

Shaping Shropshire Together

Shropshire Partnership's Whole Place Community Budget Proposal

Our vision

Shropshire's public service partners see development of a whole place community budget as the key to unlock the full potential of our citizen-focused transformation of what we do locally. It will enable us to focus our considerable, combined resources more effectively on tackling the big, complex issues that could undermine success in shaping Shropshire's future. Specifically this approach will accelerate the redesign of public services locally. It will integrate them to cut costs and visibly improve quality of life outcomes, and to put power into the hands of local people, in terms of influence over and co-production of the new forms of local delivery. It will build on our existing work together across a range of outcome areas, where Shropshire partners are already responding positively with pace and capacity to meet the challenges of open public service reform.

Our ambition is clear and our capacity to deliver well evidenced. Already we are prototyping a wide range of innovative, complementary initiatives. These include Neighbourhood Plans Vanguard, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Front Runner, Local Enterprise Partnership early adopter, Health and wellbeing early implementer, Capital Asset Transfer Pathfinder, our Voluntary Sector Delivery Consortium, and Social Work Social Enterprise pilot.

A whole place community budget is the essential next step which will realise our collective ambition to put **local people and local public service leaders and commissioners in the driving seat of service transformation** in an accountable way.

Our partnership has a clear vision for a '**Flourishing Shropshire**' underpinned by strong, strategic alignment across our local public services, the Voluntary Sector Assembly, and the Shropshire Business Board. Our agreed shared priorities are;

- Enterprise and Growth, with strong, vibrant market towns and rebalanced, sustainable rural settlements
- Healthy, safe and confident people and communities
- Responding to climate change and enhancing our natural and built environment

These already form the basis for Shropshire's approved core spatial planning strategy, informing our key development decisions, and are the foundation for our community-led Place Plans, equipping local people with the power to decide how investment through the Community Infrastructure Levy and New Homes Bonus is spent in each locality.

Our priorities for joint action in the pilot will be:-

- Offender management
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Creating community capacity
- Dementia and strokes
- Childhood obesity
- Family poverty and breakdown
- Affordable housing (for economic growth)

Our intention is to find ways to “get ahead of the curve”, in terms of reducing future demand and cost for public services in each of these areas, through a joint approach to both commissioning and providing a series of effective/interventions, (rather than creating long term dependency on “services”).

Central to Shropshire’s approach is the radical reinvention of the role of local elected councillors from Shropshire Council, as well as from Town and Parish Councils. Innovative cutting edge development of this is already well underway here. Working with OPM, we have been exploring how new tools, including social media, the new Community Rights to Buy/Challenge, and ‘World Café’ style citizen empowerment, can re-boot the local councillor role for the 21st Century. This recognises that the type of leadership now required needs to take full account of the complexity and value of the bonds and networks in our local communities, in enhancing social capital and community resilience. It is leadership that needs to be visible and comfortable operating in our High Streets and our online social networks, as well as in our council chambers and boardrooms. Our approach recognises the growing role of local politicians as ‘social entrepreneurs’ building the capacity of local communities to become more self sufficient, as well as being local commissioners of integrated public services which are ‘customised’ for each community based on the preferences of local people.

As new models of public accountability, like Police and Crime Commissioners and Clinical Commissioning Groups emerge, we will adapt and evolve these approaches to increase the reach and influence of such commissioners over the total quantum of local public spend, in consistent and complementary ways. This will ensure joined up local commissioning as well as joined up local delivery.

Our vision here is for community budgets to forge new and powerful relationships between all these new forms of citizen representation and the levers of power and decision making which have previously been locked up in organisational silos. Rather than administratively complex financial pooling arrangements, we see big opportunities for closer alignment of the totality of public resources in Shropshire in ways which are aligned with each other and with the wishes of local people.

Our approach will use these new models of accountability to coordinate a power shift to the most local level. Already in Shropshire, key local assets: car-parking, public toilets, street markets and street-scene are being transferred to willing town and parish councils, best able to reflect local needs and preferences. Our vision is for a community budget encouraging and empowering much more rapid and radical shifts of power and control to local communities, and to see local voluntary and community sector organisations as the gateway to this.

Underpinning this vision is a strong, and partnership grounded, evidence base. An Intelligence Observatory drawing on data from health, criminal justice and local government partners is being developed, as evidenced, for example, by our collaboration on a new look, open source, Wiki-style Joint Strategic Needs Assessment focusing on the wider determinants of health and health inequalities.

Through a Community Budget approach, this intelligence source would expand to give local citizens access to information which links performance outcomes to spend at a local level, so that local people can see clearly what is being spent and what is being achieved as a result in terms of improved quality of life, thereby equipping them to

effectively hold local agencies and other providers in the market place to account for the quality of service delivery.

Our partnership track record

This bid is submitted by Shropshire Partnership as it reflects a collective ambition across public service organisations at all levels in the county to do things differently together in future. Unburdened from the bureaucratic shackles of the past, the Partnership is flourishing and is already focussed on coordinating frontline service transformation from the citizen and community perspective, by working on an integrated approach, bottom-up as well as top-down.

Whilst some other parts of the country have broken up or abandoned partnership arrangements, we have recently reviewed our approach, stripping out non-essential structures and galvanising efforts around a shared approach to cutting costs, accelerating performance improvement, and redesigning integrated services around visible outcomes for our citizens.

Our 'Flourishing Shropshire' change programme has also already driven a collaborative approach to dialogue with local citizens on the tough choices necessary to meet future fiscal challenges. Key decision makers from health, police, fire, local government and other public agencies in Shropshire were able, last year, to deliver a common set of messages about the future, and to listen together to the concerns of local people. This helped us set aligned priorities for both service decommissioning and for investment in improvement, eliminating the risk of shunting costs around the sector as funding pressures increase.

Shropshire has also been delivering its own Place Based Intervention projects which bring partners together with local people in our most vulnerable communities to co-design new, integrated services and deliver better outcomes for the most disadvantaged.

The public agencies in Shropshire have demonstrated that they are receptive and responsive to those communities that want to take on responsibility for their local area. Shropshire already has good examples of community-based networks created by and for local people taking ownership of what happens in their town or village. For example the successful Cleobury Country Partnership, formed in 2003, brings together local people with expertise and interest in specific areas such as the economy, environment and transport.

Now a fully fledged social enterprise company, incorporated in 2006, it draws on the skills of over 100 members from a diverse range of backgrounds to promote the business, economic and community needs of this isolated rural community. It has been successful in creating a purpose built community hub, the Cleobury Country centre which offers state of the art ICT equipment, community run library, business incubator units, conference rooms and business support services for local SMEs. It's a showcase building for environmental local carbon technologies (green roof, photo voltaics, ground source heat pump and sustainable timber)

This project shows what local people, with the right technical support from public service organisations can achieve. We have strong interest from a number of other local communities that wish to quickly pursue a similar approach. Community budgets will give similar local networks the chance to influence, bend and shape funds across the

public sector. It will help bring motivated, creative local people together with key decision makers and gatekeepers of public spending, ensuring spend can be pulled together to align with their priorities, rather than those of administrators remote from grass-roots issues.

Our Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly (representing over 300 groups and organisations) is a key component of the partnership. By choice, and with support and facilitation from Shropshire Council, it is undergoing a radical shift in approach, focused on improving both commissioning and performance. This is future-proofing our approach, recognising the importance of outcome-based accountability, and is carefully preparing the sector to play a bigger role and to take advantage of the shift in delivery from old-style contracts to new models of provision and payment by results. Uniquely, we believe, this change agenda is being led by a round-table alliance of key VCS representatives, sitting alongside council and other public service leaders, as well as local business leaders, tackling the challenges together, reflecting the maturity and honesty of partnership working in the county. As a result, the VCS Assembly has put together a strong commercial approach to competing for an winning future business, not least through the development of an effective framework of local social enterprises, working closely with the Shropshire business sector.

Relationships are equally strong and well developed between public and private sectors, with a highly effective Business Board and Local Enterprise Partnership which fully engages local businesses. Similarly, our success in developing only the second, nationally approved Community Infrastructure Levy approach is testament to the quality of relationships in Shropshire with private sector housing developers, demonstrating a confident, collective attitude to Shropshire's future, but recognising that sustainable, resilient communities need targeted investment. The Shropshire Partnership has a private sector chair and deliberately uses commercial challenge to encourage fresh thinking across the public and voluntary sectors.

In reviewing the partnership recently, our agreed focus is increasingly on bringing its total resources to bear on a place based approach, where frontline workers co-design service transformation with local people to deliver better, faster and cheaper services. Where blocks and barriers are identified, the Leadership Board brings its insight and influence to bear to make change happen by removing these, and creating 'safe places' for staff and local people to experiment and try new ways of working. For example, in Market Drayton, a partnership team is helping local people address high levels of worklessness and long term health issues. Local councillors are at the heart of this approach, and social media and other tools are helping people be champions for change in their neighbourhoods. This approach will be accelerated and massively enhanced through a community budget pilot – where civil servants with direct access to national decision makers could draw on local insight and practice to help reshape national frameworks and regulation, providing greater flexibility.

This local engagement sits well alongside Shropshire Council's evolving approach to localism, building on our local joint committees, which bring elected Shropshire and Parish/Town Councillors together with community representatives to agree a shared vision for their place and priorities for joint action to achieve it. These are already used by other key partners, such as the police, to rationalise their community engagement, getting maximum impact from investment, and making sense to communities and agencies alike. As part of a community budget approach these would be enhanced to

include other key local leaders such as GPs, school heads and governors, business representatives, clergy from various faith groups, and local 'activitists'.

This local action complements intensive work already underway with our Neighbourhood Planning Vanguard areas, where parish and town councils are working with local residents and planning officers to create a positive spatial planning environment. Again, this would be accelerated and complemented by a community budget, which could unlock resource and help align total public spend to best address the priorities of local people.

Alongside this strategic refocusing of partnership working, Shropshire has a strong track record of specific projects that demonstrate our commitment and capacity to learn quickly and effectively from community budgets. These include:-

- **Integrated Offender Management (Route 7)** – where Shropshire has piloted multi-agency work from a single, shared work base, centred around the client, on behalf of the West Mercia policing region. This approach effectively brings public and voluntary sector resources together to tackle crime and reduce re-offending, through a focus on tackling the causes of offender behaviour, including helping get them into sustained employment.
- **Civil resilience and emergency planning** – where the PCT, Fire and Rescue Service and Shropshire Council are pooling staff resource, co-locating teams, and coordinating engagement with communities on the role they play in improving community response and recovery in the event of a civic emergency.
- **West Mercia Probation Trust and VCS partnership** - where an innovative preferred partnership agreement with YSS, a VCS organisation through whom they have been able to access additional funding and resources, and to develop wider partnership working with other VCS organisations.
- **Voluntary and Community sector capacity** – development of a consortium to enhance the sector's ability to successfully bid for delivery of public service spin-outs, through a better joint approach to commissioning and procurement.
- **Strategic Infrastructure Forum** – an innovative new group bringing together all major infrastructure agencies from public and private sector, to agree a common approach to delivering strategic Community Infrastructure Levy projects
- **Drugs and Alcohol Awareness Team** – works to increase understanding of cause and effect and develop evidence based approach to tackling the issues

Whole Place pilot status will bring together and better enhance the impact of all these initiatives and will help transfer the learning from each prototype quickly to other parts of the country.

Process

Key programme elements for the Shropshire Community Budget pilot will be:-

- Developing an outcome-based accounting approach across the public sector so we can see what is being spent and how effective it is in achieving the desired outcomes in localities
- Extracting intelligence from Place Based Intervention work on overlapping service delivery to vulnerable and high need families, then actioning the removal of duplication to give more effective coordination of targeted interventions.
- Developing multi-agency teams/ multi-skilled groups able to work across organisational boundaries to engage local communities as co-producers

- Pan public / voluntary sector asset review leading to shared premises/rationalisation of public buildings, co-located teams, and the handing over of facilities to direct community ownership and operation
- Integrate a community budget approach with parallel work to increase personalisation of budgets to individuals
- Developing local decision making and accountability, based on a community level partnership governance frameworks, between locally elected councillors, frontline professional staff from all partners and other providers, and local people/businesses. Initially this will be tested at a small number of sub-pilots in areas with different socio-economic characteristics. One of these will be Harlescott, one of our most deprived wards that has many parallels with inner city areas and where Shropshire Partnership is already trialling new, more integrated ways of working.

Extent of the pilot – Geography

We are confident that Shropshire is a highly coherent area, reflecting strong local community identity, and providing helpful co-terminosity with key organisational boundaries. Recent research by the New Local Government Network shows that Shropshire has the greatest potential of any unitary or upper tier local authority area to work with communities to deliver the Big Society. We benefit from having more active volunteers, a stronger sense of belonging, and higher levels of civic participation in our towns and villages than almost any other part of England.

Shropshire is also facing some of the key demographic challenges for the UK faster and more intensely than other areas. The increasing proportion of older people presents both a significant opportunity – reflected in the volunteering capacity and civic participation cited above – as well as a major challenge for social care and health services. A community budget pilot here will, therefore, offer the opportunity to explore how more sophisticated alignment of resources across all public services can help tackle these challenges more effectively.

This proposal is submitted by Shropshire Partnership and covers the Shropshire Partnership area, which is contiguous with the administrative boundary for Shropshire Council and aligns to the boundaries of the Shropshire Division of West Mercia Police; Shropshire PCT and the Clinical Commissioning Group; Shropshire division of West Mercia Probation Service; the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly; the Shropshire Business Board (part of the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership); the Shropshire area of the Marches Job Centre Plus Division; and the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service area.

These partner agencies, together with the Association of Local Councils and Shropshire Youth Parliament, have a track record of working together well across this geography, within the overarching framework of the Shropshire Partnership. Shropshire is part of a Work Programme contract package area covered by the providers SERCO and ESG. They, in turn, mainly sub-contract activity to local delivery organisations like Shropshire County Training.

As part of Shropshire Council's innovative Place Plan approach, the administrative area has been further broken down into 18 community-defined geographies or "Places", based around Shrewsbury and our market towns as local 'service hubs', which reflect the way the county actually works on the ground. Our current Market Towns Regeneration initiative involves significant investment in the vibrancy of these local 'hubs' and this can be boosted by the Community Budget pilot. This will help the

partners to work with individual communities to ensure efficient and effective joint responses to agreed priorities for action and investment.

Extent of the pilot – Services

In terms of the scope of these activities, the Shropshire Partnership has agreed what Community Budgets will mean, as follows:

- All Public Sector Partners will make their total resources transparent;
- All resources (but not necessarily all cash) will be available for pooling or alignment;
- In effective dialogue with local people, Shropshire Councillors, working locally with Town and Parish Councils, will be able to determine the levels and methods of delivery of service and how these will be designed in their locality to reflect local needs and preferences;
- The roles and operation of front line staff can be radically changed and adapted to more effectively meet these local needs and preferences;
- Resources will be used to enable the most efficient and appropriate commissioning, procurement and delivery mechanism;
- Town and Parish Councils will determine which services they want delivered 'centrally' by Shropshire Council, which they want to contract out or devolve directly to the community, and which they want to deliver directly. All services are open to this (subject to the limits of existing contracts).

Much of the current public service finance in Shropshire is allocated separately to particular services and, whilst this protects key service delivery, such an approach can stifle innovation in tackling complex issues and in meeting the differing needs and wants of local communities.

Shropshire is keen to explore with the Government how a locally accountable system of community budgeting can deliver better services and improve outcomes for our residents. At this stage we are not proposing any service exclusions and wish to begin with the presumption that all services should be included in the pilot.

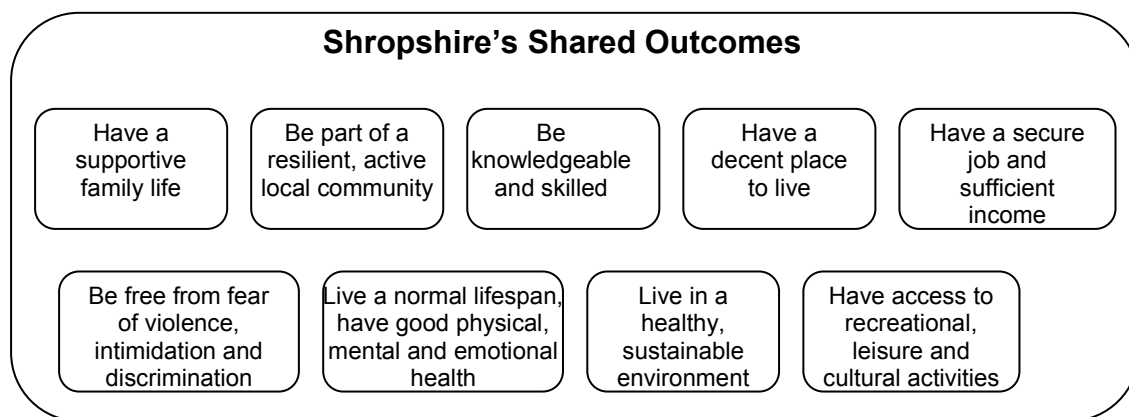
Having said that, partner organisations recognise that there are some contractual obligations that will limit flexibility in shared budgeting in the short to medium term, and some statutory requirements and national priorities (such as mutual aid for counter-terrorism) that don't directly fit this approach, but have agreed that this pilot will inform both current and future commissioning, procurement and investment as much as possible.

Decision making and accountability

Shropshire Partnership Leaders Board is the main forum for joint decision making and setting strategic direction for Shropshire. It is here that under-performance or risk of failure is dealt with, and any disagreements are managed. Our thematic partnerships, which include the Safer Stronger Communities Partnership, Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board, Housing Strategy Group, and Shropshire Business Board, drive and oversee specific areas of work, including managing performance in those aspects against agreed shared targets for improvement.

At a community level, we intend to build on our Place Plan and Local Joint Committee model, to create more locally focussed steering groups that bring together local elected members with other community leaders such as GPs, head teachers and governors. At this early stage we are not prescribing a particular format as this will stifle innovation. Instead we will establish a simple set of principles for local level decision making and accountability whilst still allowing flexibility in order to create the right models for each locality.

Building on our shared priorities, listening to what local people said was important to them, we have developed nine priority outcomes, which deliberately cut across individual organisational silos, against which we want our shared performance to be held to account by local citizens and communities.



We intend our approach to accountability to be fully transparent. As part of the pilot, we will commit to putting real-time performance information online against each of these outcomes in accessible, open source formats.

Our Place Plans approach can provide a model for this. All investment for CIL decisions is captured and displayed in the Online Place Plans, to ensure complete transparency in terms of linking community benefits with development, enhancing trust and understanding on how decisions are reached around the prioritisation of issues of both strategic and local importance, and how investment decisions respond to this.

This will build on our experience in using techniques such as infographics to bring performance information to life for citizens and communities. Active citizen engagement in the Whole Place pilot is seen as a critical element of the project. This will be secured through a sophisticated approach to communications, building on Shropshire's track record in using social media (e.g. our Shrop360 Twitter campaign) and local community engagement (e.g. building on our rural Toolkit approach, endorsed by the RTPI and Action for Market Towns) as best practice.

We recognise that several of our partner organisations have some objectives set by national government but we wish to explore how much we can influence these to meet local priorities down to the community level. However, we are keen to create a new method of accounting based on activity, audience and locality, that will underpin our outcomes focussed approach and move away from service orientated budgets that reinforce silo working. We see this as an important step towards a meaningful process of payment by results.

Use of resources

Shropshire's Place Plans have been drawn up and are updated annually to provide a single resource for investors, parishes and decision makers. They contain the key investment priorities for Shropshire and, through the use of CIL, public and private resources, begin to piece together a picture of how our overall resources can best be targeted to address these.

This approach will be built on and expanded to provide accessible, transparent and accountable evidence of all local spend across the public sector, and its effectiveness in improving agreed outcomes. The Community Budget pilot will be based on a trial of a newly developed accounting framework. This will no longer track spend on the basis of 'services', but rather on the links between activity, 'audience' (client group), and locality. For example, it will allow the Partnership to examine the total spend on say 16-19 year old young people in the market town of Ludlow, in relation to activities (by all agencies and the local community) to reduce offending and re-offending. Linked to the new, shared performance framework, it will then enable an evaluation to be made of the effectiveness of such investment in meeting the agreed outcomes, using a range of locally developed measures of success.

Decisions on future spending can, therefore, be based on clear evidence of what works and what does not, to support the rapid realignment of limited public resources where appropriate.

This new framework will also enable us to track where new forms of joint working and integrated service delivery at the frontline, in our local communities, is providing better value for money for local people, reducing costs, duplication and inefficiency.

Sharing and learning

As a national pathfinder for a range of pilot projects, both currently and in the past, Shropshire has an excellent track record in sharing good practice and learning from others.

For example, our VCS Foundation is embedded in sharing learning; it naturally disseminates models of good practice as individual organisations and, more recently, for our work as an Assembly. The Assembly is recognised and sought out by other areas of the country as a constructive and effective model for working with large and diverse VCS organisations; we are constantly sending information out and sharing our learning through meeting and wider group discussions and presentations.

Shropshire has also recently hosted a major national convention of community representatives of market towns. With Ludlow as its focus, the event centred on sharing expertise of neighbourhood planning and market town regeneration and attracted national input from ministers, key stakeholder groups, parish and town councils.

As one of eight recently created unitary councils, Shropshire played the key role in arranging the first annual exchange of experience, facilitating learning across the new authorities. This had a particular focus on our respective approaches to meeting the financial challenges of the global economic context, as well as how the different councils have addressed localism. The intention is to repeat this shortly and make it an annual event, supported by an active virtual learning network.

We have a large number of senior councillors and officers who are accredited peers and, therefore, have experience in working with other councils on learning and transfer of expertise and experience.

In relation to this pilot, we will put together a dedicated “review and challenge group”, using representatives from the full range of local partners together with experts from outside Shropshire, whose role will be to push us to identify and disseminate effectively the learning involved, on a monthly basis, as we make progress in delivering the new Community Budget framework. This “peer review” group will require the Partnership to regularly evaluate what is working and why; identify “honourable” failures from which valuable learning can be extracted; and determine how best this can be communicated effectively to others and disseminated elsewhere, in an accessible, relevant and practical form.

We will, for example set up an online “learning laboratory” to share insights into our progress in the pilot, and a series of wiki-style interactive bulletin boards to promote dissemination and debate nationally about the issues arising from our experience.

The Team

A dedicated project team consisting of senior officers led by one of Shropshire Council’s three Area Directors will manage the Community Budget pilot. The Area Director will report to the Shropshire Partnership Leaders Board.

The team will be supported by staff with expertise in engagement, communication, legal, HR and business redesign.

This bid is fully supported by:

Shropshire Council
West Mercia Police
Shropshire PCT
Shropshire Clinical Commissioning
Group
West Mercia Probation Service

Shropshire Voluntary and Community
Sector Assembly
Job Centre Plus Shropshire Division
Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service
Association of Local Councils
Shropshire Business Board