

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Date 4 FEBRUARY 2026

Officer: Helen Ball (Town Clerk)

COMMUNITIES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

1. Purpose of the Report

This report sets out the rationale, scope, and delivery framework for the proposed Shrewsbury Town Council Cost of Living Fund, including the recommended funding model and the criteria against which applications for funding will be assessed.

The report seeks Council approval to:

- Establish a Cost of Living Fund for a three-year period
- Allocate £80,000 per annum to the Fund
- Award funding to 4–5 local charities operating in Shrewsbury
- Approve the proposed application and assessment criteria

2. Background and Context

The continuing cost of living pressures are having a significant impact on households across Shrewsbury, particularly older residents, low-income families, and those experiencing financial vulnerability. Rising costs relating to food, energy, transport, and housing have increased demand for advice services, practical support, and community-based interventions.

Shrewsbury Town Council has identified the need to provide targeted, preventative funding that:

- Helps residents reduce essential household costs
- Supports access to advice and early intervention
- Strengthens community-based responses and partnership working
- Delivers measurable social and financial outcomes for residents

The proposed Cost of Living Fund aligns with the Council's wider strategic objectives around community wellbeing, reducing inequality, and supporting residents most at risk of financial hardship.

3. Overview of the Cost of Living Fund

3.1 Funding Allocation

- **Total annual budget:** £80,000
- **Funding period:** 3 years
- **Number of awards:** 4–5 charities
- **Indicative award size:** £20,000 per organisation per year

Funding will be awarded on an annual basis, subject to satisfactory performance and reporting.

3.2 Intended Outcomes

The Fund is intended to support projects that:

- Reduce the day-to-day costs faced by residents
- Increase household resilience and financial stability
- Improve access to practical support, advice, and services
- Encourage collaboration and reduce duplication across the local voluntary and community sector

4. Key Themed Priority Areas

Applications must clearly align with one or more of the following priority themes:

1. **Supporting Older People**
Initiatives that help older residents manage living costs, access support, remain independent, and avoid financial hardship.
2. **Debt Advice and Financial Inclusion**
Provision of free, accessible debt advice, budgeting support, benefits advice, and financial capability services.
3. **Community Transport**
Projects that reduce transport costs or improve affordable access to essential services, particularly for isolated or vulnerable residents.
4. **Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty**
Advice, interventions, or practical support that reduce energy usage, improve efficiency, or tackle fuel poverty.
5. **Food Support and Food Security**
Projects that improve access to affordable food, reduce food costs, or promote sustainable food provision.

5. Use of Funding

Applicants must demonstrate how £20,000 per year would be used to deliver clear, cost-of-living-related benefits for Shrewsbury residents. Funding may be used for:

- Staffing costs directly related to service delivery
- Project delivery costs
- Advice, outreach, or support services
- Equipment or resources essential to the project

Funding should not be used for:

- Core organisational overheads unrelated to the project
- Political activity
- Activities outside Shrewsbury town

6. Partnership Working and Collaboration

A key principle of the Fund is collaboration. Applicants will be expected to:

- Demonstrate how they currently work with other local organisations
- Set out proposals for collective working with other funded organisations or partners
- Identify opportunities to share referral pathways, data (where appropriate), or joint outreach
- Show how their work complements, rather than duplicates, existing provision

Joint working may include shared outcomes, coordinated campaigns, or joint reporting where appropriate.

7. Outcomes, Monitoring and Evaluation

Applicants must propose clear and measurable outcomes. These should include:

- Quantifiable outputs (e.g. number of people supported, households advised)
- Measurable outcomes (e.g. money saved by households, debts reduced, energy savings achieved)
- Broader social outcomes (e.g. reduced isolation, improved confidence or wellbeing)

Successful applicants will be required to:

- Submit annual monitoring reports
- Participate in review meetings with the Town Council
- Contribute to collective learning and shared impact reporting across the Fund

8. Funding Application Criteria

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

8.1 Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Be a registered charity, CIO, or not-for-profit organisation
- Be based in, or primarily delivering services within, Shrewsbury
- Have a clear governance structure and financial controls
- Demonstrate relevant experience in one or more of the priority themes

8.2 Strategic Fit (20%)

- Clear alignment with the Cost of Living Fund objectives
- Strong fit with one or more priority themed areas
- Evidence of local need within Shrewsbury

8.3 Impact and Outcomes (30%)

- Clear, realistic, and measurable outcomes
- Evidence that the project will reduce costs or increase savings for residents
- Robust monitoring and evaluation approach

8.4 Delivery and Value for Money (25%)

- Clear and realistic delivery plan

- Appropriate use of the £20,000 annual funding
- Evidence of value for money and sustainability

8.5 Partnership and Collaboration (15%)

- Evidence of existing partnership working
- Clear proposals for collaborative working with others
- Contribution to a joined-up local response

8.6 Organisational Capacity and Governance (10%)

- Demonstrated ability to manage public funds
- Appropriate safeguarding and equality policies
- Strong leadership and financial management

9. Assessment and Award Process

- Applications will be assessed by a panel comprising elected members and officers
- Awards will be made for an initial 12-month period
- Continued funding in years two and three will be subject to performance and available budget

10. RECOMMENDED

That the Committee

- 1. Notes the Report**
- 2. Approves the establishment of the Cost of Living Fund for a three-year period**
- 3. Agrees the annual budget of £80,000**
- 4. Approves the funding priorities and application criteria set out in this report**
- 5. Delegates authority to officers to administer and monitor the Fund**