

Oct 2026

OVERVIEW

September has flown by, and autumn is clearly beginning to show. I would encourage parish councils to carry out a winter audit of things like grit bins and street lights. Please let me know if anything needs attention.

I spent a good part of September dealing with planning issues. I have emailed all clerks with an update on the Planning Delegation of Authority rules, which come into effect on 31 October 2026. I have copied that update at the end of this report, and more detailed information about the changes will be circulated to clerks shortly.

The council has undergone a three-week inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) of our adult social care provision. I was interviewed by the CQC team in my role as scrutiny vice-chair. It will be several weeks before we receive the full report, but I want to recognise the hard work council officers put in over the summer to prepare for the inspection. There has been a significant positive change in the council's culture, and I am confident this will be recognised in the report's findings.

Thank you to the organisers of the Cheswardine annual Fruit & Veg Show, who kindly invited me to be the auctioneer at The Red Lion on 5 September. Just over £1,400 was raised for Severn Hospice. It was also lovely to support Cheswardine Youth Club at their coffee and cake fundraiser for Macmillan on 24 September. A big well done to all the young people involved and, of course, to their wonderful leaders.

Full Council met on 24 September, and you can find the [full agenda here](#). At the meeting, the council approved the new senior management structure and appointments. Some very experienced leaders will soon be joining us to help shape the council's future. We have not yet appointed a permanent Section 151 officer, but our interim officer, Duncan Whitfield, has agreed to stay in post for a further 12 months. This is very much welcomed by the administration.

FINANCE UPDATE:

A year ago, we were discussing whether Shropshire Council could remain financially viable. Today, we are discussing how quickly we can reduce our dependence on Government support. Here are a few current updates for residents:

- Our projected requirement for Exceptional Financial Support has reduced from £121 million to £90 million.
- General Fund reserves are forecast to reach £15 million by March 2027, an important step in rebuilding the Council's financial resilience.
- The Quarter 1 position forecasts a £2.291 million underspend against the General Fund budget.
- £5.238 million of savings are forecast to be delivered, nearly 105% of this year's £5 million target.

This is particularly significant because, for too long, savings were identified on paper but not delivered in practice. More realistic budgeting, stronger monitoring and greater accountability are now helping us identify financial issues earlier and take action.

Summary of my (public) meetings during September

02/09/2026 — Pre-meeting ahead of CQC Inspection | Teams

02/09/2026 — Shropshire Youth Partnership Board Founding Trustees Meeting | Zoom

08/09/2026 — CQC Interview | Guildhall

21/09/2026 — Liberal Democrat Group Meeting | Teams

22/09/2026 — Northern Planning Committee | Guildhall

22/09/2026 — AAY Trust Board | Shrewsbury

24/09/2026 — Full Council | Guildhall

24/09/2026 — Telford & Wrekin Lib Dem Executive Meeting | Google Meet

CASEWORK

Casework	Issue Raised / Portfolio	Actions
Speeding in Soudley	HIGHWAYS/POLICE	NB to liaise with highways engineers and police for recommendations.
Benbows Close Childs Ercall	PLANNING	(24/09/26) NB emailed senior planning officer for clarification regarding delegated authority for 'Technical Applications'.
Lottery Grant Cheswardine	Playground	(19/09/26) NB emailed Kompan for updated quotes
A41 Cluvert Shakeford	HIGHWAYS	(02/09/26) NB raised internal enquiry - awaiting response.
A41 Speed Camera Update	HIGHWAYS	Update from Simon D'Vali: Plans currently being reviewed by the Police.
Highways Mirror Little Soudley	HIGHWAYS	Update received from highways engineers suggesting that funding of this additional asset would ideally be sought from the parish council as this is a paid service. The current cost is £1,300 and would need DfT approval.

PARISH COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

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

Question	Answer / Outcomes
Is Child's Ercall Hall registered on the Market Drayton Place Plan?	(24/09/26) NB raised an internal enquiry for clarification.
Could parish council's register designated vehicles to be given authority at recycling centres?	I have raised this idea with the portfolio holder for discussion and investigation.

PLANNING: Delegation of Authority Update

Cllr Neil Bentley – Liberal Democrat Councillor Cheswardine Division

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Updated: 28/09/26

*From **31st October 2026**, a new national Scheme of Delegation will apply. One significant consequence is that the existing arrangements which allow local members to request that planning applications are **“called in” to committee will no longer be available** - this also applies to all historical applications where I have requested call-in but hasn't yet made it to committee.*

*The changes will also affect the role of Parish and Town Councils. At present, where a Parish Council takes a view contrary to the planning officer's recommendation, there is a mechanism through which the application can be considered for referral to committee. Under the new system, certain smaller applications will have to be determined by officers, while other applications will only be referred to committee where they raise **a significant local economic, social or environmental issue, or a significant planning matter**, and the designated senior planning officer and Planning Committee Chair member agree that referral is appropriate.*

If they do not agree then the senior planning officer has the power to decide which applications are referred for committee consideration, otherwise a decision will be made under delegated authority.

This does not mean that the views of Parish Councils or local members cease to matter, but the mechanism by which those views can lead to committee consideration is changing.

I will keep you updated as the new Shropshire arrangements become clearer. The council will be circulating further detailed information about these changes shortly.

The next (and final) Northern Planning Committee under the current scheme is scheduled for 20th October.