

SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

Division: Highley



FEBRUARY 2026

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITY – FEBRUARY 2026

February involved sustained casework across highways, planning enforcement, drainage, parking enforcement, transport and infrastructure adoption. Several matters required clarification of statutory responsibility before progression could occur. A number of cases remain active and under monitoring.

Significant carriageway deterioration across key routes serving Highley has been escalated as a stretch-level safety concern. Planning monitoring continues across several development sites. Full Council considered major financial decisions with direct impact on Highley residents.

A detailed casework ledger is now maintained separately to track all open and closed matters.

1. RESIDENT CASEWORK

Overgrown Conifer Trees – Borle Brook Court Status: Closed

Guidance was provided regarding the High Hedges statutory process, evidential requirements and formal complaint route. As the trees are on private land, Council powers are limited unless a formal complaint is initiated. Having clarified the legal framework and next steps, the matter is closed from a councillor casework perspective.

Dirt Track Access – South Farm to Highley Park Homes Status: Closed

Land registry review confirmed the track is privately owned and not adopted highway. The Council has no statutory maintenance responsibility. The resident has been advised accordingly. Case closed.

Footpath Safety – Hawthorn Drive to Main Road (Telephone Exchange) Status: Escalated and Scheduled

Following two reported incidents (sprained ankle and mobility scooter fall), investigation established the footpath had not been correctly mapped within Highways' maintenance system. Responsibility has now been formally recorded.

Resurfacing is programmed from March when seasonal works recommence.

A third incident occurred this week. Given the pattern of accidents, I have formally escalated the matter again requesting early prioritisation at the start of the new financial year. Monitoring continues.

2. HIGHWAYS & INFRASTRUCTURE

Severe Carriageway Deterioration

Covert Lane to Hagg's Corner and Highley out towards Bewdley

Significant surface failure has developed across both stretches. Defects are deep and widespread, with multiple reports of tyre and vehicle damage. I have escalated as a stretch-level safety issue rather than isolated potholes. It remains a standing item on my weekly Highways call.

Residents may contact the local MP if they wish; however continued reporting via FixMyStreet remains essential as this triggers formal inspection within the system.

Prolonged rainfall, network-wide deterioration, staffing reductions and budget constraints have left crews under significant operational pressure county-wide. The will to address defects is not lacking; capacity is the constraint.

This remains an active and pressing matter.

Parking Enforcement – Highley Activity Review

Following resident concerns, I requested enforcement data covering 1 April 2025 – 17 February 2026.

203 enforcement visits

80 observations recorded

8 Penalty Charge Notices issued

5 hours 17 minutes enforcement time logged

Street-level activity:

- High Street – 71 visits, 55 observations, 4 PCNs
- Barke Street – 20 visits, 3 observations, 1 PCN
- Church Lane – 22 visits
- Coronation Street – 19 visits
- Orchard Street – 22 visits, 8 observations, 1 PCN
- Old School Close – 14 visits, 4 observations, 2 PCNs
- Silverdale Terrace – 25 visits, 10 observations
- Each entry represents an individual officer attendance.

This confirms enforcement presence. Action can only be taken where a clear contravention exists. Discussions have also commenced with Traffic Management regarding potential yellow line review in specific areas.

3. TRANSPORT

125 Bus Service Status: Ongoing

Further engagement attempts were made during February. A substantive response from the Council's bus team remains outstanding. This matter remains open.

4. PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Hitchens Way – Adoption Status

Hitchens Way is not currently adopted and is not under a live Section 38 agreement. The estate is built to adoptable standard and remains intended for adoption, however sewer infrastructure must first be adopted by the Local Water Authority.

There has been no substantive communication from Taylor Wimpey for approximately 12 months. The Developing Highways Manager is re-engaging as part of a wider review of historic unadopted developments.

Netherton Lane – Silverwoods Enforcement

Repairs remain incomplete. The Senior Enforcement Officer has confirmed that he has emailed the owner and he responded to advise he'll seek professional advice. The owner has requested a meeting on site which I'll arrange with him very shortly.

This will be a follow-up visit. Planning Enforcement are continuing discussions with the landowner.

Castle Inn – Boundary and Conifer Order

An order to address the cutting of a large conifer has now been submitted to the landowner. If action is not taken, I will contact the site agent directly.

Further concerns were raised by parishioners regarding the erection of fencing along the roadside boundary and whether this was in breach of planning requirements, particularly in relation to retaining the original stonework.

I have discussed this directly with Planning Enforcement. Officers have clarified that the planning condition requiring materials to remain in keeping with the original stonework applies to the building itself, not to the perimeter boundary wall. As such, the replacement of sections of wall with fencing does not constitute a breach of the approved planning permission.

Planning Enforcement have therefore confirmed that no enforcement action will be taken in relation to the fence.

Should any new planning issues arise, I will review accordingly. At present, this element of the case is considered resolved from a planning compliance perspective.

Malt Shovel – Approved Accommodation and Monitoring

There has been much confusion due to the multiple planning applications submitted over time regarding the permitted accommodation for the Malt Shovel site. I have received confirmation from Planning Enforcement that the site has approval for 25 accommodation units comprising:

- 11 chalets
- Conversion of two wooden structures
- 12 caravan pitches

Terminology around chalets requires careful interpretation as some modern caravans may fall within this description.

Concerns have been raised regarding nature corridors and public ways. During construction it is difficult to fully assess compliance. Planning Enforcement will keep the site under active review as development progresses.

Cycle Track – Lapsed Sustrans Agreement

Residents advised that Sustrans previously held a maintenance contract for hedgerow works. That agreement has lapsed.

The Outdoor Partnerships Team has confirmed no responsibility. Highways have indicated this is not an isolated scenario and have suggested engagement with Planning and Legal.

Responsibility for maintenance elements remains unclear. Further investigation continues.

CONCLUSION

February has involved continued casework escalation, infrastructure clarification, enforcement monitoring and scrutiny of significant financial decisions. Highways deterioration remains the most pressing operational concern locally. Planning matters remain under review. Financial decisions taken at Full Council will have direct and ongoing implications for Highley residents.

A comprehensive case ledger is now maintained separately to track all matters from initiation to closure.

APPENDICES

1. Appendix 1 – Briefing of Meetings attended
2. Appendix 2 – Councillor Case Ledger (sent as additional attachment)

Appendix 1 – Briefing of Meetings attended

1.1 Full Council – 26 February 2026

Full Council on 26 February was primarily concerned with the Council's financial position and the setting of the 2026/27 budget. The debate centred on the Medium Term Financial Plan, borrowing requirements, and a series of policy decisions with direct financial implications for residents.

Financial Position and Borrowing

Members were presented with a continuing structural deficit. Core government funding for 2026/27 has reduced by £4 million, with funding redistributed towards more urban authorities.

The five-year forecast projects escalating funding gaps:

- £120.7m in 2026/27
- £123.1m in 2027/28
- £147.8m in 2028/29
- £168.0m in 2029/30
- £180.3m in 2030/31

To balance the 2026/27 budget, the Council is applying for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS), which allows borrowing to fund revenue expenditure. EFS must be applied for annually and there is no guarantee of approval in future years. If forecast gaps continue to be bridged through borrowing, cumulative exposure will increase significantly over the medium term.

The scale of projected deficits frames all other budget decisions.

Council Tax

An 8.99% increase was approved on the Shropshire Council element of Council Tax. A Band D property will now pay £1,969.09 per year, representing an increase of approximately £162 annually.

Social Housing Rents

A 4.8% rent increase (CPI 3.8% + 1%) was approved from April 2026. Weekly increases range from approximately £4.21 to £8.64 depending on property size.

Adult Social Care – Deferred Payment Agreements

Changes were approved to the Deferred Payment Agreement policy. The setup fee will rise from £610 to £750, alongside the introduction of annual administration and legal charges.

Highways Prioritisation

Members sought clarification on whether councillors can influence highways scheduling. Officers confirmed that schemes are determined through structural condition assessments and risk modelling. Councillors may request inspections and escalate concerns but cannot reorder the works programme.

Fees and Charges

A revised Fees and Charges Pricing Policy was approved. The Council expects approximately £105m in 2026/27 from fees and charges across planning, licensing, parking, garden waste, leisure and regulatory services. The direction of travel is toward full cost recovery for discretionary services.

Non-Statutory Services

The Council confirmed that, given financial pressures, priority will remain on statutory service delivery. Where discretionary services are reduced or withdrawn, parish and town councils may be asked whether they wish to assume responsibility and fund them locally.

What This Means for Highley

Taken together, the decisions made at Full Council indicate sustained financial pressure on the authority over the coming years.

For Highley residents, this translates into:

- A confirmed Council Tax increase for 2026/27.
- Rent increases for Council tenants.
- Higher charges associated with certain Adult Social Care arrangements.
- Continued movement toward full cost recovery for discretionary services, with potential for increased fees over time.
- Limited flexibility in highways scheduling, as works are governed by a risk-based framework rather than member discretion.
- The possibility that some discretionary services may only continue if funded at parish level, which could place additional pressure on local precepts.

The overarching theme is that the Council is operating within a constrained financial environment, and future decisions are likely to continue reflecting that reality.

1.2 Audit & Governance Committee – 5 February 2026

The Audit & Governance Committee reviewed progress against the Council's financial improvement plan, including delivery of savings, risk management, treasury strategy, internal audit planning and governance controls.

Adult Social Care financial management and contract oversight formed part of the scrutiny discussion. The Committee's role is to ensure that financial controls, risk frameworks and governance processes remain robust during a period of significant fiscal pressure.

1.3 Economy & Environment Scrutiny Committee – 29 January 2026

The Committee reviewed performance of the Community Safety Partnership and considered the forthcoming statutory requirement to introduce weekly food waste collections.

Weekly Food Waste Collections

Government has mandated weekly food waste collections from March 2026. While Shropshire has received capital funding through the Burdens Fund, no ongoing revenue funding has been provided to cover the annual cost of delivery.

Officers advised that implementing a weekly service would create a significant recurring revenue pressure at a time when the Council is already operating with a structural deficit and applying for Exceptional Financial Support.

During debate, I stated that residents would reasonably expect a weekly collection if it is being introduced as a statutory requirement. However, in the absence of revenue funding, I recommended that the Council should not commit to unfunded ongoing expenditure and should instead press Government to provide sustainable funding before implementation.

Two approaches were debated:

- Defer implementation until adequate funding is secured.
- Proceed with implementation and absorb the cost, accepting potential displacement of other services.

The vote split 4–4 between these positions, requiring the Chair's casting vote. The Committee unanimously agreed that Government should provide appropriate revenue funding.

Impact for Highley:

Weekly food waste collection will affect all households. However, the financial sustainability of delivery remains unresolved and will influence wider budget decisions.