



Committee and Date

Housing Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

23rd September 2026

HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2026

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

2.00 - 3.40 pm

Responsible Officer: Shelley Davies

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Present

Councillor Andy Davis (Chairman)

Councillors Rosemary Dartnall (Vice Chairman), Jeremy Blandford, Christopher Lemon,
Nigel Lumby, Vicky Moore, Vivienne Parry (remotely), Jon Tandy and Teri Trickett

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Roger Evans - Portfolio Holder for Finance (remotely)

Dawn Husemann – Group Leader (remotely)

Councillor James Owen – Portfolio Holder for Housing

Councillor David Walker – Portfolio Holder for Planning (remotely)

Councillor Alex Wagner - Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Transformation and
Economic Growth

Officers in Attendance:

Claire Braddock – Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Tom Dodds - Strategy and Scrutiny Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer (remotely)

Laura Fisher - Head of Service - Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living

Paula Mawson - Service Director Communities & Customer

Kassandra Polyzoides - Service Director – Place Shaping (remotely)

Edward West – Planned Policy & Strategy Manager

4 Apologies for Absence

None received.

5 Disclosable Interests

None received.

6 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th May 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record.

7 Housing Supervisory Board - Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Housing Supervisory Board meetings held on 19th & 25th March 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record.

8 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

9 Member Questions

There were no member questions.

10 Local Plan

Edward West, Planning Policy and Strategy Manager, provided an overview of progress on the new Shropshire Local Plan. He explained that the Council was currently undertaking an early engagement exercise to gather views on the future vision for Shropshire, the outcomes the plan should achieve, planning policies, evidence requirements and how housing, employment and other development needs should be delivered. It was emphasised that the Council was currently seeking views and evidence rather than consulting on specific development sites or growth options.

The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager explained that the new national planning system introduces a series of gateway assessments designed to keep plan-making on schedule and ensure that plans were scrutinised by Planning Inspectors at key stages before submission for examination. Public consultation on a draft plan, including housing numbers, settlement growth and preferred development sites, was expected in spring 2027, with adoption anticipated in 2029. It was stressed that the Local Plan was not solely about housing and would also consider employment, transport, infrastructure, environmental matters and wider community needs.

In discussion, members considered how scrutiny should engage with the Local Plan process. It was suggested that the Committee should receive updates before key gateway assessments so that members would have an opportunity to comment on proposals and influence the process. The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager agreed that the gateway stages would provide useful milestones for Scrutiny involvement and the Chairman proposed that updates be incorporated into the Committee's work programme.

Questions were raised regarding the relationship between the Local Plan and other strategic documents, particularly the Local Transport Plan. Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that housing growth, transport infrastructure, employment opportunities and economic development were planned together. In response, the Planning Policy and Strategy Manager advised that Government guidance expects

the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan to align and confirmed that the timing of both processes provided a valuable opportunity to ensure they inform one another. He also confirmed that the Local Plan would consider employment land and wider economic needs, not just housing requirements.

Councillor David Walker, Portfolio Holder for Planning reinforced the importance of joined-up planning, recognising that a number of major strategies, including the Local Plan, Local Transport Plan and other key policy documents, were being developed at the same time which provided a valuable opportunity to produce a more integrated strategy than had been possible previously. He advised that Scrutiny would have opportunities to examine the evidence gathered during the plan-making process and highlighted that the Local Plan must respond not only to national housing targets but also to the differing needs of communities across the county.

Members also asked whether agriculture and rural development would be considered through the Local Plan. It was explained that previous plans had contained policies supporting rural businesses and agricultural development and anticipated that similar policies would be included within the new plan. He added that agricultural land quality would form part of the site assessment process when potential development locations were evaluated.

The Chairman sought clarification on how the current consultation had been promoted. The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager reported that the Council had issued press releases, undertaken a series of drop-in events across the county, attended libraries, worked through area committees and contacted community groups, town councils and parish councils. He confirmed that information had previously been circulated to all members and agreed that the consultation link could be shared again to encourage wider participation.

Members expressed concerns regarding maps published on the Council's website showing land submitted through the call-for-sites process and asked whether residents could comment on those locations. The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager clarified that these sites were not proposals or decisions made by the Council but simply land submitted by landowners for consideration. He advised that while comments received at the current stage would be considered, the formal opportunity for residents to comment on potential allocations would arise during consultation on the draft plan in 2027, when the Council identifies its preferred options.

Further discussion focused on housing needs within local communities. Members highlighted concerns regarding the availability of affordable homes, accommodation for younger people, the need for more bungalows for older residents and the importance of supporting rural communities to retain local families. Concerns were also expressed about ensuring communities were involved in shaping proposals before decisions become fixed. The Planning Policy and Strategy Manager reiterated that no decisions had yet been made on any sites and that early engagement was intended to ensure local communities could help shape the plan before draft proposals were produced.

Recommended:

It was agreed that the Local Plan should return to the Committee at key gateway stages and before major consultations and decision points, with the process incorporated into the Committee's future work programme.

11 Social Housing Regulator

Paula Mawson, Service Director for Communities and Customer, and Laura Fisher, Head of Housing, Resettlement and Independent Living, provided an overview of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the strengthened regulatory framework for social housing providers. Members were advised that the updated framework placed greater emphasis on tenant safety, housing quality, tenant voice, accountability and compliance and that as a registered social housing provider Shropshire Council would now be subject to inspection by the Regulator of Social Housing. Officers emphasised that although STAR Housing manages the Council's housing stock on a day-to-day basis, it is Shropshire Council itself that will be inspected and held accountable for compliance with regulatory standards.

The Social Housing Regulator's key objectives were outlined by officers and members were informed that inspections focus on four principal themes: safety and quality, transparency and accountability, neighbourhoods and communities, and tenancy services. It was explained that inspections were generally expected to take place every four years, although the timing can vary according to risks identified by the regulator or concerns raised through self-referral and performance monitoring. Officers added that landlords must be able to demonstrate compliance through robust evidence rather than relying solely on policies or assurances with particular importance placed on tenant satisfaction, health and safety compliance, repairs performance and the quality of engagement with tenants.

During discussion, the Chairman sought clarification regarding the relationship between the Council and STAR Housing, questioning how the Council could be inspected when STAR Housing was responsible for day-to-day management. Officers explained that the Council remains the registered provider and is therefore accountable for ensuring effective governance, oversight and performance management. While STAR Housing would inevitably be involved in any inspection process, the regulator would hold the Council responsible for demonstrating that appropriate monitoring and assurance arrangements were in place and that tenants were receiving the required standards of service.

The Chairman further asked how the Council monitored standards in areas such as neighbourhood management, antisocial behaviour and community engagement. Officers explained that several mechanisms were used, including tenant satisfaction measures, performance indicators, complaint monitoring, safeguarding arrangements and direct oversight of complex housing cases. A newly established Council post would also provide additional monitoring and assurance, particularly in relation to vulnerable tenants and complex tenancy management issues. Information from tenants, performance reports and partnership working would all contribute to the Council's assessment of service quality and compliance.

Members asked whether the regulator would deal directly with STAR Housing during inspections. Officers advised that the regulator had been clear that its primary engagement would be with Shropshire Council as the registered provider. However, STAR Housing would be fully involved in supporting the inspection process, providing evidence and demonstrating how services are delivered on behalf of the Council. Officers added that Scrutiny itself forms an important part of the regulatory framework, and inspectors may review Committee activity, consider how members challenge officers and assess whether Scrutiny arrangements provide effective accountability.

Clarification was sought by members regarding the inspection regime itself, including who carried out inspections and how often they occurred. Officers confirmed that inspections were undertaken by the Regulator of Social Housing and explained that providers were expected to complete annual self-assessments against the regulatory standards. These self-assessments were shared with the Regulator and help to determine whether any concerns require further investigation. Officers noted that if significant issues were identified internally, the Council would be expected to self-refer these concerns rather than waiting for a formal inspection. Depending on the circumstances, the Regulator could choose to undertake an inspection outside the normal four-year cycle.

Members recognised the potential role of the Committee in supporting the Council's regulatory responsibilities. It was noted that Scrutiny could provide an additional level of assurance by reviewing compliance, performance and tenant outcomes. The Committee was advised of STAR Housing's annual tenant engagement exercise, The Big Check In, during which members would have an opportunity to accompany officers from STAR and the Council and speak directly with tenants about their experience of housing services if they wished to take part.

Recommended:

Members welcomed the update and agreed that Social Housing Regulator, tenant satisfaction and compliance monitoring should continue to feature within the Committee's future work programme, and it was noted that a further update would be presented at the November meeting.

12 Work Programme

Claire Braddock, Overview & Scrutiny Officer noted that the draft work programme circulated had been developed following the work programming session held earlier in June. Members were advised that the programme remained flexible and member-led and that the listed items represented the key areas identified for the Committee over the coming year. The Overview and Scrutiny Officer outlined the proposed programme and emphasised that it could be amended as priorities emerged and that members were encouraged to influence both the subjects considered and the information provided within reports.

Members highlighted particular areas they wished future reports to address. One member stated that they would be especially interested in understanding financial performance and risk exposure. The Chairman agreed that, given the Council's financial position, Scrutiny should ensure that financial sustainability and risk management were considered in all relevant reports and invited members to submit further detailed questions for incorporation into future agendas.

A discussion also took place regarding Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 funding. Members were advised that work had recently been undertaken to review the operation of CIL and that recommendations from a task and finish review had been accepted. Officers explained that proposals for a revised approach to administering and allocating CIL funding were being prepared and would provide greater transparency and democratic oversight. It was anticipated that by the November meeting there would be an opportunity for the Committee to scrutinise both the new arrangements and the effectiveness of funding already allocated. Members noted the importance of understanding where developer contributions had been spent, what outcomes had been achieved and where delivery challenges remained. Officers suggested that CIL and Section 106 monitoring could become a regular feature of the Committee's work programme.

Members also referred back to the earlier Local Plan discussion and agreed that Scrutiny updates should be scheduled at key gateway stages to ensure that the Committee remained involved before major decisions were taken. The Chairman confirmed that this item would be incorporated into the work programme and that flexibility would be maintained to reflect changing priorities and emerging issues.

Recommended:

It was agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair should have delegated authority to develop the work programme and establish task and finish groups between meetings where necessary, whilst ensuring that all members remained informed of any work undertaken.

13 Exclusion of the Public and Press

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 during consideration of the following items.

14 Housing Supervisory Board - Exempt Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the Housing Supervisory Board meetings held on 19th & 25th March 2026 be approved as a true record.

15 Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Meeting will be held at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday 23rd September 2026.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: