

July 2026

OVERVIEW

It was certainly a hot end to June! Can I take this opportunity to remind us all to check on our elderly and vulnerable neighbours during the summer months, including updating them on any changes to council services such as waste collections – these updates will be posted on the council website and shared via social media channels.

As the council's representative on the Rural Services Network, in June I attended a meeting with representatives from BT to discuss the national Digital Voice switchover which will happen at the end of January 2027. There are still 13% of phone users that are not ready for this switch over, with rural areas making up most of that 13%. Please do encourage/help friends and relatives prepare for this, the first step is to speak to BT asap who will discuss all the options around this.

June was a difficult month for the administration as we start to make some very tough decisions to restore the council's finances. Raising council tax, reducing services and disposing of assets goes against everything we stand for as Liberal Democrats, but we are determined to confront the reality of the council's financial position rather than continue delaying difficult decisions. The financial position we inherited after 16 years of Conservative administration is extremely challenging, with years of short-term savings and service reductions leaving the council in a far weaker position than many people realise. Those decisions may have balanced budgets in the short term, but they often came at the expense of long-term financial resilience. The final budget approved by the previous administration in February 2025 has had catastrophic implications on all of our finances and will do for at least 20 years. For reference, **every £1m we have to borrow to get out of this mess will cost £100k in debt repayments, every year.**

To be clear, Shropshire Council, under any political administration in 2026, would be in exactly this position. Our priority now is to lead collaborative work across political parties to deliver a sustainable recovery plan and, crucially, to avoid the intervention of government commissioners, whose decisions would inevitably remove local democratic control and, to be frank, would be brutal.

It is also important to remember that the Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) secured by the Liberal Democrat administration comes with significant responsibilities. Our EFS is also the highest in the country and because of that we remain under extremely close scrutiny from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Every decision we take must demonstrate that we are delivering against the commitments made through the Improvement Board. This includes reducing debt, increasing savings and steadily reducing the council's reliance on EFS. Whilst that level of oversight is demanding, it also provides assurance that the difficult decisions being taken form part of a structured and closely monitored recovery programme.

There are, however, encouraging signs that our approach is beginning to deliver results. MHCLG has recognised the progress being made and, as set out in our EFS submission, part of that financial support is being invested in strengthening key services and reshaping the organisation to deliver better value for money, clearer accountability and more effective decision-making. This transformation begins with the senior leadership team before extending throughout the wider organisation. Earlier this month, CEO Tanya Miles set out her plan to comprehensively restructure the Executive Leadership Team, (which also

includes recruiting additional capacity), this process has already started and will continue throughout the summer. I will, of course, keep members updated on the outcome in due course. This will not be a quick process, but it is an essential step towards building a council that is financially sustainable, fit for the future and far less likely to repeat the mistakes of the past.

This month we outlined significant changes to supported bus services across Shropshire, with 21 of the county's 60 council-funded routes due for contract renewal. Renewing every service on the lowest tender received would have created a funding gap of around £500,000 in our council-tax budget, while government funding for supported bus services has also reduced by approximately £200,000. In addition, the important Route 64 between Market Drayton and Shrewsbury also came under threat. We considered this route a vital service and have therefore committed around £500,000 to protect it. Taken together, these pressures created a funding gap of approximately £1.2 million, meaning difficult decisions had to be made about which services could continue to receive council funding.

Finally, on the 30th June, an independent review on the future of Shirehall was published and will be presented to special cabinet on the 14th July. The Lib Dem administration also met online with Duncan Whitfield, the Section 151 officer who commissioned this report to discuss the findings. Although passions around Shirehall have been high for a number of years, we must again face reality and take difficult decisions in light of our financial emergency. The terms of the EFS are clear, essentially stating that the council must not invest in assets and should dispose of empty and unused premises at the earliest opportunity. The report can be found here: <https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/SHIREHALL-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>

Summary of my meetings during June:

(01/06/26) Prevention Contract – All Member Briefing
 (01/06/26) POSC Chair & Vice Chair Catchup
 (05/06/26) Shropshire Youth Partnership Board Discussion Meeting
 (09/06/26) Scrutiny Work Program Setting Meeting | Guildhall
 (18/06/26) Rural Services Network Meeting | BT Digital Voice Switch Over
 (18/06/26) POSC Pre Meeting
 (22/06/26) PAS Planning Training for Councillors
 (25/06/26) Governors Walks | Cheswardine & Hinstock Primary Schools
 (29/06/26) Health Overview Scrutiny Committee | Guildhall
 (29/06/26) Local Governing Committee Meeting | Hinstock Primary
 (29/06/26) All About Youth Trustee Meeting | Shrewsbury
 (30/06/26) Lib Dem Administration | Shirehall Briefing Meeting

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.
Hare Coursing Cheswardine	A number of residents have raised concerns.	(29/06/26) NB Submitted information to West Mercia for investigation.
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. (30/06/26) Still waiting.

25/03608/FUL Chicken Egg Production Caynton	PLANNING: This is still at 'recommendations/committee'	No update, next planning committee is scheduled 21/07/26
Land Ownership Glebe Close, Cheswardine	Overgrown piece of land between Glebe Close and the School.	Initial work scheduled for summer summer holidays.
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.
Tag Lane Chipnall	Overgrown hedge row	NB has raised concerns over the lack of progress with this case, specifically the lack of commitment from council and the process or reporting.
Potholes Chipnall	HIGHWAYS: Serious road defects	Potholes 'fixed' but NB has raised concerns over the quality with the portfolio holder and requested a visit from our inspection team.
Motor X Buntingsdale	Environmental Noise	(15/06/26) Response received from Kieron Smith, Environmental Protection and Housing Enforcement Manager - investigation ongoing.

PARISH COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

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

Question	Answer / Outcomes
Why was an enforcement restriction put in place in Childs Ercall if the council had no option to enforce?	Internal enquiry started, waiting response.
A41 Speed Camera Update	- Deputy PCC Tracey Onslow to chase with PCC John Campion - No response - Simon D'Vali attended a meeting with T&W highways - no response.