

Aug 2026

OVERVIEW

Please note that I am away at various stages during August and won't have access to my council devices. I will respond to any requests ASAP.

July was my usual mix of meetings, charity work and community events. Thank you to all the volunteers and organisers who make these events possible. It was lovely to attend Hinstock's Party In The Park and chat to so many residents and stall holders. Plus, as an added bonus, I couldn't resist the opportunity to throw wet sponges at Cllr Dan Ashley who was in the stocks – all in the name of charity of course! Also, another successful turn out for the Fox & Hounds Fun Run in Cheswardine, congratulations to all the runners and riders.

I met with PC Phil Nock from West Mercia Rural Crime Team to discuss recent reports of Hare Coursing at various locations across the division. If you see a potential hare courser then please report immediately on 999.

Shropshire Council Budget 2027/28 - An Honest Update

As always, I will continue to keep residents, parish councils and fellow local members informed as Shropshire Council begins preparing its budget for 2027/28. On the 15th July the Government issued a **'Best Value' Notice** to the Council, recognising that whilst significant improvements have already been made to financial management, governance and leadership, further work is required to secure the Council's long-term financial sustainability. This notice has been triggered by failings in the 2024/25 budget where the previous administration received EFS but had not implemented any of the T&Cs.

Although understanding how we arrived here is important, our focus is firmly on where we are now and how we respond. The decisions we make over the coming months will play a significant part in determining the future of the Council and the services it provides. The Best Value Notice means increased scrutiny from the MHCLG and we must demonstrate that we are taking our financial position seriously – no matter how difficult those choices are.

The Best Value Notice can be accessed here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a573d38822f6b8245c946/Shropshire_Council_Best_Value_Notice.pdf

One of the biggest misconceptions is that the Council's finances can be balanced simply by reducing visible services. The reality is very different. Although Shropshire Council has a net annual budget of approximately £489 million, around three-quarters of that budget is already committed to statutory services, principally Adult Social Care and Children's Services, which the Council is legally required to provide.

Demand for these services continues to rise significantly every year. Last year's 8.99% Council Tax increase generated around £21 million, yet that only covered around one-third of the annual increase in demand and inflation. At the same time, the Council is seeking £121 million of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) for 2026/27. (Although this figure is expected to be lower due to actions we've already taken).

Despite the name, EFS is not additional Government funding - it is borrowing that must be repaid, with interest, over many years. Residents quite naturally judge the Council by the services they see every day, such as roads, parks, libraries and street cleaning. However, much of the financial pressure comes from statutory services that many people never directly use but which the Council has a legal duty to provide. This can understandably create the perception that “the Council is cutting services”, when in reality the largest financial pressures are occurring elsewhere.

For us, this means the challenge ahead is not simply about making savings; it is about building a different kind of Council. We must continue investing where it reduces future costs, whether through earlier intervention, service redesign, digital transformation or strengthening the organisation’s ability to deliver services more efficiently. That can sometimes mean investing in additional expertise or leadership at a time when finances are under pressure, but if those investments reduce future borrowing, improve productivity and prevent far greater costs later, they represent good stewardship of public money rather than unnecessary spending. Alongside this, I believe closer partnership working with our parish councils, voluntary organisations and local communities will become increasingly important. As parish councils begin considering their own budgets over the coming months, there may also be opportunities to discuss whether certain local services, facilities or community assets could be supported locally where there is both the appetite and the financial capacity to do so.

The current financial year continues to focus on stability but now with the Best Value Notice, CEO Tanya Miles and council leader Cllr Heather Kidd have made clear that we must all work at ‘rapid pace’ to ensure that the decisions and outcomes are clearly defined and deliver the best for Shropshire and demonstrate our commitment to reducing reliance on EFS.

Hopefully members should know that I will always be open and honest, difficult decisions are rarely made easier by keeping people in the dark. I will continue to explain the reasons behind the decisions we make because it is essential if we are to maintain trust and continue working together for the benefit of our communities.

Summary of my meetings during July:

(01/07/26) People Overview Scrutiny Committee (POSC)

(02/07/26) Shropshire Youth Foundation Trustee Meeting | Guildhall

(15/07/26) ‘Breakfast With The Best’ – All About Youth Network Breakfast Meeting | Monkmoor

(16/07/26) Full Council - agenda and documents can be accessed here:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=125&MId=6359>

(17/07/26) Scrutiny, Audit and Governance Chairs Meeting | Guildhall

(20/07/26) Northern Planning Committee | Guildhall

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.
Hare Coursing Cheswardine	A number of residents have raised concerns.	(29/06/26) NB Submitted information to West Mercia for investigation. (03/07/26) Site visit from PC Phil Nock.

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 18/08/26
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.
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. - Repairs to be undertaken.
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
Your July report highlights the council's need to reduce costs, dispose of assets and reshape services. Can you confirm which services or assets are currently being considered for devolution or transfer to parish councils?	From a parish council aspect, the most suitable area will be some of the street scene services. However, as we have outlined throughout the past 12 months, we are asking parish/towns for their specific recommendations instead of 'forcing' something on to a PC/TC.
Where services or assets are transferred to parish councils, what funding or financial support will accompany those transfers, and for how long will that support be guaranteed?	Where some towns have already fully taken on StreetScene services for example, funding has simply been diverted from the original contractor to the town council, this is often at a saving to Shropshire Council. So its not a case of additional financial support but more of a diversion of funds...and generally, a better service at a reduced cost. If a small piece of land was transferred to a parish council there is unlikely to be any specific financial support as there isn't a value added to that in the first place. The maintenance of that land would fall to the PC/TC if they chose to accept that land. The maintenance of this would likely be better for the community.

What assessment has been undertaken of the likely impact on parish precepts if parish councils are expected to take on additional responsibilities currently delivered by Shropshire Council?	Precepts are the responsibility of the PC/TC so would be adjusted to reflect the assets/services they provide. This would just be part of your normal budget setting. There is no discussion of any mandatory precept increases coming from Shropshire Council.
As residents are being advised to expect council tax increases while services are being reduced, what safeguards are being considered to prevent residents from effectively paying twice through both higher Shropshire Council tax and higher parish precepts?	Shropshire Council will still provide its statutory obligations and will be looking for reduce its offering essentially to its legal minimum. For clarity, I have again requested that a definitive 'Minimum Service Level' list be produced. So as a slight example, should a PC/TC wish to take on the running of a local library, that isn't a case of double taxation because there is no obligation on Shropshire Council to provide that library in the first instance...its just nice if we can. I will keep pushing for better communication on this as the phrase 'double taxation' is a little misleading. As elected members of your parish, you already run the risk of double taxation if for example, the parish council chose to have a private road sweeper ahead of an event or get the verges cut back by a private contractor on a more regular basis. In this instance, yes it would be beneficial to the residents and make the community feel/look more welcoming but equally these services are already included in a minimum service.
How and when will parish councils be involved in shaping proposals for service devolution and asset transfers, and will parish councils be engaged before decisions are made rather than consulted after options have already been determined?	Again, in the initial Shropshire Partnership process we were encouraging PC/TC to bring their suggestions forward. I have raised the concerns of my parishes with the administration about this process and we know it can be improved for future discussions. We will however keep discussing and sharing our ideas and welcoming the views of PC/TC through the Unitary Cllrs and having discussions like this. I will stress though that whilst these conversations are difficult and are rightly challenging the administration/council, it is important that we can still have these discussions and positively explore options. <i>IF</i>, the council were forced into a Section 114, there would be no discussion - libraries, leisure centers, park and ride etc would instantly be closed - if we don't need to provide it, it would be shut straight away or sold off. As I wrote in my July report, this would be brutal and, in most cases, irreversible. There are some areas that the council couldn't feasibly run an extensive consultation (bus services for example) as we are having to make difficult decisions at pace to meet the terms of our Emergency Financial Support. If the MHCLG believe we are stalling a decision then they will simply cut the funding. The MHCLG are quite literally watching everything we do - including watching all of the livestreamed meetings.
Are there any further plans for Shropshire Council to use accommodation at the Four Alls to house homeless	(22/07/26) Internal question raised – awaiting response.

people? If so, could this be extended to any other groups such as Asylum Seekers?	
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