

Shrewsbury Town Council

Criteria for Establishing a Working Group

1. Rationale for Establishing a Working Group

A Working Group may be established by Shrewsbury Town Council where:

- The issue or subject matter requires in-depth research, development, or consultation that cannot be efficiently conducted within the time constraints of a formal Committee meeting.
- The topic is cross-cutting and may involve input from multiple Committees, stakeholders, or sectors of the community.
- A flexible and informal approach is better suited to develop proposals or explore emerging areas of interest before any formal decision-making process.
- The work required is temporary in nature and does not warrant a permanent Committee or Sub-Committee.

Note: A Working Group does not have decision-making powers and must report back with recommendations to the parent Committee or Full Council.

2. Defining the Subject Matter

A Working Group will only be established if the subject matter:

- Is clearly defined and distinct, with a specific issue or area to be explored or developed.
- Aligns with the Council's strategic objectives, priorities, or duties.
- Would benefit from focused attention and the gathering of evidence, consultation, or expert input outside the confines of formal meetings.

The scope and remit of the Working Group must be agreed upon and recorded in the Committee or Council minutes at the time of establishment.

3. Purpose of the Working Group

Each Working Group must have:

- A clearly stated **purpose**, including key objectives or deliverables.
- **Terms of Reference** approved by the parent Committee or Full Council, setting out:
 - Membership (including Councillors, officers, and any external advisors, where appropriate)

- Reporting arrangements and frequency
- Any authority to liaise with third parties or conduct public consultation
- Expected outputs, such as a report, draft policy, or set of recommendations

4. Officer Involvement

- Working Groups are **Councillor-led** and designed to support member initiative and exploration. They are **not officer-led** and should not rely on Council officers to carry out substantive work.
- Officer support may be provided on a minimal and advisory basis only, such as:
 - Providing background information or data
 - Attending initial meetings to clarify procedures or context
 - Assisting with final reporting to the parent Committee
- There will be **no formal agendas or minutes** produced by Council officers. Informal notes may be taken by Working Group members themselves for reference and internal use.

This approach ensures that the emphasis remains on Councillor involvement and accountability in shaping recommendations.

5. Duration of a Working Group

- Working Groups are **time-limited**, and their duration should be defined upon establishment.
- A review date must be set to evaluate progress, usually at 6-month intervals or as appropriate.
- A Working Group shall be **disbanded** upon:
 - Completion of its task and acceptance of its final report or recommendations.
 - Determination by the parent Committee that the Group is no longer required.
 - Failure to meet or report over a defined period (e.g., 3 months).

6. Additional Governance Considerations

- Working Groups are informal advisory bodies and operate outside of the Council's formal meeting structure.
- They must still adhere to the Council's policies and standards, including the Members' Code of Conduct.

- Where appropriate, Working Groups may invite external stakeholders or subject matter experts to participate in discussions.
- All recommendations must be brought back to the appropriate Committee or Full Council for formal consideration and decision.