

**Committee and Date**

Council
25th September 2025

Item

Public



A New Direction

Responsible Officer:

Tanya Miles, Interim Chief Executive

email: tanya.miles@shropshire.gov.uk

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):

Heather Kidd, Leader of the Council

1. Synopsis

This report outlines the strategic direction proposed by the new administration, a precursor to the development of a new Shropshire Plan.

2. Executive Summary

The recent local elections on 1 May 2025 brought a change in the Council's administration, with the Liberal Democrat Group taking overall control of the Council. This change marked the end of the Conservative Group's leadership since 2009 and signals a new direction for the authority. Officers are now required to adapt to the new administration's priorities, which, while still operating under the Council's Constitution, reflect a departure from the previous administration's focus.

To facilitate this transition and ensure success, it is crucial for officers and Council Members to understand and engage with the new administration's priorities. An outline of these priorities is provided in the attached document ("Appendix A"), which will serve as a foundation for the new Corporate Plan. This plan will be developed in stages, starting with an Improvement Plan based on the recent Corporate Peer Challenge, followed by a comprehensive Corporate Plan, and finally, a Partnership Plan co-produced with wider partners and stakeholders to help build a prosperous future for Shropshire.

The Council needs to carefully balance the recent declaration of a financial emergency (favouring short term decision making) with the need to set a long-term vision under a new strategic and sustainable direction. The attached document, set out under the current Cabinet portfolios, includes key outcomes to emphasise accountability, suggested approaches, and short to medium-term actions, some of which help address directly the financial emergency.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Consider and endorse the strategic direction and priorities outlined in the attached document (Appendix A) with a view to agreeing an aligned way forward for the Council.
- 3.2. Agree that detailed delivery plans are created at a Portfolio Holder level, subject to the consideration under the Scrutiny process, with Portfolio Holders reporting back to Council on a regular basis on the progress being made.

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The Council has an Opportunity Risk Management Strategy and ten strategic risks, reviewed regularly and due for consideration over the coming months. The development of a new Corporate Plan and, ahead of that, the delivery of the priorities set out in Appendix A of this report, will necessitate a review, and consideration of, the Council's Strategic Risks.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands, and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):
 - scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope of activities,
 - delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
 - extending delivery timescales.

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. The direction of travel is indicated in the Waste and Climate portfolio area in Appendix A.

7. Background

- 7.1. On 1 May 2025 the local elections returned a new administration. The Liberal Democrat Group took overall control of the Council and a new Leader elected and Cabinet appointed at and following Council on 22 May 2025.
- 7.2. This change in administration, after control of the Unitary Council by the Conservative Group since its inception in 2009, marks the commencement of period for a significant change in direction for the authority. For officers this requires a change in approach given that many of the procedures in place and “business as usual” activities delivered, while provided with the overall powers set out in the Council Constitution (which has fundamentally not changed) are nevertheless reflective of the priorities of a former administration.
- 7.3. Given this significant change, it would be helpful for all officers across the organisation and all Council Members to understand and engage with the new Administration’s stated priorities.
- 7.4. Attached at Appendix A is an outline of the new direction the Administration wishes to take. This outline is not exhaustive, rather it outlines the basis for an approach that can then be considered for incorporation within a new Corporate Plan. The current Shropshire Plan covers the period to 2025 and is due to be rewritten.
- 7.5. The Corporate Plan will be a living document that will develop in several stages as set out below:
- Improvement Plan – this will form the first ‘chapter’ of the Corporate Plan and include actions predominantly built around the recent Corporate Peer Challenge (also on this agenda)
 - Corporate Plan – this will expand the improvement plan into a full, but internally focussed, document including actions to deliver the wider priorities and outcomes of the Council over a 12-to-18-month period.
 - Partnership Plan – this will be a more outward facing, place-focused plan delivered with partners. This Partnership Plan will be co-produced with our wider partners and stakeholders, setting out the long-term future of the Shropshire area and the key deliverables and commitments to enabling and sustaining a prosperous and thriving place.
- 7.6. The document attached as Appendix A is set out in a way to reflect the current portfolios within Cabinet. Referencing distinct portfolio areas engenders greater accountability for the delivery of outcomes. Within each portfolio area a key outcome is described followed by the suggested approach to be taken and any short to medium term actions proposed. Each section may include specific actions that can be implemented with immediate effect, many of these tied directly, and providing a response to, the financial emergency declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. Elsewhere, the approaches described are more aligned to the setting a new strategic direction which can be incorporated within the new Corporate Plan.
- 7.7. The appendix outlines the administration's focus across three key priorities: (i) financial recovery and stability, (ii) contract reform and value for money, and (iii) community empowerment and partnership. Key initiatives include developing a new highways contract, launching the Shropshire Partnership, and supporting community-led initiatives. The Council will also prioritise improved customer care,

inclusive planning and housing policies, expanded youth and SEND services, climate-conscious infrastructure, and transparent governance

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: All

Appendices

Appendix A – A New Direction