



Item

Report of the
Partnership Working
Task and Finish Group

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Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Report of the Partnership Working Task and Finish Group

Responsible Overview and Scrutiny Officer:

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Task and Finish Group Chair:

Councillor Dawn Husemann

1. Synopsis

This is the second report to Cabinet of the Partnership Working Task and Finish Group whose members have agreed to report their findings at regular intervals to both the Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet as their work progresses. The last report of the Task and Finish Group was shared in November 2025, and this report covers the work undertaken from that date until now, as part of Phase Two of their investigation.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 The Partnership Working Task and Finish Group was formed through Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2025 with the aim of exploring opportunities to deliver local outcomes and services differently, identifying opportunities for enhancing partnership opportunities across the County. The group's aim is to achieve improved outcomes for the people and communities of Shropshire through more efficient and effective collaboration, including initiatives at a local level through greater engagement with town and parish councils.

- 2.2 This second phase of Partnership Working Task and Finish Group work was intended to explore the ways in which Town and Parish Councils might work together to improve local decision making and outcomes in light of the proposed devolution of Streetscene services. This report focuses on this second phase of work prior to the group handing this devolution work over and focusing on the Partnership Plan.
- 2.3 At Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 19th January 2026 it was agreed that due to the totally different nature of the devolution of services and the Partnership Plan these two areas will be separated and dealt with by two separate Task and Finish Groups in future.
- 2.4 As part of understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by Town and Parish Councils within Shropshire the Partnership Working Task and Finish group undertook two separate workshops with Town and Parish chairs and clerks in Bridgnorth and in Ludlow, and this report details the findings from these sessions.
- 2.5 A further workshop with a rural cluster of parishes North of the County is expected to take place later in the Spring.

Report

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The Partnership Working Task and Finish Group recognise that each community has unique challenges and understand that what works well for a rural parish may not be suitable in a large market town. They aim to review ways in which financial and non-financial benefits might be achieved through the adoption of a partnership approach.
- 3.2 Shropshire Councils' future approach may well be shaped by the work of the Task and Finish Group and therefore regular and timely updates to Cabinet need to be timed to align with informing future budget setting and the setting of Town and Parish precepts.

4. Climate Change Appraisal

- 4.1. During this phase of work the Partnership Working Task and Finish Group have considered how the different needs of communities, geographic areas, and partners should be built into any framework and arrangements for effective partnership working. They have worked with town and parishes to map community relations, ie; where people go to access services, may realise the potential for clustering of parishes to build neighbourhood resource and strong relationships which could be positive in reducing fuel consumption and carbon offsetting.

5. Background

- 5.1 The Partnership Working Task and Finish Group have already presented a number of recommendations to both Cabinet and Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2025. An update as to their progress would be welcomed by the Task and Finish Members.
- 5.2 The most recent report attached of the Partnership Working Task and Finish Group outlines their research activities to enhance collaboration between Shropshire Council and local partners, especially Town and Parish Councils, to improve community outcomes and service delivery across Shropshire. It summarises enquiries, workshops, and findings aimed at informing effective partnership models tailored to suit diverse local needs.
- 5.2 Appendix One details the discoveries and feedback from workshops held in Bridgnorth and Ludlow with Town and Parish Council clerks and chairs, who undertook a number of exercises including local service mapping, and an exploration of potential partnership models including identification of the opportunities and challenges of each.
- 5.3 The workshop attendees were all very engaged and the outcomes of these sessions were very informative. Some of the feedback received included concern over a lack of funding, inconsistent service data, increased workload for clerks, and communication issues with Shropshire Council who they perceived as distant and hard to reach. Concerns were also raised about any imposition of unnecessary bureaucracy potentially undermining existing informal arrangements and local goodwill.
- 5.5 The Task and Finish Group recognised over the course of the workshops that the Town and Parish Councils perception of Shropshire Council would be an influential factor in the success of any partnership arrangement. Town and Parish Councils who attended the workshops expressed an erosion of trust in Shropshire Council, that would need to be restored through meaningful communication and transparent engagement.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 Town and Parish Councils required clear assurance that there were benefits to pursuing a Partnership Working model, as well as a strengthening of trust and an assurance of efficiency in order to avoid potential repetition of previously unsuccessful models. Towns and Parishes sought empowerment and control over their local resources and services to best meet their community needs.
- 6.2 The Task and Finish Group recognised that a collaborative data audit between Shropshire Council and Town and Parish Councils was essential to clarifying service responsibilities, as well as providing transparency through clear two way open and honest communication. The active involvement of Town and Parish Councils in designing partnership arrangements together with Shropshire Council officers might help in alleviating their concerns.

6.3 The full report, listing the activities and findings of the group, and their recommendations in detail is attached at Appendix One

7. **Recommendations**

7.1 Members of Cabinet are asked to consider and review the report of the Partnerships Task and Finish group, attached at Appendix One, and to endorse the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group set out below

Recommendation 1 – A collaborative approach to a data audit between town and parish councils and Shropshire Council is essential to understanding expectations of one another. This needs to include clarity over what the statutory minimum is, a joint mapping of services and a clear understanding of service provision.

Recommendation 2 – Ensure that work undertaken with town and parish councils is transparent and honest, with the aim of reaching a mutually beneficial arrangement that doesn't risk erosion of any previous good will arrangements by imposing too much bureaucracy and oversight.

Recommendation 3 – Allow Town and Parish Councils to be involved in the joint development of any proposed Partnership arrangements, working together to provide clear benefits for local communities, alleviating some of the town and parish concerns highlighted in this report.

Recommendation 4 – Provide regular communication with town and parish councils and look to improve ways in which they can communicate more easily with Shropshire Council officers and service areas.

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:

Report of the Partnership Working Task and Finish Group - Appendix One - 09.02.2026