

Sept 2026

OVERVIEW

I hope you've all had a great summer and managed to get some quality time in the sunshine. This summer hasn't been a typical summer at the council as everybody continues to work at rapid pace to address the challenges outlined in the Best Value Notice as well as our continued effort to restructure the council to ensure financial stability and making a council fit for the future. I feel its worth sharing a note from CEO Tanya Miles from her latest whole staff update: *"Alongside delivering more than 800 services to our residents every day, we are managing significant financial challenges, operating under increased external scrutiny and driving one of the biggest transformation programmes this organisation has ever undertaken. At the same time, the needs of our communities do not pause, and neither do the expectations placed upon us. That is a significant responsibility for all of us to carry. It can feel relentless and, at times, overwhelming."*

It was great to meet Cathy at The Chatterbox in Market Drayton to have a look around this new facility to support children with mental health and social challenges. Cathy already supports children at both Cheswardine & Hinstock Primary Schools and I wish her all the best of luck with this new venture.

On the 18th August the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) published its External Assurance Review of Shropshire Council. It's an important report because it provides an independent assessment of both how the Council reached its current financial position and the significant work now underway to put Shropshire Council on a more sustainable footing.

There has understandably been a lot of political debate about the Council's finances over recent months. This review provides some important context about the financial decisions and management practices overseen by the previous administration and the scale of the challenge inherited by the Liberal Democrats in May 2025.

Among its findings, CIPFA states: "The financial pressures facing Shropshire Council are due to significant increases in net expenditure and a lack of adequate financial management in the past, as well as the legacy impact of freezes in council tax between 2010 and 2016."

It also found: "[The] review, conducted in April 2025, established that budgets lacked realism and the council's reserves were steadily eroded to pay for the consequent continued overspends." And: "Past savings targets were ambitious, but they were not backed up by any realistic delivery plans and thus regularly fell significantly short."

The report also highlights the consequences of the 2024/25 workforce restructure, which removed 217 posts: "The heavy reliance on voluntary redundancies led to a loss of experience and capability in business-critical areas of the council..." These are significant findings and help explain why the financial challenges facing the Council cannot simply be resolved overnight.

However, this report shouldn't just be about looking backwards. CIPFA also recognises the important changes that have been made since the change of administration and sets out recommendations for continuing that improvement. Work is already underway to strengthen financial management, governance and leadership, rebuild capacity and establish a much more realistic understanding of the Council's financial position.

There is still a considerable amount of work to do and some extremely difficult decisions ahead as we prepare the budget for 2027/28. Being clear about what we inherited doesn't remove our responsibility for dealing with it and that is exactly what we are doing.

For me, the important thing is that residents are given an honest picture: how we got here, where we are now, and the work being undertaken to secure the future of the Council and the services people rely upon. I would encourage anyone interested to read the independent report for themselves:

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shropshire-council-external-assurance-review-2026-27?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Summary of my meetings during August:

06/08/2026 – The Chatterbox | Market Drayton - Discuss children's mental health.

06/08/2026 – Licensing Training | Guildhall

07/08/2026 – All About Youth Community Day | Monkmoor

10/08/2026 – HOSC One-to-One Meeting | Guildhall

10/08/2026 – All About You Trustee Meeting | Monkmoor

18/08/2026 – Northern Planning Committee | Guildhall

19/08/2026 – Joint Sutton Upon Tern & Stoke Upon Tern Meeting | Stoke upon Tern Parish Hall

CASEWORK

Casework	Issue Raised / Portfolio	Actions
Ollerton Business Park, Childs Ercall	PLANNING: Various planning applications have been passed yet conditions not met (esp highways)	- NB Has been in contact with council legal team. - Email sent to Emma Green for updates - none received. - Legal team still processing the planning notice appeal refusal for change of condition.
23/03138/FUL Mixed 28 Residential Dwellings Childs Ercall	PLANNING: This has gone to 'recommendations/committee'	(23/03/26) I have emailed Andrew Huntley (new case officer) to ask for an update - awaiting response. (31/08/26) Still waiting.
25/03608/FUL Chicken Egg Production Caynton	PLANNING: This is still at 'recommendations/committee'	(31/08/26) Updated residents with changes to the NPPF which will have an effect on the decision process.
26/01212/FUL 25 dwellings Childs Ercall	Proposal of 25 dwellings just off Eaton Road	- Listened to the views of many residents at the CEPC. - NB: written a formal letter of objection to the case officer and completed a 'call-in' form.
Dodecote Drive Childs Ercall	HIGHWAYS: ongoing	Highways have instructed a technician to visit the road and to address current potholes.
Eaton Road Childs Ercall	HIGHWAYS: ongoing	(10/06/26) Road assessment map shared with CEPC, awaiting work.

PARISH COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

Here are questions posed by parish councillors across the division and updates/answers at present.

Question	Answer / Outcomes
Has Shropshire Council undertaken any formal assessment of the likely impact on parish precepts where services or assets are devolved to parish and town councils, and if so, would it be possible to share this?	I am not aware of a county-wide formal assessment as any devolved services will be on a case-by-case basis and of various sizes and commitments across the county. In most instances, I would anticipate the impact to be an increase in the precept of the PC/TC but once again, that decision is for the local members to decide depending on their own financial position and the level of commitment they wish to make.
Beyond Street Scene services, is there a list of services and assets currently being considered for transfer or devolution to parish and town councils?	I am still chasing a 'minimum service list' to really make this clear but as with the MOU exercise, it really is up to the individual PC/TC which additional services they might want to take on. For example, Shrewsbury TC has completely taken over all streetscene services including road sweeping and have invested in a number of pieces of equipment and staff. My understanding is that some TC/PC's are having active conversations to take control of services such as libraries and youth centres. As for Cheswardine, I am not aware of any major asset or service that could be taken over by the PC. It maybe worth considering the implication of taking over street furniture cleaning and possibly grit bin maintenance as an example.
Where funding is transferred alongside services, is there any guarantee or protection for that funding in future years, or would this be subject to annual review?	I believe this would just fall as part of a natural contractual review. I would expect this only to affect those considerable contracts such as Shrewsbury's roadsweeping for example.
Whilst I appreciate your comments regarding the use of the term "double taxation", are there any specific measures being considered to mitigate the financial impact on residents where parish councils choose to take on services that were previously delivered by Shropshire Council?	This is a bit of a grey area and I will seek additional clarification. I would not expect Shropshire Council to refuse a request from a PC/TC solely based on a potential double taxation as that decision is for the local members to discuss and vote. There are many instances where services could be executed by a TC/PC that would require no additional precept increase but would still contribute to a financial saving for Shropshire Council. For example, Cheswardine PC has already set a nominal budget for 'signage'. If all of that figure was unlikely to be used within this financial year, members may consider using unspent monies on replacing any damaged highways signs. I will just reiterate that despite the term 'cuts to services', Shropshire Council will still deliver all of its statutory obligations - this is a legal requirement. The cuts we face will be to the 'additional' services that, yes, residents enjoy but are not specifically required. Our appeal to PC/TC will be to help us maintain the standards (and improve) that we all have come accustomed for the benefit of all residents.
Are there any further plans for Shropshire Council to use accommodation at the Four Alls to house homeless people? If so, could this be extended to any other groups such as Asylum Seekers?	(31/07/26) Response from Head of Housing: I can confirm that Shropshire Council no longer uses the Four All Pub in regard to the housing of homeless households. This is in part because we now have a number of in house temporary accommodation schemes. I acknowledge the concerns raised regarding possible use of the property and understand that residents may wish to understand any changes affecting properties in their area. However, responsibility for the accommodation of asylum seekers rests with the Home Office rather than with local authorities. The Home Office is the decision maker in relation to property use and is the

	data owner for information in relation to this. The Council is therefore unable to confirm or disclose information about a particular address. If constituents have any enquiries regarding accommodation they believe is being or may be used for asylum dispersal this needs referring through to the Home Office - the email for Home Office FOI requests is: foirequests@homeoffice.gov.uk
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