SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee
Held in Committee Room, Livesey House
At 6.00pm on Monday 12th January 2026

PRESENT

Councillors: R Wilson (Chair), B Bentick, R Dartnall, J Dean, A Fejfer, K Halliday, B Jephcott, A Mosley, K Pardy and D Vasmer

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Clare Turner (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources), Danny Powell (Operations Manager), Stuart Farmer (Operations Manager), Heather Phillips (Committee Clerk) and Max Ball (Communications Officer)

59/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillor Wagner.

60/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dartnall requested that twin-hatted councillors declare their roles at Shropshire Council considering the nature of the items up for discussion.

Councillor Bentick	Portfolio Holder for Health & Public Protection, Shropshire Council
Councillor Dartnall	Group Leader – Labour Group, Shropshire Council
Councillor Dean	Chair – Northern Planning Committee, Shropshire Council
Councillor Fejfer	Shropshire Councillor
Councillor Halliday	Vice-Chair of Audit & Governance Committee, Shropshire Council
Councillor Jephcott	Deputy Portfolio Holder – Planning, Shropshire Council
Councillor Mosley	Unofficial member, Shropshire Council
Councillor Vasmer	Portfolio Holder for Highways & Environment, Shropshire Council
Councillor Wilson	Portfolio Holder for Transport & Economic Growth

Prior to the start of proceedings, Councillor Wilson reminded members that Standing Order (t) restricted contributions in debates to 3 minutes without the consent of the Chair.

61/25 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 8th December 2025 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 8th December 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

62/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

63/25 FUTURE SERVICE SURVEY – FINAL REPORT

Max Ball, Communications Officer, had been invited to the meeting to appraise members of the final report on the result of the responses to the Future Service Survey which was concluded on 2nd January 2026. The total number of responses was 1,200. There was a 95% confidence with a 2.8%+/- swing that the survey results were representative of the views of the residents of Shrewsbury.

The Communications Officer summarised the final result of responses to the survey as below:

Q1 - Responses were received from residents in all Wards. Approximately 200 responses were from received from people living outside of the town.

Q2 - 71% of respondents had lived in the area for 10 or more years.

Q3 - 86% were 45 years old or over.

Q4 – It was 50/50 whether people felt they were informed about the work of the Town Council.

Q5 – Over 50% used Facebook to access information on the Council.

Q6 – 37% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with Council services but 30% were fairly satisfied.

Q7 – 43% were confident that the Council represented the view of local people but 47% were not.

Q8 – 57% said it was important that the Town Council was independent of Shropshire Council.

Q9 – The top 4 most valued services were Parks and Open Spaces (76%), Town Centre Maintenance (64%), Public Safety (51%), and Footway Lighting (40%).

Q10 – Other valued services mentioned were: Street cleaning and litter Control; Roads, pavements and potholes; Drain, gulley and leaf clearance; Maintenance beyond the town centre; Traffic Management and congestion; Public transport and bus services; Parking and access; Walking and cycling infrastructure; Public toilets and basic facilities; Focus on core services and upkeep.

Q11 – The most valued service provided by the Town Council was Parks and Open Spaces.

Q12 – 37% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the progress of the Stepping Up Team but 47% expressed satisfaction.

Q13 – When asked how important it was to enhance certain services, 61% agreed to Floral features and public planting, 94% for Graffiti and fly-tipping removal, 93% for Paths and verge maintenance, and 96% for Street cleaning and litter-picking.

Q14 – The top 3 services provided by Shropshire Council that residents would want to protect were: Steet cleaning and litter-picking (71%), Litter bin collection 58%, and Libraries (43%).

Q15 – Additional services that residents identified as wanting protection were collated by AI and included: "Cleanliness, Pride & Basic Maintenance Are Top Priorities," "Roads, Pavements & Potholes Need Urgent Attention" and "Traffic Management & Congestion Are Major Frustrations."

Q16 – 79% agreed with that key local services were protected even if it costed more; 38% disagreed that services should be reduced to keep Council Tax low; and, 53% agreed, and 22% disagreed, that they didn't mind which services were delivered providing they were efficient.

Q17 – 86% agreed that more decisions about local services should be made in Shrewsbury rather than at county level.

Q18 – The benefits to locally made decisions cited by residents included (using AI to collate replies): "Strong Belief That Local Knowledge Leads to Better Decisions," "Desire for Shrewsbury-Focused Decision Making (Not County-Wide)" and "Accountability Is Seen as Stronger at a Local Level."

Q19 - The concerns mentioned by residents in having decisions made at the most local level included (using AI to collate replies): "Strong Concern About Cost, Council Tax & Value for Money," "Widespread Doubts About Competence, Skills & Experience," and "Fear of Repeating Poor Decisions (Especially Transport Schemes)."

Q20 – 55% were open in some capacity for an increase in the Town Council's share of Council Tax so that it could take on more services. 23% were neutral and 22% were against.

Q21 – When asked which areas should be prioritised if extra funding was available, the top 4 results were: Keeping streets clean and tidy (67%), Keeping people safe (57%), Cultural activities (56%), and Town Centre upkeep (46%).

Q22 - Additional areas not already mentioned (using AI to collate) included: "Cleanliness, Street Maintenance & Civic Pride (Whole Town, Not Just Centre)," "Roads, Potholes, Drainage & Flood Prevention," "Traffic Management & Fixing Failed Schemes," and "Protecting & Maintaining Swimming Pools and Leisure Facilities."

Q23 – "Keep Shrewsbury Clean" was the most important service that residents wanted to the Town Council to focus on.

Q24 – Only 207 of respondents completed the final thoughts question on the survey. These responses were collated by AI and included: "Improve and Maintain the Public Realm," "Enhance Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour," and "Town Centre Revitalisation."

The Communications Officer concluded his report with the overall message from residents: "Stick to the basics, listen properly, spend wisely, fix what's broken, keep the town clean and safe, and protect what makes Shrewsbury special – for the people who live here first."

Thanks were given to the Communications Officer for his thorough report and also to all the residents who took the time to respond to the survey.

Councillor Wilson said that the survey indicated that the work of the new Stepping Up Team was appreciated. It also provided priorities for the Town Council and an understanding of what residents wanted.

Councillor Mosley expressed concern about how much reliance should be given to the survey results. His concerns were about whether a high enough proportion of residents had responded, that the age range was skewed as 87% of respondents were over 45 years old, and that the survey made no mention of the amount the Precept might be raised by should additional services be taken on by the Town Council, only that they might be asked to pay "a bit more." He also said that a significant proportion of residents responded that they were not happy with the service currently being provided by the Town Council but that this could be part of the uncertainty as to which services are provided by the Town Council and which by Shropshire Council.

Councillor Dean responded that Question 16 and 17 on possible Council Tax rises didn't quote any specific figure but that all members had viewed the survey prior to its publication and were asked for their input in designing its questions. He acknowledged that no survey was perfect but was confident that these results gave a picture of what residents wanted. There was no time for another consultation before Full Council on 26th January 2026.

Councillor Dartnall also expressed concern that doubling the Precept, as was going to be proposed, was not "paying a bit more" as per the question residents responded to in the survey.

Councillor Vasmer said that Councillor Mosley's points were not well made and made reference to a news article this time last year that he had been previously happy with the 1,000 responses received to the consultation about the formation of the Stepping Up Team. He said that the Council should take this opportunity to move forward.

Councillor Bentick commented that there had been a good response to the survey and so its validity should be accepted. The local population had not been informed of the precise rise in the Precept but for most it would amount to £1.30 per week and for this there would be a substantially enhanced service.

Councillor Halliday said that members should not hide away from the fact that that the Council was intending to double its Precept and the significance of this. She agreed with Councillor Dartnall that this was not made clear in the survey. Councillor Halliday also asked what evidence was there that people would get a substantially better service. Councillor Fejfer added that the Council did not know how much more residents would be willing to pay.

Councillor Jephcott said that the survey chords with the survey run in the Bagley Ward and added that the overall proposed increase to the Precept was not too high.

Councillor Dean said that discussions on the survey should be separated from those about money. He supported the survey and thought it was a good indicator of what residents wanted. For instance, a good chunk of the extra money was going to go to CCTV and security in the Town Centre was one of the most important issues for residents.

RESOLVED:

That the final results of the Future Service Strategy be noted.

64/25 FUTURE SERVICE DELIVERY

A report entitled Service Devolution was received by members prior to this meeting. The Town Clerk said she had based it on all the information currently known. The Senior Management Team had discussed the future service delivery at length. They had also met with operational officers at Shropshire Council in order to understand the requirements of the Town Council taking on a service which might still mean there are statutory responsibilities for Shropshire Council.

The Service Devolution report gave members with an overview of proposals for the Town Council to take on devolved Street Cleaning services — including street sweeping, litter picking and bin collection — from Shropshire Council, the case for and against devolution at this time, and the strategic, financial and operational considerations for implementation by 1st April 2026. Shropshire Council was currently facing a severe financial crisis and had been engaging with local town and parish councils about greater collaborative working, including service devolution. Shrewsbury Town Council has already signed the Memorandum of Understanding in relation to a more collaborative approach to service delivery and had engaged actively with senior managers to understand the levels of service delivery requirements that could be placed on the Town Council.

All aspects on the current crisis in local government service provision had been risk assessed as far as was possible. There were risks associated with taking on these services but equally there were risks if these services were not taken on. The survey indicated a clear instruction from the public to take over these services.

To clarify, the Town Clerk said that the devolution scheme involved both our existing Horticultural Service Provision as well as the Streetscene Services currently undertaken under the Kier/Idverde contract, which included Litter Bin Maintenance and Repair, Litter Bin Emptying, Street Sweeping, Weed Control, and Road and Footpath Sweeping.

In her report, the Town Clerk had detailed the workload of what was required to mobilise these workstreams for 1st April and that the day after the Full Council agrees the budget work must begin. For this reason, the Town Clerk asked for delegated authority in conjunction with the Leader of the Town Council to start the work, reporting to monthly meetings of Policy & Resources and Operations Committee meetings leading up to April.

Councillor Halliday was concerned that Shropshire Council had not provided a value for money assessment as it was obligated to provide this. The Town Clerk said that she would request this. The Town Clerk added that the Town Council was working on a devolution agreement and would not be a contractor.

The devolution of the following 4 key services had been discussed by officers:

- Existing Highways Grounds Maintenance work undertaken by STC.
- Existing Culture & Leisure Service Grounds Maintenance work undertaken by STC.
- Existing Bereavement Services Grounds Maintenance work undertaken by STC.
- Streetscene works undertaken by SC's existing Streetscene contractor – this includes road sweeping, litter picking, litter bin emptying and bin repair & maintenance.

Councillor Dean asked what proportion of the budget would be allocated to these additional services. The RFO said that the budget assumed £923K would be received from Shropshire Council for SLA and Other Works but that this was still uncertain and any additional income received above this would be spent on the service, and was about £450K less. He also added that another £112K was missed off the budget in Appendix A for street scene works and that it would be added in time for the meeting of the Full Council.

The RFO explained that the £1.36M forecast figure was estimated as £300K was received each quarter with the shortfall balance due. Was received each quarter. Next year £923K for existing services. Councillor Dartnall asked where the number came from considering the change from £1.36M to £900K. The Town Clerk said that 66% was included on documents, a slightly lower figure of the statutory minimum of 50% prudently included.

Councillor Mosley said that the Service Delivery Working Group had had a report from Shropshire Council identifying that the Town Council would receive 75% of the devolved contract. This looked like it had now been significantly reduced to 66%. The RFO agreed that the initial document did quote £75% and then had been lowered to 66% but that nothing had yet been signed off. Councillor Mosley said that this was a cause for concern. Councillor Mosley also expressed concern about the lack of an added value analysis from Shropshire Council.

The Town Clerk said that the Service Delivery Working Group had received an initial draft and that this detailed the reduction to 66%. It also referred to a reduction year on year for this electoral term which would therefore amount to about 50% when it ended. However, this was the worst-case scenario. The Town Clerk acknowledged that this reduction was significant but that it reflected budgeting by Shropshire Council, while in its ever more precarious financial position, and that this was its affordability.

In tabling an amendment to the Recommendations, Councillor Mosley read out a press release that the Labour Group had issued that morning. The amendment read:

- The financial position of Shropshire Council, including the declaration of a financial emergency, the application to Government for emergency financial support and the ongoing risk of a Section 114 notice, and the potential implications for the continuity of local services in Shrewsbury.

- The outcomes and emerging themes from the public survey hosted on the Shrewsbury Town Council website seeking residents' general views on protecting local services. However, we agree that all future consultations on budgets and service delivery must contain full information of the consequences which any changes may have on the precept in the budget year ahead and into the medium term.

- Agree to do all within members powers to fill gaps in service delivery as a consequence of inadequate provision of Street Cleaning/Street Scene services, including street sweeping, litter picking and bin collection, from Shropshire Council.

However, members should not agree to the wholesale devolution proposals given the impact on residents regarding a doubled precept, the lack of preparedness and high risks involved.

- Agree to rapid review of our Stepping Up services to identify its successes in responding to street scene issues and identify how some enhancement to staffing and resources might remedy any significant deficit in overall Street Scene service delivery.

- Recommend to Full Council on 26th January that the precept increase of up to 25% to facilitate additional resources for the Stepping Up work and other budget additions, as recommended.

- Re-establish a Service Delivery Working Group comprising Group Leaders to continuously review Street Scene service delivery in Shrewsbury, examine any request for service devolution in other service areas, fully review experiences of devolution on a wide national/regional basis and further identify opportunities for localism-based initiatives.

Councillor Dartnall agreed with the proposed amendments from Councillor Mosley to the report. She was concerned about doubling the Precept. She said that consideration should be given to the medium-term impact on costs and that, although she was not wanting the Council to carry out all these services, she was hesitant about a wholescale leap without proper governance on all sides of the contract. Councillor Dartnall reiterated the strong concern expressed by residents in the survey i.e. no “paying twice.”

The amendment was put to the vote ahead of any further discussion on the substantive motion.

The amendment lost 2 votes for: 6 against.

Councillor Dean said that it was a leap of faith but that it was not necessarily of the Town Council’s making due to insufficient information from Shropshire Council. However, it was not unreasonable to request a fuller picture nearer to budget setting. The danger was that some services would collapse if the Town Council does not take this on now. Help for people with the cost of living to ameliorate the rise in Council Tax should be something to consider.

Councillor Wilson agreed that there would be some support for people struggling with the cost of living but added that this Town Council’s tax was the lowest in Shropshire. He felt that residents understood that these services costs money and it was time to take a measured risk.

Councillor Halliday replied that she was not sure what risk the Council was undertaking as she had seen no figures or forward projections, and that she was concerned about members’ ability to govern this, especially considering that this was taxpayers’ money. She believed that legitimate concerns were being expressed by members and that the Council should put this on hold for a year.

Councillor Vasmer agreed that the issue of risk was important but that members had to recognise the crisis that Shropshire Council was in and the consequences of services being reduced to the statutory minimum if the Town Council does not take on these services. Further investigations and the evaluation of risks could be undertaken at later meetings.

Councillor Jephcott said he was pleased with the survey and the number of responses and agreed that action should not be delayed. Councillor Bentick agreed with this and added that the residents of Shrewsbury had let the Council know what they want through democratic process and that this opportunity to significantly improve services should be seized.

Councillor Dartnall asked if the agreement with Shropshire Council was likely to be secure considering it might issue a Section 114. The Town Clerk replied that this is what made the situation urgent and that the Chief Executive of Shropshire Council had been informed that a confirmed formal contract was required.

Councillor Mosley was not opposed to taking on this work but that he believed a delay of a year would give the Council time to mitigate any risks. The Precept was increased last year to fund the Stepping Up Team, and this was to close the gaps in services. He suggested that the Team be enhanced and bolstered by to fill these additional gaps in services and noted that a cleaning machine had already been purchased. Councillor Mosley urged members to look at the options suggested in his amendment.

Councillor Wilson thanked all of the residents who had taken the time to complete the consultation. He said there had been a high level of response – particularly considering a similar survey was carried out a year ago. It was excellent to see support for the Stepping Up work done over the last 6-12 months and there were strong levels of support for action; particularly on street, but other services too. Members now had clear priorities from the public. The survey showed that it had a high level of trust in the Town Council to take on more and there was support for independent decision making. Councillor Wilson said he was confident that a very good understanding had been received of the views of Shrewsbury residents on these matters.

Councillor Halliday reiterated her concerns about working with such an unstable business partner as Shropshire Council, particularly in relation to its financial management and governance. Officers had not recognised Shropshire Council's significant governance problems. She said that councillors raising questions at this point was the responsible thing to do.

The Town Clerk responded that measurements in place were done on a worst-case scenario basis of 50% funding. A lot of work had been undertaken by officers on how the Town Council can successfully operationalise this service. Officers had met with members of Bridgwater Town Council for advice and any problems it encountered with a similar devolution of services as well as conversations with other rural councils.

Councillor Dean pointed out that the guardrail was that this service was a statutory one and if the Town Council found itself unable to delivery it then it could be returned to Shropshire Council. Devolution of this service would provide the Town Council with more control than if it were a contract.

Councillor Dartnall requested that an exempt agenda item be added to the next Full Council in order to discuss the projection of this project for this and next year.

Councillor Vasmer hoped that Shropshire Council would now be better controlled since a new governance had been elected. He supported this proposal for taking on this service believing that major improvements could be made to make the state of the town one to be proud of.

Councillor Halliday left the meeting.

RECOMMENDED:

That

(i) The report be noted.

(ii) Shropshire Council's financial position be noted, including the declaration of a financial emergency, the application to Government for emergency financial support and the ongoing risk of a Section 114 notice, and the potential implications for the continuity of local services in Shrewsbury.

(iii) The outcomes and emerging themes from the public survey hosted on the Shrewsbury Town Council website seeking residents' views on protecting local services be noted.

(iv) There be an agreement in principle to the devolution of Street Cleaning services, including street sweeping, litter picking and bin collection, from Shropshire Council to Shrewsbury Town Council, subject to satisfactory implementation planning and budget provision.

(v) The proposed implementation timetable to enable service commencement by 1 April be approved, including:
- **Setting the annual budget and precept at Full Council on 26 January; and**
- **Monthly updates to the Policy & Resources Committee to maintain Member oversight during the transition period.**

(vi) Delegated authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader of the Council be granted for the following:
- **Lead negotiations with the Leader and officers of Shropshire Council.**
- **Develop and implement the detailed service transition plan.**
- **Recruit staff and manage TUPE processes where applicable;**
- **Procure vehicles, plant, equipment and operational contracts;**
- **Negotiate and enter into the necessary legal agreements;**
- **Instruct and obtain specialist legal, HR and procurement advice; and**
- **Take all necessary operational decisions to ensure services are in place by 1 April.**

(vii) The strengthening of organisational capacity be approved, including:
- **Additional management and professional support;**
- **Increased customer services capacity;**
- **Short-term accommodation solutions where required;**
- **An overhaul of health and safety arrangements;**
- **Investment in CRM, reporting systems and operational infrastructure.**

(viii) The following further work be undertaken by officers:
- **Assess non-statutory services currently delivered in Shrewsbury by Shropshire Council;**

- **Evaluate the potential impact of service withdrawal in the event of a Section 114 notice; and**
- **Identify interim measures the Town Council may need to put in place during the next financial year.**

(ix) **The inclusion of budget provision or earmarked reserves be approved to enable the Town Council to respond swiftly to risks to other priority services not currently included within the Street Cleaning devolution proposals.**

(x) **Further engagement with key stakeholders, including the Shrewsbury Business Improvement District and other partners, be agreed to develop a shared understanding of future service priorities and opportunities for collaborative delivery.**

(xi) **The experience of other town councils, including Bridgwater Town Council be noted, and agree that learning from comparable authorities continues to inform Shrewsbury Town Council's approach to service devolution.**

65/25 BUDGET 2026/27

(i) Revenue Budget for 2026/27

Details of the draft 2026/27 budget had been circulated to members prior to the meeting for consideration and recommendation to Full Council on 26th January 2026.

The RFO introduced the forecast out-turn for the 2025/26 financial year first and compared it to the budget set.

Expenditure: There was more spent on Wages due to the employment of temporary staff for posts currently unfilled. Premises costs were a bit higher than expected. Costs for Grounds and Equipment & Machinery were similar, except for vehicle maintenance which had risen slightly. Under Printing, Telephones & Insurances, the RFO said that some costs had risen, eg insurance, and that Postage was higher due to the recent survey mailshot to residents. Under Members, Professional Costs & Events, the RFO noted the cost of the Internal Audit had risen more than expected. Capital & Other Costs were to reach £80K. A number of vehicles had been purchased and funds had been put into Reserves for elections and astro pitch maintenance.

Income: The RFO reported Income was slightly more than forecast. The SLA received from Shropshire Council was a lower figure than expected but Hanging Basket sales had exceeded what was expected. Also, on the Forecast was Commuted (S106)/Neighbourhood funds of £165,836. Looking at Interest Received, the RFO advised members that rates were decreasing.

The Forecast showed about £31,642 over budget.

Budget 2026/27. **Expenditure:** The RFO reported that the amount spent on Wages was increased due to the addition new posts (which had been agreed at a previous meeting). Premises Costs was set slightly higher than last year to take account of rate rises and the higher cost of non-commodities, e.g. gas and electricity. Grounds Costs and Equipment & Machinery Costs were to stay largely the same. Under Printing, Telephones & Insurances, Postage was set a little higher due to the possibility of further mailshots, as was Insurance due to the rise in costs. The budget for Computer/IT costs was also higher and there would be a number of new users. Members, Professional Costs & Events remained largely the same.

Councillor Mosley asked if it included devolution sums and the RFO said that it did not.

The RFO concluded by saying that the core cost base had risen by £422K and that therefore the Precept needed to rise to cover this notwithstanding other additions relating to the proposed devolution of services from Shropshire Council.

Budget 2026/27 Income: The RFO reported Income was projected to be similar to previous. Under Rents & Sports, the income expected for Open space – events/fairs were lower as there were fewer large events planned. Under SLA & Other Works, the RFO said he had included the statutory 50% minimum level of £923,771 for the Shropshire Council – SLA. Interest Received was also projected to be lower due to the falling interest rate.

Councillor Dean asked the specific costs of being involved with Britain in Bloom and where it sat on the budget. The RFO explained that it has a separate budget and that some sponsorship helps to cover costs. The Town Clerk added that since most of the work had been done in house that there was very little charged out.

Appendix A - Additional services and provision budget 2026/26: Councillors had received this budget prior to the meeting and it had formed part of the debate under Item 64/25.

The RFO explained that there were three strands to the proposed Precept increase: increases in expenditure, reduced income from Shropshire Council. The RFO noted again that he had missed £112K from Shropshire Council off the budget which brought the percentage increase to the Precept for 2026/27 down from 99/66% to 95%.

Operations Manager, Stuart Farmer, said that the budget was assuming a new 9-person team working 7 days per week, together with two road sweepers (1 large, 1 small) and 3 tipper trucks. Any side-loaders required would be hired initially but may be purchased in future.

Councillor Pardy left the meeting.

Operations Manager, Danny Powell, added that working 7 days a week would mean that bins and sweeping could be carried out at weekends, which was not being done currently. Fly-tipping would also be cleared. Shropshire Council had not supplied any indication of how many operatives and vehicles they had working in Shrewsbury. There was also no cover for holidays nor sickness and staff working at the weekends were working on an overtime basis.

Councillor Mosley questioned the number of road sweepers required as it had previously been 3 that were needed. Operations Manager, Stuart Farmer, said that the road sweeper manufacturer had visited Shrewsbury and had recommended that 2 would be sufficient. This was based on 2 sweeps per year, excepting the town centre which would be done on a daily basis.

The Deputy Town Clerk said that 5 new members of office staff were required due to the rise in the amount of calls the Town Council would receive, to help with CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system data input, and to provide support for human resource services and Health & Safety aspects. Additional office space was required. The Deputy Town Clerk had requested TUPE information, but the salaries of these staff were not known. There was a 30-day deadline to be given to TUPE staff. Work was ongoing within the SMT on the project plan for delivery of recruitment. Councillor Dean asked if she was confident that it covered the change management and the Deputy Town Clerk said it did but that it would not all be done by 1st April.

Operations Manager, Danny Powell, said that for areas like Castlefields, there would be a maildrop to residents asking them to remove cards for works like gulley emptying to be undertaken under a combined plan with other works. Councillor Mosley said that the specification was that streets outside of the Town Centre would be swept 4 times per year. Operations Manager, Stuart Farmer, said this issue would be revisited as officers had been working on a twice-yearly sweep. Councillor Mosley asked for written reports to be submitted for these works.

Councillor Jephcott asked about cycleways, and it was established that these would be included. The smaller sweeper would be used for cycleways and footpaths.

It was noted that the Additional services and provision budget included more items than the proposed devolved services etc CCTV. Councillor Wilson said that this would be split up so that it was clear what the budgets were for the devolution programme.

It was established that salaries and equipment would come within the £550K Street Scene expenditure budget. There was £300K put aside for CCTV - £40K for maintenance and £260K for monitoring. Councillor Mosley asked about this and that no paper on monitoring CCTV had been tabled.

The RFO went on to say that Play area replacement budget was £150K but this was likely to only replace 2 each year. For the protection of Shropshire Council services, £250K had been allocated. This was broken down into £40K to protect services like, for example, the Library and Museum, £150K for visioning projects, and the rest for any other services that might require assistance in 2026/27. Councillor Mosley was troubled that there had been no discussion regarding these allocations.

Councillor Wilson said that this budget was about putting into action the aspirations of this council, its residents, and the town. The past four years had seen a lot of work put into the visioning exercise which produced the Town Council's Corporate Plan. This plan was supported by the last council and this current one and it was time to put it into action.

He said that the largest item was for Street Cleaning and that discussions had taken a significant amount of time at this meeting. This draft budget was important in allowing the Town Council to prove its independence from Shropshire Council and act in the best interests of its residents. This budget had allocated funds to protect services which may come under threat from Shropshire Council's precarious financial position.

Councillor Wilson said that the draft proposal was to increase the Town Council Precept by £1.30 per week for a Band B household, bearing in mind that 71% of households in the town were Band A or Band B.

The consultation had shown that 79% of residents agreed with the statement that Public Services should be protected even if it costed more. Councillor Wilson said that this Draft

Budget for 2026/27 was a budget of action, and proposed the recommendations as set out in the report.

Councillor Dean recognised the need for clarity and that it may require separate votes on individual elements of the proposed budget. He recognised the frustration in officers having to ask for information from Shropshire Council. He wished to assure officers that what might have appeared as a grilling of them at this meeting was not a criticism of their work.

Councillor Mosley expressed his disappointment that there was a lack of clarity and he sought individual reports on:

- How the Council adds value
- Street Cleaning frequency
- Staffing & TUPE
- £300k for protecting CCTV
- £250k for protecting services
- Bin replacement programme

In seconding the budget Councillor Vasmer said he welcomed the debate on detail and look forward to greater detail as proposals move nearer to mobilisation. He thanked officers for the tremendous amount of work that had been done so far

RECOMMENDED:

That an Expenditure of £4,692,978 be set working on a Taxbase of 27713.12 requiring a Band D Precept of £169.34

66/25 PENSION VALUATION 2025

The RFO reported the Shropshire Pension Fund had received its triennial audit. The Shrewsbury Town Council part of the fund was fully funded and given a strong stock market as well as changes to auditing assumptions the future serve rate could be reduced from 19.6% to 17.6%. This meant that the annual contribution made by the Town Council could also reduce.

The RFO had reviewed the recommendations and recommended a 2% reduction in the contributions to 14%. This would result in a £90,000 reduction in pension premiums whilst reducing the risk of any surplus dilution from an increased number of staff into the workforce as well an inability to realise the revised assumptions.

RESOLVED:

That:

(i) The Triennial Report on the Pension Valuation be noted;

(ii) That an annual pension contribution of 14% be approved

67/25 FUNDING STRATEGY STATEMENT

The RFO presented the Funding Strategy Statement from the Shropshire Pension Funding. There was a requirement for the Town Council to give its view on proposals. The RFO recognised that it was a lengthy document. He had read through the document and considered the strategy as a very sensible way forward.

RECOMMENDED:

That Full Council supports the Shropshire Pension Fund Strategy Statement and communicates the fact to the fund accordingly.

68/25 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked members of the public that had logged in. All papers relating to this meeting could be found on the website www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk and the minutes would appear in draft on the website within the next month. He thanked Councillors and all staff involved in the meeting.