

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee Held in Committee Room, Livesey House At 6.00pm on Monday 2nd June 2025

PRESENT

Councillors: R Wilson (Chair), R Dartnall, J Dean, A Fejfer, B Jephcott, A Mosley, J Tandy, D Vasmer and A Wagner

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources) and Heather Phillips (Committee Clerk)

01/25 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF NEW COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

It was noted that, following the Annual Meeting of the Council, Councillor Wilson was appointed Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Councillor Wilson as Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee be noted.

02/25 OVERVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE

The Town Clerk reported that this Committee was the successor to the previous Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The Town Clerk explained that the Policy & Resources Committee was primarily responsible for agreeing and monitoring the Town Council's budget and advising on issues of financial management both in terms of day-to-day financial management but also its governance arrangements including duties under Accounting & Audit Regulations. It was also to establish the policy direction of the Council through its Vision work and externally through the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan Partnership. This Committee was to oversee policy creation for staff to follow, external relations with outside bodies and partners, and its wider communications.

Future discussions were to include CIL & S106 payments from developers, Fees & Charges Review, upgrading of its Communications Strategy, finalising its Vision for 2025-2029 and the development of a Management Plan for the Quarry.

Councillor Dartnall asked whether the the Committee would direct the auditors. The Town Clerk confirmed that the appointment of the auditors was under this Committee's Terms of Reference.

Councillor Mosley asked for confirmation that there had been a change to the Terms of Reference in relation to decisions being Recommended and/or Resolved. Previously, all decisions before committees would be Recommended before going to Full Council, except when an item was important and it could be Resolved without some councillors having sight of it. Councillor Wilson said that this matter was raised at the Annual Town Meeting.

Committees could refer matters directly to Full Council without passing through the Policy & Resources Committee. The Town Clerk advised that since 2009 the Terms of Reference gave powers to committees to resolve matters. Councillor Dean said that the power to Resolve had always been there but that it was not often used. The Terms of Reference gave committees the power to decide to resolve or recommend to Council.

Councillor Jephcott arrived.

RESOLVED:

That the overview of the Policy & Resources Committee be noted.

03/25 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference for the Policy & Resources Committee was circulated to members prior to the meeting. Councillor Wilson asked members if there were any comments.

Councillor Mosley asked if matters relating to ASB and Team Shrewsbury should be reporting to this Committee as it was the main one. Councillor Wilson said that all committees were of equal importance and crime and anti-social behaviour sat better with the Communities & Environment Committee than with the Policy & Resources Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Terms of Reference for the Policy & Resources Committee be noted.

04/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillor Bentick and Clare Turner (Deputy Town Clerk).

05/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Shropshire Councillors	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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06/25 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7th April 2025 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7th April 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

07/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising but it was noted that the Youth Strategy that was due to be tabled at this meeting was now under the remit of the Communities & Environment Committee and would be tabled at its next meeting.

08/25 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 1st April to 23rd May 2025. These had been agreed by two signatories before the RFO and Town Clerk uploaded for payment. No comments or concerns were raised.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 1st April to 23rd May 2025 be approved.

09/25 END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS

Prior to this meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated a draft Annual Report and Draft Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025 in accordance with the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2011. He explained that this Committee was to Recommend the final accounts to the Full Council. The following documents were included:

- (i) Annual Report
- (ii) Statement of Accounting Policies
- (iii) Annual Governance Statement
- (iv) Income & Expenditure Account
- (v) Statement of Movement of Reserves
- (vi) Balance Sheet
- (vii) Annual Return (AGAR)

Overall, the result was better than budgeted and expected which had generated a surplus and had been allocated in Earmarked Reserves.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR)

The Annual Return (AGAR) 2024/25 was presented and highlighted that it had been signed by the Internal Auditor.

Sections 1 and 2 were completed by the Town Council. Section 1 listed 8 assertions that the Council confirmed it had done and which the accounts would also confirm. This was to be signed by the Mayor and Town Clerk at the next Full Council. Section 2 lists the Accounting Statements and was to be signed by the RFO. Section 3 was to be completed by the External Auditor. The AGAR along with further information would be submitted to External Auditors at the end of June and the deadline for the completed audit was the end of September.

(i) Annual Report

The Annual Report (pages 1-9) detailed the activity of the Council and provided a financial comparison for the year compared to the budget. It had been updated to include Visioning and 6 pillars.

The Financial Summary (page 6) showed that income was skewed by grants and S106/CIL of £334k, which left a further positive variance of £156k due to interest, markets and concessions and sports.

Expenses had increased as reported quarterly but there was some positive variance of budget due to strict monitoring and staff not replaced. Capital expenditure included projects all funded by reserves but also CIL income received transferred to reserves.

Overall, there was a small surplus of £7k, but in reality, this was slightly higher due to some budgets not used and amounts earmarked as mentioned above.

Councillor Mosley asked where the repurchase of the land at Greenfields and associated costs was shown. The RFO explained that it was included in the fixed asset note under Freehold (page 28, note 9).

(ii) Statement of Accounting Policies

The Statement of Policies (pages 10-13) remained unchanged.

(iii) Annual Governance Statement

The Annual Governance Statement fed into the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and showed how the Council met the assertions. This was updated annually by the Town Clerk and the RFO.

Assertion 8 Significant Events (p22) was updated since last year and read as follows:

- (i) All matters in relation to the treatment of the repurchase of land at Greenfields Recreation Ground has been completed in 2024/25.
- (ii) There remains a dispute between Dr Day and Greenfields Community Group regarding the use of paid back legal costs and the group's entitlement to use these funds. Until this matter is fully addressed, the Council has resolved not to receive any funding as part payment towards any new infrastructure on site.
- (iii) The Town Council continues to be greatly impacted by significant emergency scenarios that were unforeseen and beyond their control; namely significant flooding of the River Severn.
- (iv) The Town Council continues to be in negotiation with Shropshire Council over the future of the Horticultural Service Level Agreement which expired on 31st March 2025.
- (v) In February 2024 Shropshire Council published its MTFP outlining the need to make £62m of cuts to its revenue budget in 2024/25. These cuts continue to impact on non-statutory services many of which are provided in Shrewsbury. The Town Council has set up a Member/Officer working group to consider the implications of these budget cuts both to the Town Council and the town.

(vi) Local elections were held on 1st May 2025 for both Shrewsbury Town and Shropshire Council.

(iv) Income and Expenditure Account

There was a net deficit (£496k) despite additional CIL income, this is due to capital expenditure and financial rules which are followed.

(v) Statement of Movement of Reserves

The movement of net reserves was self-explanatory and showed general reserves increased by £7k to £356k. This showed how reserves are used, so that despite the large deficit, £550k of usable receipts was used to reduce net movement to earmarked reserves (see below). Capital financing represented fixed asset movements.

(vi) Balance Sheet

This showed fixed assets increasing. There were lower current assets than last year and current liabilities had slightly decreased, for overall reduction in net current assets.

Notes to the Accounts

Overall the notes are to provide more information for users of the accounts, note 16 for earmarked Reserve shows the money set aside for each project going forward. There was lots of movement other than budgeted amounts being added or where reserves were used in the year to finance expenditure. The key figures were:

- £40k added to Children's play areas
- £50k for Solar lights
- £50k for Quarry Management Plan.

The RFO also briefed members as follows on some of the other general income funds under Earmarked Reserves:

- Election cost reserve – monies set aside as bill not yet received
- Equipment and vehicle replacement – machinery procurement had not gone through so budget earmarked for future tender process
- Children's play areas – monies left over £40k
- Allotments – underspend on budget therefore spend going forward
- Recreation (astroturf & floodlights) – astro turf £10k sink fund
- Splash Park – wetpour refresh £15k contribution
- Dana footpath - £20k allocated from previous Finance & General Purposes Committee
- Bus Shelters – final phase to be begun and completed
- Ash die back – in year expenditure
- Quarry picnic area – project completed
- Greenfields Recreation Ground – re-purchased land therefore reserve used up
- Greenhouse Eco heating and venting – needed work to restore, and environment considerations
- Solar lights - £50k for project

- Quarry gates - £70k work soon to be finished
- Heath and Safety Works – works needed to be done
- Sundorne Depot Works – improvement works to staff welfare facilities needed
- CRM, Automation & digitisation – this was part of the SLA and the use of IT

Councillor Dartnall asked if the £30k for the Greenhouse eco heating and venting would take it to net zero. The RFO explained that the boiler used to heat it runs on oil and needed replacing; a more eco-friendly solution was needed. The decision on this was to be made at the Communities & Environment Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Report and timetabled dates be noted;**
- (ii) That the Accounts for the year end 31st March 2025 be recommended to Full Council for approval.**

10/25 INTERNAL AUDITOR

The RFO reported that the Internal Auditor had completed the third and final audit and was able to sign page 3 of the Annual Return (AGAR). No major issues or concerns were identified.

RESOLVED:

That the Internal Auditor's final audit report for the financial year ending 31st March 2025 be accepted, and page 3 of the AGAR submitted to external auditor.

11/25 BUDGET TIMETABLE FOR COMMITTEES

Prior to the meeting, the RFO circulated a report on the Budget Timetable for Committees to appraise members, especially those new to the Town Council, of the new committees, delegation and spending. The dates of the meetings where initial discussions on the budget would take place were given for the Operations Committee (3rd September 2025), the Communities & Environment Committee (15th September 2025) and Planning Committee (9th September 2025). Any recommendations were to be considered at the Policy & Resources Committee on 8th December and fed into final budget discussions on 12th January 2026.

Councillor Dartnall asked if any other committees would have a meeting as part of this programme eg the JCC where input from Town Council staff could be obtained. The Town Clerk said that this would added. She also said that a date had been established for the whole Council to look at the Strategic Plan which would then be passed to this Committee to sign off. The Plan would be received by members shortly.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report and dates be noted;**
- (ii) That Officers ensure agenda items are set for the Committee dates as outlined in the Report.**

12/25 WORKING GROUP AND FORUM ARRANGEMENTS

Prior to the meeting, members received two documents: Criteria for Establishing a Working Group; and, Process for Establishing a Councillor-Led Forum.

Councillor Wilson said that there had been an ever growing number of working groups in recent years and this documentation was to establish the criteria for establishing Working Groups and Forums. Members would be able to clerk their own meetings as they had access to MS Teams for this purpose and which offered a good facility for meeting administration. The Town Clerk said that training could be provided for this.

Councillor Dartnall asked if there would be a budget if a public meeting was held. Councillor Wilson replied that the Committee Room at Livesey House could be utilised at no cost but if a larger venue was required then a request would have to be made for the Town Council to cover the cost.

Councillor Wagner was pleased to see that members would drive these meetings so that the public responsibility lay on members' shoulders and not Town Council staff. Councillor Wilson added that it also allowed councillors to seek advice from experts which they can then take to committees.

Councillor Mosley pointed out that, although both types of meetings would have an objective, that the Forum was less formal than a Working Group.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Working Group and Forum arrangements be approved.

13/25 LAND DISPOSAL

The Asset Disposal Policy was circulated to members prior to this meeting, which had been prepared in the light of previous experience in disposing of assets.

The Town Clerk was keen to ensure that the Town Council's Asset Disposal Policy was fit for purpose and that, regardless of the status of the land, a public notice would be issued in the press and all procedures would be followed.

Three separate requests for disposal of land had been received as follows:

- Land off Wenlock Road – a land-locked parcel of land next to social housing stock. It came to the Town Council originally with an option for Severnside Housing at the time to buy it for affordable housing but that option had now expired. There had been allotment plots on that land since. Virtually every resident that backs onto the land had expressed an interest to purchase it. There was no rear vehicular access and so it was beyond Town Council requirements.
- Land at Sweetlake – a small parcel of land that a resident wanted to acquire to incorporate into his garden – he had been maintaining it since he moved in and it did not affect the usage of POS on site.

- Land at Bowbrook Meadows – a parcel of land that a resident wanted to acquire to incorporate into his garden. He was at the end of a hammerhead which only served his and his neighbour's property and they wished to make the area more private and maintain it to their private garden standard and not amenity standard.

With both the residential sites, checks would have to be made for any restrictive covenants attached to releasing developer initiated land.

Councillor Dartnall said that residents of Wenlock Road had discussed this parcel of inaccessible land with her and it seemed sensible to dispose of this providing there were no covenants attached. Her only concerns were the possibility that it might be developed and/or loss of any wildlife habitat.

Councillor Wilson said that he hadn't yet heard from councillors from Radbrook or Meole with regard to the other pieces of land.

The Town Clerk said that the public can be asked to make any representations regarding disposal of these parcels of land which would then be brought back to this committee before any proposals were made. Notice had to be published 2 weeks prior.

Councillor Wilson said that all councillors would be involved with the decision and that there was a due diligence checklist to complete. It was decided that this could be done ahead of the Full Council meeting in June.

Councillor Mosley said that this process would help if the Council received a stream of other requests. The Town Clerk said that requests had come in occasionally but that they were not all taken to committee because they had already been refused so she didn't foresee that a stream of applications would result.

Councillor Wilson said it must be made clear to the public what was Town Council owned land. The Town Clerk suggested that a layer over a map indicating Town Council areas could be added to the website.

Councillor Dartnall raised the possibility that there may be documentation missing going back to when land was transferred from SABC. The Town Clerk noted this possibility.

RECOMMENDED:

That the proposed 3 parcels of land for disposal be taken to Full Council together with necessary due diligence checks completed.

14/25 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

A Communications Update report was circulated to members prior to this meeting. The Town Clerk added that the Communications Officer had been very proactive since his appointment in January and had moved towards a very engaging brand. The Town Council had moved from posting on X as a social media platform and were now actively publishing on Facebook and Instagram. Take up of the press releases was the highest it had been. The next stage was to develop a Communications Strategy which the Communications Officer

was to come to present at the next meeting. Councillor Dartnall hoped that this would help to distinguish the Town Council.

Councillor Mosley asked if the website could be updated and improved and remarked that the search facility was not at all good. Councillor Wilson agreed with this.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted;**
- (ii) That a Communications Strategy be brought to the next meeting.**

15/25 QUARRY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prior to this meeting, a Specification for Consultancy Services for a Conservation Management Plan for Quarry Park, Shrewsbury was circulated to all. It was proposed that the brief would go out to tender for a suitable consultant to assist with this work. The Town Clerk said that in the past the Town Council had looked at the potential of seeking consultants to help establish a Management Plan for the Park. As the Council's busiest asset, it got considerable wear and tear, not just from day-to-day usage as well as major events, but the fact that millions of litres of flood water sat on it for increasingly longer periods of time causing huge compaction work. The aim of this piece of work was to take the Park into the next generation, to look at where infrastructure was best placed to potentially take things out of the flood zone and have those day-to-day management arrangements in place to sustain it. The budget was earmarked for £50K.

Councillor Dean asked why a consultant was required. The Town Clerk explained that specialist advice was required for, for example, flood risk, river bank maintenance etc and that using a consultant would bring everything together in one plan and establish a priority of work to be done. Councillor Mosley supported the plan and the way it emphasized connectivity with the whole town.

Councillor Vasmer, with reference to 4.5 of the brief, said that a free event which could promote the Town Council should be added and Councillor Fejfer agreed adding that perhaps it could have an emphasis on physical activities. Councillor Wilson suggested an amphitheatre to put on plays etc, or something that would lend itself to putting on free events.

With reference to item 4.3 of the brief, Councillor Jephcot said that it could help improve the Council's excellence in managing the tree stock and other improvements in this area. Taking expert advice on this and how trees can be helped to cope with events would be welcomed. The Town Clerk added that although there was a Tree Management Policy, the trees in the Quarry were special and maintaining them to lengthen their lives was very important and more significant than anywhere else in the town.

Councillor Wagner said that, although the Quarry was well-managed, a great asset, a heritage link and accessible from different areas of the town, it was under-utilised. It had so much going for it that it was easy to resist changing it. He was pleased to see this specific tender for the Quarry. Councillor Wilson said that this had been discussed for sometime so it was good to finally take some action. The Quarry was the jewel of the town and doing nothing was not an option. There was lots to be addressed and each item could not be done in isolation – a consultant could join all of this together.

RESOLVED:

That the Specification for Consultancy Services for a Conservation Management Plan for Quarry Park be put out to tender.

16/25 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked members of the public that had logged in. All papers relating to this meeting could be found on the website www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk and the minutes would appear in draft on the website within the next month. He thanked Councillors and all staff involved in the meeting.