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Committee and Date
Cabinet
5 August 2026

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2026
In the Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ
10.30 am

Responsible Officer: Ashley Kendrick
Email: ashley.kendrick@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 250893

Present
Councillors Alex Wagner (Chair), Roger Evans, Andy Hall, Ruth Houghton, James Owen, Rob Wilson, David Vasmer and David Walker

In attendance
Rachel Robinson - Deputy Chief Executive, Richard Phillips – Monitoring Officer, Duncan Whitfield – S151 Officer, Natasha Moody – Assistant Director for Children's Services Reforms, Paul Clarke – Service Director Strategy & Change (remote), Kassandra Polyzoides – Interim Service Director Place Shaping (remote), David Baker – Head of Automation & Technology (remote), Councillor Dawn Husemann – Group Leader Reform UK, Councillor Ed Potter – Deputising for Group Leader Conservatives, Councillor Rosemary Dartnell – Group Leader Labour, Councillor Colin Taylor, Councillor Andy Boddington (remote), Councillor Rosie Radford (remote)

196 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Councillor Heather Kidd, Councillor Sarah Marston and Tanya Miles - Chief Executive.

197 **Disclosable Interests**

No declarations were received.

198 **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record.

199 **Public Question Time**

Six public questions had been received:

Carole Warner, Clerk to Welshampton and Lyneal Parish Council, in relation to the effects on Highways ref P/2026/0075 BEFESA, Fenns Bank, Whitchurch, SY13 3PA.

Olly Rose, in relation to the land transfer to Oswestry Town Council for a Pump Track. In response to a supplementary question raising concerns that an alternative site being considered may lack suitable access, the Cabinet Member stated that officers had not advised him of any recent progress with Oswestry Town Council. He reiterated that the council remained committed to working collaboratively with the Town Council and would support the leasing of an appropriate site as soon as a preferred location was identified.

Mike Streetly, in relation to a North West Relief Road review.

Andrew Sceats, in relation to Shirehall. In response to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder advised that questions relating to Cornovii fell outside his portfolio area and would be addressed by the relevant Cabinet Member.

Kevin Pardy, in relation to highways repairs. In response to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that neither he nor officers had prioritised repairs based on political representation and that decisions were made solely according to road condition and safety criteria.

John Palmer, in relation to the future of Theatre Severn.

The full questions and responses can be found on the webpage for the meeting - [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 8th July, 2026, 10.30 am — Shropshire Council]

200 **Member Question Time**

Four questions had been received.

Councillor Rosie Radford, in relation to the safety of vulnerable residents in their own homes.

Councillor Colin Tayor, in relation to fly tipping. In response to a supplementary question, it was confirmed that enforcement activity would continue to be publicised and that the Portfolio Holder would explore the publication of penalty statistics to increase transparency and deterrence.

Councillor Rosemary Dartnall, in relation to Meole Brace Park & Ride. In response to a supplementary question, the Portfolio Holder stated that the proposed closure was driven entirely by funding pressures and service prioritisation and was not linked to any intention to dispose of the site.

Councillor Andy Boddington, in relation to the retendering of bus contracts.

The full questions and responses can be found on the webpage for the meeting - [Agenda for Cabinet on Wednesday, 8th July, 2026, 10.30 am — Shropshire Council]

201 **Scrutiny Items**

a **Scrutiny Item - Verbal Update from the Station Gyratory Task and Finish Group**

The Chair of the Station Gyratory Task and Finish Group, presented a progress update on the group's review of the Station Gyratory scheme, which summarised consideration of the interim Road Safety Audit, traffic data, operational impacts, and concerns relating to traffic flow, congestion, the cycleway and floating bus stop arrangement.

The Task and Finish Group reported that most issues identified in the safety audit were minor and capable of being addressed through contractor-led improvements. However, concerns remained regarding congestion, traffic displacement into residential areas, and the operation of the cycleway and bus stop. Members noted the need for further evidence gathering, including traffic modelling, cycle usage data, signal timing analysis and clarification of any potential grant funding implications.

The Group recommended that the Council continue implementing safety audit recommendations, explore alternative configurations for the cycleway and bus stop, and undertake detailed assessment of two options: reinstating two traffic lanes and introducing a shared bus/taxi/cycle lane. The Group also recommended ongoing engagement with emergency services, businesses and other stakeholders.

Cabinet welcomed the work of the Task and Finish Group and recognised the extensive cross-party scrutiny that had been undertaken. The Portfolio Holder for Transport and Regeneration supported the recommendations and emphasised the need to balance traffic flow, bus reliability, public safety and funding considerations. Cabinet agreed that officers should undertake further detailed investigation of the proposed options, including costs, operational impacts and grant funding implications.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet endorsed the following recommendations from the Station Gyratory Task & Finish Group and requested officers undertake detailed investigations into the identified options and report back with a proposed timetable for further work:

- *Continuing delivery of the Road Safety Audit recommendations via the contractor, which are currently progressing.*

- *Exploration of configuration changes to the bus stop and cycleway, with the exploration of alternative designs to address safety and usability concerns.*

- *The Task and Finish Group has specifically recommended:*
    - *Further exploration of Option 3 of the LUF2 Station Gyratory – Project Conclusion Options document which is ‘Revert to 2 lanes of traffic’*
    - *With Parallel exploration of Option 2 of the LUF2 Station Gyratory – Project Conclusion Options document which is ‘Change Cycleway to shared use (bus/taxi/cycle)’ to ensure a robust comparison.*

- *Clarification of the grant conditions and any potential clawback risk through officer engagement with the funder.*

- *Members have highlighted the need for a stronger evidence base to support decision-making, including:*
    - *Teleraam data capture, traffic modelling and signal timing analysis*
    - *Cycle usage data and validation of existing counts*

- *The Task and Finish Group will:*
    - *Continue to operate as a collective advisory group, contributing to the development of recommendations*.

202 **LGA Corporate Peer Challenge: Progress Review**

The Deputy Leader presented the report which assessed progress against recommendations made following the Peer Challenge undertaken in 2025.

Members welcomed the positive findings and acknowledged the contribution of officers and staff in driving improvement across the Council. Reference was made to strengthened financial controls, improved governance arrangements, clearer strategic direction and a more collaborative organisational culture. It was noted that the Council remained at an early stage in its improvement journey and that maintaining momentum would be essential.

During discussion, members highlighted the continuing challenges associated with financial sustainability, organisational capacity and the delivery of transformation programmes. The importance of measurable outcomes, robust scrutiny and reducing reliance on Exceptional Financial Support was emphasised. Cabinet noted that transformation programmes across service areas were progressing and that further reporting on delivery and performance would be brought forward through the Council's improvement framework.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Noted the report of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review undertaken on 12th May 2026.

2. Noted that the CPC recommendations, along with subsequent feedback from the Progress Review, will continue to inform the Council's plans for improvement and financial sustainability

203 **Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2027-2032**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report which provided an updated assessment of the Council's financial position, funding gap projections and the ongoing need for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).

Members noted that the estimated funding gap had reduced from previous forecasts but remained significant and that detailed budget planning work was continuing.

The report outlined the Council's Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy, which focuses on strengthening organisational capacity, delivering transformation programmes, improving financial management and achieving long-term sustainability. It was noted that the Council would need to continue seeking EFS in the short term while reducing reliance on borrowing over future years.

Members welcomed improvements in financial management and highlighted the importance of robust monitoring, transparency and scrutiny. Questions were raised regarding assumptions within the financial projections, asset disposals, performance monitoring arrangements and the delivery of savings and transformation programmes. Officers advised that quarterly and ongoing financial monitoring would continue and that further reports on asset management and transformation activity would be brought forward.

Cabinet acknowledged the significant financial challenges facing the authority but noted the progress being made in strengthening financial governance and planning for long-term sustainability.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet noted that:

a) Council agreed a balanced budget for 2026-27 on 27th February 2026, which included in principle agreement from government of EFS of approximately £121m. Council noted at the time the need for future EFS for 2025-26, 2026/27 and beyond based on a number of working assumptions.

b) This report presents, on the basis of updated assumptions, the continued need for EFS in 2026-27, 2027/28 and beyond but at a lower level than originally estimated (para 4.1 and 4.2).

c) That the need for EFS, while significantly reduced, remain at unsustainable levels and are still subject to formal approval by MHCLG.

d) Current assumptions are dependent on the Council delivering 2026-27 services within the budget envelope provided in February 2026.

e) Quarterly budget monitoring reports will continue to be received by Cabinet throughout the year including Quarter 1 in September 2026.

f) A further MTFP update will be presented to Cabinet in November 2026 including initial budget proposals for 2027/28

g) The report notes the ongoing pressures on Shropshire Council's financial position and on local government finances more generally, including council tax capping and reductions in real terms government funding.

That Cabinet approved:

a) The Finance Sustainability and Recovery Strategy to form the basis for the financial recovery of the Council over the next five years (Section 5 below and Appendix A)

b) The Budget Planning Arrangements for the preparation of future budgets including Officer, Cabinet and Member engagement and accountability (Section 6 below and Appendix B). c) The Budget Guiding Principles that will determine the approach to setting priorities when setting balance budgets in the future (Section 7 below and Appendix C)

That Cabinet instructed the Section 151 officer:

a) Together with the Chief Executive. Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Finance make representations to MHCLG for further EFS and for further increases in Council Tax above the cap in line with previous applications.

b) With the support of Service Directors, to prepare indicative budget proposals including savings and future commitment, initially for 2027-28 and then for 2028-29 to 2031-32.

204 **Annual Treasury Report 2025/26**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report which detailed treasury management activity undertaken during the financial year and compliance with the Council's Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Strategy.

Members noted that treasury management activities had been conducted within approved limits and that the Council had achieved investment income of £2.409 million despite reduced cash balances during the year. The report also highlighted the Council's management of borrowing requirements and the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit position.

Members acknowledged the importance of prudent financial management and ongoing monitoring of the Council's financial position as part of wider efforts to achieve long-term financial sustainability. Members recognised the work of officers in managing treasury activity during a challenging financial period.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approved the actual 2025/26 prudential and treasury indicators in this report.

2. Noted the annual treasury management report for 2025/26.

3. Noted the inclusion of EFS borrowing in the 2025/26 position

205 **Shropshire UK Shared Prosperity Fund - review of progress and programme evaluation**

The Deputy Leader presented the report on the delivery and outcomes of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme in Shropshire. Members noted that the programme had supported a wide range of projects across the county, including business support, skills development, cultural initiatives, community projects, heritage improvements and employment programmes. The independent evaluation concluded that the programme had been effectively managed and had delivered positive outcomes for residents, businesses and communities.

Cabinet welcomed the achievements of the programme and commended officers and partner organisations for their work in delivering projects and securing benefits for Shropshire. Members highlighted successful investment in town centres, rural communities, skills initiatives and employment support, together with projects that had strengthened local communities and supported economic growth.

Members discussed the benefits delivered through the funding programme, concerns regarding the ending of the fund in September 2026, and the absence of a replacement funding stream for rural authorities. Members expressed concern that rural counties could be disadvantaged by future funding arrangements and emphasised the importance of continued support for economic development, community projects and business growth.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Noted the high-performance of the delivery of Shropshire's UKSPF programme, including the achievement against spend, outcomes and outputs targets.

2. Noted the findings and recommendations from the independent Shropshire UKSPF programme evaluation.

3. Recognised the decline of external funding in Shropshire post UKSPF and the implications leading from this,

4. Agreed to formally write to Government and its departments noting concerns around the loss of funding to rural and non-Combined Authority Regions and the implications that this will have for Shropshire.

5. Supported the effort to promote UKSPF and its legacy as a good news story, whilst also communicating effectively to its residents and businesses that the Council is continuing to lobby Government for fair access to future growth funds.

206 **Bridgnorth Youth club – Asset Decision**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented the report regarding the former Bridgnorth Youth Centre, which closed in November 2024 and is no longer operating as a youth facility. Members noted that a condition survey had identified the building as being in poor condition, requiring significant investment to bring it back into use, and that no viable alternative use had been identified.

Concerns were raised regarding the loss of community assets and youth facilities. Members were advised that youth services previously delivered from the building had been successfully relocated elsewhere in Bridgnorth and that discussions had taken place with local representatives and the Town Council regarding potential future use of the site. No alternative proposals had been received.

Cabinet noted the Council's financial position and the need to review underused assets to reduce borrowing requirements and support financial sustainability. Members agreed that, in the absence of a viable operational use, disposal of the asset was the most appropriate course of action.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Declared the former Bridgnorth Youth Centre, Innage Lane (in accordance with the red line plan detailed in Appendix A) surplus to requirements and approved its disposal as a non-core asset.

2. Delegated authority to the Head of Property and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, to take all necessary steps to progress disposal, including determination of the appropriate disposal strategy and completion of the sale in accordance with the Council’s constitutional and legal requirements.

207 **Shropshire's Children Achieving and Thriving (previously referred to as "Educational Excellence Strategy)**

The Portfolio Holder for Children & Education presented the report which set out the Council’s approach to promoting educational achievement, attendance, inclusion, SEND provision and safeguarding across all education settings. Members noted that, despite the increasing number of academies operating independently of local authority control, the Council retains statutory responsibilities for educational standards, safeguarding and supporting vulnerable children.

Members were advised that the strategy aimed to provide a consistent county-wide framework for monitoring performance, identifying risks at an early stage and strengthening collaboration with schools, academy trusts and other partners. It was noted that the strategy aligns with the Council’s wider ambitions for children and young people and will be delivered within existing resources.

Members sought assurance regarding measurable outcomes, available resources and the Council’s ability to influence academy trusts. The Assistant Director for Children's Services Reforms advised that progress would be monitored through established performance scorecards and scrutiny arrangements, with clear targets linked to national and local priorities. It was also noted that the strategy would strengthen oversight and accountability across the education system while supporting schools to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Members welcomed the strategy’s focus on improving educational attainment, attendance, inclusion and safeguarding, and recognised the importance of ensuring all children are supported to achieve their full potential.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Considered and endorsed the final draft Shropshire Achieving and Thriving in Education Strategy 2026-29 attached as appendix A and recommended its adoption to Council in September.

2. Referred the impact of the strategy for regular review by the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee and for this committee to receive regular reports on its implementation.

208 **Cyber Strategy Report**

The Deputy Leader presented the report which set out the Council's approach to managing cyber security risks and improving organisational resilience. Members noted that cyber security is a corporate responsibility and a key strategic risk, with the strategy focused on protecting sensitive information, safeguarding critical services and ensuring the Council can respond effectively to cyber incidents.

The strategy is structured around six priorities: secure-by-design principles, governance and assurance, protection of data and critical services, workforce capability, incident detection and recovery, and partnership working with national cyber organisations. Members were advised that the strategy aligns with recognised national cyber security frameworks and will support a risk-based approach to managing cyber threats.

Questions were raised regarding performance measures, future costs and the monitoring of cyber risks. Officers advised that detailed information regarding the Council's cyber maturity and risk profile could not be disclosed publicly for security reasons, but confirmed that the strategy would be delivered within existing budgets and that any future investment requirements would be subject to separate business cases. Members also noted that a Digital Strategy and associated delivery roadmap would provide further detail on implementation activity.

Cabinet recognised the increasing importance of cyber resilience in protecting Council services and agreed that a strategic approach was essential to support service continuity and public confidence.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approved the Cyber Strategy 2026-2030 in appendix 1, and the Plan on a Page Cyber Strategy 026-2030 in appendix 2.

2. Delegated authority to the Service Director Enabling and Head of Automation and Technology in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Transformation and Economic Growth to update the strategy annually aligned with any legislation change and best practice.

209 **Digital Strategy Report**

The Deputy Leader presented the report which set out the Council's approach to using digital technology, data, automation and modern ways of working to support service transformation, improve customer experience and contribute to long-term financial sustainability. Members noted that the strategy is focused on service redesign and organisational transformation rather than technology alone.

The strategy includes a commitment to modernising systems, improving the use of data, strengthening digital skills across the workforce and making responsible use of automation and artificial intelligence. Members were advised that digital inclusion is a key principle of the strategy, ensuring that residents who are unable or unwilling to access services digitally continue to have alternative ways of engaging with the Council.

Members highlighted the importance of digital inclusion and ensuring support remains available for vulnerable residents. Questions were raised regarding the measurement of benefits, delivery timescales and financial savings. Officers advised that a detailed Digital Roadmap would be presented separately, setting out delivery plans, priorities and expected outcomes. Members noted that the strategy provides the framework for prioritising digital investment and supporting wider transformation programmes across the Council.

Cabinet welcomed the strategy as a key enabler of organisational transformation and service improvement, recognising its role in helping the Council respond to increasing demand and financial pressures.

A request was made for officers to work with partner organisations to improve digital skills among carers, recognising the important role they play in supporting residents who are unable to use digital technology independently. In response, members noted the positive work already taking place through local libraries and community organisations to develop digital skills and support residents and carers to access services online.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Approved the Digital Strategy 2026-2030 in appendix 1, and the Plan on a Page Digital Strategy 2026-2030 in appendix 2.

2. Delegated authority to the Service Director Enabling and Head of Automation and Technology in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Transformation and Economic Growth to update the strategy annually aligned with any legislation change and best practice.

210 **Town Centre Public Space Protection Order**

The Deputy Leader introduced the report which sought the renewal of the Shrewsbury Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for a further three years. Members noted evidence showing significant reductions in incidents of alcohol-related anti-social behaviour, congregation, drug misuse, drug litter and fly-tipping since the introduction of the Order, supported by partnership working between the Council, West Mercia Police, Shrewsbury Town Council, the Business Improvement District and other organisations.

Members welcomed the positive outcomes achieved through the PSPO and the wider work of Team Shrewsbury, the Town Centre Rangers and the town centre police presence. Discussion took place regarding the potential displacement of anti-social behaviour to neighbouring areas and the importance of maintaining public awareness of reporting mechanisms and enforcement activity. Cabinet noted that incident levels had reduced significantly and that monitoring of emerging issues would continue.

Cabinet recognised the PSPO as an effective tool in supporting the management of anti-social behaviour and helping to maintain a safe and welcoming town centre environment for residents, businesses and visitors.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Agreed that the Council extend the Shrewsbury Town Centre Public Space Protection Order (No.1) 2017, as set out in Appendix A (the Order), with an effective commencement date of August 1st 2026.

2. Delegated authority to the Director Legal & Governance (MO) for holding responsibility for functions relevant to the Order (as extended).

3. Delegated authority to the Director Legal & Governance (MO) to publish and cause to be erected notices in accordance with Regulations made under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

211 **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 items.

212 **DWP Funded Connect to Work Programme - Year 1 progress**

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

213 **Date of Next Meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 14 July 2026.

Signed .... (Chairman)

Date: ....

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