

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Recreation & Leisure Committee Held in the Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury At 6.00pm on Wednesday 4 December 2019

PRESENT

Councillors K Pardy (Chair), Mrs G Burgess, Mrs K Halliday, I Jones, Ms J Mackenzie, A Mosley, K Roberts, D Vasmer (substituting for Councillor Nat Green) and Mrs R Wall.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs H Ball (Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Stuart Farmer (Projects Manager), Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager), Carol Pullen (Acting Committee Clerk).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

49/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY & NON-PECUNIARY) IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Shropshire Councillors	(i) Those twin-hatted members declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council.
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50/19 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 2 October 2019 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 2 October 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

51/19 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(i) **Ref: Min 36/19 (i) Capital Programme**

Christmas Lights – Councillor Pardy had reported that Goldsmiths Jewellers had requested lights be extended to the sides of the Old Market Hall to improve the area. The Town Clerk reported that Christmas lighting provision was targeted at the high footfall areas and it might be that the BID would wish to provide further enhancements.

Toilets – Councillor Jones said he was aware that the toilets in the Pride Hill Shopping Centre had been closed, although it was unclear whether this was temporarily, meaning the nearest public toilets to Frankwell Car Park were in the Town Centre. He asked that consideration be given to providing toilets in Frankwell Car Park. The Town Clerk reported there was a planned refurbishment for the shopping centre toilets and she would contact the Shopping Centre Manager to clarify which were available and when they would be closed. There were finger posts in the car park that directed people to toilets for public use in the Guildhall and Theatre Severn. In the future it may be possible to consider a community toilet scheme whereby local business offer access to their facilities.

52/19 2019 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Capital Programme Report had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Town Clerk gave an update on current projects.

BMX – The Operations Manager had met with the contractors and work would begin in the New Year, depending on climatic conditions. It was intended to start on Shorncliffe Drive and report on progress before moving on to other locations.

Street Lights – Work was progressing although there had been a slow down due to Christmas light installation taking priority with the Electrical Contractor.

Toilets – A full feasibility programme was continuing. Discussions being held with Shropshire Council to set up a working group to look at the whole of the Quarry and pool facilities.

Footpaths/Cycleways – The Countryside & Greenspace Team Leader was preparing specifications to go out to tender for all footpaths including Belvidere Paddocks. Officers had investigated whether there were any S106 monies due for Belvidere Paddocks. None had been flagged up. Cllr Mrs Moseley would investigate further as she had been advised there would be.

Defibrillators – Defibrillator ordered for Weeping Cross. The red phone box on Castle Street had been adopted and was being kitted out as a Defibrillator station.

Community Centres – Still awaiting input from Castlefields Community Centre Management Committee about kitchen requirements. Housing Plus had agreed to contribute £20,000 to the Meet Place extension. They had instructed MECA to consult widely to determine local need. In the meantime the Town Council would ring-fence £20,000 for the future project.

Countryside Sites – The artwork for the interpretation boards has been prepared and the cost for five boards had come in under budget at £1,800 + VAT with a small cost on top for the boards and legs. Other locations will be explored to consider further interpretation boards.

Abbey Gardens – The Operations Manager would be meeting with the Ward member to discuss enhancements to the site.

Springfield Recreation Ground – Improvements to footpaths had been included in the wider tender specification for footpaths.

Roundhill Green – The play area was nearly ready for signing off.

Dana Footpath – Discussions were still taking place between Shropshire Horticultural Society and Shropshire Council's Legal Department. The Operations Manager reported that the Town Council had been asked not to replace the summer bedding as the Contractor wished to use the area as a compound when work commences.

Castlewalk Recreation Ground – Discussions were taking place with local developers re utilising excess top soil from development sites. Currently ground conditions were not too good; this was likely to be a late Spring/early Summer project.

Monkmoor Recreation Ground – Astro turf pitch progressing well, fencing & floodlighting in, on target for mid January opening. Wooden kickboards were found to be in poor condition and instructions have been given to undertake a wholesale replacement. The project was still likely to come in under budget as budgeted contingency was unlikely to be required. Need for a specialist brush machine to keep the rubber crumb agitated; options were being investigated.

The Town Clerk praised the work of the Projects Manager who had been instrumental in running the Contracts for the LED Street Lights, the Christmas Lights Tender and the Monkmoor Recreation Ground refurbishment of the artificial surface from tendering through to Contract management and delivery.

RESOLVED:

- (i) **That the update be noted.**
- (ii) **That the Committee thank the Project Manager for delivery of the projects on time and within budget.**

53/19 FEES & CHARGES

The proposed Fees & Charges for 2020/21 had been circulated to the Finance & General Purpose Committee earlier in the week. Inflation of circa 2.5% had been added to increase the fees across the board rounding up or down in some scenarios and attention was drawn to the new charge for events in the Quarry where a percentage would be applied to the rental fee for increased capacity by organisers. The Finance & General Purpose Committee had agreed that a discounted rate for individuals wishing to hire the Grange Community Centre be applied and were happy to progress the proposed Fees & Charges for 2020/21 through to the budget.

RECOMMENDED:

That the revised Fees & Charges for 2020/21 be approved as part of the 2020/21 budget process.

54/19 CLIMATE EMERGENCY

(i) Update on Peat-free Compost Trials

The Operations Manager reported on the peat-free compost trials. A compost substitute made up of green waste had been bought in and was currently being trialled with the Spring bedding and it was intended to extend this to the Summer bedding. If successful the hope would be to be totally peat free by Autumn of 2020.

The compost shows no difference in quality but is more expensive but the cost may come down with bulk purchase.

RESOLVED:

That the update on compost trials be noted.

(ii) Update on battery powered equipment procurement

The Projects Manager reported on trials of battery powered blowers, strimmers and hedge cutters in the Quarry. The trials using Stihl and Husqvarna machines had proved successful and there had been positive comments from the public that the machinery was so quiet. The batteries are the expensive item with each machine needing three batteries to get through the day. A full twelve months is needed and if successful this could be rolled out to all of the fleet. Unfortunately the company had not been able to demonstrate a battery operated mower in the Dingle due to the necessity for a domestic mower to be used but it is hoped that a solution has been found and the outcome of these trials will be reported back to the Committee at a later date.

RESOLVED:

That the update on battery powered equipment be noted.

(iii) Approval of Solar Light Tenders

Tenders have been sought, reviewed and evaluated using a scoring matrix for the provision of solar powered LED lights along Victoria Avenue in the Quarry between Clement Memorial and Kingsland Bridge. Five tenders had been received and evaluated giving consideration to a design in keeping with a heritage park. Details of all proposals were circulated and the Committee agreed with the findings of the Finance & General Purpose Committee that Contract D3 was far superior. It was reported that the same traditional style lantern (but for a power supply) is already being used in other parts of the town as part of the current LED replacement programme.

A £60,000 budget had been allocated originally for 20 light columns but the siting distance required 21 light columns to avoid any dark gaps, at a cost of £72,710. The Finance & General Purpose Committee had discussed and agreed to increase the budget and the Contract had been duly awarded to Tenderer D3.

RESOLVED:

That the update on approval of solar light tender be noted.

55/19 TENDERING

(i) BMX Tendering

The Operations Manager had met with Tenderer 1 to discuss the planned refurbishment programme for Little Harlescott Lane and Shorncliffe Drive. He had written to Tenderer 2 regarding a site visit for Mary Webb Road and was awaiting a response.

(ii) Play Area – Roundhill Green

Work had commenced on the refurbishment of the play area, however this had been hampered by climatic conditions.

(iii) Play Area – Sweetlake

Approval had been received from the Planning Authority and the developer of the extended footprint of the play area to accommodate more varied equipment. Tenders were being prepared.

(iv) Solar Lights – Quarry

The contract had now been awarded following the Finance & General Purpose Committee agreement to the additional spend.

(v) Christmas Lights

The tender for the Christmas lights for a period of three years from 2020 was open and live until 24 January after which time they would be evaluated with a view to shortlisting and invitations to do a presentation in mid-February before a decision being taken at Full Council in March.

Members were keen to again be involved in the decision as they had done three years ago and it was agreed that the Chair, Councillor Pardy along with Councillors Roberts, Ms Mackenzie and Mrs Burgess form a working group and be involved in the evaluation.

RESOLVED:

That the update on Tendering be noted.

56/19 QUARRY

(i) Update of events in the Quarry for 2019

The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager circulated a list of events from October through to end of December due to take place in the Quarry and other locations. It was reported that a number of fishing events had been cancelled due to river levels. The River Fest Qualifier and finals were still scheduled to take place.

Councillor Mrs Moseley asked what the situation of payment was when an event had to be cancelled. The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager confirmed that as the Council incurred no costs, there was no charge to organisers although they did pay a Bond, which was returned providing they caused no damage and the Council incurred no costs.

(ii) Approval of major events for 2020

The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager circulated a list of events for 2020, some of which were provisional. Only one new event had been added which was a Wellness Event on 14 June. As the Premises Licence only allows for two major events a year, expressions of interest had been sought as there was so much interest in holding a major event. It had now been confirmed that UK Live would hold the Let's Rock Concert in July.

(iii) Update on the use of the Quarry for Events

The Town Clerk gave a presentation on the Town Council's policy for outdoor events. The Council have a definitive guide on how to run events with narrative provided by the Safety Advisory Group. The Quarry is run by a Premise Licence and licensing objectives must be met. The events policy is available on the Shrewsbury Town Council website.

Councillors noted the report and thanked the Town Clerk for her detailed presentation.

Members concluded there was a reasonable balance of usage and Officers managed the use of the Quarry as an events venue well. The Town Clerk was asked to circulate the presentation to all members of the Council.

(iv) Update on footfall activity in the Quarry

The footfall data for October and November had been circulated to members. The Projects Manager reported over 100,000 visitors each month with an average of 100 minutes spent in the Quarry. In October there was a peak during the Octoberfest and in November a peak on Remembrance Sunday.

There had been increased visitors to the town during Christmas Lights switch on and it would be interesting to note the footfall at Carols in the Square later this month and see how much these events affect footfall.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update on events for 2019 be noted.**
- (ii) That the approval of major events for 2020 be noted.**

- (iii) That the update on the use of the Quarry for events be noted.
- (iv) That the update on footfall report be noted.

57/19 MARKETS

The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager reported a 76% occupancy. There were three stalls available on a Tuesday and a Wednesday with eight on the waiting list, mainly existing traders wanting more days or larger stalls and newcomers deemed not appropriate at the moment due to the trader mix policy.

The Market had opened late on the evening of Christmas lights switch on and attendance had increased to nearly Saturday levels with the average dwell time increasing. There was a late night opening planned for Saturday 7 December and a festive late night in conjunction with Carols in the Square on 18 December.

The Market was currently ranked in the top 10 of Britain's Favourite Markets and results of the judging would be known in January.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager be noted.

58/19 RECREATION GROUND & OPEN SPACE MATTERS

(i) Springfield Recreation Ground

The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager provided an update following further discussions with Arthog regarding their interest in running an outdoor classroom at Springfield. The Town Council had posed some questions for Arthog which they had responded to and had also been in touch with the Environment Agency. There were concerns about water quality, causing Algal Blooms and fish kills, which can be caused by over feeding wildlife. The Environment Agency did not consider the area safe for on water activities such as canoeing although an area on the South side of the Mere could be used for occasional canoeing. There were certain parts of the mere, which were overgrown with overhanging trees but with liaison with the Wildlife Trust, these could be removed to create more room for canoeing. The Environment Agency could provide some bird and bat boxes. A dipping platform with interpretation boards, possibly designed by local children could be included. To respect the wildlife, activities would be limited during the bird nesting season. Shower and toilet facilities could be provided on the site at the Springfield Pavilion.

Members agreed that subject to costing and contribution from the Environment Agency and the Wildlife Trust and input from the Town Council's Countryside Unit they were happy to pursue the use of Springfield as an outdoor classroom.

RESOLVED:

That discussions with Arthog, the Environment Agency & the Wildlife Trust into the use of Springfield as an outdoor classroom continue and progress be reported back to the Recreation & Leisure Committee.

(ii) Castlewalk Recreation Ground

The Operations Manager & Town Clerk had met with Councillor Mosley to discuss management of Castlewalk Recreation Ground. Further discussions were taking place with local developers re utilising excess top soil from development sites. Currently ground conditions were not too good; this was likely to be a late Spring/early Summer project to avoid damage to the recreational area.

A list of proposals was subsequently drawn up and forwarded to Councillor Vasmer for consultation with residents. Councillor Mosley had requested consideration to link Mousefield to Castle Walk with access via the cycle track. Councillor Vasmer had met with local residents but there was no enthusiasm for extending the footpath to link Mousefield and Castle Walk.

Councillor Mosley felt the two areas should be integrated as it is a fabulous wildlife area. The Operations Manager suggested that the Countryside & Greenspace Team Leader give this further consideration and subject to budget constraints consider barriers or kissing gates to gain access.

Concerns were expressed by Councillors Mosley & Vasmer over the control of weed encroachment onto paths. The Operations Manager said that the Town Council are trying to limit the use of chemicals and it may be possible to burn off the edges when climatic conditions allow.

Councillor Mosley suggested that further development of the area could be undertaken by local community groups who were interested in setting up a nature trail using local funding.

RESOLVED:

That the update on Castlewalk Recreation Ground be noted.

59/19 FISHERIES

Since the last Recreation and Leisure meeting, activity had been slow due to the high river levels. Quotes have been received to do some more work at Mousecroft pool, which would include some more bank stabilisation and the creation of a new footpath with drain. This would be sited away from the water edge so that pedestrians had the option to avoid walking past people fishing.

Radbrook Pool had an invasive weed, which whilst not naturally occurring around here, the EA believe was introduced by someone depositing domestic pond fish into the pool. A plan for disposal was being drawn up.

Oxon Pool requires some more clearing and improvements. At the moment it is too wet to work on the site. It would not be opened to the public until it was safe.

Indications are that the number of people purchasing permits had increased considerably and it is hoped to build on this success.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

60/19 CHRISTMAS

(i) Update on Installation of Christmas Lights

Christmas lights installation was complete, there was only one issue which was three columns on Smithfield Road. The clocks had been removed but it was unclear by whom. The Town Council had covered the cost of replacements.

(ii) Update on Christmas Lights Switch-on Evening

The switch on event had gone well, footfall was up and shops had reported good sales.

(iii) Preparations for Carols in the Square

Preparations for Carols in the Square were well underway.

RESOLVED:

That the updates on Christmas be noted.

61/19 TEAM SHREWSBURY

The Operations Manager reported that now the focus was on different subject areas each month. November had been around exploitation including County lines.

He reported that an Interim Manager had been recruited at the Ark who would be attending future Team Shrewsbury meetings and four inreach/outreach support workers were being recruited across Shropshire.

RESOLVED:

That the Team Shrewsbury update be noted.

62/19 CHARTER FOR WALKING NEIGHBOURHOODS

Following the last Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting the Town Clerk had written to the Ramblers Association to express a wish to sign up to the Ramblers Association Charter

for Walking Neighbourhoods. Details of Town Council activities in this area had been forwarded to the Ramblers Association.

Since the discussions the Ramblers Association had developed a Charter and they were keen for the Town Council to sign. It was felt a good time would be to tie in with installation of the footpath Interpretation Boards. The Town Clerk would continue to liaise with the Ramblers Association.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

63/19 TREES

(i) Urban Tree Challenge Fund

Councillors were reminded to make suggestions for tree planting in their wards. Councillors were asked to consider green spaces managed by Shrewsbury Town Council that could accommodate additional tree planting to create new wooded areas. Once suggestions had been received, Officers would look at the potential of making a bid to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund.

(ii) Ash Die Back

The Town Clerk presented a report on the prevalence of Ash Die Back in Shrewsbury and the need to develop an Action Plan.

Ash Die Back or Chalara Ash Die Back (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) is the most significant tree disease to effect the UK since Dutch Elm Disease. It will lead to the decline and death of the majority of Ash Trees in Britain and it is estimated it has the potential to infect more than 2 billion ash trees across the country. This equates to some 5million in Shropshire with a significantly large sum in Shrewsbury. 10% of the treestock in Shrewsbury is Ash and there are 20% Ash amongst the mature treestock. Many of the Community Woodlands in Shrewsbury were planted with a prevalence of Ash in the 1990s and due to their proliferation in seed production there are considerable numbers of self-set Ash. The Forestry Commission reports that there is unlikely to be any 10km square in England that does not have evidence of Ash Die Back.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the report be noted.**
- (ii) That Officers begin to assess the Ash Tree Population in Shrewsbury.**
- (iii) That an Ash Die Back Action Plan be prepared in consultation with colleagues at Shropshire Council for future consideration by this Committee.**
- (iv) That Officers determine resources required (in terms of budget, staff, skills, equipment) to address the Ash Die Back Problem.**

- (v) That Council sets aside a sum of £100,000 in the 2020/21 budget to deal with Ash Die Back assessment, management and recovery.

64/19 WARD WALKS

Previously all Ward Walks had been diarised and listed for subsequent actions to consider, but nothing had ever been forthcoming. Councillor Mosley expressed concern that no action appeared to be taken following these walks and asked that the item be removed from the Agenda until such time as members had anything to report.

65/19 COMMUTED SUMS

- (a) **Copthorne Barracks Play and Open Space** – offsite contributions to play and open space – awaiting progress with Pavilion Extension & confirmation of drawdown of Commuted Sums from the planning authority
- (b) **Barratt Homes/Bovis Homes – Mytton Oak Road** – planned adoption for the 2019 grass cutting season – costing for snagging list agreed by developers, awaiting confirmation of ownership of SUDS
- (c) **Shrewsbury South Urban**
- i. Sutton Grange site – ongoing – likely transfer in 2019 grass cutting season
 - ii. Bellway Homes site – discussion on land adoption and adoption of acoustic fencing
 - iii. Galliers site – early discussions on land adoption
 - iv. Community Centre – location on the site
- (d) **Ingleby Way** – Adoption & Maintenance of open space – now ready following clarification of hedgerow ownership – awaiting confirmation of title from developer
- (e) **Holgate Drive** – Adoption & Maintenance of open space - awaiting completion of snagging– paperwork signed;
- (f) **Belvidere Paddocks** – Adoption & Maintenance of open space – ready awaiting transfer– paperwork signed;
- (g) **Arlington Way** – Adoption & Maintenance of open space – Land transferred – awaiting £60k transfer S106 money from Shropshire Council;
- (h) **Sweetlake** – Development of play area and future adoption of open space – Tender specification being prepared following approval of extended play area footprint by both the developer and the Planning Authority