

Shropshire Councillor Report August/September 2025

The Leader's first 100 days

Tuesday 2 September 2025 marked 100 days since Heather Kidd became Shropshire Council's new leader following the elections in May.

During this time, the focus has been on three key priorities:

- Fixing more potholes and improving the state of Shropshire's 3,200 miles of roads.
- Improving customer service across the council, making it more responsive and easier to do business with.
- Better and closer working with town and parish councils who can help take on some service services from Shropshire Council or may be better placed find simple solutions to issues in their area.

Some really great progress has been seen in these areas already. To date:

- 7,970 potholes have been filled– with a 55% reduction in the number of potholes outstanding, compared to the same period last year.
- An additional highways team has been introduced to tackle potholes – with the team repairing 564 potholes since the end of June.
- A major scheme to repair and future-proof the A488 Hope Valley has been carried out following five landslips.
- In-person customer service has been rolled-out, to more places across the county including rural areas like Bishop's Castle. This is in addition to the five Shropshire Local sites already in place.
- The average wait time on the phone when people call our customer services has been reduced. Over the past 10 weeks, the average wait time for calls to be answered has been under eight minutes.

The Council has engaged with town and parish councils across the county, receiving over 130 responses to calls for information and signing Memorandum of Understanding's (MOUs) with two town councils, Shifnal Town Council and Shrewsbury Town Council setting out how the council is going to work more closely with them in the future

Shropshire Council's Financial Position

The financial position of the council in the short and long term remains highly challenging. There is a projected overspend of £35.169 million by the end of the 2025/26 financial year. That is £889,000 above present financial resources and the authority could be in an illegal financial position by year end unless significant action is taken to ensure the financial survival of the Council in the current year. This will require a reduction in all non-essential spending. Unexpected increases occurred during July, meaning situation got worse. Added to this many of the identified savings in the budget set by the Conservative administration whilst in power have not been delivered, therefore there was again an overspend last year of just over £41m.

Nature Recovery Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin

The draft Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has been published and entered the public consultation phase with a focus on two key resources:

- A strategy document outlining county-wide priorities for nature recovery.
- An interactive map showing where nature is thriving and where targeted action could deliver the greatest benefits for wildlife, water, soil and climate resilience.

Residents, landowners, community groups, environmental organisations and businesses are encouraged to explore the proposals and contribute their local insight. Visit the map and draft strategy: www.shropshire.gov.uk/lnrs

Priorities for Transformation & Improvement Overview & Scrutiny Committee

The Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the effectiveness and delivery of the Council's Improvement and Transformation programmes, overall Council Performance (including financial, quality and activity), and the discharge of its corporate and strategic services and governance arrangements including; Finance, ICT, HR, OD, Legal and Member Services. This committee has drawn up its first priorities. Task & finish groups will be recruited to examine:

- The Shropshire Partnership with the aim to have recommendations to cabinet by November
- Review of scrutiny and committee structures
- The process for distributing CIL
- Review of the budget & Medium-Term Financial Strategy

Footpath Resurfacing Work

Ten stretches of public footpaths across Shropshire are being resurfaced in the coming weeks. The work is being carried out by Multevo on behalf of Shropshire Council's outdoor partnerships team – and is concentrating on the footpaths most in need of repair.

Shrewsbury Sports Village Plans

A planning application to transform Shrewsbury Sports Village in Sundorne has been submitted. These plans, which were given the go-ahead by the previous administration last September (2024), have been shaped following a public to include a range of new fitness & pool facilities. Plans for the Sports Village also include making it an all-electric operation. This will mean that if approved, the centre's existing gas boilers will be decommissioned to make a step change in the council's journey to being net-zero.

Plans are available to view in the reception area of the Sports Village or on the [council's website here](#). The planning application reference is 25/02658/FUL.

Education Services:

Back to School

New cohort year, Shropshire Council will be delivering better communication to parents and carers. The new administration understands that for some students the start of September is something they look forward to, but for others this period of change and settling back in to school can feel like a challenge. In our Education Access Service, we understand that these worries can be significant for a student and their family, so we are here to help and support and our team are happy to offer advice,

The start of the new academic year is a crucial time to attend school, settling in and developing good routines as well as meeting new teachers and seeing friends. Even a few days' absence can significantly impact on a student's outcomes and future opportunities.

Shropshire Council has now invested in support to help students and families with positive attendance and there have been excellent outcomes, with attendance in Shropshire at 93.3% for the last academic year (above the national figure). We are increasing our support for schools this year with new opportunities, training, and resources - and we are aspirational towards even better outcomes for students this year. Every day in school and being on time counts.

Free School Meals, maximising free school meal take-up by eligible families.

Free school meals are available to pupils who attend maintained schools, academies and free schools (state-funded schools), who are in receipt of - or whose parents or carers receive - certain benefits. Further information can be found on the council's website at <https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/free-school-meals/>

Parents and carers in Shropshire who are eligible for free school meals are urged to apply for the scheme and ensure that their children receive the support to which they are entitled.

All children in reception, year 1 and year 2 are automatically entitled to have a free school meal, regardless of their family income through universal infant free school meals. However, some children in these year groups may also be eligible for benefits-related free school meals, which can bring additional benefits for both the pupil and the school.

Free school meals can save families more than £495 a year per child, which breaks down to approximately £13 per week over an academic school year.

Shropshire Local will be available to help parents/carers access the online application for free school meals. Parents/carers can visit the Shropshire Local offices or contact them for assistance with the application process.

Youth Provision

The Liberal Democrat administration have welcomed the news that the authority has now been chosen as one of 12 councils selected to take part in the pilot, meaning Shropshire is

one of a small number of councils nationally leading the way in rebuilding more inclusive, youth-led service provision.

Through the pilot the government is investing £8 million over 2025/26 to help ensure a local youth offer which addresses the needs of young people and supports government priorities.

The pilot will be delivered across 2025 to 2026, with all activity ending by 31 March 2026. This is excellent news and recognises the council's renewed ambition and readiness to transform youth services across the county.

Act to reduce the backlog of SEND assessments, including a transparent audit of the current situation.

Since the election of May 25, we have established a permanent team of EHCP Case Officers, Senior Case Officers and Team Manager, the first time since 2020. We also have a fixed term dedicated team of 3 EHCP Case Officers and a Senior Case Officer working to update EHC plans following Annual Reviews. In addition to this we have increased capacity by 3 additional EHCP Case Officers from September 25, to support the sustained high level of requests for EHC plans.

Children's Services Ofsted Inspection

Ofsted inspectors have rated Shropshire Council children's services 'outstanding' - the highest score that can be achieved.

The recent inspection held over a three-week period, included detailed case work analysis, data review, and interviews with partners, children, and families, and assessed the service across four key areas including:

- The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families – outstanding
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection – outstanding
- The experiences and progress of children in care – outstanding
- The experiences and progress of care leavers – good
- Overall effectiveness – outstanding

This achievement reflects significant progress since the overall good judgement secured in 2022 and Ofsted focused visits undertaken in 2023 and 2024. It also builds on the current ratings of six children's homes rated good and outstanding.

Casework Issues

Casework in August and September has been focused on road maintenance complaints, flooding issues, overgrown trees, speeding, road adoption and planning enforcement cases and the lack of enforcement, as well as following up on existing casework and the back log of issues across all parishes. As always, I am happy to help with casework where I can.

Road closures:

Road Closure: Unnamed road, Petton

Start Date: 15th September 2025

End Date: 19th September 2025

Purpose: Road Closure - Air Valve install

Works Promoter: Severn Trent Water

Works Promoter Ref: LB7012204-000014015594-01

Enforcement pattern for Unnamed road, Petton:

All the time