

**Committee and Date**

Cabinet

15 October 2025

CABINET**Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2025**

**In the The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.30 am – 1.00 pm**

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak
Email: amanda.holyoak@shropshire.gov.uk

Present

Councillors Heather Kidd (Leader), Bernie Bentick, Roger Evans, Andy Hall, Ruth Houghton, James Owen, David Vasmer, Alex Wagner (Deputy Leader), David Walker and Rob Wilson

Group Leaders Cllrs Rosemary Dartnall (Labour), Julian Dean (Green and Progressive Independent), Dan Thomas (Conservative) and Deputy Group Leader Brendan Mallon, (Reform UK) were in attendance.

31 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies from Cabinet Members.

32 Disclosable Interests

Cllrs Heather Kidd and Ruth Houghton both reported that they were Trustees of Bishop's Castle Arts and Leisure Centre and would leave the room for item 14.

Cllr David Walker reported that he was a member of West Felton Parish Council and would leave the room for item 15.

33 Minutes**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2026 be confirmed as a correct record.

34 Public Question Time

Public Questions were received from the following:

Graham Betts – in relation to the bus service, Darwin's Walk, Bowbrook in Shrewsbury

John Palmer – in relation to affordable homes

Olly Rose – in relation to work looking into arranging a pump track in Oswestry

The full questions and responses to them area available from here: [Responses to questions](#)

35 Member Question Time

Members questions and initial responses provided to them are available here: [Responses to questions](#)

Member questions were received from:

Cllr Julian Dean on behalf of Cllr Craig Emery – in relation to a temporary road closure which had been extended several times in Pantglas

In response to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Environment said he would look further into and report back on the precise timescale for the work to be completed and investigate the poor signage set up for the diversion. He confirmed he was continuing efforts to improve communication regarding updates on road and infrastructure work with local members and so that they could easily track the progress of works in their electoral divisions.

Cllr Chris Naylor – in relation to the partnership initiative with Parish Councils

The Deputy Leader responded to a supplementary question about the range of reception from town and parish councils to the proposed memorandum of understanding which had been shared and whether perhaps a memorandum of understanding 'lite' might be available for smaller parish councils. He confirmed this would be the case and the Task and Finish Group would consider this as part of their work.

Cllr Andy Boddington –re property in King Street, Ludlow

Responding to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder for Planning confirmed that he was happy with the approach that officers were taking but that he would be happy to hold a site visit with officers and ask them about the possibility of using a s215 notice. He encouraged members to get in touch with him directly outside of meetings over issues such as these.

Cllr Teri Trickett – re Planning site visits

Cllr Rosemary Dartnall – in relation to allocation of CIL and S106 monies

Responding to Cllr Dartnall's supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder for Planning recognised the importance of improving communications around future development with local members and the need to ensure that residents could see the direct benefits of CIL.

36 Scrutiny Items

- a **Scrutiny Item - Skateboard Facility and Pump Track Petition - recommendation from Economy & Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Ed Potter, Chair of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented a report setting out the discussion held and recommendations agreed at the meeting of the Committee held on 10 July 2025 following the presentation of a petition for a skateboard facility and pump track in Oswestry. The petition called for Shropshire Council to transfer ownership of land to the North of Oswestry Leisure Centre for this purpose. The Committee had recognised the benefits this would bring and the Portfolio Holder for Finance said this would be explored at pace, with a report brought back to the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

3.1 That the relevant Portfolio Holders with officer support explore the possibility of transferring land to Oswestry Town Council for use as a pump track and skate park, and the most appropriate means of doing so.

3.2 That a report setting out the findings of the Portfolio Holder be presented to Cabinet on the 15th October.

37 Children's Social Care Ofsted Report and Next Steps

The Portfolio Holder for Social Care was pleased to present the report on the Children's Social Care Ofsted Report; the service had achieved an outstanding rating which had been attributed to strong leadership, professional social work practice and effective cross-departmental collaboration. She outlined the council's vision for family-based care, and the transition to a Children's Ambition Board to maintain and build on successes. All members present thanked and congratulated children's services recognising that the outcome of the inspection was a testament to a dedicated and hard working team who went over and beyond to improve the experience of children and families. Members discussed ongoing challenges and the importance of cross-party support moving forward.

RESOLVED:

3.1 That Cabinet acknowledges this outstanding achievement and the positive impact on the lives of children, young people and families.

3.2. That Cabinet acknowledge the Council wide commitment to sustaining and embedding this outstanding achievement, at the same time recognising the preventative benefits that doing so will bring to children, young people and families.

3.3 The report to be shared with Full Council on the 25th September 2025.

38 Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2025/26

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report and explained it now reflected the new management structure introduced in the previous year. He said that the administration had inherited a budget that it had not set; previously set ambitious savings targets had not been achieved and this had resulted in a dangerously low general fund balance and depleted reserves. As the current year progressed, the general fund balance at 31 March 2026 was currently estimated at just £768,000 which was not acceptable, and there were simply no more reserves available to bolster it. Work was ongoing to try and

find ways to improve this position but the council was now at risk with minimal resilience against any unforeseen variances.

Discussion included a year on year funding stream cut from central government, the government funding formula which disadvantaged rural counties like Shropshire, the impact of the removal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant and the impact of past decisions, council tax freezes and cuts to grants which had all impacted on the current budget crisis. The Leader referred to the large number of issues outside of the council's control and confirmed that a submission had been made to the fairer funding review.

RESOLVED:

- A. To note the arrangements being put into place to secure tighter control over all aspects of spending, as set out in this report
- B. To note that the Quarter 1 position (as at the end of June) forecasts indicative savings delivery of £34.154m (57%)
- C. To direct the Chief Executive to instruct all Officers to urgently take the necessary actions to improve the Quarter 1 forecast of a projected spend over budget of £33.544m (30th June 2025), by year end, predominantly focussing on remaining savings or mitigating actions to be delivered in 2025/26.
- D. To consider the impact of the projected forecast on the General Fund Balance and note the risk of further service pressures (requiring additional savings) in the future financial years if financial performance in the current year is not significantly improved.
- E. To consider the updated summary position as set out in the Period 4 Monitoring Report also on this agenda.

39 Financial Monitoring Period 4

The Portfolio Holder for Finance reported that the council's financial position had worsened, with unplanned and unexpected costs in July leading to a projected overspend of £35.169 million and a negative General Fund Balance. This situation signalled a potential breach of legal financial requirements by the end of the year if no further action was taken. The risk of issuing a Section 114 notice was highlighted, which would result in government commissioners taking control of council spending and severely limiting local autonomy.

While some late savings were identified, these were insufficient to offset the overspend. The council agreed that a financial emergency should be declared, the annual budget target revised, and all non-essential spending reduced between September and March.

Despite the financial emergency, the Leader emphasised that the council remained committed to delivering essential services and maintaining public trust. There was discussion about the confusion among the public regarding capital versus day-to-day spending, and the need for clear communication about funding sources. The importance

of partnership working, both within the council and with external bodies, was stressed as a way to find alternative solutions and maintain service delivery in challenging times.

The Leader commented on the length of time taken to set up a new Improvement Board as recommended following the CPC review but confirmed that the council was working closely with the LGA to recruit to the Board and put it in place as soon as practicable. The new strategic plan would be based on new strategic priorities, the immediate need to avoid a S114 notice and longer term the council would have to reappraise its purpose and level of service it could provide.

The Leader welcomed the cross-party support expressed for declaring a financial emergency, taking decisive action, and working collaboratively to avoid a Section 114 notice and restore financial stability.

RESOLVED:

- A. To declare a financial emergency and direct the Chief Executive (in conjunction with the Council Leader) to instruct all Officers to take emergency action to reduce all non-essential spending between September and March to significantly improve the Period 4 forecast of a projected spend over budget of £35.169m. Such action should predominantly focus on reducing spend, delivering remaining savings and significant mitigating actions to control in-year spending pressures.
- B. Direct the Chief Executive to work closely with the LGA and the Council Leader to put in place an independently chaired Improvement Board, as recommended in the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, as soon as practicable.
- C. To note that Operations Boards, to ultimately work with the Improvement Board, are in place from August 2025 to challenge all in-year spending.
- D. To note that the Period 4 position (as at the end of July) forecasts indicative savings delivery of £34.012m (57%).
- E. To note the projected General Fund Balance is now negative (£0.899m), indicating a potentially illegal financial position by the end of the financial year if no further action is taken F. Immediately direct the Chief Executive, working in collaboration with Cabinet, to bring forward a sustainable corporate plan for the authority to Council in December, reflected in a medium term financial strategy that sets out an approach to deliver a sustainable financial position within a timeframe of no more than three years.

40 Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2025/26

The Leader introduced the item and explained that it was her intention that future reports would clearly highlight changes in performance and could be used more constructively as a tool.

Discussion of the report focused on the number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation with numbers rising despite efforts to support homeless families. This was attributed to delays in turning around void social housing properties, partly due to

contractor changes. A new contractor was now in place and efforts underway to clear the backlog. The Leader emphasised the importance of increasing affordable housing supply, leveraging exception sites and improving allocation processes.

Discussion also covered the council's recycling and composting rate which had fallen below target, primarily due to the introduction of garden waste charges, with some waste being diverted to general refuse. Efforts were ongoing to improve performance and address food waste collection.

RESOLVED:

1. To Note progress to date in achieving the outcomes of The Shropshire Plan (TSP).
2. To confirm that the KPIs currently agreed remain the same for 2025/2026 until aligned to the refresh of The Shropshire Plan in 2025/26
3. To note the new draft Local Government Outcomes Framework, provide any feedback and consider these metrics when reviewing the KPIs for the new corporate plan.

41 Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Guide

The Portfolio Holder for Planning introduced the draft Shrewsbury Town Centre Code, which would set out an aspiration for high quality design throughout Shrewsbury Town Centre. The content of the draft design code had been informed through working with stakeholders, including Shrewsbury BID and Shrewsbury Town Council. Approval was now sought from Cabinet for a six week public consultation on the draft design code. The intention was for the final version to be adopted as a material consideration in planning decisions to help preserve the town's unique character.

Responding to questions, it was confirmed that the Draft Design Code recognised the importance of active travel and was intended to support delivery of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan and the Shrewsbury Movement and Public Space Strategy.

The Portfolio Holder encouraged members to feed into the consultation.

RESOLVED:

3.1. That Cabinet consider the Draft Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code (Appendix 1) and approve a minimum six week public consultation on the draft document. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, the final draft Design Code will be brought back to Cabinet to seek approval to 'adopt' it as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in Shrewsbury town centre.

3.2. That authority is given to the Service Director - Legal Governance and Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to agree any additional minor changes to the Draft Shrewsbury Town Centre Design Code ahead of this consultation

42 Treasury Management Update Quarter 1 2025/26

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the Treasury Management Update Quarter 1, a largely technical report showing the return on investments over quarter 1, the economic outlook for the next 3 years and confirming activities align with the Council approved Treasury Management Strategy.

RESOLVED:

3.1. Members are asked to review the position as set out in the report 3.1.1. Noting the summary of the wider economic environment and the Council's borrowings and investments set out in Appendix A

3.1.2. Noting the performance within prudential indicators for quarter 1, 2025/26 (Appendix B)

43 Proposed Consultation on Residential Design Supplementary Planning Documents

The Portfolio Holder for Planning explained that approval was sought to consult on two draft Supplementary Planning Documents for Shropshire – the Design of New Dwellings SPD and the Design of Residential Extensions and Alterations SPD. These and others to come would strengthen the policy framework until a new local plan was made. He responded to questions about siting and density of development, quality of design, reduction of car dependency and community space.

It was confirmed that reference to existing strategies could be included within new SPDs

RESOLVED:

3.1. Following consideration of the draft Design of New Dwellings Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 1) - to approve a minimum six week public consultation on the draft document. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, the final draft Supplementary Planning Document will be brought back to Cabinet to seek approval to 'adopt' it as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

3.2. Following consideration of the draft Design of Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 2) – to approve a minimum six week public consultation on the draft document. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, the final draft Supplementary Planning Document will be brought back to Cabinet to seek approval to 'adopt' it as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

3.3. That authority is given to the Service Director – Legal, Governance and Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to agree any additional minor changes to the draft Design of New Dwellings Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 1) and the draft Design of Residential Extensions and Alterations Supplementary Planning Document (Appendix 2) ahead of these consultations.

44 Bishop's Castle Arts and Leisure Centre – Approval for decarbonisation and pool renovation projects including the allocation of CIL funds

Councillors Heather Kidd and Ruth Houghton left the room for the duration of this item

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure was pleased to present the report which was an excellent example of how facilities could be protected and improved when communities and the council worked together. The Centre was set to undergo essential repairs and improvements, including a decarbonisation project and pool refurbishment, with a total investment of £3.939 million funded by CIL, government grants, local donations, and council capital. These upgrades would reduce carbon emissions by 70%, lower running costs, and improve accessibility for children, older people, and those with disabilities. Cabinet approval was sought for the allocation of CIL funds and inclusion of both projects in the Capital Programme.

It was hoped that this example of partnership working could be applied to other facilities in the county.

RESOLVED:

3.1 To agree the allocation of £680,000 of CIL funds to the Bishop's Castle Pool Refurbishment project, including £300,000 from the Bishop's Castle local CIL fund and £380,000 from the Strategic County wide CIL Fund.

3.2 To recommend that Council approve the Bishop's Castle Pool Refurbishment Project for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

3.3 To recommend that Council approve the Bishop's Castle Decarbonisation Project for inclusion in the Capital Programme.

3.4 To recommend that Council delegates authority to the Service Director for Commissioning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure to procure, negotiate and agree the terms of any agreements and contracts necessary and to proceed with the delivery of both projects

45 Application by West Felton Parish Council for West Felton Parish to be considered as a Neighbourhood Area

Councillor David Walker left the room for the duration of this item.

The report was presented by the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure on Councillor Walker's behalf.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet agree the designation of the proposed Neighbourhood Area identified on the map in Appendix B, covering the Parish of West Felton as an appropriate basis for the development of a Neighbourhood Development Plan and notifies West Felton Parish Council accordingly.

46 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 item

47 Proposed sale of the former (closed) St Marys Church of England Primary School, Dawsons Rough, Wem Road, Shawbury

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report.

RESOLVED:

That recommendations 3.1 and 3.2 set out in the report be approved.

48 Date of Next Meeting

15 October 2025 at 10.30 am

Signed (Chairman)

Date: