

# March 2026

## OVERVIEW

February has been a particularly busy month, with several longstanding pieces of casework finally moving toward resolution. The variety of these issues has continued to expose gaps in staffing and structure within the council. Although this remains frustrating, it also reflects the challenging situation inherited by the administration ten months ago. As a result, the workload has effectively doubled – not only in resolving matters for residents, but also in highlighting and proposing ways to address the significant systemic shortcomings within the council. These conclusions are presented constantly to the Improvement Board as we look to find solutions that benefit us all.

The council are pleased to welcome Duncan Whitfield as the Interim Chief Financial Section 151 Officer following the departure of James Walton at the end of January. Duncan has been working closely with the administration, leadership and government to get the council's finances on a firmer footing. Duncan was also available during the full council meeting to answer (non-political) questions from all members around the EFS and our finances. This is something that has never been asked of the previous financial director but the Lib Dems have always said we would be open and transparent so we are introducing new practices to the council.

The government approved our two EFS applications on 23rd February. The in-year settlement for 2025/26 is £71m, and due to the 8.99% council tax rise for 2026/27, the total EFS support rises to £121m. This will save the council £880,000 per year in interest payments compared with the original request of £130m. This funding is a loan, not a bail-out, and will need to be repaid. However, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has been impressed with the steps already taken to improve the council's financial position and will continue to monitor progress closely.

This money will only be drawn down if required so the council will still continue to make efficiency savings where possible. The administration is realistic however about investing in people and resources to raise vital income. I have also included some slides at the end of this report for statistical comparison purposes.

This is not a position we want to be in, but it is a necessary to secure the future of Shropshire Council. We are all aware that the approved 8.99% council tax increase will put a considerable strain on residents and would like to assure them that options are available for those in need including our Crisis Resilience Fund. Residents should visit [www.shropshire.gov.uk/counciltaxassistance](http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/counciltaxassistance) for initial guidance. We would also like to remind those who pay council tax over 10 months that they can change this to 12 months at no additional cost.

In other news, I have been made trustee of three additional charities this month; Rosalie Inskip Music Trust (1029180), Jubilee Trust (507107) and the Priory Education Trust (528396). I look forward to contributing to these charities alongside my other three charities – all of which are for the benefit of the residents of Shropshire.

## Summary of my meetings during February:

(09/02/26) Full Local Governing Board Meeting | Goldstone Federation Schools

(16/02/26) Portfolio Meeting | Microsoft Teams

(22/02/26) Liberal Democrat Shropshire Cllrs Meeting | TEAMS

(23/02/26) SYA meeting | The New Lodge, Shrewsbury

(25/02/26) 1:1 with Deputy Council Leader Cllr Alex Wagner | Teams

(26/02/26) Full Council | Guildhall ([Agenda for Council on Thursday, 26th February, 2026, 10.00 am – Shropshire Council](#))

## CASEWORK

Casework	Issue Raised / Portfolio	Actions
Ollerton Business Park, Childs Ercall	PLANNING: Various planning applications have been passed yet conditions not met (esp highways)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="mailto:planningenforcement@shropshire.gov.uk">planningenforcement@shropshire.gov.uk</a> can be used to report any breaches of planning.</li> <li>(05/01/26) I am still chasing updates on this one.</li> <li>(29/01/26) Emailed Emma Green for any updates.</li> </ul>
Speed Testing / Signage   Childs Ercall	PCC John Campion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(29/01/26) No contact received.</li> <li>(25/02/26) A site meeting has been arranged for 24<sup>th</sup> March (PM) with Dept PCC Tracey Onslow.</li> </ul>
23/03138/FUL Mixed 28 Residential Dwellings   Childs Ercall	PLANNING: This has gone to 'recommendations/committee'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(01/09/25) Email received from case officer to confirm the current position of this application (updates available on the planning portal).</li> <li>(21/09/25) Request for this to be called-in to the Northern Planning Committee.</li> <li>(29/01/26) No update.</li> </ul>
25/03608/FUL Chicken Egg Production   Caynton	PLANNING: This is still at 'recommendations/committee'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(29/01/26) This is likely to go to committee but I am waiting confirmation. I have spoken to the local action group.</li> </ul>
Edwards Transport Felling of Conifer Trees	PLANNING: 20/05255/FUL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal investigation launched.</li> <li>(27/02/26) Martin Sutton: "If my interpretation of the approved plan is correct, my assessment is that the tree felling would be in accordance with the planning permission, if removal of the mature hedging was necessary to install the acoustic barrier. As such, there would be no case to answer. However, I would defer to colleagues within Planning Enforcement (Dave Sambrook copied in) for a definitive answer on that point.</li> <li>Compensatory tree planting is going to be suggested however this isn't enforceable.</li> <li>Residents contacted.</li> </ul>
Artificial 'Lake' Cheswardine	Off Westcott Lane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(28/01/26) I have requested that SC Legal write to the landowner for a response.</li> <li>(16/02/26) Confirmation that the resident has been contacted.</li> </ul>
Dog & Waste Bins	Market Drayton Golf Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication received from the golf club.</li> <li>SC Response: StreetScene (who are the only service that deals with public waste bins) will</li> </ul>

		not supply or service a bin [here] and that the Outdoor Partnerships Service do not have any bins on the public rights of way network.
Dodecote Drive   Condition of Road	HIGHWAYS: ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (18/02/26) NB conducted a site visit.</li> <li>• Requested to highways to produce some costings for options.</li> <li>• Spoken to the portfolio holder for highways.</li> <li>• I have communicated with residents that as this road only services 9 properties it does not fall as a priority for the highways team, however it is on the active capital list.</li> </ul>

## PARISH COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

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

Question	Answer / Outcomes
Traffic Mirror Asset in Soudley	(04/02/26) <b>Response:</b> "It has been in situ since 2013. As such, it is highly likely it was put it by the authority at the request of the parish. The Parish may purchase a replacement like for like if possible. The verge is showing up as being on highway and maintained by Shropshire Council. If this is the case, depending on the level of damage that has occurred the parish may require the authority to install the mirror to avoid risk of danger whilst working in the highway."
Grit Bins not filled as requested.	(28/02/26) Still no response received, will escalate.
How much do we pay for Fix My Street?	Still awaiting a response from the council but the administration have raised concerns with this service so it is on our radar for improvement.
How many grit Bins in Childs Ercall?	(20/02/26) Initial check shows no bins are currently mapped; technicians to verify.
Can parishes or local groups undertake their own pothole filling?	I have spoken to Cllr David Vasmer (Highways Portfolio) as well as Juan Hernandez at StreetScene who both confirmed that there is currently a pilot of this scheme being developed to address all legal, equipment and training aspects and hopefully this can be rolled out to other groups. They are pleased that this proposal has come forward from the division.

## Council Tax Rankings 2026/27

- **Statistical Neighbours**
- Northumberland **Highest** £ 2382.00
- Herefordshire **Average** £2067.63
- Bath & Somerset **Lowest** £1914.03
- **Shropshire** £ 1969.09

## Statistical Neighbours Band D – 2025/26 – 2026/27

### Council Tax 2025/26

RANK	Statistical Nearest Neighbours	2025/26 Band D Council Tax
1	Northumberland	2,268.79
2	Stockport	2,076.06
3	Sefton	2,061.70
4	Isle of Wight	2,003.78
5	Cornwall	1,987.20
6	Wirral	1,982.44
7	Cheshire West and Chester	1,978.08
8	Herefordshire	1,969.36
9	Wiltshire	1,886.99
10	Cheshire East	1,882.04
11	East Riding of Yorkshire	1,871.10
12	BCP	1,855.41
13	Bath and North East Somerset	1,823.06
14	<b>Shropshire</b>	<b>1,806.67</b>
15	North Somerset	1,793.35
		29,246.03
	Average	1,949.74

### Council Tax 2026/27

RANK	Statistical Nearest Neighbours	Increase 2026/27 %	Council Tax 2026/27
1	Northumberland	4.99	2382.00
2	Stockport	4.99	2179.65
3	Sefton	4.99	2164.58
4	Isle of Wight	4.99	2103.77
5	Cornwall	4.99	2086.36
6	Wirral	4.99	2081.37
7	Wiltshire	4.99	1981.15
8	Cheshire West and Chester	4.99	2076.79
9	Herefordshire	4.99	2067.63
10	BCP	6.74	1980.46
11	Cheshire East	4.99	1975.95
12	<b>Shropshire</b>	<b>8.99</b>	<b>1969.09</b>
13	East Riding of Yorkshire	4.99	1964.47
14	North Somerset	6.99	1954.57
15	Bath and North East Somerset	4.99	1914.03
			30881.87
	Average		2058.791333