

North Shropshire Area Committee – 15th September 2025

Chief Officer's Report

In my last report, I referred to difficulties experienced with the elections process. As a follow up we surveyed members for their experiences the responses to which have been shared with the Elections Team at Shropshire Council. We are looking to a follow up meeting to consider the responses and future improvements in the process. Thank you to those members who responded to the survey and the useful feedback provided.

Since the election we have run a full training programme and hope the sessions have been of use. We are now looking at the programme for the autumn / winter months and if there are any particular topics members would like covered in future sessions please let us know and we will look to see how we can accommodate them in the forthcoming programme. Details of the training offering by Breakthrough Communications and the Parkinson Partnership have also been circulated to your Council.

Our Executive met on 9th September, which was attended by both your Area Committee representatives, Paul and Merv. Our AGM is being held on 29th October at Shrewsbury Town FC. Details have been sent to your Clerk regarding registration, seeking nominations for the President's Award and details of any long serving Clerks which the Association would like to recognise. The President is this year supporting the Lingen Davies Charity. Our guest speaker is Emma Backhouse its Chief Operating Officer and we are also looking to hold a raffle at the event in support of its fundraising efforts. We hope your Council will be able to join us on 29th!

The Executive meeting on 9th September approved a budget for 2026/27. As a result, it is recommending to the AGM on the 29th October the following fees structure for approval:

Councils up to 3500 electorate 53.5p per elector (increase of 3.5p) and Councils over 3501 electorate 4.5p per elector (increase of 1p). Admin fees for small Councils £70 and larger Councils £80 (no change)

As previously reported, the Area Committee review has commenced. It has held two meetings and an initial report went to the Executive meeting earlier this week but without any particular conclusions at this stage. Area Committee's will be consulted on a number of issues during your next round of meetings.

Work has continued to support parishes with their work on local nature recovery projects, and we have a tab on our website which is building up case studies based on

the work parishes are doing. Some great work is taking place. We are holding a conference on Friday 3rd October in Ellesmere. Booking details have been circulated to parishes. We are encouraging parishes to attend and should you wish to register to come, please speak with your Clerk. Shropshire has also now launched its [consultation](#) on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the county and we urge all members to engage with the process and where appropriate submit a response to Shropshire Council.

In June, we facilitated SaTH in holding an online update on the hospital transformation programme to which a number of Councillors attended. The recording for the meeting and presentation slides have been provided to your clerk if you wish to have a copy of both. It is intended there will be further such updates as the programme develops.

We have taken an active role in the community governance review in Telford & Wrekin. A number of changes have been accepted, and a further limited consultation is being carried out on some of the original proposals. Whilst smaller in scale, some useful lessons have been learnt which will be useful when Shropshire carries out a similar review of the parishes in its part of the County. We have sought information on the timescales for such a review in Shropshire but to date the Leader has indicated the Councils is prioritising the relationship with parish & town councils. That said a review could commence during 2027.

I have continued to attend various meetings with NALC and colleague County Officers for updates on national issues and briefings on NALC led issues. Following useful meetings with Shropshire's MPs, we have tried to set up meetings with the MPs for The Wrekin and Telford to ensure we have a good working relationship with all our MPs. Unfortunately, to date we have not been successful in meeting with them though we will continue to try.

As reported at the last meeting, following the change of Administration at Shropshire Council, we took an early opportunity to meet with the new Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities to understand its approach toward parish & town councils and how we can improve relationships between our members and the Council. We have had a further useful meeting since with the Leader and have dates for future meetings to continue the dialogue. One of the issues the Chairman raised at this meeting was the planning framework relating to solar farms in the county. This is being considered by the Cabinet Member for Planning, Cllr David Walker with a view to replacing the current voluntary policy with a supplementary planning document.

In July we were invited to take part in Shropshire Council's recent Corporate Peer Review which we attended with several parish and town councils across the county. This was a useful opportunity to engage with the review team, and we look forward to receiving the results of the review in due course.

In partnership with SLCC, the Leader and Cabinet Member, we held a successful Shropshire Together Conference to explore the issues further as we look to reset the relationship between the Council and parishes and explore the opportunities for further working together in the future. The Council's Call for Information closed on 18th August. We are now awaiting information on the outcome and the next steps. Scrutiny will be considering the issue at a future meeting with a view to developing proposals for recommendations to Cabinet. The Area Committee is holding a session on the issue as part of your September meeting which will be useful and provides the opportunity to engage directly with both Cabinet Member, Cllr Alex Wagner and Cllr David Minnery, chair of the Scrutiny Committee at the Council.

At an individual level, we have continued to support and provide advice for Councils as appropriate. A weekly bulletin continues to be sent out to members which we hope is useful. We are also trying to gather examples of local projects and good practice which we can share amongst our members, and we would encourage your Council's provide us with such examples. This gives us an opportunity to celebrate the work of our members, the benefit it brings to our communities and share good practice.

Over the summer NALC launched its [Star Awards for 2025](#) seeking nominations from members across the country. We circulated details to Clerks in the information bulletin. The closing date for nominations was 5th September and we look forward to seeing if any Shropshire Councils have been nominated this year.

Following the Government's withdrawal of funding for Neighbourhood Plans, we worked with our regional colleagues to produce a campaign pack for parishes to raise the issue with their local MP. We had a good level of engagement and MPs, including local MP Helen Morgan, were active on Shropshire's behalf in raising the issue with Ministers. Unfortunately, the Government has maintained its position though it recognises the value of Neighbourhood Plans in the planning process.

At the June meeting of the Bridgnorth & Shifnal Area Committee concern was raised about changes to the shift pattern of PCSOs across the county. The Chairman raised the issue with the Chief Constable and received a full response which has been circulated to all member Councils. SALC has also received a letter from the Police & Crime Commissioner indicating the challenging state of West Mercia's finances and the need to save £8 million. Where these savings will be made have not yet been made clear. The issue was reported to the Executive Committee on 9th September, and we wait to see what proposals come forward over the coming weeks. Copies of both letters are attached for information.

We are yet to "relaunch" the Local Council Award Scheme here in Shropshire. A meeting of the Shropshire Panel is to be held on 16th September with a launch before Christmas – so please watch out for further information over the coming weeks!

In previous reports, I have mentioned NALCs relatively recent revamped website. It was reported at a County Officer's meeting last week that nationally over 7500 Clerks and Councillors have registered to access the information and resources carried on the website. Please do [register](#) and make use of the information and resources available – they are there to support you and your Councils!

We have promoted the [civility & respect agenda](#) with Councils and the Executive itself signed up to the pledge at its April meeting. A training on the code of conduct and standards framework was held on 3rd July and we encourage all Councils to consider signing up to the civility & respect agenda to remind Councillors of the expected behaviour and promote appropriate standards amongst all as well as building confidence amongst our communities in our sector.

Changes have been made to the year-end accounting process and from 2025/26 onwards Councils will be required to complete a new Assertion 10 confirmation on data compliance and digital matters. The detail has been provided to all Councils, and we are encouraging Council's to put in place measures to comply with the new requirement during the year rather than leave it until year end. Your Clerk will be able to give you further details on the requirements and the measures you will need to consider. Breakthrough Communications are also providing webinars to provide further support to enable members ensure they meet the requirements come year end.

Internal audit is an important area of work for all our Councils. We are trying to build a register of those who are willing to be internal auditors where vacancies occur. We are also aiming to hold a training session for current and potential auditors with the Internal Audit Forum in the autumn.

Following publication of The Devolution White Paper, work has so far focussed on those remaining two-tier areas. Whilst there has been speculation on the future of Shropshire in any strategic authority / mayoral model, the timescales or implications are not yet clear. A devolution bill is currently before parliament, and we continue to monitor the issue to assess the implications for Shropshire. Local MP, Helen Morgan, raised concerns about the impact on Shropshire on the floor of the House.

NALC has set up a Westminster Forum to build the relationship with MPs to ensure that issues of concern to our sector are understood and can be raised in Parliament. We have written to all the County's MPs urging them to join the Forum and be active on our behalf.

Since the last Area Committee meeting, there have been two meetings of the informal Chairs Network with a good attendance at each. As ever a range of issues were raised, and as always it is a useful opportunity for Chairs to meet on an informal basis. The next meeting has been set for Thursday 20th November at 6pm.

Hope this helps but if you want any further information or have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Look forward to joining with you at your meeting on Monday!

Chris Mellings

Chief Officer – September 2025



IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

SHROPSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Riggs Hall, The Library, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 2AS

e-mail: alc@shropshire.gov.uk Website: www.alcshropshire.co.uk