By way of supplementary question Councillor Houghton asked in light of the response how will the Council meet the housing needs of the people in the Clun valley? The Portfolio Holder stated that work was ongoing to address the problems and that he would update Members when the work had progressed

Received from Councillor Julian Dean in relation to resources for supporting safer streets. By way of supplementary question Councillor Dean asked whether there were further opportunities to bring more of the work "in house". The Portfolio Holder stated that there were always opportunities to look at bringing more of the work "in house"

74 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

75 Exempt Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved and signed as a correct record.

76 Housing Supervisory Board: CDL Shareholder Report

It was proposed by Councillor Vince Hunt, Chair of the Housing Supervisory Board and seconded by Councillor Dean Carroll, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets, that the exempt report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED**

That the recommendation in the report be agreed

77 Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme: Housing First

It was proposed by Councillor Dean Carroll, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets, and seconded by Councillor Mark Jones, Portfolio Holder for Growth and Regeneration that the exempt report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED**

That the recommendation in the report be agreed

78 Shirehall Disposal and Decommissioning Strategy

It was proposed by Councillor Dean Carroll, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assets, and seconded by Councillor Ian Nellins, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Climate Change, Environment And Transport that the exempt report of the Executive Director of Place, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes and the recommendations contained therein, be received, and agreed.

It was **RESOLVED**

That the recommendation in the report be agreed

Signed (Chairman)

Date: