

Unitary Councillor's February 2026 Report

his month has been out of the ordinary. I was rushed into Worcester Hospital with breathing and heart trouble, which has been ongoing for quite some time. I have received excellent surgery/treatment and a stay in hospital and hopefully on the way to recovery. Unfortunately, I cannot drive for the time being, therefore, please accept my apologies as I will not be attending any meetings in February as my wife will not be here to taxi me around.

Stottesdon

I can appreciate your frustration with all the works that are needed to be done. It is the same in all the other parishes. Shropshire County Council staff are doing the best they can with limited staff and funds. I am constantly chasing up issues, but nothing happens quickly enough! The weather we have had, has obviously delayed some progress. I have reported the road from the ford near the weir to Newhouse Farm that has been in a bad way for some time.

I would like to thank the councillors for the explanation on what additional information they would like to see in my reports, which we spoke about at a recent parish council meeting. I believe the previous councilors were on the finance committee, so would have had access to financial information sooner than I have now. I have put a summary of the financial situation at County level below. Please don't hesitate to ask if there is anything specific you would like me to look into.

Kinlet

The flytipping has been collected for now. As it is an ongoing nuisance, we need to work together on this. Therefore if you come across any fly tipping please try to get the registration number of the vehicle and report it on fixmystreet. However, do not put yourself in any danger in doing so. I have been informed that there is only one team of two people who cover the whole of Shropshire and the distances involved, makes sense to group collections together.

Neen Savage

Nothing extra to report, just waiting on works to be started regarding the depth gauges and signs, which are all dependant on the weather.

Hopton Wafers

I have spoken to Andy Keyland regarding a grit bin. He has asked for you to report it on fixmystreet with the location of where you would like it to be sited. I believe you were going to do this anyway.

I have responded to Trystran Williams in the planning department, regarding the planning appeal in Stockhall Lane.

Wheathill

Nothing extra to report. I was unable to attend the last meeting as I was at hospital.

Farlow

Nothing extra to report. Did not attend meeting because it was cancelled as we had snow.

Shropshire County Council

The financial situation for Shropshire is bad, but, at the moment, it does not look like Shropshire Council will have to declare bankruptcy which is good news. The council is going to have to undertake very significant borrowing in the way of what is called Exceptional Funding Support (EFS). The council has asked to borrow just over £71 million to balance the budget for this year and have asked to borrow another £130 million next year and probably more in years to come. Whilst our situation is bad, we are part of a group of around 100 councils that are going to have to go to the Government for EFS. It is no longer 'exceptional' funding but is becoming the only way local authorities can balance their budgets.

Adult and children's social care account for roughly 76 – 78% of our total spending as a council. Inflation in these areas is a lot higher than CPI, but central Government funding simply doesn't cover the cost of providing these essential services. Local authorities have all the responsibility, but totally inadequate funding to provide the necessary services. The Government have tried to say our funding has increased, but the vast majority of this increase is them insisting on the council raising council tax to at least the 4.99% rate. A 1% increase equals £2 million more income from council tax. The Government has removed the 'remoteness adjustment' that we used to get which helped to cover the additional costs associated with supplying services to rural areas. This has reduced our funding by £4.4 million. The Government have also taken the Rural Services Delivery Grant from us. In total this means that our Government funding has reduced by £13.3 million this year. Urban councils are receiving significantly more funding per head of the population than rural counties,

Shirehall update

I have been to visit the Shirehall and will update you on the outcome. At the previous full council meeting, a Task and Finish group was set up. All councillors were invited to visit the Shirehall, to see for themselves the condition of the building. It was attended by the full group of Reform councillors and four from the other parties. A Task and Finish group was formed, to look at the financial viability whether it is cost effective to keep or demolish the building and to enable councillors to make an "informed" decision.

It is an iconic building that needs some maintenance and updating, not at all the depressed condition we had been led to believe. And there are plenty of car parking spaces, also it does not flood! It is a very substantial building compared to the Guildhall.

Kindest regards

David