

CHESWARDINE

PARISH COUNCIL

www.cheswardineparishcouncil.org.uk - clerk@cheswardineparishcouncil.org.uk

Attendance

Chairman:	Cllr J Hislop
Councillors:	Cllr N Stallard, Cllr I Jacobson, Cllr S Lewis, Cllr N Partridge, Cllr M Pound, Cllr A Thomson
Also Present:	Cllr Bentley, attending in his capacity as both a member of the Parish Council and as the Unitary Authority Ward Councillor.
Apologies:	Cllr B Maskell
Not in attendance:	None
Clerk:	Mr Wayne Salisbury
Other:	None
Public:	None

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Cheswardine Parish Council held at the Parish Hall on Tuesday 21st July 2026

Meeting started at 7:00 p.m.

1. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr B Maskell

2. Declarations of Interest and Dispensation Considerations

- Cllr Bentley declared an interest in item 12, authorisation of payments.
- Cllr Bentley declared an interest relating to his role as a Unitary Councillor for Shropshire Council.
- No dispensations were requested or granted.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 16th June 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. Policing Matters

a) To receive a report from the local PCSO and neighbourhood policing team.

Representatives from the police were not in attendance.

Cllr Bentley reported that, following contact from a resident, he had raised a suspected hare coursing incident at the eastern end of the village with the police rural crime team. Hare coursing signage has since been displayed in the area, with additional signage available for further use.

The Chair confirmed that the Clerk's response to SALC on policing matters raised at the June meeting, including hare coursing, remains outstanding and will be sent shortly.

5. Public Participation

There were no members of the public in attendance.

6. Shropshire Unitary Councillor's report

Cllr Bentley shared a report with members ahead of the meeting, which is included in the appendix to these minutes on pages 957 - 959.

Cllr Bentley shared the following specific updates.

- Cllr Bentley advised members that on 15th July 2026 Shropshire Council received a Notice of Best Value from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Shropshire is one of three councils under such a notice, alongside Basildon and Somerset. Three civil servants have been assigned to work

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alongside the Council for a period of 12 months, during which time the Council is required to demonstrate that the necessary changes are being made at the pace expected by Government.

- Cllr Bentley reported that the Council has been granted an overdraft facility of £121 million for the current year and that £90 million has been drawn to date, with £30 million of savings already identified. Every £1 million borrowed represents approximately £100,000 per year in debt repayment over a 20-year period.
- That devolution will see some functions being transferred to parish level, with looking after grit bins given as an example.
- A programme of senior officer recruitment is underway.
- Shire Hall is to be sold and the Council will not undertake demolition, which will be a matter for the purchaser.
- The Bus Route 64 service between Market Drayton and Shrewsbury will continue on subsidy, while the Park and Ride link is to be withdrawn as part of addressing a £1.2 million funding gap in bus services.
- On matters specific to Cheswardine, Cllr Bentley confirmed that a request for a mirror has been submitted.

The Chair asked whether the three civil servants assigned by Whitehall were monitoring the Council or providing advice.

Cllr Bentley replied that their role is to ensure that everything is being submitted as required and to work alongside the Council on its structural changes.

Cllr Jacobson asked if the recruitment of senior officers reflected a policy of bringing services in-house and reducing reliance on external contractors.

Cllr Bentley confirmed that this was the case. He explained that previous redundancy arrangements had not been targeted at particular departments and had left gaps in required functions.

Cllr Pound asked where the Council would be based, once Shire Hall is sold.

Cllr Bentley responded that the Council would remain at Guild Hall which is its current base. Shire Hall will be sold as it is costing £400,000 to £500,000 per year to sit empty.

Cllr Stallard sought clarification on whether the 20-year borrowing period implied that council tax rises would continue for 20 years.

Cllr Bentley clarified that the 20-year figure refers to the repayment period for money borrowed, rather than a fixed period of council tax increases. In response to a follow-up question, he explained that the Council's projections show a reducing requirement for Exceptional Financial Support borrowing over time, though total debt will roll forward. Cllr Bentley noted that the current financial position is common to many councils and that he was hopeful the direction on devolved authority under the new Prime Minister would be beneficial.

The Chair thanked Cllr Bentley for his report.

7. Playing Field, Playground and Car Park

Cllr Pound raised that the existing sign at the bus stop, referring to the Community Hub being closed for donations, was outdated.

Cllr Thomson explained the background to the sign, and that it had been displayed following inappropriate items being recently left.

Members discussed if continued display of the sign served as a helpful reminder or whether new signage would better reflect the current arrangement.

It was agreed that the Clerk would produce a revised sign for the bus stop, worded positively to reflect the site's current use as a book swap and information point.

The Chair reported that one of the community bins is damaged and needs replacing. Cllr Thomson added that bin liners had not been present at some locations. The Clerk confirmed that they would follow this up with the odd job's contractor.

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Members considered the possibility of gradually replacing the existing bins with a uniform, covered style to improve hygiene and reduce water ingress when the weather is poor. The Chair noted that a similar recycled plastic bin had previously been installed in the wildflower garden.

It was agreed that options for replacement bins, would be brought to a future meeting for consideration.

The Clerk advised that a request had been received on 18th July 2026 to hold a further pigeon flying competition on the playing field on Saturday 8th August 2026.

The Chair opened the discussion by expressing the view that, whatever the ultimate decision, the short timescale of the request and the Clerk's forthcoming period of leave made the proposed date impractical. The Chair also noted that the request had come only a short time after the June event and that a number of members had received negative comments from residents alongside positive ones.

Cllr Bentley agreed that the June event had generally been well received, but that a range of negative comments had also been raised.

The Chair further reported that concerns had been raised by two people in relation to the condition in which the Parish Hall and the toilets had been left following the June event, and that the scale of the event had exceeded expectations.

Cllr Pound asked if the Council refusing permission would prevent the organiser from simply attending on the day regardless.

The Clerk clarified that the Playing Field and the Parish Hall are the subject of separate booking requests, and that the current request related only to the Playing Field.

The Chair noted that, in relation to the June event, the organiser had sought permission for using the playing field before approaching the Parish Hall, indicating that one arrangement was dependent on the other. The Chair raised that early August falls within the school holiday period, when children are likely to be using the playing field and residents are more likely to be at home. The Chair added that as the June event had been described by the organiser as a success, which could cause the numbers attending a repeat event to increase, with participants having travelled to the June event from as far as London. The Chair shared that they considered the short interval between the two requests to be a cause for concern.

The Clerk added that a community's tolerance of an event of this nature is often linked to its infrequency, and that bringing the same event back within two months would risk that tolerance being significantly reduced.

Cllr Pound repeated his concern regarding the possibility of the organiser attending irrespective of the Council's decision. Cllr Bentley added that, in the event of unauthorised use, the police would need to be involved.

Cllr Partridge, drawing on prior policing experience, described a comparable event elsewhere at which the number of vehicles had escalated from a small group to approximately one thousand, resulting in the village being overwhelmed and criminal activity taking place. He cited Southend as a further example of an activity that had grown from a small gathering to a level at which the town centre was routinely inaccessible. He advised it was preferable to manage the position early.

Cllr Stallard expressed a differing view, noting that the June event had attracted more compliments than complaints and that people wishing to return to the village should be regarded positively.

Cllr Bentley advised that a positive response, rather than a refusal in principle, would be preferable, and that the reason for refusing the current request should be framed around timing and the readiness of the Council's arrangements, rather than as a rejection of the event itself.

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The Chair stated that she was concerned by the speed with which the organiser had returned, and that while the June event had positive aspects, a number of residents had been put out. She proposed that consideration also be given to restricting numbers at any future event, and that a working group in September would be a suitable way forward, given that the June experience had identified gaps in the Council's arrangements.

Cllr Pound added that additional legal frameworks, including Martyn's Law, would need to be taken into account, and that as owner of the land the Council held ultimate responsibility for demonstrating that due diligence had been undertaken.

The Clerk noted that this was a substantial piece of work, and that with the August recess, the priority in September being the speed indicator devices, and budget planning starting in October, it was unlikely that a full policy could be brought to Council before the end of the year. The Clerk suggested that a working group might be formed in September to progress the work.

Cllr Lewis asked if any feedback had been shared with the organiser following the June event. The Clerk confirmed that no feedback had yet been provided.

Cllr Lewis suggested that providing feedback now, together with a timeline pointing to 2027, would be a positive step.

The Clerk advised that he had not provided feedback after the June event on the basis that any further request would provide an opportunity to continue the discussion, and that the current request now made that dialogue necessary.

Cllr Pound listed a range of matters that would need to be addressed within a future policy, including public liability insurance, temporary toilet provision proportionate to attendance, a local contact number for the organiser that could be published on local social media, and compliance with Martyn's Law.

The Chair proposed that the request be declined at this time, with feedback provided to the organiser reflecting the concerns raised and an indication that the Council may be able to accommodate similar events in the future once its policy position has been reviewed. Members discussed the scope of that policy work, agreeing that it should cover the use of Council premises generally rather than being confined to specific events.

RESOLVED: that the request to hold a pigeon flying competition on Saturday 8th August 2026 be declined at this time and that feedback be provided to the organiser following the June event and that information would be conveyed to indicate that future requests may be accommodated once a policy review has been completed.

Members further agreed that a working group be considered at the September meeting to develop a policy covering the hire and use of Council premises for events.

The Chair reported that vehicles continue to be left in the car park overnight from time to time, occasionally obstructing works taking place.

8. Playground Equipment Replacement

The Clerk reported that quotations had been sought from four playground equipment suppliers for the replacement of the swings.

Quotations had been received from Kompan and Playdale. Wicksteed had responded to advise that it did not wish to quote on this occasion, and no response had been received from Caloo.

Members noted that the Kompan quotation for the metal option, at £7,289.15 excluding VAT, also includes repair to the multi-play unit. The Playdale quotation was considerably higher and did not include the additional repair.

The Clerk recommended that a delegated buffer of £1,000 be included in the resolution to accommodate any minor variation following the site survey.

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The Chair noted that approximately £2,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy funding is available and may be applied to reduce the cost to the Council.

Cllr Pound queried the warranty on the equipment, and it was confirmed that the equipment carries a lifetime warranty on the frame and a two-year warranty on the seats.

RESOLVED: that the quotation from Kompan for the purchase and installation of 2 swing frames with 2 cradle seats and 2 flat seats (metal option) at £7,289.15 excluding VAT be accepted and that a delegated buffer of £1,000 be authorised for use if required following the site survey.

9. Chair's Report

The Chair reported that they had not attended any external meetings since the last meeting of the Council, but that the Chairs meeting is scheduled for next week. A report will be provided at the September meeting.

The Chair noted, and thanked, Cllr Partridge for accepting the appointment as a member of the Parish Hall board of management following her resignation from the board.

The Chair thanked the Clerk, Cllr Pound and Cllr Partridge for their time in supporting the CCTV servicing which is arranged for Thursday afternoon.

10. Clerk's Report

The Clerk's report was received by members, which detailed updates on actions since the last meeting, including:

- The external audit had been submitted within the required deadline, with the outcome awaited. The period of notice for electors to examine the accounts continues until 30th July 2026.
- The VAT reclaim for Q4 has been completed; the Q1 reclaim remains to be submitted.
- The Clerk advised members that he will be on annual leave from 3rd to 23rd August 2026.
- Members were asked to keep a regular check on their Council emails to ensure that requests are dealt with promptly and to notify the Clerk of any dates on which they will be on holiday or not available.
- Correspondence. The Clerk reported an enquiry from a resident regarding the Council's plans for vehicle speeding interactive signage, which will be brought back to the September meeting for further consideration.

11. Planning (Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Sched 1, para 8)

No planning applications had been received since publication of the agenda.

12. Authorisation of payments

RESOLVED: the schedule of payments for July 2026 correctly states the invoices presented and that **£1,012.58** is approved to be paid. **£477.94** has been paid under 6.6 and **£7.00** has been paid under 6.9 iii. (as detailed on page 954)

13. Bank Reconciliation

The bank reconciliation documents were checked and verified by Cllr Stallard and Cllr Bentley.

RESOLVED: that the bank reconciliation summary is an accurate reflection of payments and receipts against the bank balances as of 30th June 2026. (as detailed on page 955)

14. Budget Review

The Clerk presented the Quarter 1 budget review for the period April to June 2026, incorporating a revised format with a percentage-of-budget-used column to assist members in identifying variances against the 25% pro-rata position.

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Total payments of £7,164.73 represent 18.0% of the annual budget of £39,781.52, below the pro-rata position.

Total receipts of £27,578.76 exceed the annual budget at 105.5%, reflecting receipt of the precept in full during April and an unbudgeted Community Infrastructure Levy receipt of £2,098.08.

Administration Fixed costs stand at 61.9% of budget, reflecting the payment of annual costs (insurance, SALC affiliation, internal audit fee) in the first quarter. Administration General is at 19.3%, Salary and Overtime at 17.4%, and Playing Fields at 21.5%, with playing field contract labour above pro-rata at 36.4% due to seasonal activity.

Bank interest of £230.68 is tracking ahead of expectations. Allotment rent of £400 remains outstanding and is not due until later in the year.

Cllr Pound requested that a further line showing the actual cash position be added to the report in future quarters.

RESOLVED: The Q1 Budget Review for 2026-27 be approved.

15. Accounting Audit

RESOLVED: to approve the presented accounting audit for the 1st quarter of the 2026 - 2027 Council year as completed by Cllr Bentley. (as detailed on page 956)

16. Standing Orders

Members considered the amendments to the Council's standing orders.

The Clerk explained that the changes comprised a new standing order on the management of information, addressing that information shared with members remains privileged unless specifically deemed shareable. An updated procedure for facilitating comments on planning applications received between meetings, incorporating a three-member quorum threshold and minor grammatical amendments raised by Cllr Stallard.

The Clerk advised that NALC is undertaking a full review of its standing orders template during the coming year, which will inform a further review by the Council in due course.

RESOLVED: that the amendments to the Council's standing orders be adopted.

17. Oak Tree Plaque

The Chair introduced the item and thanked Cllr Thomson for providing photographs and background information which had assisted the Clerk in preparing the item.

Cllr Thomson noted that reviewing the earlier minutes had been useful in confirming the relevant dates.

The Clerk explained that, given the low value of the purchase, he had obtained two quotations. The Clerk advised that he had successfully used Anglia Sign Casting previously.

It was queried if the plaque would be sited inside or outside the existing wooden fence.

The Chair explained that further consideration had been given to if the existing fencing should be replaced with more appropriate railings, or a circular seat installed around the tree, depending on the level of expenditure members wished to commit.

Cllr Thomson observed that the wooden fencing had originally been installed to protect the sapling and, given the current size of the tree, could now be removed.

Cllr Thomson provided further background on the tree, noting that the original tree had been planted on 10th December 2020 as part of the commemoration of the centenary of the end of the First World War, that it had died

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within around six months during the Covid period, and that it had been replanted in September 2021. He confirmed that the commemoration relates to the original ceremonial planting rather than to the current tree.

Cllr Pound raised that the dates "1918 to 2018" as drafted could be misread, in particular by younger readers, and suggested their removal. Cllr Jacobson supported this on the basis that the dates could be confusing.

Members considered the words "This oak tree was first planted". The Clerk explained that "first planted" had been included intentionally to reflect that the commemoration relates to the original planting rather than to the current tree, which was itself a replanting. Cllr Lewis noted that very few residents would be aware of that history.

Cllr Stallard queried if the plaque should also refer to those who had died in the First World War. Cllr Thomson responded that the war memorial railings in the village already carry a plaque commemorating those who had died in the First and Second World Wars, and that the oak tree commemorates the 2018 centenary events specifically.

Cllr Pound added that retaining both the centenary reference and the dates would read awkwardly, and members agreed to simplify the wording accordingly. Cllr Pound further suggested that "Cheswardine Parish Council" be moved to the bottom so that the commemoration wording could form the focus of the plaque.

Cllr Stallard raised the vulnerability of the plaque to damage, particularly from children on bicycles. Cllr Thomson added that the plaque would need to be positioned so as not to be caught by the mower.

The Chair proposed that a decision is made on the plaque now and that costings for railings could be brought to a future meeting.

The Clerk explained that, in his experience of similar plaques, the ground stake is designed to be installed fully below ground level so that the plaque sits flush with the ground at the base of the tree, rather than mounted on a raised post. On that basis, the existing wooden fencing would obscure the plaque, and its removal would be preferable. The Clerk referred to similar installations in which the tree is staked and set within a tree pit.

Cllr Jacobson suggested that an area of wood chip could be provided around the base of the tree, both to define the area and to prevent the mower encroaching on it. The Clerk confirmed that this arrangement is a standard tree pit installation. The Chair confirmed that the odd jobs contractor would be able to undertake the tree pit installation.

RESOLVED: that option 1 (Anglia Sign Casting) be accepted, at a cost of £156.48 including VAT, for the supply of a cast bronze plaque with a green background and gold lettering, bearing the wording:

Cheswardine Parish Council

This oak tree commemorates the centenary of the end of the First World War

December 2020

It was further agreed that the existing wooden fencing be removed and that the odd jobs contractor be instructed to install a tree pit at the base of the tree.

Meeting concluded at 8:35 p.m.

Chairman..... Date.....

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Schedule of Payments - As resolved under Item 11.

Cheswardine Parish Council Schedule of Payments

21st July 2026

	Date of Debit or Cheque Raised	Recipient	Purpose	£	£	Payment Method	Power of expenditure	Scribe
1	22/07/2026	PG SKIPS	Rubbish Removal - Skip Emptied 19/06/26	36.11		BT - Unity Trust	Litter Act 1983 ss.5	Yes
2	22/07/2026	Med UK	Defibrillator Consumables	201.00		BT - Unity Trust	Public Health Act 1936 S234	Yes
3	22/07/2026	North Salop Wheelers	Journey Subsidies - June	16.50		BT - Unity Trust	LG Rating Act 1997 s26-29	Yes
4	22/07/2026	Cllr N Bentley	EE - Bus Service Phone Top Up	5.00		BT - Unity Trust	LGA 1972 S 111	Yes
5	22/07/2026	W Salisbury (Clerk)	Clerk Homeworking Expenses (01/04/26 to 30/06/26)	78.00		BT - Unity Trust	LGA 1972 S 111	Yes
6	22/07/2026	W Salisbury (Clerk)	Giff Gaff - Phone Monthly Payment - June	6.00	104.90	BT - Unity Trust	LGA 1972 S 111	Yes
7	22/07/2026	W Salisbury (Clerk)	Mileage (16th June - 38 miles x 0.55)	20.90		BT - Unity Trust	LGA 1972 S 111	Yes
8	22/07/2026	W Salisbury (Clerk)	Clerk Salary - July	495.00		BT - Unity Trust	LGA 1972 S 112	Yes
9	22/07/2026	HMRC	Tax & Contributions on Clerks salary - July Month 4	123.80	154.07	BT - Unity Trust	LGA 1972 S 112	Yes
10	22/07/2026	HMRC	Employer NIC - Month 4	30.27		BT - Unity Trust	LGA 1972 S 112	Yes
			Total	1012.58				

	Payments made as resolved under the approved payments list 5.5b							Scribe
11	08/07/2026	BT	Parish Hall Broadband - 1st to 30th June	53.94		DD - Unity Trust	LGA 1972 S 133	Yes
12	30/06/2026	Shropshire Grounds Maintenance	Grounds Maintenance Contract - June	424.00		BT - Unity Trust	Open Spaces Act 1906 ss9 & 10	Yes
			Total	477.94				

	Payments made under Financial Regulations 5.5a to avoid late payment							
	Date of							Scribe
	30/06/2026	Unity Trust Bank	Bank Charges (No invoice - as shown on statement)	7.00		Bank Charge	LGA 1972 S 111	Yes
			Total	7.00				

Invoices checked and verified at the meeting held on 21st July 2026

Cllr A Thomson 21/07/26

Cllr - Proposer - Sign & Date

Cllr N Partridge 21/07/26

Cllr - Seconder - Sign & Date

DEPOSITS RECEIVED		
June	2026	
Date	Total	From
30/06/2026	£230.68	Bank Interest - Unity Trust
Total	£230.68	

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16. Bank Reconciliation

Bank Reconciliation - As resolved under Item 13.

3 July 2026 (2026-2027)

Cheswardine Parish Council

Prepared by: W Salisbury Clerk / RFO
Name and Role (Clerk/RFO etc)

Date: 3rd July 2026

Approved by: W Salisbury Clerk / RFO
Name and Role (RFO/Chair of Finance etc)

Date: 3rd July 2026

A	Bank Reconciliation at 30/06/2026		
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2026		42,861.36
	ADD Receipts 01/04/2026 - 30/06/2026		27,578.76
	SUBTRACT Payments 01/04/2026 - 30/06/2026		70,440.12
	Cash in Hand 30/06/2026 (per Cash Book)		7,496.08
			62,944.04
B	Cash in hand per Bank Statements		
	Petty Cash 30/06/2026	0.00	
	Unity Trust Instant Access 3687 30/06/2026	61,525.45	
	Unity Trust Current 3674 30/06/2026	1,679.53	
			63,204.98
	Less unrepresented payments		260.94
			62,944.04
	Plus unrepresented receipts		
	Adjusted Bank Balance		62,944.04
	A = B Checks out OK		

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Accounting Audit Quarter 1 - As resolved under Item 15.

Completed by Cllr Bentley

VOUCHER / PAYMENT NO	DATE OF ENTRY	SUPPLIER / RECIPIENT	£ AMOUNT	DATE CASHED / PAID	INVOICE UPLOADED AND CORRECT	ENTRY APPEARS ON THE SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS
2	19/04/26	AJT Carpentry	60.00	22/04/26	Yes	Yes - 21st April 2026
5	19/04/26	PG Skips Ltd	33.13	22/04/26	Yes	Yes - 21st April 2026
12	28/04/26	Shropshire Plant Hire Ltd	424.00	13/05/26	Yes	Yes - 19th May 2026
13	28/04/26	BT Business	53.94	08/05/26	Yes	Yes - 19th May 2026
14	01/05/26	SALC	604.06	20/05/26	Yes	Yes - 19th May 2026
17	05/05/26	Microsoft	84.99	20/05/26	Yes	Yes - 19th May 2026
21	14/05/26	Clear Councils	839.10	20/05/26	Yes	Yes - 19th May 2026
24	18/05/26	Amazon	9.96	20/05/26	Yes	Yes - 19th May 2026
32	01/06/26	JDH Business Services	476.40	17/06/26	Yes	Yes - 16th June 2026
33	02/06/26	Shropshire Council	276.08	17/06/26	Yes	Yes - 16th June 2026
36	08/06/26	North Shropshire Wheelers	12.00	17/06/26	Yes	Yes - 16th June 2026
39	11/06/26	Cllr Nigel Stallard - Expenses	19.80	18/06/26	Yes	Yes - 16th June 2026

Report from Shropshire Council Unitary Councillor (July)- As received under Item 6.

Cllr Neil Bentley Unitary Councillor Report | Cheswardine Division

July 2026

OVERVIEW

It was certainly a hot end to June! Can I take this opportunity to remind us all to check on our elderly and vulnerable neighbours during the summer months, including updating them on any changes to council services such as waste collections - these updates will be posted on the council website and shared via social media channels.

As the council's representative on the Rural Services Network, in June I attended a meeting with representatives from BT to discuss the national Digital Voice switchover which will happen at the end of January 2027. There are still 13% of phone users that are not ready for this switch over, with rural areas making up most of that 13%. Please do encourage/help friends and relatives prepare for this, the first step is to speak to BT asap who will discuss all the options around this.

June was a difficult month for the administration as we start to make some very tough decisions to restore the council's finances. Raising council tax, reducing services and disposing of assets goes against everything we stand for as Liberal Democrats, but we are determined to confront the reality of the council's financial position rather than continue delaying difficult decisions. The financial position we inherited after 16 years of Conservative administration is extremely challenging, with years of short-term savings and service reductions leaving the council in a far weaker position than many people realise. Those decisions may have balanced budgets in the short term, but they often came at the expense of long-term financial resilience. The final budget approved by the previous administration in February 2025 has had catastrophic implications on all of our finances and will do for at least 20 years. For reference, **every £1m we have to borrow to get out of this mess will cost £100k in debt repayments, every year.**

To be clear, Shropshire Council, under any political administration in 2026, would be in exactly this position. Our priority now is to lead collaborative work across political parties to deliver a sustainable recovery plan and, crucially, to avoid the intervention of government commissioners, whose decisions would inevitably remove local democratic control and, to be frank, would be brutal.

It is also important to remember that the Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) secured by the Liberal Democrat administration comes with significant responsibilities. Our EFS is also the highest in the country and because of that we remain under extremely close scrutiny from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Every decision we take must demonstrate that we are delivering against the commitments made through the Improvement Board. This includes reducing debt, increasing savings and steadily reducing the council's reliance on EFS. Whilst that level of oversight is demanding, it also provides assurance that the difficult decisions being taken form part of a structured and closely monitored recovery programme.

There are, however, encouraging signs that our approach is beginning to deliver results. MHCLG has recognised the progress being made and, as set out in our EFS submission, part of that financial support is being invested in strengthening key services and reshaping the organisation to deliver better value for money, clearer accountability and more effective decision-making. This transformation begins with the senior leadership team before extending throughout the wider organisation. Earlier this month, CEO Tanya Miles set out her plan to comprehensively restructure the Executive Leadership Team, (which also

Cllr Neil Bentley – Liberal Democrat Councillor Cheswardine Division

Updated: 30/06/26

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c/o Members Secretariat, Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury. SY3 8HQ

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Report from Shropshire Council Unitary Councillor (July) - As received under Item 6. (Cont.)

includes recruiting additional capacity), this process has already started and will continue throughout the summer. I will, of course, keep members updated on the outcome in due course. This will not be a quick process, but it is an essential step towards building a council that is financially sustainable, fit for the future and far less likely to repeat the mistakes of the past.

This month we outlined significant changes to supported bus services across Shropshire, with 21 of the county's 60 council-funded routes due for contract renewal. Renewing every service on the lowest tender received would have created a funding gap of around £500,000 in our council-tax budget, while government funding for supported bus services has also reduced by approximately £200,000. In addition, the important Route 64 between Market Drayton and Shrewsbury also came under threat. We considered this route a vital service and have therefore committed around £500,000 to protect it. Taken together, these pressures created a funding gap of approximately £1.2 million, meaning difficult decisions had to be made about which services could continue to receive council funding.

Finally, on the 30th June, an independent review on the future of Shirehall was published and will be presented to special cabinet on the 14th July. The Lib Dem administration also met online with Duncan Whitfield, the Section 151 officer who commissioned this report to discuss the findings. Although passions around Shirehall have been high for a number of years, we must again face reality and take difficult decisions in light of our financial emergency. The terms of the EFS are clear, essentially stating that the council must not invest in assets and should dispose of empty and unused premises at the earliest opportunity. The report can be found here: <https://newsroom.shropshire.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/SHIREHALL-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>

Summary of my meetings during June:

(01/06/26) Prevention Contract – All Member Briefing
 (01/06/26) POSC Chair & Vice Chair Catchup
 (05/06/26) Shropshire Youth Partnership Board Discussion Meeting
 (09/06/26) Scrutiny Work Program Setting Meeting | Guildhall
 (18/06/26) Rural Services Network Meeting | BT Digital Voice Switch Over
 (18/06/26) POSC Pre Meeting
 (22/06/26) PAS Planning Training for Councillors
 (25/06/26) Governors Walks | Cheswardine & Hinstock Primary Schools
 (29/06/26) Health Overview Scrutiny Committee | Guildhall
 (29/06/26) Local Governing Committee Meeting | Hinstock Primary
 (29/06/26) All About Youth Trustee Meeting | Shrewsbury
 (30/06/26) Lib Dem Administration | Shirehall Briefing Meeting

CASEWORK

Casework	Issue Raised / Portfolio	Actions
Ollerton Business Park, Childs Ercall	PLANNING: Various planning applications have been passed yet conditions not met (esp highways)	- NB Has been in contact with council legal team. - Email sent to Emma Green for updates – none received.
Hare Coursing Cheswardine	A number of residents have raised concerns.	(29/06/26) NB Submitted information to West Mercia for investigation.
23/03138/FUL Mixed 28 Residential Dwellings Childs Ercall	PLANNING: This has gone to 'recommendations/committee'	(23/03/26) I have emailed Andrew Huntley (new case officer) to ask for an update – awaiting response. (30/06/26) Still waiting.

Cllr Neil Bentley – Liberal Democrat Councillor Cheswardine Division
neil.bentley@shropshire.gov.uk 07483 111541
 c/o Members Secretariat, Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury. SY3 8HQ

Updated: 30/06/26

CHESWARDINE

PARISH COUNCIL

Report from Shropshire Council Unitary Councillor (July) - As received under Item 6. (Cont.)

25/03608/FUL Chicken Egg Production Caynton	PLANNING: This is still at 'recommendations/committee'	No update, next planning committee is scheduled 21/07/26
Land Ownership Glebe Close, Cheswardine	Overgrown piece of land between Glebe Close and the School.	Initial work scheduled for summer summer holidays.
26/01212/FUL 25 dwellings Childs Ercall	Proposal of 25 dwellings just off Eaton Road	- Listened to the views of many residents at the CEPC. - NB: written a formal letter of objection to the case officer and completed a 'call-in' form.
Dodecote Drive Childs Ercall	HIGHWAYS: ongoing	Highways have instructed a technician to visit the road and to address current potholes.
Eaton Road Childs Ercall	HIGHWAYS: ongoing	(10/06/26) Road assessment map shared with CEPC, awaiting work.
Tag Lane Chipnall	Overgrown hedge row	NB has raised concerns over the lack of progress with this case, specifically the lack of commitment from council and the process or reporting.
Potholes Chipnall	HIGHWAYS: Serious road defects	Potholes 'fixed' but NB has raised concerns over the quality with the portfolio holder and requested a visit from our inspection team.
Motor X Buntingsdale	Environmental Noise	(15/06/26) Response received from Kieron Smith, Environmental Protection and Housing Enforcement Manager - investigation ongoing.

PARISH COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS

Here are questions posed by parish councillors across the division and updates/answers at present.

Question	Answer / Outcomes
Why was an enforcement restriction put in place in Childs Ercall if the council had no option to enforce?	Internal enquiry started, waiting response.
A41 Speed Camera Update	- Deputy PCC Tracey Onslow to chase with PCC John Campion - No response - Simon D'Vali attended a meeting with T&W highways - no response.