

Shropshire Council

DRAFT Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

Good Governance in the Public Sector comprises the arrangements in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for all interested parties are defined and legally achieved. In delivering good governance, both the Council, and individuals working for and with the Council, should aim to achieve the Council's objectives while acting in the public interest.

The Council's Code of Corporate Governance, located in the Constitution¹, summarises the Council's good governance principles and details the actions and behaviours required to demonstrate good governance. Senior managers have provided assurances that the seven core principles have been applied throughout the 2024/25 financial year.

Work has continued throughout 2024/25 alongside our Strategic Partner PwC to review the way the Council delivers its services. Our council-wide transformation will give us a new way of organising ourselves and a more efficient way of interacting with our customers. We will focus on early help and prevention, working alongside our partners to make sure our residents are connected to support in their communities to stay healthy and well. We will make use of new technology and embrace a culture of collaboration, grasping the opportunities that have never been available before now.

In March 2025, a complete senior management restructure was finalised and approved. The new structure and Council operating model will be fully implemented during the 2025/26 financial year. Additionally, the Council's headquarters has moved from Shirehall on Abbey Foregate (the Council's head office location since 1967) to the Guildhall in Frankwell Shrewsbury.

Any significant instances of non-compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance are identified and escalated to the top of the Council for action. Assurances have been provided by Assistant Directors and the executive management team which demonstrate where the Council is doing the right things in the right way for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open and accountable manner. These arrangements take into consideration the systems, processes, culture and values which direct and control the way the Council works; through which it is accountable to, engages with and leads its communities. **Annex A demonstrates the overall Assurance Framework.**

This statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations. This is supported by a 2024/25 Code of Governance Internal Audit review which provides a Reasonable level of assurance.

¹ [Document Part 5 Codes and Protocols — Shropshire Council](#)

A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

Members and officers recognise the importance of compliance with the Constitution, specifically the Rules; Regulations, Scheme of Delegation and Codes of Conduct; all of which are regularly reviewed and updated. Instances of non-compliance or areas of concern are identified, reported through appropriate channels and managed effectively under established policies and processes and where necessary escalated for further action.

Officers comply with their professional organisations' codes of conduct in delivering services (E.g. HCPC², AMGPs³, EHORB⁴, SRA, CILEX⁵), against which assessments are conducted to confirm compliance and identify any improvements required. Adult Social Care (ASC) receive regular focused audits which monitor their compliance with the law e.g. Mental Capacity Act, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, Care Act and the Mental Health Act. Emergency Planning undertake all duties expected under the Civil Contingencies Act with integrity and work closely with multi-agency partners within the Local Resilience Forum (LRF).

Statutory responsibilities across the Council are discharged openly and proactively, key statutory officers are in place (Monitoring Officer⁶, Section 151⁷ Officer, Head of Paid Service and the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)). Examples of statutory responsibilities delivered include, LGPS⁸ Regulations, CIPFA⁹ Code of Practice, Freedom of Information (FOI), Elections, Treasury Management, Coroner and Registrars' Services. Statutory responsibilities for duties under the Care Act; Special Educational Needs, Education Access, Early Years and place planning, sufficiency and admissions are discharged openly, proactively and in full compliance with Admission Codes.

Throughout 2024/25 Policy Forum and EJCC¹⁰ have taken place to agree new employment policies.

In April 2023 the Council received an enforcement notice from the ICO¹¹ in relation to FOI response times. Action has been taken to improve information governance arrangements and legislative compliance rates and the enforcement notice was subsequently removed. The Council has responded positively and during 2024/25 quarterly performance statistics are published on the website.

Recording and reporting key information about transformation projects in a consistent, accurate and timely fashion enables Programme Managers and Sponsors

² Health Care and Professions Council

³ Approved Mental Health Act Professionals

⁴ Environmental Health Registration Board

⁵ Solicitors Regulation Authority/ Chartered Institute of Legal Executives

⁶ The Monitoring Officer has three main roles: 1. To report on matters he/she believes are, or are likely to be, illegal or amount to maladministration; 2. To be responsible for matters relating to the conduct of members and officers; and 3. To be responsible for the operation of the Council's Constitution.

⁷ Every local authority shall plan for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs, this is the Section 151 Officer

⁸ Local Government Pension Scheme

⁹ Chartered Institute of Public Finance Managers

¹⁰ Employees Joint Consultative Committees

¹¹ Information Commissioners Office

A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

(Executive Management Team) to make decisions in an objective, unbiased, professional and ethical manner. Communications comply with the Code of Practice on Local Authority publicity and give due consideration to equality issues affecting the Council. GLR has provided an organisational wide expectation and standards in terms of behaviours and culture.

There are many clear legal obligations that affect the work of the former Resources Directorate and staff in the directorate are aware of how to support these requirements as part of their professional training and experience. Awareness within the Resources Directorate of the need to comply with the Constitution, finance and contract rules, regularised CPD¹² to keep abreast of legislation and case law, regular discussions with stakeholders such as Trade Unions.

ILACS¹³ through Ofsted provide Review and Feedback to our Early Help, Statutory Safeguarding and Services to Children. The Council's last full inspection was February 2022 which judged our services to children as Good and more recently in July 2024 Children Services was subject of a Focussed Visit. As part of our ILACS the Council produced a self-evaluation (SEF). This is submitted to Ofsted prior to an inspection and our service offer and outcomes for children will then be scrutinised against our SEF.

The Council's Children's Homes are also subject to regulatory visits every six months. Two of our homes have been judged to be Outstanding and three are judged to be Good. All Services to Children are statutory and therefore we must abide by legislation e.g. Children Act 1989, 2004, Children and Families Act 2014, Adoption and Children Act 2002 etc. as well as Guidance Working Together (updated 2023). All Social Workers are registered with Social Work England and therefore must comply with Professional Standards.

There is a Children's improvement and Ambitions board in place to manage the delivery of a plan of Improvement for Children's Services ensuring a cycle of continuous improvement and outcomes for children, delivering on the Shropshire Plan for Children.

A large proportion of Public Health staff are registered with professional bodies. Public health staff, for example are registered with UKPHR¹⁴, the professional body which sets standards which require demonstration of ethical values and professional practice within the rule of law. Trading Standards Professionals are likewise registered. Where staff do not have registration with a professional body, their working practice in accordance with these requirements are monitored via regular supervision and formal appraisal processes.

¹² Continuing professional development

¹³ Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services

¹⁴ [Home - UK Public Health Register](https://www.ukphr.org/)

A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

Senior managers use the Quality in Public Health Framework to review and raise the quality of public health practice, to ensure that our priorities are best meeting the needs of our population as a whole, and particularly vulnerable groups, using ethical practice and regulations and the law appropriately throughout our work. Librarians work within professional frameworks and connect with regional and national networks and use these to benchmark delivery and confirm and challenge position in relation to areas of ethical practice / legislation.

Human Resource (HR) and recruitment policies and processes help ensure that the Council complies with employment law and avoids discrimination, these are refreshed regularly and agreed with the recognised trade unions. Employees are well supported, receive training and development opportunities. Directorate workforce boards have continued to operate throughout 2024/25 as an additional layer of constructive challenge to workforce decision making. These are chaired by the Executive Director for each directorate.

Within the Place directorate respecting the rule of law is regularly evidenced in quasi-judicial services such as the preparation of planning reports and enforcement services such as trading standards and registration services. Furthermore, the climate change team reviews the content of the climate change appraisal section for every Cabinet and Council decision report to ensure that a firm commitment to ethical and environmental values are considered.

Adherence to complex areas of Housing law, which are applied rigorously, to ensure that there is no risk of the Council being successfully challenged. The Council has taken steps to review the governance arrangements in terms of infrastructure, including the North West Relief Road, informed by independent challenge and internal audit and scrutiny.

Internal Audit produce a risk-based plan, working closely with Executive Directors and reports provide independent assurance that appropriate governance and internal control standards are maintained, or areas of concern highlighted for action.

The Council has a zero tolerance to fraud and corruption. Identified concerns are acted upon and can lead to specific outcomes, learning points and improvements.

The Council undertakes a self-assessment of its fraud risks, to identify and understand them which has continued in 2024/25. It acknowledges issues and plans to demonstrate that action is taken, and outcomes are visible. This process is transparent, reports are taken to senior management and those charged with governance. Guidance on 'Speaking up about Wrongdoing' which incorporates whistle blowing is available to employees, members, the public and contractors. Any irregularities identified will be investigated by Internal Audit or the appropriate officers within services. Audit Committee are responsible for the monitoring and overview of the "Speaking up about Wrongdoing Policy" and receive regular outcome reports including an annual report.

A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

Key developments consider green and environmental issues to ensure mitigations are in place; such as noise reductions for tourism venues and acoustic fencing. Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessments (ESIIA) are undertaken.

B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Openness and transparency are demonstrated throughout Council activity. Members represent local people in decision making; reporting processes are transparent, internally through officer and executive director groups, and publicly through Council committee meetings. All public meetings are face to face and open to the public and are live streamed, increasing accessibility to a wider audience. Compliance has been demonstrated in the elections process for members, delivered in an open and fair way in accordance with electoral law and extensive engagement with the public and other bodies. In recent years the Council’s response to the Covid pandemic has provided learning for responses to other major events in the last year, including flooding. This includes communications across several media channels at an unprecedented frequency level, daily at peak times and to a variety of clientele, including regular updates from the Chief Executive informing members officers and the general public of responses to other major events.

The Council has a strong Transparency agenda. Key decisions are reported and tested where necessary, through the senior team and then to members via Party Leads, Groups, Cabinet and Executive Director meetings. Examples include Cabinet and Council reports, policy approvals and published minutes of meetings. The Information Governance Leadership and Organisational Oversight (IGLOO) Group and Information Security Group (ISG) provide a clear process for the consideration and escalation of information governance and security risks. The groups have been in operation since January 2022, attendance is from across the Council and terms of reference have been refreshed during 2024/25. IGLOO focusses on decisions, compliance and oversight and improvements have been evidenced in response to ICT security and infrastructure concerns.

The Council engages positively and sets out to work in a collaborative open partnership approach with several strategic partners including Central Government departments (Cities and Local Growth Unit, Homes and Communities Agency) and neighbouring local authorities. It is a non-constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority; has a proactive Business Board which it services and engages with on key initiatives and policies, which in turn has informed the Local Economic Growth Strategy. The management of One Public Estate continues with other public-sector partners. A multi-agency high-cost placement funding panel with Children’s Services, Education Services and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is established to manage high cost placements efficiently.

There is a Local Resilience Forum (LRF) supported throughout the Council, with the Chief Executive attending Gold Command meetings where work is undertaken with community and multi-agency partners ensuring a robust response to emergencies,

B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

this has remained key. Use of emergency planning arrangements for internal and external gold and silver meetings have increased efficiencies and knowledge sharing.

Policy decisions or particular initiatives that require consultation or stakeholder engagement are enacted appropriately using the correct channels including formal presentation for decision making at cabinet or council.

Engagement and coproduction are a cornerstone of good public health practice, both at strategic and operational levels. Engagement forms a key part of strategic partnership and statutory boards, including Shropshire's Integrated Place Partnership and the Health & Wellbeing Board (HWBB). For example, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is underpinned by engagement work with key stakeholders and this assessment informs the work and priorities of the HWBB, including thematic and place based JSNAs¹⁵. The team also prioritises strategic engagement with national bodies including, UKHSA¹⁶, OHID¹⁷, LGA¹⁸, Health Foundation, Universities etc to inform approach and receive feedback.

The Council recognises the importance of appropriate engagement with our residents and particularly vulnerable groups to design and deliver our public health interventions. We meet on a quarterly basis with PACC (Parent and Carer Council) to support our work to improve outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs, and we have sought wide engagement to develop a toolkit for schools to aid their management of young people's use of drugs, alcohol vapes. Our libraries service participates in the JSNA engagement process as a stakeholder, and uses their connections with Town and Parish Councils and other stakeholders to obtain and receive feedback, with any appropriate consultation undertaken for significant service changes in line with guidance.

Many Council services are delivered in partnership with other organisations such as the Local Strategic Partnership, STaR¹⁹ Housing, West Mercia Energy, Shropshire County Pension Fund, town and parish councils, voluntary bodies and trusts. The Safeguarding Executive Board comprises of NHS, police and the third sector creating a strategic forum for planning and delivering services.

The Pension Board has oversight of key decisions by the Pensions Committee this year including review of the investment strategy, equity protection and adoption of a climate change strategy.

Internally, stakeholder engagement with staff at all levels is demonstrated through the staff groups and Trade Union engagement. Externally, this is demonstrated through supplier engagement, procurement processes and employer relationships.

¹⁵ [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and joint health and wellbeing strategies explained. - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁶ [UK Health Security Agency - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁷ [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities - GOV.UK](#)

¹⁸ [Home | Local Government Association](#)

¹⁹ Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing

B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The Finance Team produce public reports including detailed budget monitoring and variances, the annual Statement of Accounts delivered to statutory deadlines and in year data to increase transparency of service delivery for stakeholders.

Our commissioning, procurement and contract activity includes early market engagement exercises and a full feedback process to unsuccessful bidders. Alongside comprehensive stakeholder engagement in the commissioning of existing and new services and internal stakeholder engagement in management of procurement projects, such as colleagues in Risk Management, Audit, Insurance, Legal Services, Finance and Human Resources (HR).

Council services are open by nature in that they involve stakeholders and the public in their decision making e.g. planning. A new Economic Partnership has been developed and implemented that involves over 20 external business, public and VCS organisations. The Highways Service uses the 'Fix My Street' application to give openness and visibility, as far as currently possible, to highways related repairs and maintenance.

All council decisions in relation to the Place directorate are communicated with members appropriately and in a timely manner. Within the Leisure Service decisions been communicated openly with Members, local councils, stakeholders, and customers. They have also been subject to formal consultation so that the public can give their views on planned changes. This allows decisions to be carried out in a transparent manner.

The Council listens to the voice of the child or adult learning from case reviews. We have implemented a participation and impact board for children and young people and have recently reviewed our approach to co-production to ensure we hear a wide range of voices in Shropshire. We have good information on the Council website. We have presented number of papers to cabinet and full council and consulted with the public on new ways of working for example School Music Service.

Adult Social Care holds regular stakeholder forums and partnership boards, where users of services are represented. We have a local Making it Real board and Making it Real chair employed by the Council.

In February 2025 the Council received the final Care Quality Commission (CQC) report and received a 'Good' rating. The CQC concluded that 'evidence shows a good standard' for our Adult Social Care service highlighting several areas where we are excelling in serving our communities.

There is representation on a range of Stakeholder Boards who work together to improve outcomes for children, including Early Help Partnership Board, SHIPP, SEND Partnership Board, Corporate Parenting Board, Children's Improvement Board, ICB, there are experts by experience sitting on a number of these Boards.

Several boards are in place such as Carers, Direct payments, LD/Autism Board, Safeguarding, Provider forums, system partner boards, SEND. Included in this we have a Making it Real Board which are experts by experience who we are working

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with to ensure service improvement and co-production is embedded across all our practice. We have recently strengthened the Commissioning team with dedicated officers for mental health and autism work programmes which will strengthen the stakeholder engagement within these areas.

Regular dialogue with trade unions both informally and formally takes place. Policies and practices are robustly reviewed and agreed through collective bargaining process (policy forum, EJCC, Association Secretaries Group (Schools), Health, Safety & Welfare Committee, Audit Committee). Strategic, Operational and Project Risks regularly reviewed and reported on.

The Employee Engagement Group (EEG) meets monthly and over the last 12 months has aligned to the Financial Survival and Sustainability/Transformation Programme in place to share information and gain feedback/engagement from employees across the organisation. Officers engage with other Local Authorities, Regional Organisations (West Midlands Employers, WM H&S Group) and professional bodies (CIPD, PPMA, CIRM, DBCI, ALARM, CFSG).

During 2024/25 the council's VR Programme launched and comprehensive stakeholder engagement has taken place throughout this initiative ensuring that the programme was open and transparent.

Strategic, Operational and Project Risks are regularly reviewed and challenge provided to service areas to provide assurance for the organisation that it is actively managing its risks. Executive Directors review strategic risks on an ongoing basis.

When drafting new or updating policies or developing information and insights we engage with a wide range of staff to ensure that stakeholders views are taken into account, as well as Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessments being carried out.

Officers respond to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and Subject Access Requests where possible in a timely manner providing information as appropriate, however the year did see delays to responses due to increased demand on all services. Effort was focused on maintaining response rates in line with legislation.

Communications are made with customers and stakeholders via our websites, Newsroom and Departmental Customer Relations Team, providing customer experience and resolution service. The Team works closely with businesses from a regulatory perspective and adopts a collaborative supportive approach to compliance with a strong focus on transparency and proportionality.

Stakeholder engagement through communications is a key part in supporting the understanding of the Council's financial position and the effectiveness of its communications and engagement functions with a range of stakeholders. During 2024/25 the Communications and Feedback and Insight teams have led on promoting greater openness and engagement with the community and stakeholders on a range of issues.

B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Public views on a very broad range of subjects are captured, providing guidance to services on how to conduct such activity to meet best practice. Officers work closely with the voluntary sector to embed strong partnership working and open dialogue, involving them in any discussion on changes to services, policies or future direction.

The use of SharePoint for all Cabinet Reports provides a level of transparency in decision making across senior officers of the Council never available previously. A clear sign-off process for key professionals in Resources and Place Directorates ensures clarity and strong governance in the creation of reports before they are finalised. These reports are then signed off by Executive Management Team with the Monitoring Officer in attendance in advance of being sent out to Members.

C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

The Workforce Strategy ²⁰(22-25) outlines actions that support the Four Healthy Priorities within The Shropshire Plan as well as being aligned to the Shropshire Telford & Wrekin ICS People Plan. The Council also ensures that services are not putting the health and safety of employees at risk which could lead to costly repercussions / prosecutions. For 2024/25 the focus has been on financial survival and therefore this has taken priority over other activities which would have other benefits than economic. Despite this, Upskill Shropshire continues to support development of the workforce through apprenticeships, working with Training Providers across Shropshire.

During 2024/25 we successfully used the maximum apprenticeship levy funds to transfer to Shropshire based organisations to support their development. The Council continues to provide HR, Payroll, Occupational Health & Safety services on a traded basis to Schools, Academies, Charities, SMEs, although this is proving challenging with reduced resources. Overview and Scrutiny has been supported with a new work programme/approach during the year.

In providing services to the Council, we support services to have the right staff with the right skills, at the right time, at the right cost and in the right places. This helps to support the organisation to provide efficient and effective services to the community and realise sustainable, economic, social and environmental benefits. From a compliance perspective, we also ensure that services are not putting the health and safety of employees at risk which could lead to costly repercussions.

The Workforce Strategy sets the direction for the organisation in terms of its workforce, which then translates into team plans and individual’s objectives so that all actions are related to the Shropshire Plan, the council’s vision, values and strategic objectives. During the year we have implemented a new approach to Service Plans - Service Improvement Planning and utilised Microsoft co-pilot

²⁰ [Workforce Strategy 2022 to 2025](#)

C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

technology to capture plans for 2025/2026 and assess these against the Shropshire Plan and the MTFS²¹.

Shropshire HR provides HR Advice to both private and public sector businesses across Shropshire on a not-for-profit basis, which reduces the cost of the internal HR service to the organisation.

A Social Value framework for the Council and Social Value Charter for the Council and other partner organisations is in place.

Strategic Planning is demonstrated across service areas and evidenced by the MTFS, Workforce Strategy, Health and Safety policy, IT Strategy. The prioritisation of the Council's financial survival demonstrates agility and alignment in decision making. Many areas support the outcomes defined here in more indirect ways or have to be reactive to the wishes of clients, but never contradict the defined outcomes, so is considered to comply.

All decision making is scrutinised with particular focus on economic and environmental benefits as demonstrated through the Committee, Cabinet and Council reporting processes.

The largest project in the county is the North West Relief Road which will present challenges in terms of Carbon generation. This is in potential conflict with 2030 net zero targets, yet it will provide a wider range of social, economic and environmental benefits, in the medium to long term.

The Waste Management Service is driven by a requirement to deliver within strict environmental regulations which are closely adhered to, as well as providing an economically viable service for Shropshire Council. Opportunities have been identified to use the financial challenge to drive messages and behaviours towards more recycling and composting of green waste, which will ultimately drive environmental benefits.

Responses to the Cost-of-Living crisis have been prioritised and support made available. All Programmes and projects are approved based on Cost/benefit Analysis.

There is a continued reduction in demand for office space and the need for travel, some of the Council's traditional approaches to service delivery and learning from this is informing the Target Operating Model (TOM) which is underpinning The Shropshire Plan. The Shropshire Plan hold all the SDP²² priorities and targets with clear evidence links and positive impacts relating to safer and stronger economies and enhancing our environmental and sustainability priorities.

Employees and members are encouraged to consider their environmental footprint especially in relation to printing, mileage claims and use of equipment. Sustainability advancements have been delivered with Shropshire Council increasingly using

²¹ Medium Term Financial Strategy

²² Service Design Partnership for health and social care

C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

technology with improvements in communications; increased home working, electronic signatures on documents; better secure sharing of documents, virtual member and officer meetings and promotion of effective cybersecurity.

The Health and Wellbeing directorate is primarily focused on delivering positive outcomes in relation to health, wellbeing and prevention, but a key part of this requires achieving social and economic benefits. This could be, for example, improving an individual or communities social connections, working with the voluntary and community sector and considering the employment / economic needs of vulnerable people. The directorate will also undertake and support other parts of the Council to undertake formal Health Impact Assessments for work programmes and strategies and these will consider the economic, social and environmental issues - the ESHIA template was refreshed in 2024/25 and the team contributed to this basing their recommendations on latest national guidance.

In 2024/25 the team prepared and presented a report to the Health and Wellbeing Board to update them on the delivery of the Shropshire Inequalities Plan. This plan details a wide range of projects and programmes internal and external to the Council to deliver benefits to our population, tackling inequalities across Shropshire. The team is also leading the development and delivering of the community and family hubs project which is providing enhanced early intervention and prevention support in our communities.

Our library strategy sets out the six principal objectives for our libraries service to achieve and several of these are delivering of the benefits requested in this question. Relevant principles include promoting economic recovery and growth, improved health and wellbeing, resilient communities, libraries services that are innovative and sustainable and people enabled to access digital offers.

The Health and Wellbeing in all Policies (HiAP) approach has been approved for all Shropshire Council policies and associated training continues to be rolled out. Formal Health Impact Assessments for work programmes and strategies consider the economic, social and environmental issues, alongside responding to emerging challenges such as the ongoing cost of living crisis and work to support the Social Task Force.

All services within the People directorate are clear about outcomes and have had clear delivery plans which have delivered against the service-related savings. Many services have outcomes related to National grant conditions which are reported to central government in addition to overview and scrutiny committee and cabinet.

The social benefits of the services provided are well articulated in law and have been increasingly clear during the Covid pandemic period with the partial closure of schools and settings. Expected outcomes for some aspects of the service are outlined in national inspection frameworks and other legislation. Economic benefits of increasing attendance, achievement, and positive activity post 16 are well documented nationally and contribute to the delivery of the Shropshire Plan.

C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

A local outcomes framework identifies the key indicators of success for each service area within the People Directorate. This will enable a far clearer evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the services, whilst supporting preparation for inspection, and the changing role of authorities around education services.

Commissioning of supported living services considers the economic benefits to the individuals who will be moving into these schemes, that rents are affordable, the care and support provided is of a good quality and a cost that is reasonable and affordable. Accommodation commissioned is chosen with the individual who will be moving in to ensure that they like the area; it enables opportunities for social interaction in the community and independence building; it is adaptable to changing needs to establish a home for life.

The Council aims to comply with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy (CIPFA), Financial Management Code 2019 (FM Code) and where there are outstanding matters or areas for improvement aims to address these. The longer-term impact of Covid has continued to test financial resilience and will continue to do so in coming years. The medium and long-term planning elements of the FM Code remain challenging.

Shropshire Council is the administering authority for Shropshire County Pension fund. The Local Government Pension Scheme company (LGPS Central Limited) manages nine Local Pension Funds of which the Shropshire County Pension fund is one. Governance arrangements are led by the Company's Board and the Council contributes to the Shareholder Forum.

Sustainable development principles are fundamental to the determination of all new development proposals across Shropshire embedded in both the locally adopted development plan policies and national guidance.

Waste and Transport Services are clear in their outcomes regarding economic, social and environmental benefits and benchmark themselves against others on this basis. Funding pressures in Highways has led to a focus on delivering the most amount of improvement to the highway network within the confines of funding constraints. The service trialled a programme of works that considered the carbon impact of activity and the social value that could be delivered alongside it resulting in the first carbon neutral programme of maintenance to be delivered in the country.

Activities at both STAR Housing and Cornovii Development Limited (CDL) are focussed fully across economic, social, and environmental benefits. The development of homes that are affordable to buy or rent and the development of homes that perform to a high environmental standard, whilst maintaining affordability for delivery and occupation are key to both companies.

The Culture, Leisure, Theatre (CLT) service continues to operate with a commercial approach.

D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

All decisions are taken correctly by Cabinet, Council or delegation to committees or appropriate officers. Reports are considered by Legal, Finance, Risk Management and lead service areas before decisions are made to ensure they present the information required to fully inform reasoned decision making.

Implications for delivery of services or increases in resources are reported throughout the Council and with the support of Finance Business Partners. Services generally do not overspend without appropriate action being taken and where this is not possible, appropriate justification provided. Support is also provided to maximise income generation.

Decision makers are provided with information, options and advice to ensure outcomes are achieved. Challenge and support is provided across the authority to secure benefits, operating within agreed delegations to minimise steps in decision making and improve efficiency.

There are strong examples within the Resources Directorate that have not gained full exposure or commitment across the wider Council. Decision-making follows strong governance principles at a Member level and improvements are being made to the underlying technological processes to manage this. Risk Management principles are embedded across all areas of the directorate.

HR Officers work closely with service areas and have good working relationships focussed on finding solutions, whilst ensuring that they are keeping the organisation safe. Officers liaise with colleagues in Legal and Audit where necessary and will escalate issues as appropriate. Officers use the principles from Getting Leadership Right in their work as well as adopting professional best practice to be outcome focussed. Teams have been and are keen to review policy and practice to streamline and make as effective as possible, utilising and maximising technology. Frustrations still exist with the ERP system where it is not fit for purpose from a payroll point of view, which results in manual work-arounds and additional work for teams. Challenges also remain with compliance with Payroll deadlines which causes failure demand within the service and therefore hampers the ability to make improvements within the service. Reduced resources through voluntary redundancies across the teams also places pressure on delivering an optimised service, focussed on outcomes.

The Workforce Strategy was approved in 2022 and aligns with the Shropshire Plan and strategic objectives. Service Plans are directly related to the strategic objectives, the majority falling under 'Healthy Organisation' but many also having an indirect impact on the other Healthy priorities. The Service Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2024/2025 has been completed reflecting the challenges the organisation faces, particularly from a financial perspective.

Management Information has been enhanced through the Power BI Dashboards for Senior Managers (Directors Gateway, SLT Gateway) and support is provided to Directorate Management Teams in interpreting the data.

D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

In 2024/25 a refreshed approach to the management of operational risks was implemented with reporting to Assistant Directors and then Executive Directors. Project risks are in place and challenged at Project Board Meetings to ensure they are kept up to date as the project moves forward. Strategic risks are reviewed on an ongoing basis with reporting to Executive Directors and Informal Cabinet. Strategic risks are reported twice a year to Audit Committee and an annual Risk Report is issued to Audit Committee.

There is a continued development and expansion of the learning and development offer through the online learning platform, Leap into Learning.

Information & Insight provide data, intelligence and analytics to service areas to assist in decision making. Dashboards have been created utilising Power BI to support the interpretation of information and inform decision making and are being developed as access to data becomes more readily available. The Corporate Performance Management Framework was developed, and reporting took place each quarter via the online dashboard. The Shropshire Knowledge Bank has been developed to pull together all reporting, data and insights into one place accessible via the Intranet - plans are in place to share appropriate data on the council's website.

The use of clear identified outcomes, business cases and performance measures is used within Commissioning and re-commissioning activity to ensure optimal results. The use of thorough and robust tender processes, evaluation criteria and evaluation to ensure intended outcomes are achieved and optimised. The achievement of 'social value' outcomes are achieved through procurement, contracting and commissioning activities.

The Place directorate has two high profile multi-million pound partnerships with WSP and Kier. These contracts are managed towards an optimised position with KPIs in place that reflect the ambitions and key drivers. The Place directorate defined outcomes have been, and continue to be, fully aligned to the outcomes as set out in the Shropshire Plan.

All major contracts have performance metrics that are actively considered and require action plans to be developed where failing. The highways and transport services continue to use computer modelling to optimise the outcomes able to be achieved from available budgets.

Business continuity plans and teams have mobilised quickly to respond to continuing emergencies, including flooding, refugee pressures, cost of living crisis and cyber security attacks.

Within Public Health, work and interventions are intelligence led, data driven in relation to need and based on reviews of the evidence of best practice, at both strategic and operational levels. This is a formal part of good public health practice and, as such, performance is regularly reviewed during supervision and formal appraisal and revalidation processes. Senior Managers will also engage with

D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

professional bodies and groups to review and discuss evidence and participate in regional networks covering specific areas (e.g. Best Start in Life network, Substance Misuse and Sexual Health Commissioners Networks).

The team undertake a confirm and challenge approach with commissioned providers to ensure the evidence base, data and needs are driving performance and choice of interventions as part of our contract management and quality assurance processes, and operating procedures for internal delivery are informed by the evidence of best practice and assessment of local needs and data.

Our library services ensure they meet our statutory obligations, driven by data and analysis around usage. Stakeholder engagement and feedback is undertaken with customer feedback and complaints monitored by management. Evaluation of library events is ongoing. The team participate in the CIPFA review survey and respond to feedback from DCMS. Libraries support delivery of TSP and this year they have particularly supported delivery of community and family hubs in library venues, access of Shropshire Local staff within library settings, and provision of warm hub spaces in line with requirements of additional national funding.

There is a clear vision for the People directorate with care and support needs to ensure better outcomes are being achieved with a clear focus on prevention. We work to restorative and strengths-based approach with a strong focus on achieving better outcomes.

E: Developing the Council’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

2024/25 has been the fourth full year of activity under the current Chief Executive (CEO) who completed the recruitment to all the Executive Director posts allowing structures to be aligned and new leadership teams at Assistant Director level formulated and recruited, leading to an increasingly stable structure and reduction of temporary and interim posts.

The approach to Personal Development Planning (PDPs) has been rolled out. GLR related initiatives have also been rolled out to the organisation. The Manager Essentials Handbook and associated training programme has been rebranded to align to GLR.

Section 151 update meetings and Governance meetings with the Monitoring Officer, s151 Officer and Chief Audit Executive are established and undertaken regularly to consider governance issues as they arise. The frequency of these meetings increased further during 2024/25.

Officers and members understand their respective roles; these are set out in job descriptions and the Constitution. These responsibilities and accountabilities are understood and reviewed on a regular basis. Members continued to receive training throughout the year and Personal Development Plans are in place for officers. Members are briefed on new and emerging local government initiatives, and the e-

E: Developing the Council’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

learning portal provides other pieces of helpful training alongside information. Both employees and members have mandatory training in cybersecurity and data protection.

Employees in the main receive regular supervision, attend team meetings and Executive Management Team information is cascaded for action through Directorate Management Teams, Team meetings and individual one to one catch ups. Risks and key issues are escalated upwards through the same processes and shared electronically.

Investment is evident in wellbeing initiatives including Access to Work, supporting employees struggling with their mental health, providing a coaching programme and provision of a mental health professional to help devise support plans. Benefits for employees from health and wellbeing partners designed to improve physical, financial and mental health have been delivered alongside a financial wellbeing surgery for employees experiencing difficulties, especially with the impact of increased cost of living.

Digital Champion training has continued throughout 2024/25 to improve the use of ICT and support the exploration of embedding ICT into practices and processes to maximise efficiencies. There is a continued development and expansion of the learning and development offer through the online learning platform, Leap into Learning, and employees are encouraged to take part in Apprenticeship schemes, their profession’s Continuous Professional Development schemes.

Officers engage with other Local Authorities, Regional Organisations (West Midlands Employers) and professional bodies (CIPD²³, PPMA²⁴, CIRM²⁵, BCI²⁶) to improve and seek external assurances. Collaborative procurement activity with other Local Authorities. West Midlands Heads of Procurement Group is helping to deliver efficiencies.

Part of the remit of the Strategic Transformation Partner, PWC, is to review our capacity and capability to deliver transformation. Gaps identified will be met by the partner initially, with skills transfer to Council staff over time alongside the development of a strong corporate narrative around The Shropshire Plan and associated transformation programme.

Within Resources there are good examples of resilience, continuing professional development, service and team planning and succession planning within the directorate. The Leadership Board, once established, will also provide an opportunity to embed this wider.

Within the People directorate there is strong governance in place from senior management down to team meetings with operational staff to ensure communication is strong. The Executive Director holds a quarterly DCS / DASS assurance days with

²³ Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
²⁴ Public Services People Managers Association
²⁵ Certified International Risk Management
²⁶ Business Continuity Institute

E: Developing the Council’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

managers where the Council reviews key achievements and challenges. The people transformation board has been a strong driver to delivery of the transformation improvement plan.

F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Services report routinely and regularly through to Council Committees such as Cabinet, Audit, Pension and Scrutiny Committees. They pro-actively input into the annual audit programme, strategic, operational and project risk reviews. Strategic and operational risks are reviewed regularly by senior managers and Executive Directors for learning points and action and are reported through to Informal Cabinet and Audit Committee. Risks are identified, recorded and managed for projects and in service and team plans. There is promotion of the Opportunity Risk Management Strategy across the Council and, through its application, a positive approach to managing risk is delivered when focusing on achieving the required outcomes and objectives.

Risk registers for key projects involve all relevant parties including external partners to ensure all risks are captured and mitigated. Major projects include the Northwest Relief Road, Shrewsbury Schools Programme, Whitchurch Leisure Centre, Shrewsbury Redevelopment Programme and the Wider Oswestry Economic Project. All have clear governance arrangements in place with project boards established.

Existing mechanisms of scrutiny and public challenge are used to ensure robust controls are in place to ensure and demonstrate strong financial management and the appropriate management of risk and performance.

Transformation and TOM Programme Risks are captured and tracked via a 'Project Control' SharePoint and are regularly reviewed. Creation of monthly dashboards to identify success and baseline activity norms is in development alongside use of data and insight to help drive corporate channel shift.

Software improvements provide control systems to protect assets; examples include access control to public buildings; roll out of an electronic signing system; adjustments to the ERP and other finance systems.

Despite overall internal control framework resilience, there remains several areas for which assurance levels are not strong, because of shortcomings in the ERP system and associated practices. A review of the ERP system and potential alternatives is now being explored in earnest.

The development of the Office of the Chief Executive (OCE) is aimed at reducing risk in delivering major projects and programmes with support from the Strategic Transformation Partner PwC²⁷. Financial monitoring reports and key risks associated

²⁷ Price Waterhouse Coopers

F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

with strategies and projects are regularly reviewed with a strong focus on improving service backlogs. Opportunities for mentoring, coaching, and developing cross-departmental work are being explored to assist colleagues to expand their knowledge and experience. Staff are being supported to put in place their new leadership and organisational change thinking, supported by the Office of the Chief Executive.

Each Council Directorate has robust processes in place with monthly Directorate and Senior Management Team Meetings finance and performance focussed meetings as well as MTFS savings delivery meetings with actions to remedy any concerns and escalate.

Commissioning decisions are based on robust case studies based on data and performance information. Risk registers are reviewed regularly. Joint commissioning delivery group is across all ages with representation from procurement, legal and officers to ensure robust challenge on decision making. Continual bench marking is undertaken and action plans on areas which need more focus such as younger adults.

Most financial decisions are reported through to Cabinet, Council and Scrutiny Committee in an appropriate and transparent basis and challenge welcomed from members and officers. All budgets, actuals and variances are reported regularly with supporting information trails. The Financial Strategy identifies a short-term budget plan and a long-term aspirational plan aligned to the outcomes identified in The Shropshire Plan. A full risk assessment is undertaken in support of this. Final Accounts are produced on time and in-line with statutory deadlines and best practice.

The Council approves the Robustness of Estimates and Adequacy of Reserves paper each year. This report demonstrates the financial resilience of the Council, for example: the need to hold a General Fund Balance with a target level and explanations for variance, details and categorisation of all earmarked reserves and provisions and details of previous year outturn variances.

All managers have an allocated member of the Finance Business Partner Team who takes them through monthly forecasting procedures and budget management expectations when they start in post. A dashboard of financial performance is shared and discussed at each management team meeting. This includes a RAG²⁸ rating for each of the primary codes within the service. Budget forecasting is completed on the Finance system each period.

A financial management framework is operating to ensure public monies are managed appropriately for both revenue and capital funds. A Financial Accountabilities Framework was launched to ensure all budget holders are aware of their responsibilities in managing budgets. Robust financial internal controls are managed and maintained across financial processes and systems. Where issues are identified in the control environment, risks are considered, and action plans put in place to improve control. Responsibility for managing strategic financial risks is identified and regularly reviewed.

²⁸ Red; Amber; Green

F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Internal Audit sets a risk assessed programme, identifying the key areas for review and assurance, this is agile and adjusts in response to changing risks throughout the year. Audit plans were regularly revisited, and resources redeployed to help design and deliver processes and activity in response to exceptional situations. High risk areas not subject to audit continued to be identified to enable senior management and members to gather and seek direct assurance as necessary. Audit Committee undertakes a regular self-assessment, challenged by officers and External Audit, and regular training sessions based on the identification of areas for improvement and key risks and fundamental knowledge-based needs.

During 2024/25 senior managers have been required to attend Audit Committee to provide assurance not otherwise secured on their governance, control and risk management environment. The year has continued to be challenging with the changes of key managerial posts, alongside a challenge to deliver savings.

Information management training is compulsory for all employees and compliance is reported through to the SIRO. All data has assigned owners which is regularly reviewed. Information Asset Owners complete annual Information Governance Assurance Statements. Data is held across many systems by different teams. It is stored on secure drives and databases that are protected in accordance with approved policies. During 2024/25 a new information asset management system was introduced provides a more consistent approach to the management of data assets.

The allocation of the ring-fence Public Health Grant is scrutinised by OHID (national public health body) and by formal Council Committees - Scrutiny of the public health function was undertaken during 2024/25 at its meeting on Monday 19th February 2024 where a report was presented by the DPH and AD lead, with members asking questions. Feedback from members was very positive. A portfolio holder report on the delivery of the public health function is also presented to Cabinet annually. The team participate in formal audit processes.

2024/25 has included a focus on partnerships with both SHIPP and the Combatting Drugs Partnership audited. Strategic and operational risks both for internal services and commissioned provision are regularly reviewed by senior managers. Staff undertake appropriate training, including information governance and will develop information sharing agreements as required, with information asset owners identified. Service Restoration Plan (previously known as Business Continuity Plan) and Service Improvement Plans has been prepared for the service, and kept under review, including risks to delivery. Our libraries service is robustly managed financially, and this year is currently forecasted an underspend due to the significant and tight management of the budget spend by the service leads. Libraries services are committed to participating in audit processes as required. Risks and Issues are escalated to AD at least in our monthly leadership meetings, with significant issues escalated immediately. Health and Safety audits are undertaken of library buildings and ways of working.

G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability
<p>As a public body, the Council has a high level of transparency in its activities and reporting and complies with the relevant legislation. Information is reported and shared through various routes including Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and with partners, via for example the Neighbourhood Plans, Place Plans, Local Plan Review, Planning Applications and local Economic Growth Strategies. The Place Plans have also been the subject of a Shropshire Association of Local Councils working group. The Members’ Gateway (webpage) has provided greater access to information and regular briefings are held with portfolio holders and ward members are engaged on local matters.</p> <p>Good audit trails are evident to demonstrate good practice and transparency, this is through formal channels and scrutiny functions, as well as being evidenced within written reports and recorded decision making.</p> <p>There is regularised reporting of information throughout the Council which is under constant review. This includes formal reporting through agreed pathways ultimately leading to Council Members. Financial information is now highly transparent with dashboards and monitoring processes in place with strong engagement from Members through the Collaborative Budget Process implemented from October 2024. A robust internal process follows up internal audit recommendations within the Resources directorate.</p> <p>The Health and Wellbeing Directorate reports to Council Committees, including Cabinet & Scrutiny, and partnership boards including Health and Wellbeing and Shropshire Integrated Place Partnership. Strategic & Operational risks are regularly reviewed by senior managers and the leadership team, and these consider issues across both our internal delivery and our commissioned provision. We regularly participate in audit and review processes, and we continue to monitor delivery against KPIs and relevant outcomes and evaluation frameworks. Our libraries service has KPIs included within TSP performance framework which monitor activity and usage. The libraries team participates in the CIPFA annual survey, various arts council and Connected libraries services which monitors delivery, and responds to requests from DCMS. Libraries delivery is included in reports to Council committees and is committed to participating in audit processes as required.</p> <p>The Place directorate has fully engaged with the FOI process and public reporting in all directorate service areas is communicated through the appropriate Council channels. Both internal and external audit have been engaged in high-risk areas and appropriate management action has been taken where control weaknesses have been identified.</p> <p>A quality assurance framework is in place with monthly audits across Children and adult's social care. Peer review action plans are in place including the formal Children Improvement board. Learning reviews and key themes shared across the directorate.</p> <p>There is wide advertising of procurement opportunities (Website, Twitter, UK Contract Finder, UK tender finder, Delta e-sourcing) Contracts awarded and procurement information is updated monthly on our websites and full, detailed and timely feedback is available to all unsuccessful bidders.</p>

G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

The Information Governance Leadership and Organisational Oversight Group oversees the implementation of Information Security policies based on best practice; its terms of reference and practices have been reviewed and refined during 2024/25.

All directorates hold regular meetings and cascade information up and down the organisation including financial and performance statistics.

Statutory returns including grants, are targeted for completion in an accurate and timely fashion. Survey, customer complaints and compliments are reported openly and used to improve service delivery.

All service areas are subject to internal audit review based on risk. Internal Audit recommendations are considered by the senior team on a regular basis for good housekeeping and to identify additional learning. The information also provides a position statement on the risk appetite of the control environment and its resilience to any challenges.

Annually the Statement of Accounts is published on the Council’s website and financial transparency data provided aligned to the Open Data and Transparency Code and all External Audit recommendations are addressed.

Significant governance issues

Satisfactory governance exists but improvements are required to ensure it is fully embedded and integrated across all areas of the Council. To achieve this, the main challenges facing the Council appear in the **Appendix** below with energy focused on achieving a balanced budget and seeking fairer funding. A structural funding gap was reported in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. This includes assumptions made around growth in services such as social care which is expected to increase. Delivering a legal and balanced budget remains the key strategic risk facing the authority in the medium to long term.

Leader

CEO



Significant Governance Issues²⁹ 2024/25

To ensure services are delivered to acceptable standards whilst achieving the budget savings required whilst managing strategic risks, the Council will strive to achieve the following outcomes:

	Governance Issue and Targeted Outcome	Strategic Risk	Activity	Sponsor	Completion date
1.	<p>Governance Issue:</p> <p>The Council will be unable to deliver a safe service to adults without further intervention.</p> <p>Targeted Outcome:</p> <p>To provide a care and support service to adults appropriate to their needs.</p>	Impact of Increased Waiting Lists in relation to DoLs, OT and SI.	<p>Work underway to improve safe pathways across adult social care services and implement a change in operating model.</p> <p>Areas of concerns have lean staffing – OT and Dols for example. The need to adopt models that utilise capacity</p> <p>Demand Management – the council to prioritise support for the pre front door model for Adult services to manage and support alternative pathways to adult social care.</p>	ExDir ³⁰ DAS	March 2026

²⁹ This action plan includes significant governance issues identified in the above statements and also includes high risks identified in review against the Best Value Framework.

³⁰ Executive Director

	Governance Issue and Targeted Outcome	Strategic Risk	Activity	Sponsor	Completion date
2.	<p>Governance Issue:</p> <p>The Council does not have a grip on Children's demand into the future.</p> <p>Governance Issue:</p> <p>The Council will be unable to deliver a safe service to children without further intervention.</p> <p>Targeted Outcome:</p> <p>To provide a care and support service to children appropriate to their needs.</p>	Safeguarding Children.	<p>Demand into CSC is showing a gradual downward trajectory for the third quarter in a row, demonstrating that the new structure of Early Help is starting to have the desired impact.</p> <p>There has also been an increase in children exiting the system, more than entered in the last 2 quarters.</p> <p>The Transformation projects are having the desired impact and are a strong foundation of the demand management model.</p>	DCS ³¹	December 2025
			Children's Improvement Board (CIB) met monthly and monitored progress and impact of the Improvement Plan. Plans are in place to conclude the CIB and replace with a partnership aspirations board to continue to oversee development and practice, impact and outcomes on children.	DCS	March 2026

³¹ Director of Children's Services

	Governance Issue and Targeted Outcome	Strategic Risk	Activity	Sponsor	Completion date
			Children and young people's ambitions board will drive forward system improvement plan, evidencing impact from the demand mitigation work.		
3.	<p>Governance Issue:</p> <p>The Council will be unable to deliver strategic objectives as set out in The Shropshire Plan due to financial constraints.</p> <p>Targeted Outcome:</p> <p>A sustainable financial position is achieved over the medium term.</p>	Inability to Set a Balanced Budget for a given year within the MTFS.	<p>MTFS finalised 27 February 2025 with £7.7m funding gap for 2025/26 (with further demand mitigations of £11m and £41.2m brought forward from 2024/25).</p> <p>For 2025/26 a radical new operating model is being implemented with a senior management restructure the starting point from January 2025. A new model of delivery through commissioning and Statement of Works should create more focussed delivery clarifying what is and is not commissioned thereby reducing the size, complexity and cost of the authority while also improving governance processes and direct delivery of positive outcomes aligned to a refreshed Shropshire Plan.</p>	ExDir s151 Officer	March 2026

	Governance Issue and Targeted Outcome	Strategic Risk	Activity	Sponsor	Completion date
			<p>Delivery Plans and associated Performance Indicators and Milestones to be documented and used to monitor delivery of outcomes.</p> <p>The Council's overall internal control environment has been assessed with only limited assurance and has not improved for six years. Further engagement is required and a review of the Council's risk appetite alongside the Constitution as increased resources is not an affordable option. Management of the Council's financial position is even more crucial than last year, but opportunities through a multiyear settlement in the first year of a new administration exist.</p>		
4.	Governance Issue: The Council will be unable to contain its costs within the	Inability to Contain overall committed Expenditure within the Current Available	Delivery Plans and associated Performance indicators to be documented and used to monitor delivery of outcomes alongside	ExDir s151 Officer	September 2025

	Governance Issue and Targeted Outcome	Strategic Risk	Activity	Sponsor	Completion date
	<p>available financial envelope for the year.</p> <p>Targeted Outcome:</p> <p>Council expenditure is in line with budgeted position for 2025/26.</p>	Resources within this Financial Year.	<p>lessons learnt from 2024/25 Outturn position.</p> <p>Activity for 2025/26 implementing new operating model and Council structure.</p> <p>Monthly review and reporting of the Council's financial position in line with the MTFS and Financial strategy 2025-2030.</p> <p>Actions and decisions implemented following a review of 2024/25 Outturn position, review of any weaknesses in controls, implementation of lessons learnt from Finance Peer Review (2022) and CIPFA Review (2024).</p> <p>A risk remains about levels of resource across what will be Enabling and Legal and Governance Functional Areas in the coming year, and this will need to be assessed as part of the new operating model and the expectations placed on managers.</p>		

	Governance Issue and Targeted Outcome	Strategic Risk	Activity	Sponsor	Completion date
5.	<p>Governance Issue:</p> <p>The Council, alongside partners, will be unable to ensure the safety and health of people and communities.</p> <p>Targeted Outcome:</p> <p>Establishment of robust co-produced Health and Care system to deliver the desired outcomes.</p>	Impact of extreme pressures upon partners (social care, health, and criminal justice).	<p>Continuation of the ICS system working. A further ICP took place in October 2024 with dates and topics in agreement for 2025, aligned to the NHS 10 year plan (3 shifts) and Darzi Report. The CEX has also taken up chair of SHIPP. Monitoring closely and mitigation of the impact of the NHS reforms</p> <p>Further development of Joint Roles planned for 2026.</p> <p>The SoS for Health and Social Care has been invited to STW regarding system pressures.</p>	ExDir Public Health and General Management	March 2026
6.	<p>Governance Issue:</p> <p>The Council has key IT systems that are unfit for purpose.</p> <p>Targeted Outcome:</p> <p>IT systems are efficient and effective with strong internal controls.</p>	Failure of Officers and Members to adhere to Governance arrangements.	<p>Financial Planning and Analysis: We are still exploring the feasibility of implementing a financial planning and analysis solution available in our existing ERP system. This would streamline our budgeting and forecasting processes and improve our financial reporting and analysis capabilities.</p> <p>These improvements have collectively enhanced the functionality,</p>	ExDir s151 Officer	September 2025

	Governance Issue and Targeted Outcome	Strategic Risk	Activity	Sponsor	Completion date
			integration, and efficiency of our ERP system, ensuring it continues to meet the evolving needs of the council.		
7.	<p>Governance Issue:</p> <p>The Council has weak or inappropriate systems of governance in place.</p> <p>Targeted Outcome:</p> <p>All officers and Members understand public sector standards, the Nolan Principles and exhibit appropriate behaviour at all times.</p>	Failure of Officers and Members to adhere to Governance arrangements	<p>Arrangements to address these governance issues were paused due to two key factors: focus on financial survival and implementation of a new operating model. Strong governance comes from setting the right example at the very top of the organisation.</p> <p>The creation of a new senior team enables a root and branch review and allows strong processes to be baked in. Furthermore, a reconfiguration of the entire authority for 2025/26 built on these principles.</p> <p>The internal audit report considering The Shropshire Plan demonstrated</p>	CEO	December 2025

	Governance Issue and Targeted Outcome	Strategic Risk	Activity	Sponsor	Completion date
			<p>that a 'golden thread' was not embedded through the authority and this helps inform the road map for the future mitigation of this governance risk.</p> <p>All Internal Audit recommendations are being followed up and the requirement for Declarations of Interest is clear within the Council's Constitution.</p> <p>The new operating model for the council will focus on measuring success and the achievement of intended outcomes during 2025/26.</p> <p>As part of the development of the Leadership Board it is important that good practice elements within this principle are not lost and benefits enhanced to include a new, stronger role for the Internal Audit Team and strong governance embedded within the new Members making up the Council following elections in May 2025.</p>		

	Governance Issue and Targeted Outcome	Strategic Risk	Activity	Sponsor	Completion date
8.	<p>Governance Issue:</p> <p>Failure to deliver best value.</p> <p>Targeted Outcome:</p> <p>Securing best value in key areas such as governance, culture, finances and statutory services.</p>	Failure of Officers and Members to adhere to Governance arrangements	<p>The Best Value framework has been reviewed informally ahead of the design of the new operating model for 2025/26.</p> <p>Strong governance comes from setting the right example at the very top of the organisation. The creation of a new senior team enables a root and branch review and allows strong processes to be baked in.</p> <p>Furthermore, a reconfiguration of the entire authority for 2025/26 built on these principles.</p> <p>Strategies need revision around the Leadership Board, including the workforce strategy and the development of a more sustainable MTFS following the publication of revised funding and multi-year settlements from Government.</p>	CEO	March 2026

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (AGS) ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Key documents and functions/process guidance:

- Local code of corporate governance
- The Shropshire Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Council constitution
- Opportunity Risk Management Strategy
- Commissioning Strategy
- Workforce Strategy, HR policies, GiR Guide, Performance Management Framework, PDP Process, procedures, and codes of conduct
- Anti-fraud and corruption and whistleblowing (Speaking up about wrongdoing) policies

