Economy and Environment and Overview Scrutiny Committee Recommendations

Scrutiny topics and officer responses

Update – Oct 2026

CONTENTS

1 Introduction 1

2 Scrutiny topics and officer responses. 1

Recommendation 1: Highways Performance Framework 1

Recommendation 2: Improved Member Transparency and Communication 1

Recommendation 3: Increased Community Involvement through Town and Parish Councils 2

Recommendation 4: Active Travel Considerations within Highway Inspections 3

Recommendation 5: Resident Communication of Highway Repair Priorities 3

Recommendation 6: Long-Term Asset Management Approach 4

3 Delivery and Assurance 4

1 Introduction

On the 1st September 2026 the Economy and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Review of Highways Maintenance Strategy and Highways Inspection Policy and made the following recommendations to Cabinet relating to performance measurement, transparency, community engagement, active travel, inspection processes, communication and long-term asset management

2 Scrutiny topics and officer responses.

Recommendation 1: Highways Performance Framework

Members highlighted the need to demonstrate success and provide assurance that investment and resources are delivering improved outcomes for residents and recommended that the revised Highways Maintenance Strategy includes a clear performance framework with measurable outcomes.

Whilst acknowledging that the strategy says what the council intends to do, it does not include information around what success looks like. Members would like detail on what measurable outcomes can be expected over the next three years and how scrutiny will be able to hold the service to account.

Including information on:

- What are the measures to show successful outcomes?
- What does good look like?
- Members would also like to work with officers to determine what measures they would like to see included?
- What is meaningful for Members and for their communities, and how to track them.

Officer Response:

Officers accept this recommendation. Existing highways performance measures will be consolidated into a clearer framework linking investment and maintenance activity to changes in network condition and resident outcomes. Measures should draw on the Council's existing information on network condition, defects, planned maintenance activity, customer feedback and highway claims. Members will be invited to identify any additional measures that would provide meaningful assurance to communities and Scrutiny. The detailed measures, reporting frequency and implementation arrangements will be confirmed through the supporting action plan.

Recommendation 2: Improved Member Transparency and Communication

Members expressed concerns that existing dates and performance information do not always appear to reflect activity on the ground, and recommended that the information available to Members regarding reported highways defects and repairs, ensures that:

- Target completion dates are meaningful and realistic
- Progress updates are clearly communicated
- Delays and backlogs are visible
- Performance information is available through an accessible dashboard where possible.

Officer Response:

Officers accept the principle of improved transparency. The consolidated performance framework will support clearer reporting to Members on highway condition, maintenance activity and delivery. The Council will review how planned activity, progress, delays and backlogs can be presented in a meaningful and accessible form, including the scope for dashboard reporting where appropriate. Any commitment to new reporting will be aligned with available data, systems and service capacity.

Recommendation 3: Increased Community Involvement through Town and Parish Councils

Members identified opportunities to utilise local knowledge and build on learning from existing pilot projects. They recommended stronger engagement with Town and Parish councils, and local communities in identifying local priorities and enabling greater proactive Town and Parish council involvement, supported by:

- Clear governance arrangements
- Suitable training
- Insurance and safety requirements
- Defined roles and responsibilities
- Developing a clear understanding of how Town and Parish Councils like to be engaged with

Developing a communication / consultation strategy that allows Town and Parish Councils to work alongside Shropshire in the decision-making process, allowing Highways to make better use of local knowledge and intelligence, supporting town and parish councils in what they can do for themselves by enabling processes and unblocking any blockers.

Officer Response:

Officers accept this recommendation. The Council will build on existing community-based approaches, including learning from the Parish Road Warden model, to strengthen local involvement in identifying priorities and supporting appropriate low risk maintenance activity. Any expansion will require clearly defined roles, responsibilities and scope, together with suitable governance, competence checks, training, insurance, safe systems of work and ongoing Council oversight. Local intelligence will complement, rather than replace, the Council's risk-based inspection and maintenance responsibilities. Subject to the agreed scope and controls, community reporting may also help identify emerging issues on lower-use rural routes between scheduled inspections.

Recommendation 4: Active Travel Considerations within Highway Inspections

Members questioned whether current inspection approaches sufficiently capture issues affecting cyclists using the wider highway network and recommended that the revised inspection policy explicitly considers the needs of cyclists and other active travel users, including whether inspection methods adequately identify defects experienced by users of the highway network beyond dedicated cycleways. Utilising the opportunity to inspect the carriageway by bicycle.

Officer Response:

Officers partially accept this recommendation. The revised Highway Safety Inspection Manual already strengthens the consideration of risks affecting cyclists. The Council will keep inspection methods under review to ensure they adequately identify risks experienced by cyclists and other active-travel users. Routine inspection by bicycle is not proposed at this stage. Many cycleways run alongside footways already fully inspected on foot; where that is not the case, inspection regimes will be reviewed. Inspection data and public service requests will also be used to develop footway asset management strategies, identify recurring accessibility barriers and prioritise improvements for wheelchair users, people using buggies and other footway users. This will link inspection findings and reported concerns to planned investment aligned with the Local Transport Plan's (LTP) active travel objectives, subject to risk assessments and available funding.

Recommendation 5: Resident Communication of Highway Repair Priorities

The committee discussed the importance of managing expectations and increasing public understanding of how highways maintenance decisions are made and recommended that the Council improves public communication regarding highway repair priorities, timescales and decision-making criteria so that residents better understand:

- How defects are assessed
- Why some repairs are prioritised over others
- Expected response times
- The impact of exceptional weather events and resource pressures on delivery

Officer Response:

Officers accept this recommendation. Resident facing information will be reviewed so that it explains more clearly how defects are assessed through the risk based inspection policy, why apparently similar defects can receive different responses, how location, network use and risk influence prioritisation, and what residents should expect after reporting a defect. Communications will distinguish an immediate safety intervention from lower-priority or planned maintenance and explain how exceptional weather and resource pressures may affect delivery. The explanation will be aligned with the approved inspection policy and will avoid implying that every observed defect requires the same treatment or response.

Recommendation 6: Long-Term Asset Management Approach

That the revised Highways Maintenance Strategy places greater emphasis on preventative maintenance and long-term asset management, helping to reduce future deterioration and improve network resilience.

Officers advised that the strategy refresh is intended to align with current priorities, best practice and Department for Transport funding requirements.

Officer Response:

Officers accept this recommendation. The Asset Management Strategy supports evidence led, preventative and whole life approach, balancing reactive safety interventions with planned maintenance intended to slow deterioration and improve network resilience. Where it is safe and appropriate, coordinating lower level interventions with a future planned treatment may provide a more sustainable outcome than repeated reactive repair. Local engagement can also help identify important community routes, drainage concerns and supporting maintenance that may protect future resurfacing or repair investment.

3 Delivery and Assurance

The proposed responses will be translated into a supporting action plan identifying confirmed owners, target dates, dependencies and reporting arrangements. Where implementation depends on additional systems, analytical capacity, workforce resource or funding, the dependency will be recorded and considered through the relevant Highways and Transport transformation and budget governance arrangements. Progress will be reported through the performance management arrangements described in the Strategy.