Sent on behalf of Cllr Alex Wagner, Deputy Leader Shropshire Council

Dear Penny

Devolution: next steps for your council

Thank you for your interest in taking greater local responsibility for the delivery of Street Scene services. We would now like to progress into further practical discussions, which Juan Hernandez has been leading on, particularly to support planning ahead of 2027/28 precept setting.

There are three potential approaches:

1. Locally funded enhancements

Building on the piloted Shifnal model, Shropshire Council would continue to provide the core Street Scene service, while your council could choose to provide or arrange additional activity to meet local priorities. We would work with you to agree what you want to achieve and put in place a clear, practical arrangement for delivery.

Depending on local priorities, this could include additional street sweeping or litter picking, bins, grounds maintenance, planting, street furniture maintenance, graffiti or fly-posting removal, or other environmental improvements.

This provides scope for councils to invest in local priorities while retaining the Shropshire Council baseline service. The detail would be developed together so that responsibilities are clear and the proposed activity can be delivered safely and effectively.

2. Fund an enhanced service delivered by Shropshire Council

Councils could instead fund additional locally focused Street Scene provision delivered and managed by Shropshire Council. There may also be opportunities for neighbouring town and parish councils to come together as a local cluster, collectively funding a dedicated resource to work across a defined area and focus on shared and locally agreed priorities.

A cluster approach could make enhanced provision more practical and affordable by creating sufficient scale and making efficient use of staff, vehicles and equipment. It could also give smaller councils greater opportunity to participate, without individual councils needing to establish or manage their own operational service. Shropshire Council would retain responsibility for managing and deploying the resource, with the participating councils helping to shape the local priorities it supports. Any arrangement would be developed with interested councils and would need to be practical, affordable and based on a workable local geography.

3. Future service devolution

Full service devolution remains an option. Moving to an in-house service from April 2027 will give us a clearer picture of delivery costs and resources, helping us develop sustainable devolution options with councils in future years.

In the meantime, we will work with interested councils to explore an arrangement that is practical and commercially sustainable, while ensuring it does not create additional cost for Shropshire Council. Each proposal will be considered on a case-by-case basis, rather than using a standard, blanket contribution and we will confirm the exact indicative sum we can offer for your area on request, so you can consider whether this option works for your council. In

some cases for example, this could mean up to a 50% contribution, in other cases it may result in a lower or no contribution being available.

If you would like to explore any of these approaches, please contact partnerships@shropshire.gov.uk with your preference and copy me in. We aim to provide further information later this month and can arrange a short discussion with officers to help inform your precept-setting considerations.

This change also creates an opportunity to make the service more responsive to changing local needs. We will work with councils to understand priorities and identify where practical, affordable partnership arrangements could add local value.

This forms part of our wider approach to working with town and parish councils, alongside discussions on libraries, culture, community assets and other services. We want local ideas to help shape that approach, recognising that different places will need different solutions.

We are also considering how local councils and communities can support Shropshire Council in meeting its statutory responsibilities. Any future arrangements would be developed collaboratively, with clear responsibilities and appropriate support, and further information shared with town and parish councils as proposals develop.

In the meantime, there may be particular activities that as a Town or Parish Council, you are keen to press ahead with yourselves particularly where it results in improvements to the local area and impacts pride of place. This list below is indicative rather than exhaustive - there may well be other ideas.

- Replacing faded signage, place names etc.
- Potholing scheme
- Ditch digging
- Use of the Lengthsman funding
- Village gateways
- Clearing vegetation from road signs.
- Cleaning road signs
- Volunteers for local flooding projects
- Snow wardens, buying and filling grit bins, gritting

We are keen to continue these conversations and would welcome the opportunity to explore what could work well for your area.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Alex Wagner

Deputy Leader of Shropshire Council

Town Clerks View

Option 2 – Preferred approach, subject to further consideration

If the Town Council are minded to consider the options put forward by Shropshire Council The Town Clerk considers option 2 *Fund an enhanced service delivered by Shropshire Council* to be the most workable solution into short term.

Overall, this could be positive and practical approach, offering the opportunity to secure more dedicated local Street Scene provision.

However, before any decision is made the Town Council would need to understand and agree a number of key points:

- **Financial Commitment :** More information is needed on the actual financial commitment required from each council and the length of the agreement.
- **Local Clusters –** Potentially the enhanced resource could operate across a cluster of towns, for example Whitchurch and Market Drayton having the service 2 days a week and Wem one day. This will enable flexibility to be built into the enhanced service and subject to agreement form towns in the partnership, towns could change days and frequency of the service during busy periods e.g. lead up to bloom judging .
- **Service Delivery** There needs to be a clear understanding of what the funding will deliver, including agreed tasks, hours, equipment and how performance and the quality of the service will be monitored. Operatives must have accesss to and be able to operate a wide range of equipment including mowers, hedgecutters, brushcutters and spraying equipment for this service to show a difference in the town. Whilst Shropshire Council would manage the resource, participating councils should have a say in the appointment to ensure they have the right skills for the work that is needed.