

We have regularly provided the Town and Parishes with written reports usually placed on their web sites and other communications. Rather than repeat what has been said during the year there is a couple of areas to update on but then we wish to share with you the future of where Shropshire Council is going and how it will transform to reduce spending by £51 million over the next twelve months.

Before we introduce the Shropshire Plan we will just comment on a couple of key areas.

Highways are improving from where they were two years ago, there will always be constant maintenance. However the unclassified lanes are becoming a major issue and how we finance the repair and restructure of the thousands of kilometres of lanes not built for the current style or volume of traffic compounded with drainage issues from fields is becoming an ever increasing burden. We will be lobbying Government for further road funding for rural areas.

In previous years and before the Pandemic we were just on the cusp of getting Fairer funding for Rural areas which would have maintained our financial future. Since the pandemic it has become apparent that the Government is not minded to give fairer funding to the Rural areas due to fiscal restraints. The Council soon realised as this was no longer on the table that it would have to take matters into its own hands and become more sustainable away from government. Un like the NHS we are not allowed to go over budget or over drawn and have to bring a balanced budget year on year otherwise the Government bring in Commissioners to run the Council. This nationally is becoming a challenge to all Local Authorities.

We have been engaged with The Local Government Association LGA to look over our proposals and plans to put the council on a firm financial footing for the future and change the way we do things once and for all and then hopefully if we become more self sufficient we will no longer be constantly having to change year on year which we have done for the past 10 plus years. The LGA have confirmed the Council is financially very well run and fully compliant but recognises the challenge of our spend reduction.

We therefore now present The Shropshire Plan

The Shropshire Plan will help us to achieve the £51 million spending reductions we must find by 2024 – while transforming services so that more people live their best lives.

Why we need the Shropshire Plan.

We need the Shropshire Plan because if we don't change – and quickly – we will fail in our responsibilities to our residents. If we get it right, we will become a council that transforms itself to transform the lives of the people we serve: we will balance our budget; we will be ready for the future; and most of all, we will be able to help more people live their best lives.

Right now, virtually every local authority in the country is under immense pressure to balance budgets whilst continuing to provide the services that are demanded by law, and expected by residents. It is a very, very difficult challenge, and requires councils to take tough and in many cases unpopular decisions. The simple fact is that councils face a moment of crisis: the fallout from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic; the cost-of-living crisis; Russia's illegal war in Ukraine; inflation that has been running at a forty-year high. All of these issues – combined with all the business-as-usual pressures of rising demand for many of our services – are putting a huge strain on council services nationally; for us in Shropshire, that means finding ways to reduce our spending by £51 million.

What is the Shropshire Plan?

Every organisation needs to have a plan or it will fail. This is as true of councils as it is of businesses. The Shropshire Plan is, quite simply, to think, act and work differently to make the difference we all want to make. The Shropshire Plan unites all of us around a shared purpose: to help the people of Shropshire live their best lives. We will do this by aligning our services and our ambitions to achieve the Four Healthies: Healthy Organisation; Healthy Economy; Healthy Environment; and Healthy People.

The aim of the Shropshire Plan: Shropshire living the best life.

As you know, Shropshire Council is a complex organisation of over 3,000 people. We care for vulnerable children and adults. We fill potholes and build roads. We help local businesses thrive. We make local democracy happen. We empty bins and protect our shared environment for future generations. And much, much more besides. But underlying everything we do is one shared purpose: to empower everyone in Shropshire to live their very best lives. This is what we do, and why we all joined the council. We came here to make a positive difference to people's lives. Our purpose is encapsulated in a single phrase: **Shropshire living the best life.**

What does Shropshire living the best life really mean? Independence and dignity.

Our aim is empower everyone in Shropshire to live their best lives. But what does that really mean? We believe that everyone, no matter their situation, deserves every chance to live fulfilling and healthy lives. The Shropshire Plan encourages us all to think how our services help people to live as independently as possible, and reducing dependency on council services. The Shropshire Plan encourages services that are **good for our residents, and good for the council.**

What do we mean by services that are good for our residents and good for the council?

Naturally, we all want to help our residents live independent, dignified and fulfilled lives. But why is that good for the council as well? By encouraging and working towards independence, we reduce dependency on council services, which are increasingly expensive – we must find new ways of working that value and respect our residents, and which offer excellent quality and excellent value, too. This means reducing our spending – but improving outcomes for our residents.

What is at stake if we don't cut costs? The very future of the council.

The simple fact is that we need to find efficiencies. If we don't we will fail to help our residents, particularly the most vulnerable members of our communities. If we fail to successfully balance our budget, auditors appointed by central government WILL find the £51 million we need to save – but without sensitivity to the issues and people of Shropshire.

The good news: it is possible to reduce spending and transform lives for the better.

Right now and for several years, our teams have been helping people live their best lives, while reducing dependency on council services. These include the lead TOMs (Target Operating Models) projects, such as Stepping Stones, the Residential Care project, 2 Carers in a Car, Getting Leadership Right, and others.

What are the Four Healthies? Our mission to achieve our vision of Shropshire living the best life.

The Four Healthies: Healthy People; Healthy Economy; Healthy Organisation; and Healthy Environment. On the Shropshire council website you will find more information on 'how' we will achieve our vision of Shropshire living the best life, by delivering services that are good for our residents, and good for the council we need to be.

The Shropshire Plan empowers us all to think, act and work differently to make the difference we all want to make.

The Shropshire Plan is less about targets on spreadsheets than the attitudes we all bring to work. It's about changing the way we work: challenging ourselves; avoiding the 'we've always done it this way' mentality; breaking down barriers and working collaboratively; and taking pride in what we do.

The Shropshire Plan in brief

- We all want to help the 343,000 people of Shropshire live their best lives.
- That means delivering services that empower independence, rather than dependency.
- We'll do this by transforming our services, so that they are good for our residents, and good for the council we need to be.
- Which means we need to think, act and work differently
- So that we achieve the Four Healthies:
 - Healthy People
 - Healthy Economy
 - Healthy Environment
 - Healthy Organisation

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