

## **Memorandum of Cooperation – Redesign of Shropshire Council Services**

To record concerns at the past financial management of Shropshire Council that has brought about some of the current funding problem by years of refusing to increase local council tax. Also to recognise the financial restriction already placed on the larger parish and town councils by the refusal of Shropshire Council to pass on the council tax support grant over the last two years.

That a referendum should be called by Shropshire Council to ensure a countywide consistency and equality of cost sharing for the services under threat and to provide market town councils with a clear community mandate of support, or otherwise for local council tax increases.

Recognition of the frustration in some areas of the county in working with Shropshire Council to secure information on finance, leases and other costs to thereby identify both risks and potential benefits from any transfer of services

That the timetable for decisions set by Shropshire Council is wholly unrealistic for due diligence to take place by the market town councils to determine support or otherwise for the transfer of services or funding support, and for Shropshire Council itself to put in place the many legal and service level agreements that may be necessary from April 2017

That the views of the local government Minister must be carefully considered to establish his opinion on substantial parish precept increases in Shropshire, that could equate to the highest in England and Wales, and the threat of any future capping measures that could arise to restrict how parish and town councils can function in the future.

That any asset disposal by Shropshire Council in a market town should see the savings generated ring fenced for the sole benefit of that area and not placed in a wider county pot.

That any negotiations must have the primary focus of the benefit of a freehold transfer of land, buildings and property for the benefit of the local council and not be restricted by leasehold or restrictive covenants unless mutually agreed.

To identify the risk to larger parish and town councils in agreeing to long terms service transfers recognising that any funding support that may be achieved from neighbouring parishes, or other sources, will only generally be for annual or short term commitments, thereby providing no assurance of sustainability.

The concern evident at the local level in attracting candidates for local elections in May 2017 with the ongoing threat to local services.

**Wednesday 8 June 2016**

**In attendance – the parish or town councils of**

**Albrighton, Bridgnorth, Broseley, Church Stretton, Cleobury Mortimer, Craven Arms, Much Wenlock, Ludlow, Oswestry, and Wem**