

CABINET – 3 DECEMBER 2025
RESPONSE TO PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1. Judy Bradley

Question:

As a new resident to Wem, I wish to put forward a question to the council team. With all new housing currently underway. How will the council be supporting high street retailers?

To avoid Wem becoming a dormitory town to Whitchurch and Shrewsbury. We need investment and encouragement for shops to remain (pastry box the latest casualty) to provide a reason to shop local.

Wem is fast becoming a derelict, ghost town. Communities around the town work hard to encourage public support, however it appears that council and governing bodies are interested in housing developments.

We must protect our high street, lower rents are better than no rent at all.

It appears as a newcomer, that we need more encouragement for retailers to come into Wem. Shrewsbury authorities need to be supporting this historic town.

What ideas or plans do the council have to offer?

Response:

Thank you for raising this important question about Wem's high street.

The council recognises the need to maintain a vibrant town centre and ensure Wem remains a thriving community rather than simply a residential hub. The council has taken a number of steps to support local businesses and encourage new investment.

Grants have been made available to help new businesses moving into properties with start-up costs, purchasing equipment, and improving premises for trading. In addition, landlords who have had properties vacant for more than twelve months can access grants to bring those properties up to a standard that will attract tenants and encourage occupancy. These schemes have been supported through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which has also enabled the creation of a business networking group in partnership with the town and parish councils. This group continues to operate under the management of the Clerk of Wem Parish Council with support from the town council. However, this funding stream is coming to an end, and like all councils, we are awaiting details of new funding opportunities from April 2026.

We also carry out a High Street survey each September for all Shropshire market towns. The 2024 report is available online, and the 2025 report will be published imminently. These surveys help inform our business support activities and future grant schemes.

Beyond these initiatives, Shropshire's Growth Hub continues to offer advice, funded courses, one-to-one consultations, and signposting to funding opportunities for small

and medium-sized enterprises across the county. While rental values are set by private landlords and cannot be controlled by the council, we aim to facilitate occupancy through grant schemes for both landlords and tenants, helping to make vacant properties viable for new businesses.

We remain committed to working with local stakeholders to ensure Wem's high street thrives and continues to serve the community.

2. John Palmer

Question:

The Financial Monitoring Period 7 report lists red-rated savings, brought forwards from 2023/24, still unachieved, and referred to by many now as unachievable. In total these brought forwards unachieved savings are listed in Table 2 as £34.395m. These were discussed by the Leader and the Leader of the Opposition in public on Thursday 27 November at Audit and Governance Committee, as "PwC transformation recommendations". The Leader said the Improvement Board needs to see the PwC documents, "as many of the red-rated savings, all of which had no plans behind them, were put forwards by PwC". The Tories who wrecked Shropshire Council finances were responsible for spending multi-millions on expensive consultants PwC. Will the Cabinet instruct that these PwC documents now all be published for public transparency?

Response:

There are number of interesting statements included in your question. I am aware a number of residents, councillors and others are all wondering what effect they did have whilst here. Were, are the claims being made true or not.

At the first improvement board meeting there was an agreed action to complete a valuation for money review into PwC, this will commence before Christmas. As a cabinet we are committee to being open and transparent and the VFM report will go Audit Committee.

We do need to learn and take on board answers to ensure the best use of any information that is obtained is fed into the organisation and subsequent improvements