

Shropshire Councillor Report- September 2025

Finance

Shropshire Council is now facing the prospect of declaring a “financial emergency” as it battles a projected overspend of more than £35m by the end of the 2025/26 financial year. Without urgent action, the authority risks triggering a Section 114 notice, which would effectively hand control of the council’s finances to government-appointed commissioners. That would result in deep cuts to local services and take years to recover from. The current administration has stressed that it has already taken steps to reduce spending, but far more drastic measures are now needed to balance the books by March. Stopping all non-essential spending is the only way to prevent financial collapse and safeguard Shropshire’s future.

It must be made clear; however, that this crisis is not of the current administration’s making but rather the result of two decades of financial mismanagement under the previous administration. The new administration is working urgently to stabilise finances, but the damage caused by two decades of failed budgets means Shropshire faces a long and difficult road to recovery.

Nature Recovery Strategy

The draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin has now been published for consultation. It sets out county-wide priorities and includes an interactive map to highlight where action will most benefit wildlife, water, soil and climate. Residents, landowners and community groups are encouraged to explore the proposals and contribute their insight.

Transformation & Improvement Committee

The Transformation and Improvement Overview and Scrutiny Committee is overseeing council performance and governance. Its initial priorities include a review of the Shropshire Partnership, scrutiny and committee structures, the process for distributing Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), and the Council’s budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, with recommendations on some areas expected in November.

Highways & Leisure

Resurfacing work is underway on ten stretches of public footpaths across the county, targeting those most in need of repair. Plans have also been submitted

for the redevelopment of Shrewsbury Sports Village, which include new fitness and pool facilities and a move to an all-electric operation, supporting the council's net-zero commitments.

Children's Services

Ofsted judged Shropshire's Children's Social Care as Outstanding following its July 2025 inspection, a result that reflects the dedication and hard work of the council's social work teams. The council's Virtual School will also be celebrating the achievements of looked-after students at a special event on 20 September 2025.

Education & Schools

The new academic year has started with a campaign to support attendance, with Shropshire's attendance rate already above the national average at 93.3%. Efforts are also underway to increase free school meal uptake, which can save families over £495 per child per year, with Shropshire Local offering help with applications. Work continues with Academy Trusts to raise standards across the county, and additional staff have been recruited to reduce the backlog of SEND assessments.

Youth Services

Shropshire has been chosen as one of just 12 councils nationally to take part in a government-funded pilot to rebuild more inclusive, youth-led provision. The pilot will run through 2025/26 with £8m of funding and will support the transformation of youth services across the county.

Bayston Hill- Local Report

A49

Over the last few months, I have been working closely with residents from the cottages on the A49 to address longstanding concerns around access to their back gardens. At present, residents can only use their front doors, meaning many have to cross the very busy road to reach their gardens, causing them huge problems. I have been engaging with both property owners and landlords, as well as liaising with the brewery, to find a resolution. The deeds indicate residents do have rights of access, and I will continue to update you on progress as we move forward.

School Road Traffic Safety

At the beginning of the summer holidays, I worked with Marston's to secure a 30-minute grace period at school drop-off and pick-up times at The Beeches Pub carpark. This measure will help improve safety for children both being transported and those crossing the road on foot, by easing parking pressures and improving visibility. The Parish Council supported this initiative and also wrote to the brewery. I am pleased to say the brewery responded positively and confirmed this arrangement. Additionally, I have been working with our local SNT and our PCSOs will be monitoring the area for road traffic safety.

Road Traffic Safety

On road traffic safety, I have been working with Rod Lake from West Mercia's Road Safety Team. I showed him the Lyth Hill Road site and he subsequently submitted comments on the portal, raising several road safety concerns. Speed enforcement has also been stepped up on the A49. In addition, I completed a walk along the A49 to identify problems with debris on the footways and I am pleased to report that the paths through the village are now scheduled for street cleaning.

Land West Lyth Hill Road

On 19th August, the planning application for land west of Lyth Hill Road was considered at committee. Originally, no site visit was planned, but I pressed the planning officer to ensure one was held, as I felt it was vital that members fully understood the site. Both Bayston Hill Parish Council and I spoke against the application. In an unusual outcome, the committee went against the officer's recommendation for approval, ultimately deferring the decision following advice from the manager of housing development, Charlotte Morrison. Redrow have indicated they may appeal for non-determination, but they may also return with revised proposals.

In response to this experience, I have written to the Cabinet requesting that site visits be arranged for all controversial or significant planning applications, in line with LGA best practice. I have also asked that local elected members should always be invited. In addition, adjacent landowners/homeowners should be invited, in accordance with Shropshire Council's policies. In this case, I had to invite myself and also notified neighbouring landowners of the visit.

Finally, I attended my first Full Council meeting, where I spoke about the importance of ensuring residents' voices are properly heard in shaping the Local Plan. I am also hopeful that Bayston Hill's Neighbourhood Plan will feed into this process and help strengthen the influence of local priorities.