Committee and Date
Cabinet
5 August 2026

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 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 Heather Kidd, Alex Wagner, Roger Evans, Andy Hall, Ruth Houghton, James Owen, Rob Wilson, David Walker and Sarah Marston

In attendance
Tanya Miles – Chief Executive, Rachel Robinson – Executive Director for Public Health, Duncan Whitfield – S151 Officer, Richard Phillips – Monitoring Officer, Kassandra Polyzoides – Interim Service Director Place Shaping, Chris Buss – Independent Advisor, Councillor Dawn Husemann – Group Leader Reform UK, Councillor Rosemary Dartnall – Group Leader Labour, Councillor Duncan Kerr – Group Leader Green & Progressive Independents, Councillor Susan Coleman – Deputising for Group Leader Conservatives, Councillor Chris Naylor, Councillor Brendan Mallon, Councillor Thomas Clayton, Councillor Charles Shackerley-Bennett, Councillor Brian Evans.

214 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Dan Thomas, substituted by Councillor Susan Coleman.

215 **Disclosable Interests**

No declarations were received.

216 **Public Question Time**

Public questions had been received from:

Jonathan Owen in relation to annual cost savings achievable if its operations were consolidated into the Shirehall. In response to a supplementary question regarding the absence of a comparative commercial appraisal of options for Shirehall and whether an independent assessment would be commissioned, Cabinet members and officers advised that the current report and the independent appendix provided relevant analysis of the available options. It was explained that the Council's financial position and oversight from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) limited the scope for further expenditure and that the information sought was not currently available.

David Kilby, Shropshire Playing Fields Association in relation to the Shropshire Unison Sports Club at Shirehall.

Phillip Scoggins in relation to the Council Chamber in Shirehall. Following a supplementary question regarding the report's stated preference for housing-led development and the potential retention and reuse of the existing buildings, Cabinet members and officers advised that no final decision had been made regarding the future use of the site. It was confirmed that the site would be marketed openly and that proposals involving retention, refurbishment, mixed-use development, healthcare uses, supported living and other options would be considered alongside housing. Members noted the requirement to secure best value for the authority and the need to consider the Council's financial circumstances when assessing future proposals.

John Crowe in relation to the sale of Shirehall. In response to a supplementary question concerning how an unrestricted marketing approach could be reconciled with references in the report to preferred future uses, Cabinet members and officers advised that any prospectus would seek to balance market interest, best consideration and wider social value outcomes. It was emphasised that the Council remained open to proposals that could deliver alternative uses or incorporate previous redevelopment ideas, provided they were viable, deliverable and consistent with the Council's statutory and financial obligations.

The full questions and responses can be found on the webpage for the meeting - Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 14th July, 2026, 10.30 am — Shropshire Council

217 **Member Question Time**

This item was considered as part of the agenda item on The Future of Shirehall.

218 **Scrutiny Items**

There were no scrutiny items.

219 **The Future of Shirehall**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance introduced the report on the future of Shirehall and outlined the recommendations before Cabinet. It was explained that the Council's financial position had changed significantly since previous decisions had been taken, with the authority now relying on Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) and facing increased scrutiny from Government regarding asset disposals and financial sustainability.

The Section 151 Officer advised that the Council had an estimated £90 million funding gap after mitigation measures and that Government expected redundant assets to be disposed of to reduce reliance on borrowing. He noted that Shirehall was costing in excess of £500,000 per year to maintain while vacant and that substantial investment would be required to bring the building back into use. He therefore recommended that the site be marketed openly, with minimal restrictions, to maximise value and secure a capital receipt.

Cabinet considered an independent review prepared by Chris Buss which examined previous options for the site, including redevelopment, joint ventures and retention. The review concluded that, given the Council's current financial circumstances, disposal of the site through an open marketing process represented the quickest route to reducing costs, generating a capital receipt and meeting Government expectations. It was noted that the proposed approach would not predetermine demolition and would allow the market to bring forward proposals for retention, refurbishment, redevelopment or mixed-use schemes.

In moving the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder for Finance emphasised that the Council was not in a position to invest further funds in the site and that decisions needed to be considered in the context of the authority's financial recovery strategy. The Deputy Leader seconded the recommendations, acknowledging the historic and community significance of Shirehall but stating that the Council could not justify investing significant sums in speculative redevelopment proposals. He highlighted that the recommendations would enable all future options for the site to remain open whilst reducing financial risk to the authority.

As agreed, Members moved to consider the two Members' questions which had been received as part of Member Question Time:

Dawn Husemann in relation to the redevelopment of Shirehall and the net zero target. In response to a supplementary question regarding how potential demolition of Shirehall could be reconciled with the Council's net zero ambitions, Cabinet members and officers stated that the carbon impact of any future scheme could only be assessed once detailed proposals were received through the marketing process. It was also noted that continued vacancy of the building carried its own environmental and financial costs, and that all discretionary spending, including carbon reduction budgets, would be subject to scrutiny as part of the Council's wider financial recovery programme.

Brendan Mallon in relation to the sale of Shirehall and the financial comparison between the 2-track approach. In response to a supplementary question regarding an immediate sale being the most effective option, Cabinet members and officers advised that joint venture arrangements would involve significant cost, risk and lengthy procurement timescales. It was noted that the proposed marketing process would remain open to development and partnership proposals from external parties, with all options assessed against best consideration and the Council's financial recovery requirements. Officers confirmed that alternative options would be considered if the marketing exercise failed to deliver an acceptable outcome.

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With permission of the Leader, each Group Leader, together with representation from the Task & Finish Group, were permitted to speak for three minutes.

Group Leaders commented on the future of Shirehall, reflecting a range of views on the building's heritage significance, its potential for regeneration and the Council's financial position. Reference was made to the work of the Task and Finish Group and the independent review, with some members expressing concern that alternative options, including joint ventures and wider redevelopment opportunities, had not been fully explored. Others highlighted the Council's reliance on Exceptional Financial Support, the absence of available capital funding, and the need to reduce financial risk and ongoing revenue costs. Cabinet members reiterated that the proposed approach would not predetermine demolition, would allow all options to come forward through the market, and represented the most realistic course of action in light of the authority's financial circumstances.

With permission of the Leader, elected members were permitted to speak for three minutes.

Members sought reassurance that alternative options, including joint venture arrangements and potential redevelopment opportunities, would continue to be explored alongside the proposed marketing exercise.

In response, officers advised that the marketing process would be open to a wide range of proposals and would help establish the level of market interest in the site. Members also raised issues relating to the history of decisions concerning Shirehall, the Council's financial position, organisational capacity, and the heritage value of the building. Cabinet members and officers reiterated that the Council was unable to fund redevelopment itself and that progressing to market represented the most practical way of reducing financial risk while maintaining flexibility for future proposals.

Cabinet members thanked the members of the public and other elected members for their input into the debate.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. Noted the Financial Sustainability and Recovery Strategy contained within the MTFP reported to Cabinet on 8 July 2026, and especially the priorities in respect of asset disposals during the period of financial recovery;

2. Noted the current valuations (RBVs) for the Shirehall site set out at paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7 and in Table 1;

3. Agreed to take steps to move urgently and in principle to the marketing for sale and disposal of the site with minimum conditions attached;

4. Delegated authority to the Service Director – Place Shaping, in consultation with the s151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, to take the necessary steps to implement this decision, including preparation of a marketing prospectus for presentation to Cabinet for agreement in the Autumn;

5. Noted that the marketing prospectus will confirm the preference for the site to be utilised for Housing development including both private and affordable, subject to planning consent, whilst achieving the earliest and optimum return to the Council;

6. Noted that the marketing prospectus will refer to the additional preferences identified by Council in December 2025, namely (sic) to pursue the development for mixed use incorporating healthcare, affordable supported living and commercial as well as residential units but these will be guides and not imperatives as part of any proposal;

7. Noted that the marketing prospectus will be published together with evaluation criteria to guide Cabinet in the selection of a preferred developer.

8. Noted that development proposals including sale values will be invited for evaluation by the Director of Place Shaping from any interested party or parties, including joint ventures;

9. Noted that the Council’s stated preference, to be set out in the marketing prospectus will be for the selected developer to commit to both obtaining planning consent and demolition or refurbishment of the building as part of the developer’s proposal;

10. Noted that a further update report including the draft prospectus for sale will be provided to Cabinet by Officers in the Autumn;

11. Noted that Officers will make all efforts to minimise the current running costs of the Shirehall site while appropriate levels of security and completing the vacation of the building to enable vacant possession of the site;

12. Noted that a separate report on the future options for the Shirehall Overspill car park site will be presented to Cabinet in September 2026; and

13. Noted that any proceeds from the sale will be prioritised to reduce the Council’s need for Exceptional Financial Support (‘EFS’).

220 **Date of Next Meeting**

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 5 August 2026.

Signed .... (Chairman)

Date: ....