

ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2025

In The Shrewsbury Room, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ

2.00 p.m. - 5.25 p.m.

Responsible Officer: Sarah Townsend Committee Officer

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Present:

Councillors Ed Potter (Chairman), Sam Walmsley (Vice-Chairman), Donna Edmunds, Craig Emery, Alan Holford, Brendan Mallon, David Minnery, Chris Naylor, Wendy Owen and Dawn Husemann (Substitute) (substitute for Sharon Ritchie-Simmons)

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Andy Boddington
Councillor Roger Evans – Portfolio Holder for Finance
Councillor Heather Kidd – Leader
Councillor James Owen – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure
Councillor David Walker – Portfolio Holder for Planning (remotely)
Councillor Rob Wilson – Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth

Officers in Attendance:

Claire Braddock – Overview and Scrutiny Officer
Tom Dodds – Scrutiny Manager (remotely)
Peter Gilbertson – Senior Project Management Officer
Matt Johnson – Strategic Project Executive Manager
Andy Moreton – Executive Manager - Technical Services (remotely)
Laura Tyler – Service Director Commissioning
James Walton – Executive Director (Section 151 Officer)
Edward West – Planned Policy and Strategy Manager (remotely)
Andy Wilde – Service Director Infrastructure
Grant Wilson – Infrastructure, Contracts and Compliance Manager (remotely)

22 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gary Groves and Sharon Ritchie-Simmons.

Councillor Dawn Husemann was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Sharon Ritchie-Simmons.

23 Disclosable Interests

Councillor David Minnery stated that he was one of the representatives of Shropshire Council who sat on the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Fire Authority and was also currently the Chairman.

24 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15th September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

25 Public Question Time

No public questions had been received.

26 Member Question Time

No member questions had been received.

27 Verbal update further to the Member Briefings on the Veolia Contract

The Service Director Commissioning provided an update on the member briefings that had been held regarding the Veolia Contract, outlining their content and noting that they were well attended.

As part of the briefings, members were informed about significant upcoming legislative changes and the requirement for all households to have weekly food waste collections by 31st March 2026. The local authority had informed Defra that it was unable to implement this by the deadline and it was explained that other local authorities were also in this position too. Whilst some capital investment and project management funding had been received, clarity on whether local authorities would receive revenue support as part of the changes in legislation was awaited, pending the November budget announcement. It was proposed that the committee revisited this item in the new year, once further information regarding modelling, funding and associated risks was available. Specific implementation timescales would be drawn up with the aim of Cabinet considering this around April 2026.

It was requested that a timeline be provided to enable the committee to scrutinise the proposals for a weekly food waste collection in a timely manner, prior to being taken to Cabinet for a decision and to ensure that it is included within their work programme. Likewise, it was commented that a timeline also be provided if there were any proposed changes to the green waste collection in order that the committee could consider these items either together or at separate meetings.

RESOLVED:

That a timeline be provided by the Service Director Commissioning regarding the tracking of key decision dates on both the weekly food waste collection and the green waste collection in order that these items can be incorporated into the committee's work programme for the committee to consider in a timely manner prior to consideration by Cabinet around April 2026.

28 Levelling Up Fund Round 2 (LUF2): Project 2 - Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury

The committee were asked to consider the report and recommendations of the Service Director Infrastructure which reported on progress for the delivery of the Levelling Up Fund (Round 2) grant funded 'Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury' project, including an overview of governance arrangements, project management, delivery of outputs and outcomes, aligned to the grant award.

The Chairman explained that this agenda item was more commonly known as the Station Gyratory in Shrewsbury Town Centre and that the committee had been asked to consider it with the aim of understanding and learning from the project's entire process, from its initial conception through to its delivery, particularly given the significant concerns raised by the public, local businesses and Councillors regarding its impact on the town centre. A verbal update would be provided at the Cabinet meeting on 19th November 2025 with the committee's recommendations.

Prior to the committee's discussion and questions, the Service Director Infrastructure provided some context to the scheme and gave a brief overview of the current situation. Members heard how the project was part of the Levelling Up Fund bid submitted in 2023, with objectives focused on public realm improvements and active travel. It was explained that the project had now moved through to the construction phase, with the main objectives being delivered on time and within budget, but inherited from previous management and not without significant contention and complications. If the committee decided to set up a Task and Finish Group to examine the scheme in more detail, officers would fully support it as it was recognised that there was valid learning and understanding needed both in terms of moving forward and regarding how projects of a similar type are delivered in the future.

In responding to questions, committee discussion and comments covered:

- Members expressed frustration at receiving the report only hours before the meeting, limiting their ability to scrutinise effectively. There was a consensus that future reports must be circulated in a timely manner to allow proper review and the Chairman stated that he would ensure that this matter was taken forward.
- Regarding the final specifications of the cycle lane, concern was expressed that only broad, initial consultation drawings were available and whether a fully defined specification ever existed, given numerous recent changes. In responding, the Service Director Infrastructure explained that the project began as a conceptual bid and that detailed technical specifications and designs were developed later, with amendments made due to engineering

complications encountered on site. The need to clarify the reasons for changes between the original concept and the final scheme was highlighted.

- The complexity of the location due to numerous underground utilities was explained and how they could only be fully understood after in-depth ground investigations. Had a more fully formed bid application been submitted, this would have ensured that funding was secured to do significant ground investigations to ensure that the risks were fully understood and were mitigated throughout the design process.
- The fire authority were deeply concerned regarding the negative impact of the new road layout on emergency response times, which was putting lives, properties and businesses at risk. Whilst temporary remedial measures had been suggested, disappointment was voiced at the lack of consultation to date. In responding, the Executive Manager – Technical Services commented that he had been liaising with the operational leads at the fire authority and it was planned to hold a meeting with all emergency services (Fire, Ambulance and Police) to collectively understand the impact that the project may or may not have had. It was suggested that if a Task and Finish Group were to be established, a representative from the fire service be invited to attend as a witness.
- Regarding consultation with Shrewsbury Town Council, Councillor Rob Wilson (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Economic Growth, Leader of Shrewsbury Town Council and Shropshire Council's representative on the Big Town Plan Partnership) explained that this should have taken place through the Big Town Plan Partnership and that whilst concerns had been raised by Shrewsbury Town Council, it was felt that they were not heard loudly enough. It was noted that Councillor Potter had received correspondence from both the Chairman of the Big Town Plan Partnership and Councillor Alan Mosley, former Leader of Shrewsbury Town Council, raising their concerns and that he would be making contact with them. It was suggested that a review of the Big Town Plan was needed.
- The timing, adequacy and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement, particularly with Active Travel England, was highlighted as it was felt that consultation with active travel users occurred late in the process, potentially impacting the quality of information provided to inform the scheme's design.
- How the scheme was designed to be included within the Shrewsbury Moves Strategy was felt to be an important consideration that needed to be addressed.
- There were improvements in journey times following the initial optimisation of traffic signals in October, but concerns had been renewed with the situation having been particularly bad during the last couple of weeks.
- The traffic light sequencing would be re-visited following comments that there was potential to improve traffic flow on Castle Foregate. Specifically, it was noted that when traffic turns left from Smithfield Road into Chester Street, there are periods when no other vehicles are moving.
- The Council's relationship with technical consultants WSP, the Council's reliance on external expertise and whether there was sufficient in-house technical expertise to challenge and oversee contracts was discussed.
- Whether the Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP 4) could be considered as part of the committee's work programme.

- The importance of not only identifying risks but also quantifying and understanding their severity and potential impact was emphasised to enable informed decision making.
- The importance of robust partnership working was discussed, particularly with Transport for Wales and issues regarding car park management at the front of the railway station.
- The need for an independent safety review, particularly regarding the “floating bus stop” and the overall safety of the new arrangements for all road users, was emphasised.
- Whether a Task and Finish Group could examine the procurement process, timeline of the project, the final contract and the extent of Cabinet Member involvement.
- Regarding learning and future projects, there was a desire to ensure that lessons learnt were captured and applied to both future initiatives and to existing schemes currently in operation.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider this report and identifies specific areas of focus that it may want to explore in more detail; the outcomes of which will be included in a future report. The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee will establish a rapid Task and Finish Group before the end of November in order to report to Cabinet on 3rd December 2025.
2. The Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends that the Service Director Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport and Economic Growth considers the commissioning of an independent safety audit review of the current proposals to provide assurance that associated risks, such as congestion and emergency access are robustly addressed.
3. That Cabinet be asked to review the Council's Strategic Partnerships.
4. That the lessons learned from this process are applied not only to future initiatives but also to existing schemes currently in operation, to ensure robust governance and prevent similar issues from arising. This approach will help to strengthen oversight and promote best practice across all ongoing programmes.

29 Sports Village Development

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Leisure introduced the report which presented proposals for the transformation of the Shrewsbury Sports Village. It was proposed to develop a major extension containing a range of swimming, health and fitness facilities that would appeal to a wider range of users and so better meet the needs of Shropshire residents. It was explained that the transformation would make the Sports Village more financially and environmentally sustainable.

The Senior Project Management Officer explained that it was recommended that the proposals within the report be taken to Cabinet on 21st January 2026 and Council on 26th February 2026 for a final decision on whether to proceed with the proposed recommendations to borrow and develop the Sports Village. A PowerPoint presentation outlining the proposals was presented to the committee.

In responding to questions, committee discussion and comments covered:

- The project is using a design and build approach, meaning a single contractor is responsible for both designing and building the facility. This ensures that the scope of the project is fixed and able to be built within the allocated budget. Price certainty i.e. final costs of all itemised elements of the construction was due to be received from the contractor in three weeks time and whilst commercially confidential, could be shared with the committee, although it was not for publication.
- Once the elements specified in the project requirements are formally agreed by Council, they become mandatory and cannot be added to or deleted without further Council approval, ensuring the project scope remains fixed. Regarding cost control variations, it was expected that these decisions would be delegated to the Service Director and Executive Director (Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.
- Having gone out to the market, Pellikaan Construction were the preferred supplier. They were experienced in leisure projects and had a reputation for producing high quality designs. Having also been the contractor and designer for Whitchurch Swimming & Fitness Centre, they had completed this project under budget and ahead of schedule.
- Once the final costs had been submitted from the contractor, an independent benchmarking exercise would be undertaken whereby the cost submissions would be tested to ensure the Council was getting value for money.
- Several estimates had been undertaken regarding footfall, including the Sports England database to estimate social value and they had estimated a footfall of 50,000 users. The modelling associated with footfall included all the competitors in the area and the competitor analysis would be shared with the committee.
- The primary factor influencing the success of large leisure facilities is the availability of parking. Facilities with ample parking and modern amenities tend to attract more users.
- The comparison of gas vs electric heating options report that had been completed for the Whitchurch Pool project would be shared with the committee.
- The advantages of implementing a biochar-based energy system as opposed to traditional solutions such as solar panels and air source heat pumps was highlighted and it was commented that the biochar option should be seriously considered as a superior option to the current proposals.
- Regarding liabilities and penalties built into the contract, the Senior Project Management Officer explained that he was confident with the contractor, Pellikaan UK Ltd, which was a subsidiary of Pellikaan, a Dutch family run company that specialised in only delivering leisure centres. Financial checks had been undertaken to ensure that they were financially stable and there would be a parent company guarantee from Holland to oversee Pellikaan in

terms of their performance. Both the main contractor and major subcontractors would be required to sign up to collateral warranties for all aspects of their construction.

- Concern was expressed about progressing with the proposed project at the current time when the Council was in a very difficult financial position and what this would look like to the public. It was commented that despite the appeal and merits of the project, this was not the appropriate time to proceed.
- Shrewsbury Town Council had been engaged with regarding the proposals and had been involved in the consultation exercise. In addition, a meeting had recently been held with Councillor Wagner and a meeting was also scheduled to take place with Shrewsbury Town Council's clerk to discuss swimming provision in the town and possible partnership options.
- Regarding the revenue costs, the Executive Director (Section 151 Officer) explained that the costs of providing swimming provision in Shrewsbury through a new facility would be less expensive than current arrangements, with savings sufficient to offset the borrowing costs required for the project.
- The importance of investing in the prevention agenda was emphasised as was the need to view leisure provision not solely as a leisure service but as integral to the long term wellbeing and support of residents, especially in the context of an ageing population.
- It was confirmed that the costs provided by Pellikaan would include an allowance for inflation and that any inflationary risk beyond this point would be borne by them, who would incur any resulting losses.
- Inflation in building costs was currently around 5% per year and if the proposed project were to be postponed, such increases would negatively impact the financial viability of the scheme. For example, if the project were to be revisited in a year, with a reduced budget, it would likely no longer include a competition pool.
- Regarding whether existing unprofitable leisure services would be discontinued to reduce costs, or if it was intended to continue subsidising them, the Service Director Commissioning explained that a conversation and decision was needed on The Quarry Swimming & Fitness Centre. The Chairman explained that conversations regarding The Quarry Swimming & Fitness Centre had occurred repeatedly over the past years and it was commented that decisions regarding the future of existing facilities and investment in new facilities were closely linked and must surely be considered together.
- It was essential that information regarding the net impact on the effect of the 2024/25 and 2025/26 revenue budget be provided to understand what the impact would be on taking the proposed project forward.
- The Executive Director (Section 151 Officer) confirmed that the proposals as presented were financially viable, regardless of whether all funds were immediately available or strategically built in for the future.

RESOLVED:

That the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse the proposals within the report which will be taken to Cabinet on 21 January 2026 and Council on 26th February 2026 for a final decision on whether to proceed with the proposed recommendations to borrow and develop the Sports Village. This

endorsement was on the provision that information regarding the net impact on the effect of the 2024/25 and 2025/26 revenue budget be included within the reports.

30 **Developer Contributions Task and Finish Group**

The Planned Policy and Strategy Manager was in attendance remotely to provide a verbal update on the progress of the implementation of recommendations from the previous year's Developer Contributions Task and Finish Group. A PowerPoint presentation was presented to the committee detailing the recommendations along with the actions undertaken / underway and the timeframe. Issues such as the review of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule, preparation of a supplementary planning document and ongoing work to align infrastructure funding with the new local plan was covered.

In responding to questions, committee discussion and comments covered:

- The evidence base for the CIL charging schedule is independently examined. In Shropshire, CIL is currently only levied on open market housing development, not on affordable housing. The evidence based behind that takes into account the cost of development and the process involves commissioning external experts due to its complexity and specialist area. Whoever is commissioned to do this work will directly engage with developers to ensure realistic assessments with the aim of striking a balance so that CIL covered the infrastructure impact of new developments without making projects financially unviable.
- A question was asked on the distinction between capital and revenue funds and whether either could be used to help fund non-statutory services over the long term. The Chairman acknowledged the question and stated that it would be addressed in the work of the newly formed CIL Task and Finish Group.
- A question was asked regarding issues if, over time, the original commitments made to communities, such as Section 106 agreements and CIL allocations, are not honoured due to changing rules. The Chairman acknowledged the question and stated that it would be addressed in the work of the newly formed CIL Task and Finish Group.

The agenda item was noted, with no vote required.

31 **Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

The committee reviewed and noted its draft work programme and were reminded that it was a live, working document. It was commented that they were dealing with numerous issues that were coming forward from Cabinet, as well as unexpected matters such as the station gyratory.

The Chairman asked members to contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer or himself if they wished to proposal additional items for the work programme. These would then be considered and discussed at future reviews.

32 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 Procedure Rules, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items.

33 Exempt Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15th September 2025 be approved as a correct record.

34 Leisure Service Contract Retendering

The committee considered the exempt report and update on the background to the procurement of a replacement contract to operate Shropshire Council Leisure centres, commencing when the current contract expires in July 2027.

35 Date/Time of Next Meeting of the Committee

It was noted that the next meeting of the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee was scheduled to be held on Thursday, 29th January 2026 commencing at 2.00 p.m.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: