

Shropshire Councillor Report-23rd March 2026

Local Update

This report provides an update on recent work and local issues. A significant part of my work as Shropshire Councillor continues to involve supporting residents with individual casework across the villages.

It has also been helpful to have the Parish Council Chairman attend my two most recent councillor surgeries. Working together in this way supports community cohesion and allows local issues and casework to be discussed collaboratively.

Frog and Toad Patrol – Lower Pulley Lane

Some months ago Anne-Mari Gordon approached me to ask whether it would be possible to source frog and toad patrol warning signs for Lower Pulley Lane, where amphibian casualties had been reported during migration season.

Although our local Highways technician had not previously dealt with such a request, he was very supportive of the idea. I am pleased that I have recently been able to secure the signage and deliver it to Anne-Mari.

Anne-Mari has now established a local Frog and Toad Patrol, helping amphibians safely cross the road during their spring migration to breeding ponds. Anyone interested in getting involved can volunteer through the Froglife “Toads on Roads” project.

Rea Brook Corridor

With the current Pulley Lane planning application being considered, Emma Plover recently organised a walk exploring the Rea Brook corridor.

This provided an opportunity to learn more about the plants, trees and wildlife within the area, and Emma shared valuable knowledge about the ecological importance of the river corridor.

Wildflower Verge Project

There is encouraging progress with the wildflower verge project. Following the preparation work last year, small shoots are now beginning to appear.

If the project proves successful, it is hoped that the scheme can be extended to other verges within the village. There may also be an opportunity to arrange further talks locally with Janet Cobb from the Restoring Shropshire Verges Project, who has been very supportive of this initiative.

A49 Resurfacing and Community Grant

The recent resurfacing works on the A49 have inevitably caused disruption locally. It has also been recognised that Bayston Hill often bears the brunt of closures and diversion routes when works take place on this strategic road.

Route Manager Joe Walmsley contacted me to make me aware of a £10,000 community grant that might be available. I felt that this funding would be most beneficial if directed through the Parish Council.

Our Parish Clerk, Julie, prepared an excellent round of applications and I am pleased that the funding has now been secured. The grant will be used to replace the inclusive roundabout in the village play park, which will be a valuable improvement for children and families.

Cadent Gas Works and Rat-Running

As many residents will know, several of the gas mains in the village require replacement. Recently Cadent Gas worked with National Highways in an attempt to carry out some of their work while the A49 resurfacing was taking place.

Unfortunately, the work had to be abandoned part way through due to unexpected issues with the type of pipework in the ground.

During that period there were significant problems with rat-running along Lyth Hill, which caused considerable disruption for residents. I spent much of that week speaking with villagers who experienced vehicles driving across lawns, damage to a wall and several incidents of road rage. The narrow road between Lyth Hill and the A49 is simply not designed for that level of traffic.

Throughout this period I remained in regular contact with Cadent, raising residents' concerns. The company will need to return to complete aspects of the A49 gas works in the future. I have received assurances from the project leader that communication will be significantly improved next time and that we will be consulted in advance on how best to prevent similar levels of rat-running.

I will continue to liaise with Cadent regarding the remaining works and will keep residents informed when they return to complete them.

Lyth Hill Road Works

Shropshire Council Highways has advised that carriageway works will take place on Lyth Hill Road, between the end of Lyth Hill Road and Lyth Farm Junction with the A49.

The works are scheduled to take place from Thursday 26 March to Thursday 2 April, between 7am and 5pm on weekdays.

To allow the works to be carried out safely there will be a temporary road closure, with a signed diversion route in place. Advance warning signs will be installed prior to the works starting.

I have spoken with residents along this road and the news of these works has been very warmly welcomed.

Parking Concerns – Beeches Road

Concerns have been raised regarding parking along Beeches Road.

The main issue relates to visibility for pedestrians and drivers, particularly where parked vehicles can restrict sightlines at junctions.

Local enforcement officers have therefore been patrolling the area to monitor the situation, ensuring parking is safe and advising drivers where necessary.

Ian, landlord of The Beeches, has kindly reminded residents that visitors are welcome to use the pub car park, with a 30-minute grace period.

He has also advised that in the afternoons, when the pub is open, residents are welcome to go inside and register their number plate, and if anyone receives a parking notice in error and directs it through him, he will do his best to have it rescinded.

Shropshire Council Update

Council Budget, Council Tax and Exceptional Financial Support (EFS)

Shropshire Council has recently set its budget for the coming year, alongside an increase in Council Tax of 8.99%, which comes into effect from 1 April 2026.

The council faces significant financial pressures. The previous administration, which had been in control of the authority since the creation of the unitary council in 2009 (and before that the County Council), left a substantial gap in the budget and had already used most reserves to balance previous budgets.

A number of factors have contributed to the current financial position over recent years, including:

- Council Tax not being increased for six years, leaving the budget approximately £26 million short this year
- Around £51 million spent on shopping centre investments
- The North West Relief Road, where £54.4 million of funding had been secured but costs rose dramatically from £87 million to an estimated £215 million
- Significant use of consultants, including WSP (£25 million) in relation to the relief road
- PwC consultancy contracts totalling £6.2 million, now estimated closer to £11 million
- Weak procurement and contract management arrangements
- Reductions in staff in key departments such as Council Tax collection, legal services and finance
- Roads remaining unadopted for up to ten years
- Reductions in planning policy staff contributing to the withdrawal of the Local Plan
- Major projects with high consultant costs and limited accountability
- The relocation from Shirehall being poorly managed and still unfinished

Government funding for Shropshire Council is forecast to reduce significantly over the next three years, which further increases the financial challenge.

What the Council Is Doing

The administration has begun a number of measures to stabilise the council's finances:

- Cutting non-essential services
- Reviewing contracts and strengthening procurement and contract management
- Pausing major capital projects including the Sports Village

- Reducing use of consultants
- Working in partnership with other organisations
- Using more accurate financial monitoring based on actual figures
- Returning staff to departments responsible for income generation
- Establishing an Improvement Board to oversee progress

Exceptional Financial Support (EFS)

To legally set a balanced budget the council has also been granted Exceptional Financial Support from government. This operates like a loan or overdraft facility which must be repaid with interest.

The council is expected to borrow around:

- £71 million this year
- £121 million next year

Council Tax Comparisons

Band D Council Tax comparisons:

- Herefordshire – £2,067.63
- Cheshire West – £2,076.79
- Cheshire East – £1,975.95
- Shropshire – £1,969.09
- Northumberland – £2,382.00

What the Increase Means

Most homes in Shropshire fall within Band B. For these properties the increase equates to approximately £12.63 per month, or about £3.16 per week.

Every 1% rise in Council Tax raises just over £2 million for services. The 8.99% rise raises more than £19 million to help address the financial gap.

Support for Residents

Residents who may struggle to pay can access support including:

- Spreading payments over 12 months instead of 10
- Council Tax reductions for low-income households, single residents and some disabled households
- Financial help through the Household Support Fund, which becomes the Crisis Resilience Fund in April 2026

Further information can be found on the Shropshire Council website under Council Tax Assistance.

Highways and Potholes

There has been a sharp rise in potholes across Shropshire following recent wet and freezing weather.

In January 2026 alone, 2,113 potholes were reported compared with 1,216 in January last year – an increase of 77%.

Since May last year:

- Over 25,000 potholes have been repaired across the county
- That averages more than 595 repairs every week

To respond to the increase:

- A dedicated rural pothole team has been created
- Three additional repair teams have been formed
- Night-time working has increased

Shropshire Council maintains over 3,200 miles of road, one of the largest networks in England, while receiving relatively low funding per mile.

The council continues to invest in preventative work such as surface dressing and resurfacing.

Residents can report potholes using FixMyStreet, via the council website, or by calling 0345 678 9006.

Finally, there is now a 12-week grace period for all Blue Badge renewals across Shropshire Council land. This means badges can be displayed up to 12 weeks after expiry.