

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**Meeting of the Recreation & Leisure Committee
Held Virtually on Microsoft Teams
At 6.00pm on Wednesday 19 January 2022**

Please note this was an informal virtual meeting of the Committee convened to assist the Town Clerk with carrying out the delegated powers granted to her by Full Council on 22 March 2021 & Finance & General Purposes Committee on 12 April 2021.

PRESENT

Councillors K Pardy (Chair), P Gillam, C Lemon, E Roberts, B Wall & R Wilson. Also in attendance Councillor Mrs P Moseley.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Head of Operations), Stuart Farmer (Projects Manager), Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager), Ruth Jones (Office Manager) & Carol Pullen (Committee Clerk).

69/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillors Bentick & Wagner.

70/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY & NON-PECUNIARY) IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

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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71/21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 17 November 2021 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 17 November 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

72/21 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

64/01 – Shorncliffe Recreation Ground – The Town Clerk had spoken to Redkite, an organisation who undertook projects such as landscape management plans and had previously done works for the Council, about a possible visioning exercise for Shorncliffe and a date was being sought to meet on site with the local councillor.

64/02 – Stanley Lane Recreation Ground – The Project Officer had been working on work specifications with a view to seeking quotes for the pathway and lighting and additional asks will be considered once the costs have been received for that work.

64/03 – Church Road Recreation Ground – The Town Clerk had met with Councillors Vasmer and Bentick about possible options and the Project Officer was currently seeking quotes to bring back to this committee. A date was being sought to have a discussion with the Church about what future use of the Glebefield might look like.

66/02 – Dana Gardens – the Town Clerk had received a medical report but it was not conclusive that it was these particular trees that was affecting the health of the individual so further advice needed to be sought before bringing this matter back to the committee.

73/21 ALLOTMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Dr Graham Tate who would speak about proposals for alternative management of allotments. Prior to the meeting members had received a copy of Doctor Tate's proposals and he spoke to the committee as a concerned allotment holder involved in allotmenting over the last ten years.

Given the wonderful allotment estate that Shrewsbury Town Council had and in order to enhance the mitigation of climate change in all its forms, he felt the allotment sites provided an opportunity to establish some wildlife friendly gardening practice. Many allotment holders he had come into contact with mainly produced fruit and vegetables but it would not be very difficult to actually enhance the wildlife aspect of that. He had discussed his report briefly with Shropshire Wildlife Trust who had a very strong record of leverage towards funding and carrying out environmental projects in Shrewsbury and Shropshire.

He felt a programme of education which would facilitate the greening of the allotment estate by creating wildlife areas such as ponds, hay meadows, safe spaces for hedgehogs, bird & bat boxes, composting and growing climbers. Although it was appreciated that sites were diverse and managed in different ways by the different allotment committees, he felt the Town Council had a role to play in influencing how sites were managed and encouraging committees to participate in educational programmes. He felt there was renewed interest in allotmenting from a younger generation who were clearly are more sympathetic and interested in wildlife. They tended to bring their children onto the site which was a wonderful opportunity and he was aware that some allotment sites were linked with schools. The Town Council would be catering for this new generation of allotments holders.

Councillor Roberts expressed some concerns, although agreeing there was a need to ensure enhancement for wildlife she also worked closely with the foodbank and much produce

received for residents came from the allotment sites. She was concerned that pushing for more wildlife friendly areas on areas that were farmed may put added pressure on people not to produce what was currently needed especially at a time when living costs were spiralling out of control. She believed it should be up to the individual allotment holder whether they chose to put aside some of their area for habitat and diversity.

The Town Clerk offered some background. The Council had around 550 allotment plots over 10 different sites which were run by 8 different management associations under devolved management. They were therefore responsible for the day to day management of their associations, the management and the appointment of new allotment holders. In effect they were responsible for changes to their constitution, tenancy agreements and any website presence they had so the Council's ability to change that was limited although it could look to changing the narrative on the websites about allotments.

In terms of management, the sites were all different, but on all there were some levels of biodiversity. Dr Tate was on the Greenfields site which was probably one of the more traditional sites, whereas places like Bowbrook had a very modern approach to managing the site.

She and the Head of Operations did spend time going round these sites and all of the wildlife suggestions raised by Dr Tate were already operated in some shape or form on those sites. There were also different styles of managing allotments, there were traditional allotment holders who liked brown space but others who operated a minimal dig capability.

She felt the first port of call before Council started to look at commissioning biodiversity surveys was to have a conversation with the Allotment Associations maybe through the six-monthly liaison meetings that she and the Head of Operations facilitated, the next meeting being the following week and perhaps then a conversation with the Biodiversity Officer at Shropshire Council to see whether there was any guidance he could provide.

Councillor Vasmer suggested it might be worth suggesting to the allotment secretaries a presentation with an educational focus on some of the ideas.

The Town Clerk was happy to explore this with allotment secretaries and it may be something that could be facilitated as a separate meeting as the liaison meeting tended to deal more with practical issues.

The Head of Operations echoed the Town Clerk's comments and offered praise to some of the allotment committees. Having been involved with allotments for many years, he was aware that many of the sites had been practicing biodiversity before climate change was even considered and he suggested that Dr Tate visit some of these locations to see the good work they were already undertaking. He did not want to do a disservice to all those plot holders and allotments sites who are really playing their part for climate change such as the Bowbrook site who had won awards for diversity and were a shining light to the other allotment associations. The other thing to bear in mind was the link to Bloom which encouraged biodiversity and there was funding available through Bloom allotment groups could seek support for purchasing bird boxes or bat boxes or planting fruit trees etc.

RECOMMENDED:

That Dr Tate's report be presented to the next Allotment Liaison Meeting with a view to further training and education programmes being made available.

74/21 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Ahead of the meeting, the Capital Programme had been circulated to members and the Town Clerk provided the following updates:

- Costings for Stanley Lane Rec works were progressing.
- Solar Lights installation had started.
- Greenacre Play Area was out for tender.
- Castlewalk Nature Trail was ready for build but awaiting Councillor consultation.
- Town Centre accommodation was being progressed.
- Dana Footpath – SHS had cancelled the meeting before Christmas and a new date for reconvening the meeting was awaited.
- Cycle & Footpath Map – The BID had £10k funding to commission the map with City ID who designed the wayfinding boards. The Climate Change Committee had agreed to fund the map printing.
- Beaver Project – was still awaiting the DEFRA/Natural England approvals. The Town Clerk and Countryside & Greenspace Manager had met with residents nearby and he was to meet them onsite shortly.
- Street Light Improvements – these would start once the Quarry Solar Lights were installed.
- Height Barrier tender had been awarded.

Councillor Wilson thanked the Town Clerk for her persistence with Shorncliffe, which had not been straightforward but now progress was being made. He urged Councillors from across the town to get involved as this was to be a large facility of benefit to the whole town.

He reported good feedback from residents about the solar light installation in the Quarry and asked the Town Clerk if there was any intention to expend these lights to other parts of the Quarry. The Town Clerk confirmed that this was a very bespoke project for the Quarry and these columns had been specifically designed to meet the heritage requirements of the park. Officers were however looking at other locations may lend themselves to less traditional and more affordable options.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

75/21 FOOTFALL

The Project Manager reported that visitor numbers for the Quarry for November and December 2021 showed a slow but steady increase throughout the months with expected peaks and troughs due to weekends and weather conditions.

Elephant WIFI had been made aware of a fault in their monitoring system which meant that Apple devices were not being picked up, this had now been fixed and updated stats had been provided. This showed the increase in visitors had been steady and the percentages of repeat and new visitors had remained largely unaffected by the additions.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

76/21 FISHERIES

The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager reported:

Mousecroft Pool – awaiting Western Power to complete the tree work, but a delay was inevitable after all the recent storm damage around the county. Once the work is completed it was intended to remove two willows which were leaning badly and if they fell over could damage the bank of the pool and adversely affect the ability of the pool to retain water.

The three new disabled platforms had been well received and a recent donation would fund the construction of another three platforms of a similar design, but slightly smaller in size. A grant application was also being made for funding to install a further three platforms.

Monkmoor Fishery – work had been done on the lane, and more stone was awaited to complete the surface levelling.

Oxon Pool – was performing well and successfully. The new gate had been installed. There was a problem with vermin climbing into warm engines and causing damage by chewing cables and pipes but steps were being taken to ensure safe control of vermin is undertaken.

Reabrook Fishery – continued to work well with many positive comments. Some additional signs were to be installed.

Radbrook Pool – was to have three new replacement platforms paid for by the recent donation. Patrols in the area had been working well. Recently during a cold snap, the bailiff found some school girls attempting to walk across the pool, he managed to talk them off the ice and made a visit to the school. The school raised the issue at the morning assembly to raise the awareness of the danger of walking on frozen pools. This demonstrated that the bailiffs not only patrolled but performed other duties related to safety or reducing anti-social behavior, for which the Council were extremely grateful.

County Ground and Quarry – once the season closed, it was intended to repair two pegs in the Quarry and one at the County ground to ensure they were in a safe condition for the start of the new season.

Emstrey Fishery – this site now had in the region of 130 anglers signed up and this was putting a strain on the existing parking arrangements. The Fisheries were currently in discussion with a local landowner to see if a plot could be made available. If agreed some work would need to be done to ensure availability during adverse weather conditions. Five platforms were due to be installed on this fishery but due to Covid and high river levels, there had been a delay.

Belvidere Fishery – some local residents who fish the area had asked if the provision in that location can be improved. Grant applications were being made for the provision of three platforms.

Sydney Avenue – grants were being made for the provision of 4 replacement fishing platforms.

New signage was to be installed at Doctors Field, the Reabrook, Belvidere and Estrey Fishery. The Family Academy would commence from Easter, with a total of eight events running until the end of the Summer. Recent angling competitions had had to be cancelled due to the high river levels and it was hoped these could be fit in now river levels had dropped.

RESOLVED:

- (i) **That the report be noted;**
- (ii) **That the Fishing Co-ordinator & Bailiffs be thanked for their continued work and vigilance.**

77/21 TEAM SHREWSBURY

77.1 **Team Shrewsbury Update** - The Team Shrewsbury report had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Office Manager provided an update. As could be seen from the December figures congregational issues had increased. Currently youths were causing issues in the Shopping Centre and conversations were taking place with Schools and letters were being issued to parents.

Following the implementation of preventative measures including additional signs and PIR's, Claremont Place continued to suffer with ASB issues. Team Shrewsbury partners had written to the owners of the alleyway and parking area at the rear of the property.

From the comparisons over the past three months there were a number of areas which have increased. Conversations were continuing with The Lantern Trust in Weymouth and the SNT Inspector with Dorset Police regarding the implementation of Operation Luscombe for tackling persistent begging and street based ASB.

The new premises for the Ark was progressing well and they would be able to accommodate much more and individuals would have more space for one to one conversations.

Information sheets from the Samaritans were attached to the Agenda reports offering contact details including bereavement support. Anyone working, studying or living in Shropshire could receive free bereavement counselling support.

Partners had been asked to consider a collective response to Town Security where Officers were employed under a Community Safety Accreditation Scheme, this however had to be approved by the Chief Constable and PCC and the Inspector was currently pursuing this.

- 77.2 **Homelessness Task Force** - The Town Clerk reported on the Homelessness Task Force Group. Mark Barrow, Executive Director Place at Shropshire Council had convened a Task Force to look at issues in relation to homelessness, vagrancy and use of drugs and alcohol in the town centre.

There had been two meetings so far with a third scheduled for 19 January. These meetings involved key officers at Shropshire Council, Police, Town Council, BID, Shopping Centre and elected members (Town, Unitary & MP).

Much of the emphasis was around how partners could work more collaboratively and collegiately in addressing problems and also using networks nationally to seek best practice that might help to inform new ways of working.

The last meeting was joined by the Chief Executive of the Lantern Trust in Weymouth; a multi-agency facility to address homelessness, very much how the Ark aspires to be. This also had allowed discussions with Police in Dorset to share Operational Briefs on addressing drugs and alcohol related ASB in the town centre.

Work was ongoing with the Town Council, Shropshire Council, BID and Shopping Centre to look at Risk Assessments to address aggressive behaviour of some in the town centre and to support public sector focussing staff.

- 77.3 **Local Policing Charter** - Last year the Town Council signed up to the West Mercia Police Local Policing Charter. This was the Police commitment to look at Policing Priorities for the individual wards. The list was collated with members input and sent as one document to the Local Safe Neighbourhood Team Inspector who cascaded it to the Safe Neighbourhood Team areas for the relevant wards. It was designed to be a working list and each Safe Neighbourhood Team should be feeding back directly to local members. Officers would continue to liaise with the Sergeants for an update on previous submissions. The next review date was April, priorities would be requested prior to the next R&L meeting on 9 March. The Superintendent also hosts a meeting for Parish & Town Clerks to feedback on progress and the next one is the 25 April.

RESOLVED:

That the Reports be noted.

78/21 QUARRY MATTERS

78.1 Events Programme for 2022

The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager reported on the events programme. The list was constantly changing but as Covid guidelines eased event organisers were now confirming events and dates.

The Town Clerk reported that there were several things that officers needed to do. Firstly all of the documentation that was sent out would need to be reviewed in light of the publication of a new Purple Guide. The Council had been operating on the

original one for around twenty years so there was a need to review what had changed and also review the Outdoor Music Events Policy in line with the Premises Licence.

Secondly the Home Secretary was set to establish a new Duty to Protect on Event organisers and hosts. This was in relation to Terrorism attacks. The Council would need to review its own Terrorism Management Plan to ensure that all organisers were working towards the same goal.

Due to the sensitivity of these documents, they would not be shared publicly but members needed to be aware that the corporate body held these Statutory Duties to Protect the public and it was the job of officers to execute that duty.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

78.2 Preparation for any Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations on any Recreation Ground

The Town Clerk reported that as the Jubilee weekend would fall on 2/3/4/5 June and be tagged onto the school holidays it was envisaged many people may be away. However, the BID were looking to do possible activities in the town centre and the Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager had already received requests from people asking to book the Quarry for Street Parties. He was currently reviewing previous jubilee guidance to distribute and this would clarify what is allowable on the Town Council's estate and would be published on the website.

The Head of Operations was looking at bloom activity that would celebrate the Jubilee in both the Castle and the Quarry and the Council was working with the BID to have a British theme with Union flags in Christmas Tree Brackets.

Members were asked to consider commissioning a permanent feature or piece of art to mark this occasion and any ideas that the Committee might have. Members discussed several ideas. Councillor Vasmer suggested a mural in the Quarry in the area of the Queen Mother's garden, which was due to be re-designed when the old greenhouses were demolished. Councillor Wilson suggested a competition for youngster to design something and a local artist commissioned.

Town Clerk reported that the BID were considering a competition for children to design some of the bunting. She also mentioned that Town Council staff who maintained Mardol Quay gardens had suggested a mural along the black fencing that separated the garden from the river. The BID had done a big project on painting some of the BT boxes and going on their experiences there had been very few graffiti incidences on those boxes which showed that people did value them as pieces of art.

Councillor Roberts, who would have taken Office as Mayor by the Jubilee, asked whether a Mayoral party in the Castle or through the town centre would be possible. The Town Clerk said that having looked at street parties before in partnership with the BID, although it was possible to close off town centre roads,

they have to be made available to emergency services so it would not be possible to put tables and benches along them. However, the potential of hosting something at the Castle could be explored.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

79/21 SHREWSBURY IN BLOOM

Minutes of the Bloom Committee had been circulated ahead of the meeting. The Head of Operations reported on activity. The Bloom Committee were considering a Commonwealth theme for this year, whereby some of the planters be themed on the national colours or the flags. Planting up was going well in the nursery and take lots of cuttings were being taken. It was planned that with the lifting of Covid restrictions there could be a return to face to face events and on that basis the open evening at the Nursery was planned for 9 June and this would be publicised shortly.

This year the RHS were changing the judging criteria and were promoting biodiversity, some of the key areas being planting perennials and pollinators, the need for wildlife, eliminating the use of peat, minimising water usage and tackling local environmental issues and planting schemes. This linked into the earlier item on allotments and the importance of this being recognised by the RHS. The Committee were working with interested groups and planning for 2022 judging.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

80/21 RECREATION GROUND MATTERS

The Projects Officer reported that following on from unauthorised encampments being discussed at previous meetings and the agreement to fund barriers to combat this problem, this had gone out to tender. Five submissions had been received and this had now been awarded but, due to delays with production lines, no start date had been given. When this was known he would update members of the relevant wards and report back at the next meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

81/21 TREE WORKS

The Town Clerk reported that major treeworks had started in the Quarry and would go on for about a month. This was a major piece of work and one that had to be done every twenty-five years or so in order to extend the life of the lime trees given their huge environmental value.

Officers were putting together a specification for updating the existing Framework Contract for procuring Arborists on an ad hoc basis. This will allow for the operational due diligence to be undertaken on all potential contractors and work towards a set price list for works to be done. This tender document would be published on Contract Finder and the outcome reported to Council.

Trees that were being planted were now being noted to be logged on the Queens Green Canopy to support the Lord Lieutenant's wish that when the Queen is presented with the national map of all trees planted, Shrewsbury & Shropshire is peppered with new trees. Officers were supporting some of Shropshire Council's tree planting commitments and Weeping Cross depot would act as a base for delivery and collection around the county. The Council was also facilitating a legacy donation of £10,000 to encourage tree planting in private gardens across the county.

Regarding the Tree Nursery enhancements funded through DEFRA's Trees Outside Woodland Project. This was designed to collect unwanted shrubs and trees that would be otherwise composted, grow them on and replant elsewhere. There had been quite a lot of donations so far and this would be publicised further.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

82/21 COMMUTED SUMS

The Town Clerk gave an update on negotiations with developers and transfer arrangements:

- (a) ***Copthorne Barracks Play and Open Space*** – offsite contributions to play (£30,498 - £20,498 for Shorncliffe Drive & £10,000 for Silks Meadow – to be paid on 75% occupancy) and open space (£115,000 for sports pitches & associated facilities at County Ground – paid on 50% occupancy)
- (b) ***Barratt Homes/Bovis Homes – Mytton Oak Road*** – Phase 1 adopted; Snagging Phase 2/3 commenced. No identified date for transfer
- (c) ***Shrewsbury South Urban***
 - i. Sutton Grange site – ongoing – likely transfer in 2021/22
 - 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) ***Sweetlake*** – Development of play area and future adoption of open space – Play complete. All open space adopted.
- (e) ***Crowmoor House*** – s106 agreement for offsite play & open space contribution to be used for Upton Lane & Monkmoor Recreation Ground – two-staged

payments on trigger on percentage occupied properties. Council to bankroll work at Upton Lane Rec;

- (f) **Harlescott Infants/Juniors site** – Offsite contributions to sport. Initial discussions have taken place with Sports Development at Shropshire Council on how the contribution might be spent. Further work is needed.
- (g) **Radbroke College site** – Open space adoption – officers met with Floreat Homes on site – likely adoption later in the 2021/22

83/21 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked Councillors for attending and taking part in this virtual Town Council meeting and also thanked the staff involved in this meeting. All papers relating to this meeting could be found on the website www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk.