

December 2024 Report

Healthy People Healthy Environment Healthy Economy Healthy Organisation

Finance

The current budget of the Council at the end of quarter two stands at a projected overspend of £35 million against a reserves position of £35 million. This is slightly better than reported at the end of quarter one and with six months gone we are more confident of the robustness of the figures. This is still not great but at the time of writing we still have over 4 months and spend of £172 million in budget unspent to which we can look to improve the situation. In brief we are still sustainable but still on a very bumpy road. I am confident The Council will sustain its financial position going forward.

Precept and budget for 25/26

In December we will release the Financial Strategy for 25/26 -29/30. This will include a proposed increase in Council Tax of 4.99%. This along with other savings requirements for the next financial year which amount to £20 million will be out for consultation around the 7th December for 6 weeks before we finalise the budget following receipt of the Government grant which is expected on the 19th December. Please engage with the consultation as there will be changes that may affect you.

Local Council precepts we know will be set in December /January and we would urge all Councils to be minded they may have the opportunity to take on services in the next financial year and therefore it may be prudent dependent on reserves to raise local precepts if they feel they would like to maintain services locally that are currently provided by Shropshire Council which are not Statutory. These MAY include Environmental maintenance grants, Street Scene, supporting local facilities. The details are being looked at and more will become clear in the coming months. We are already having conversations around the larger market towns on how services can be devolved to them and that will hopefully be rolled out across the county on a case by case basis.

Devolution

We are awaiting the Local Government paper to be launched on the future of Devolved Combined Authorities. We are led to believe we will be mandated to work with other Councils and become a Mayoral body for the government to work with and we await to find out with whom are area will be evolved.

Fly Tipping

Sadly, fly tipping remains a scourge of modern society, and quiet rural areas attract fly tippers. If you would like to report an incident of fly-tipping, you can do so via FixMyStreet mobile App: FixMyStreet (shropshire.gov.uk). In order to reduce fly tipping opportunities, consider promoting the following:

Follow the S.C.R.A.P Code to ensure waste is correctly disposed of:

- Suspect all waste carriers; do not let them take your waste unless they can prove that they are legitimate. A legitimate waste carrier should be happy to answer reasonable questions.

- Check their waste carrier's registration details. These can be verified by checking the Environment Agency website or by calling 03708 506 506. Make a note of the registration details of the vehicle used to remove your waste.
- Refuse unexpected offers to have any rubbish taken away. If you suspect that someone you have spoken to is disposing of waste illegally, report their name and vehicle registration to the Environment Agency.
- Ask what will happen to your rubbish and seek evidence that it will be disposed of appropriately.
- Paperwork should be obtained. Make sure you get a full receipt and waste transfer note for your waste removal. This should give a description of the waste and provide the waste carrier's licence number and contact details.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

A draft action plan for (spreadsheet) for the Cleobury Mortimer Place based Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has been circulated for the community's consideration, comment, and agreement. The draft action plan has been developed from the survey data presented, the group discussions and feedback on the data presented, and local insight and intelligence

The intention of the Cleobury Mortimer and surrounding area place-based needs assessment has always been and remains a collaborative and whole system venture to help improve and strengthen the health and wellbeing of all Place Plan residents. Only by partners and communities continuing to work together the agreed actions be moved forward.

The next steps will be to:

- Check and agree the *starting point for the draft Cleobury Mortimer Action plan*. This can be combined with other action plans.
- Organise or use an existing working group to discuss and move actions forward.

If you wish to review the spreadsheet please contact one of us and we will forward it.

Please email Amanda.Cheeseman@shropshire.gov.uk by Friday 6th December with your comments and amendments for the draft action plan.

Highways and Potholes

Latest figures show that the average cost to Shropshire Council of repairing a pothole has fallen by 66% in the past four years, and is now below the national average – as well as a big fall in the number of defects on A and B roads.

This does seem to support the value of Shropshire Council's new hybrid 'mixed economy' model of highways maintenance – which Andy Wilde has explained when visiting Parishes. This model sees some work being carried out in-house by the Council and larger-scale work being carried out by its contractor, Kier.

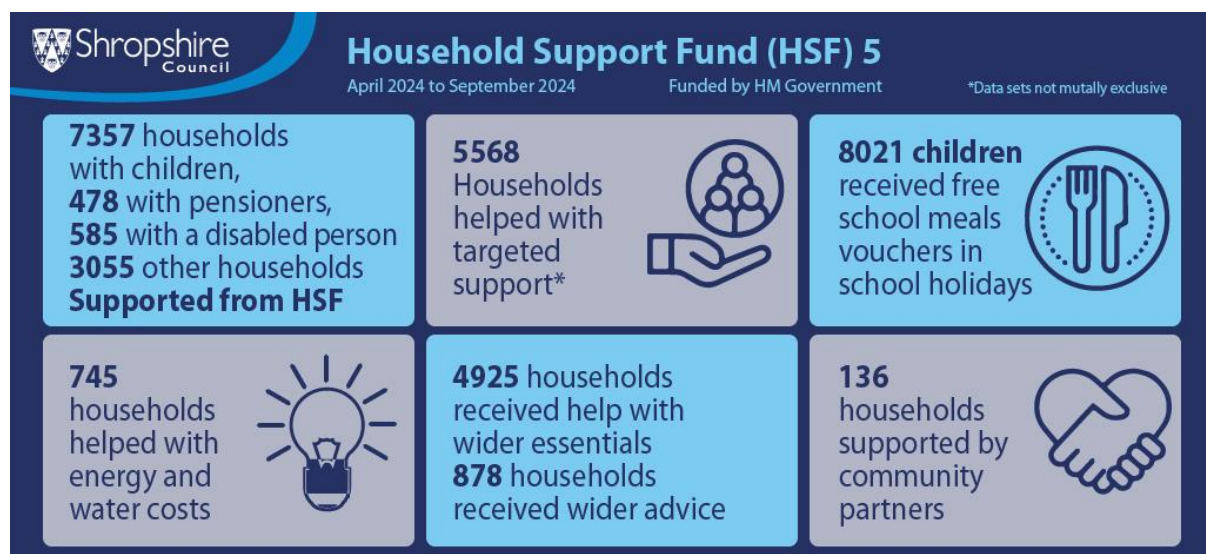
One of the most recent service changes has seen responsibility for defect repairs on A and B roads come back under Shropshire Council's full control. Since 1 April 2024, this has led to a 42% reduction in defect numbers on the council's A and B roads.

On other pothole issues, we are well aware that there is a view that pothole repairs ie when the Council sends out a contractor for quick fixes (a pothole order), are not thoroughly done. Basically, the complaints have underlined the contractor's failure to clean debris from a pothole before spreading in the tarmac – meaning that the fix is far too temporary.

We have tried to get to the bottom of this ie by querying whether there is adequate supervision when a contractor is tasked with filling a range of potholes (pothole order). Is quantity overcoming the need for quality? We have not received the level of clarity that we would want regarding supervision. Consequently, we can only now recommend that Town/Parish Clerks make specific (quoting FMS references) complaints to the Council's Interim Reputation & Engagement Officer Highways (Laura.Howells.shropshire.gov.uk) where there is a belief (photo evidence would assist) that the debris wasn't cleared before the pothole was 'repaired'. Hopefully this will enable Laura to build an evidence base that could be used to challenge particular contractors / Highways gangs.

Household Welfare Support Fund (HSF)

The following graph illustrates how many households were supported from the last round of HSF.



Household Support Fund success April 2024-September 2024

If you are approached by anyone in your Community for assistance please contact us and we will be able to sign post to potential funding.

130 Years of Parish Councils

Parish Councils were established in 1894, basically wrapping up all the various local bodies that managed local affairs eg the Vestry Committee. Women could vote and stand for election. We found the cartoon in a contemporary Punch – the new elector has an apple that says 'power'!!



Cllrs Gwilym Butler and Simon Harris
Cleobury Mortimer Division