

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee Held in Committee Room, Livesey House At 6.00pm on Monday 14th September 2026

PRESENT

Councillors: R Wilson (Chair), R Dartnall, B Jephcott, A Mosley, and D Vasmer

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Clare Turner (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources) and Heather Phillips (Committee Clerk)

40/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillors Bentick, Dean, Fejfer and Wagner.

41/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dartnall	Shropshire Councillor. Group Leader – Labour Group, Shropshire Council. Personal Interest relating to 52/26 Community Centre for Meole Estate as committee member of MECA
Councillor Jephcott	Shropshire Councillor
Councillor Mosley	Shropshire Councillor
Councillor Vasmer	Shropshire Councillor, Portfolio Holder for Highways Dispensation relating to 54/26 Service Delegation Update.
Councillor Wilson	Shropshire Councillor, Portfolio Holder for Transport & Economic Growth. Dispensation relating to 54/26 Service Delegation Update.

42/26 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 13th July 2026 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 13th July 2026 be approved and signed as a correct record.

43/26 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Min 27/26 – Internal Auditor 5-Year Plan – The RFO reported that the Internal Auditor was scheduled to visit shortly at which the 5-Year Plan would be discussed and a finalised plan brought to the next meeting of this Committee.

Min 30/26 – Service Delegation Update – The Town Clerk reported that a meeting was to be held with Pontesbury Parish Council this week to consider any work that Shrewsbury Town Council could be commissioned to deliver, particularly given that the Town Council already operated in this Parish.

Min 32/26 – Management of Public Open Space – The Town Clerk updated that she had been in contact with the Local Plan Manager & the MP but was still awaiting replies.

Min 33/26 – Development of Flower Festival – The Town clerk had contacted Andy McKeown about a potential Flower Light Show in October.

Min 34/26 – Mereside Community Centre Lease – It was reported that the Committee was working through a few governance processes ahead of a new lease being developed. The necessary ACRE draft lease agreement was in place to work on as a foundation point from which to start.

Min 35/26 – Water Testing in the River Severn – The Town Clerk met with the Environment Agency (EA) last week and had sent the relevant consents for the works for them to consider how they would put the process in place of monitoring river quality and record the information on the APP. The EA initially advised that the Town Council should wait until the start of the next bathing water season as this current season was just coming to an end.

44/26 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 4th July to 5th September 2026. These had been agreed by two signatories before the RFO and Town Clerk uploaded for payment. No comments or concerns were raised.

RESOLVED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 4th July to 5th September 2026 be approved.

45/26 BUDGETING TIMETABLE FOR 2027/28

A report on the timetabling for the 2027/28 Budget was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The RFO explained that the budget for 2027/28 must be agreed by Council no later than the end of January 2027. The Precept request to Shropshire Council had the same deadlines.

This Committee was to recommend a budget to Full Council for approval. During the preceding months, a series of meetings will take place and the standing committees shall

discuss various elements, such as inflationary pressures, wage increases, general assumptions on expenditure as well as income streams and changes to services.

The Town Clerk added that the second visioning exercise was to take place in November after the first having taken place last week. This would also feed into the budgeting process. A meeting was also to be held with committee chairs to discuss additional items that had arisen from their committees.

Councillor Mosley commented that a consequence of last year's increase in the Precept was that many people resented it. He asked whether it might be worth considering what a reasonable increase in the Precept might be for next year ahead of the next visioning meeting. He said that much of this year's increase in the Precept was to pay Shropshire Council to support the services that it was not now able to provide and to enhance those services. He had noticed in the consultation that the amount given to Shropshire Council for cultural issues had risen from £250K to £500K and he asked what discussions there had been on this and why it was included in the consultation.

Councillor Wilson said that he had not noted that residents were upset with the Precept rise and that they understood the reasoning. He added that the draft consultation had not yet been sent out and that those budget gaps would be discussed later in this meeting. The figure that had been included in the consultation was a space-holder to allow questions to be written. In terms of a wider philosophy, he did not believe that a rise in the Precept would be anywhere close to last year's and that next year was about consolidating.

Councillor Mosley said responses from the public regarding the Precept rise this year depended upon the circumstances of those people. He asked whether it would not be better to carry out the consultation when more detailed proposals were available after visioning and with some figures attached to them. Otherwise the consultation would be on hypotheticals and that people may not realise what the implications might be. It was important to be honest with people about what proposals the Council was putting forward actually meant in terms of what residents were going to be asked to pay.

Councillor Wilson said that there was a time issue here with regard to budget setting and that members were elected to make decisions.

Councillor Jephcott disagreed with Councillor Mosley that the Council had been unreasonable in raising the Precept this year. He said that the priority next year was to consolidate especially whilst Shropshire Council was facing statutory minima and an ongoing budgetary crisis. Residents were not paying twice because the Town Council was doing extra so that pride can be taken in the town and that this was generally understood. The visioning meeting last week had been good and had concentrated councillors' and officers' minds as to the direction of travel and he anticipated that this would turn into measurable improvements on the ground.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Report be noted;**
- (ii) That provisional dates as outlined be set in relevant Member/Officer diaries, and agenda item added to Committee Chairs' Meeting.**

46/26 END OF YEAR AUDIT

The RFO reported that the external audit report had not yet been received. The deadline for publication of the End of Year Accounts was 30th September 2026.

47/26 RESERVES POLICY

The RFO circulated a draft Reserves Policy prior to this meeting. He brought councillors' attention to the note that the Smaller Authorities' Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP), formerly the Joint Panel on Accountability and Governance Practitioners Guide (JPAG), was responsible for issuing proper practices about the governance and accounts of smaller authorities. It advised that, as with any financial entity, it was essential that authorities have sufficient reserves (General and Earmarked) to finance both their day-to-day operations and future plans.

This Policy was about putting a plan in place for the Town Council's General Reserves and its Earmarked Reserves. The generally accepted recommendation was that General Reserves should be maintained to between 3-12 months of revenue expenditure. Monitoring of the Earmarked and General Reserves was always part of the year end process.

The RFO noted also that in extreme circumstances Earmarked Reserves can be used to provide short-term cover. Currently, the General Reserves figure stood at £356K. This could be built up by adding in any interest received plus any surplus income. Earmarked Reserves totalled £5.4m. Councillor Mosley asked what the controllable reserves were in total but the RFO didn't have that figure at the time of this meeting. Councillor Mosley also remarked that building the Reserves up from £350K to £1.5m would take a very long time and he didn't want to see the Council lose its good auditing record.

Councillor Vasmer joined the meeting.

The Town Clerk said that, in terms of the budget, the accounts had become highly fine-tuned after 17 years. General Reserves had only really been used once, during the COVID pandemic. As a larger council, she was not concerned that the council as a whole would fail, and it was noted that larger organisations tended to have less in General Reserves. The Town Council's accounting mechanism and the way it was managed by the RFO and this Committee was robust.

Councillor Wilson asked what situations might arise that would see the need to utilise General Reserves and Councillor Mosley asked if a Risk Assessment had been drawn up for these circumstances. The Town Clerk explained that elsewhere Reserves were used to cover financial mismanagement, HR implications/tribunals or asset structural failures. The Town Council had good financial, asset and HR management and therefore any expenses that might be needed to be accommodated were generally accounted for.

Councillor Dartnall understood the Town Clerk's reasoning but thought that it would make sense to have a good cushion in the Reserves, either General or Earmarked. She asked if the Earmarked could be reviewed to make it a bit higher than it had been in the past. Councillor Jephcott agreed with this action especially considering the current uncertain times and that the organisation was now delivering more services and therefore had an increase in turnover and staffing.

Councillor Wilson, taking into account all members' comments, said that it needed to be made clear to auditors that a larger Reserve was an aspiration and that it would take some time to build up.

The Town Clerk would follow this up by having Earmarked Reserves reviewed to ensure that they were all still relevant.

Councillor Mosley understood that Earmarked Reserves could be moved to General Reserves in certain circumstances but wanted to know if that worked the other way? The RFO said that the plan was that any spare income would be deposited to bolster the Reserves and that expenditure or any additional funds would only be used for those purposes.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Draft Reserves Policy be noted;**
- (ii) That the Town Clerk & RFO review the Earmarked Reserves to determine relevance ahead of final ratification of the Policy.**

48/26 SHREWSBURY BIG TOWN PLAN

The Town Clerk reported that The Big Town Plan Partnership was not scheduled to meet until October. At that meeting it was to review Riverside Gardens, the Meanwhile Space and the Abbey Foregate Project. The Partnership was, in the meantime, working on projects that had already been agreed.

Councillor Vasmer commented that much of the Abbey Foregate Project had already been achieved and that further development was due in the spring. It had been well received by residents, and he believed it had boosted the area, particularly with the work that had been done on the new pocket park.

It was noted that parking spaces had been adjusted to a chevron formation and that the taxi spaces had been removed.

Councillor Mosley thought that the amount of pavement the Peach Tree had taken over outside its premises meant that it now looked rather narrow for pedestrians. He asked whether the Town Council had any input into pavement licence agreements at the Planning stage particularly. The Town Clerk reported that applications were reviewed by the Planning Committee.

It was noted that the speed limit had been reduced to 20mph, that the old phone box was going to be re-painted by Men's Shed, and there were going to be 2 further planters installed outside The Crown.

Councillor Mosley had expressed his disappointment on the speed of developing the Riverside Development. It was reported that Shropshire Council had reported that market forces had determined that there would now only be residential development opportunities and not office buildings (Shropshire Council had decided to not now build an office in this area). The ground conditions were a challenge in terms of building on this land and, as Shropshire Council's financial position was precarious, the Meanwhile Space might be undeveloped for quite some time.

The Town Clerk was leading on a project to develop this space in the meantime. Camlins and Berrys had been commissioned to develop plans for the meanwhile space and currently understanding current planning permissions for the area and looking at the Environment Agency's flood risk assessment permit, as well as what can and can't be done with or without planning permission. An incident management plan was also in progress for Riverside Gardens and the Meanwhile Space. Event programming, which would need to operate flexibly, was also being developed, and the licencing of large and small events was also being discussed. It was noted that the site was massive and the budget small.

Councillor Mosley asked whether there had been any discussion about where the money for any events taking place there would go. The Town Clerk said that it was Shropshire Council's ambition that the Town Council would maintain and look after the space at Riverside and that any income made could be used to offset maintenance costs. Any income, would not, therefore, be added to core budgets.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

49/26 SERVICE DELEGATION UPDATE

The Town Clerk reported that the current Service Delegation Transfer was working well and the works programme coming together. The finances for this would be forthcoming in private session at the end of this meeting.

Councillor Mosley referred to the budget papers produced for this at the last meeting of this Committee and asked that further details on what had been spent on CCTV and the Street Rangers were included. He did not fully understand what the additional responsibilities were for the Street Rangers over and above their Quarry and taxi marshal duties. He also noted that the budget had been exceeded for supporting cultural/recreational services and wanted to know on what these monies had been spent. A report was to be tabled at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update be noted.**
- (ii) That a report is brought to the next meeting detailed expenditure on delegated services.**

50/26 FOOD RESILIENCE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (2026-2029)

A Report on a Food Resilience Strategy and Action Plan (2026-2029) was tabled at the meeting. This subject had been discussed at a recent meeting of the Communities & Environment Committee and had been subject to both a Cost-of-Living Grant application and a Community Grant application. Neither relayed the ongoing necessity to review food resilience in the Town, a situation that was, if anything, getting worse. Wildfires and other impacts on farmers' fields together with ongoing international (and local community) tensions were causing a need to review food resilience. In addition, the recent El Nino

conditions had caused excessive heat. This Plan was an attempt to add further detail than previously. The Town Clerk had also discussed this issue with the Emergency Planning Manager and whilst recognising the need advised there was no resource available.

The Shropshire Good Food Partnership was keen to support the Council with developing a food resilience plan for the Town; details on how they would implement support for the next 2/3 years appeared at the end of the Report.

The Town Clerk asked members to consider this serious and looming crisis. Councillor Dartnall and Jephcott gave their support. Councillor Jephcott said that a framework on handling food shocks would be essential and that food resilience was a matter of local and national security. The Council would have to be ready for action in an emergency context.

Councillor Mosley asked how the Town would do anything different from what was nationally organised if there was a crisis. He said that there were not the resources in terms of logistics and did not want to commit any further expenditure at this time other than the £10K already committed.

Councillor Dartnall said that climate change was having the biggest impact and that Europe was set to suffer massive water cycle disruptions in terms of drought, followed by flood, followed by drought, and so on. Growing food would therefore be seriously disrupted. This plan was about the Council doing what it could and investigating what might need to be provided. Other councils were already moving forwards on this issue and improving the strength of their communities generally.

Councillor Wilson also gave his support. It was decided that the Report be Recommended to Full Council in two weeks' time.

RECOMMENDED

- (i) That the Council works with the Shrewsbury Good Food Partnership to develop a Shrewsbury Food Resilience Strategy and Action Plan 2;**
- (ii) That £20k be allocated as a budget to meet the delivery of an action plan; and**
- (iii) That Officers discuss this process with senior officers of other Town Councils and Shropshire Council to see how this might add into a wider resilience plan.**

51/26 QUARRY CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN (CMP)

The Town Clerk reported that a meeting had taken place with the Contractor Team to discuss the consultation responses and next step forward for the CMP. The consultation responses had shown how much the park was valued and its exceptional importance to town life. Whilst people showed that they valued the status quo, they also realised that improvements were required, for instance in the need for various measures to be considered namely the public toilets, lighting (Gloucester Avenue particularly), additional seating, tree management and upgrading of the play area. Interestingly, residents were generally not concerned about the flooding as the site always bounced back and there was a limit to what could be done. Development of the behaviour of people using the site would be achieved with signage.

The only surprise from the consultation was the priority of the works. Berrys had developed a CAD map of the park featuring various layers including trees, service maps (of underground services), flood zones, and the extent of the heritage park listing against land title which would prove highly useful for managing the park going forward. Their review of riverbanks included a detailed work programme but this turned out not to be as extensive as first feared.

Berrys were now developing the Conservation Management Plan further and representatives would be invited to the next meeting of this Committee to present the kind of work programmes that were needed.

RESOLVED:

That representatives from Berrys be invited to the next meeting of this Committee to present work programmes.

52/26 COMMUNITY CENTRE FOR MEOLE ESTATE

The Town clerk had drafted an Invitation to Tender for feasibility work which had been sent to Councillor Bentick for comment. She was currently awaiting feedback.

The Town Clerk highlighted the continuing demand for meeting room space across various community groups. The raised the question of whether there might be merit in running two feasibility studies; one for a community facility on Mary Webb Road and another for a community centre on the Shrewsbury South Urban Extension for which a parcel of land and some feasibility and construction budget had been allocated in the s106 agreement. These two sites were very close to each other but hugely different in terms of demographics and use.

Members asked about potential funding routes. The Town Clerk advised that part of the feasibility study would be to look at funding options above local CIL and Neighbourhood Funds

It was decided that further discussion on this would better suit the remit of the Communities & Environment Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Town Clerk start to prepare two separate feasibility study briefs for invitation to tender;**
- (ii) That this item be further considered at the next meeting of the Communities & Environment Committee.**

53/26 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with s1(2) Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings) Act 1960, members of the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following items being considered involve the disclosure of confidential information.

54/26 SERVICE DELEGATION UPDATE

The Town Clerk reported that discussions were ongoing with officers at Shropshire Council regarding funding deficits for some of its services. Costings for these services were requested from Shropshire Council for the Town Council to make decisions as to the potential support it could offer. The latest costings were shared with members.

The Town Clerk recognised that the Town Council's part it might play in supporting these services had been part of the discussions about the Big Drop and the subsequent consultation. She suggested that this Committee or a sub-group meets in due course in order to discuss Service Delegation more fully together and with up-to-date information supplied by officers.

In this financial year, the Town Council needed to think about the funding that was allocated for 2026/27 and how this budget deficit was to be addressed going into 2027/28.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the report be noted; and**
- (ii) That an extraordinary meeting of this Committee be convened.**
- (iii) That the Town Clerk continue discussions with Shropshire Council Officers.**

55/26 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting (prior to 54/26), the Chairman thanked Councillors and all staff involved in the meeting. Unfortunately, due to technical issues, it was not possible to broadcast this meeting live.