

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Held in Committee Room, Livesey House At 6.00pm on Monday 11th September 2023

PRESENT

Councillors: A Mosley (Chair), R Dartnall, J Dean, N Green, P Moseley, A Phillips, R Wilson and M Davies

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources), Stuart Farmer (Acting Up as Operations Manager and Project Manager), Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager), Andy Hall (Youth & Community Manager) and Heather Phillips (Committee Clerk)

27/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillor Vasmer.

28/23 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.
Councillor Green	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 11/23 Markets Update
Councillor Phillips	Declared an interest in item 43/23 Greenfields Recreation Ground as Ward member

29/23 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meetings held on 24th July 2023 were submitted and circulated as read.

Councillor Phillips referred to Min 20/23 to request an amendment to the following sentence where he had commented on the work to the grounds at Greenfields: "Councillor Phillips had replied that his suggestions had been submitted just before the meeting and that therefore there had been no opportunity to do so previously."

RESOLVED:

That upon the above amendment to Min 20/23, the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 24th July 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

30/23 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

31/23 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 18th July to 4th September 2023. These had been agreed by two signatories before the RFO and Town Clerk. No comments or concerns were raised.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 18th July to 4th September 2023 be approved.

32/23 BUDGETING TIMETABLE FOR 2023/24

A report on the 2024/25 Budget was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The RFO drew members' attention to the budgeting timetable and in particular the requirement to agree the budget and submit a precept request to Shropshire Council by the end of January 2024.

The RFO said he would email councillors not present about this process and that discussions would take place internally regarding the staff pay agreement in order that a draft budget is worked on in time for the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting in January 2024.

Councillor Dean commented that nearly all the opportunities given to members to consider the budget were in fairly formal meetings and suggested that an online meeting for councillors to gain a better understanding of what the budget and current spending looked like might be useful. The RFO said he would be happy to do this and would organise an informal meeting or two for this purpose. A hybrid format was agreed in order to maximise attendance. Councillor Dean said that the terms for the meeting would need to be set to ensure its informality and to confirm that it was not a forum to put forward proposals nor make decisions. Any financial implications of Visioning were also *not* to be discussed as this would require a formal meeting.

The Deputy Town Clerk said that drafts of the full Visioning Exercise and five-year plan would be going out to public consultation and would be presented at Full Council at the end of this month. The 2024-25 budget setting for Visioning would only include the number one priorities. The Visioning Exercise (a strategic plan) would sit alongside the budget timetable for 2024-25 (a financial plan).

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report and dates be noted.**
- (ii) That the RFO organises an informal meeting(s) for councillors to gain a better understanding about the budget.**

33/23 END OF YEAR AUDIT

The RFO reported that he was still awaiting the completion of the External Audit. The AGAR was submitted in June and had been acknowledged by PKF Littlejohn but no questions had yet been received. The audit needed to be completed and published by 30 September 2024.

34/23 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

An update on the Capital Programme was circulated prior to the meeting and the Town Clerk updated members as follows:

- **Quarry War Memorial** – contractors had been on site to agree the paint finish and the work should be completed before Remembrance
- **Kynaston Road Rec infant play** – a start date was awaited
- **Kynaston Road Rec drainage** – a start date was imminent
- **Upon Lane Rec play** – a contract had been awarded and start date awaited
- **County Ground** – a meeting was arranged with Beacon Cricket Club for more detailed discussion
- **Radbrook Rec changing rooms** – the tender was now live
- **Monkmoor Rec old tennis courts** – meetings had taken place with play providers re installing adult gym equipment on site
- **Beaver Project** – fencing and boardwalk works were due to start.

RESOLVED:

That the update of the Capital Programme be noted.

35/23 TENDER WORK

A report on tendering activity and details on tender progress were circulated to members prior to the meeting.

The Project Manager added that phase 2 has begun for replacing Bus Shelters and that all lighting columns had now been replaced. Councillor Davies thanked the Project Manager for his work on this project. She asked whether the timetable cases had now been installed and if the Shrewsbury Town Council name and logo were now displayed. The Project Manager confirmed both and added that he now had the keys to the timetable cases and had emailed Shropshire Council for it to display the timetables.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

36/23 TENDER APPLICATIONS – CARBON FOOTPRINT INFORMATION

The Deputy Town Clerk had been asked to report on the collection of information on carbon costs during the tender application process. She said that the tender documentation was a work in progress but that a report on this would be brought to the next Climate Committee for consideration. It was noted that the locality of the tenderers should be taken into

account in the scoring process and to bear in mind that businesses further afield may have satellite depots nearby. Councillor Phillips added that it might also be prudent to check the tenderers' suppliers in addition.

The Town Clerk asked if there should be a standard percentage to score tender applications against? Councillor Mosley said that this could be part of the discussion on this issue at the next Climate Committee.

Councillor Green left the meeting.

37/23 MARKETS

The Markets Update was circulated prior to the meeting. The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager added that meetings have been held with Shropshire Council re market opening times in the run-up to Christmas; these were to remain as normal.

Councillor Phillips remarked that Wellington Market had been revamped and that they were scheduling some late-night openings. The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager said he would be in touch with Wellington Market to try to ensure that both markets are not open on the same nights to avoid competing for visitors.

Councillor Davies asked what the latest position was on replacing the canopies. The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager said that he had met with a company which had looked at the extent of the issues involved - some designs and attractive ways to shroud stalls when closed were expected together with some costs. The company in question had not got the contract but were just supplying the ideas for when this project was ready to go out to tender.

The Town Clerk was pleased to announce that the success of the Indoor Market goes beyond Wellington: she had been asked, as the winner of the most popular market, to give a presentation at the next NABMA Conference on markets and the issues they face.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Councillor Green re-joined the meeting.

38/23 YOUTH ACTIVITIES

A report on the Youth Service and its recent activities was circulated prior to the meeting. The Youth & Community Manager drew particular note to the following:

- HAF programme - a great success this year and delivered throughout the six weeks of the summer school holidays. As a result, more young people were joining the service's youth clubs.
- Mixed martial arts at The Lantern, Sundorne – this was a new weekly session for this area of Shrewsbury which had seen a lot of anti-social behaviour.
- Closure of Monkmoor Lodge – delivery was being expanded from the Monkmoor Recreation Ground using the Mobile Youth trailer for the interim and more detached

youth work was being introduced to parts of the area that have had problems with anti-social behaviour.

The Deputy Town Clerk said that the Youth & Community Manager and his team were developing the terms of reference for a Youth Council. Work was being done on recruiting young people onto its committee. Councillors would be involved, and it was hoped that they would contribute to some of the activities. Councillor Mosley asked if Shropshire Council's youth service had also been approached and urged that this initiative engage all young people. The Deputy Town Clerk said that, although talks were taking place with Shropshire Council, this Youth Council was for the Town Council and that this was to be where it's power and authority would lie. It would ensure a democratic process. It's aim was to help young people become aware of what the Town Council is and they would provide feedback to schools. She added that the Youth Council provided a great opportunity for generating ideas and projects.

Councillor Moseley asked why attendance at the Monkmoor football sessions had tailed off this term. The Youth & Community Manager explained that this always happened towards the end of the Summer Term but that numbers were back up again this week. He added that he would be visiting schools this term to advertise the youth clubs.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

39/23 VISIONING EXERCISE

The Town Clerk reported that she and the Deputy Town Clerk were working on the wording for the Strategic Plan and had pulled together a lot of the information that had been collected over 10 separate meetings. Another workshop had been put together for Monday 18th September at 6pm to go through this in detail ahead of its presentation to Council. The Strategic Plan would then be ratified and put out to public consultation.

The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk had recently facilitated a session involving 9 members of staff. Time was spent in developing staff values and behaviours; these mirrored the values that originally came out of the visioning exercise. The group also looked at a PESTEL review of the Council; this was similar to a SWOT analysis but looked at key issues around Politics, Environment, Social, Technology, Economy and Legislation which threw up a different perspective. Another session was planned with the same group to explore things further around the Vision and Mission Statements.

The Town Clerk said that this was starting to look like a really interesting and valuable document going forward.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

40/23 BIG TOWN PLAN AND RELATED PROJECTS

The Town Clerk made the following reports:

- **Movement Strategy & Public Realm Strategy** was scheduled to be presented to Shropshire Council's Cabinet on 18th October which would kickstart a consultation exercise – time was to be factored in to various meeting agendas to discuss the content and provide a corporate response.
- **Original Masterplan** was to be re-read with references to the Movement Strategy removed so it could become a stand-alone document. This was also to be out for consultation.
- **Design Code** had not yet been submitted to Shropshire Council's Cabinet but had a 6-12 week consultation period and was planned to become an SPD (supplementary planning document) having material consideration in the planning system. Again Committee time was to be set aside for formal commentary.
- **Planning Committee** has had presentations about the Design Code and it was used as a material consideration of the Travelodge site application on Barker Street. The BTP had made representations on this application and that had facilitated additional amendments which Planning Committee were to consider. This had triggered the need to consider other significant applications and it had been good to see that the Planning Committee Clerk had provided details of the planning lists created for the committee for the BTP partnership to review.
- **Active Travel and the LCWIP and Mini-Holland submission** to Department for Transport were still ongoing so the Active Travel Working Group was to be kept on notice to review matters. A meeting was set for the end of October.
- The **Shrewsbury Moves Festival** was set for October/November, a busy time for consultations as there were also consultations taking place for the Movement Strategy, Riverside Development Strategy and the Highways Consultation on the Levelling up project around the Railway Station and Chester Street. Therefore, Council was asked to bear this in mind when scheduling the launch of the Town Council's Strategic Plan
- The **Riverside Development Stakeholder Engagement Group** met for the first time recently and details were progressing well, and the consultant team were very accommodating with the group (which included some councillors).

Councillor Mosley stated that Rowley's House was increasingly becoming a mire and a mess and he would be raising this issue with Shropshire Council. It had not been monumentalised as promised.

On the town centre development, Councillor Mosley was impressed by what the consultants had put together and was pleased with how it was moving forward. A model of the possible development for the town had been constructed and this was soon to be available for the public to view.

Councillor Dean said that he had been nervous about the war on motorists rhetoric in relation to the Movement Strategy and Shrewsbury Moves Festival but talks with the leader of Shropshire Council had reassured him that things would not change. He believed the new masterplan was better than the previous, for example there was more open space. However, the group consisted was all male apart from the Town Clerk so he said he would organise a swap with a different Green Party councillor to balance things out.

Councillor Green was impressed by the quality of the display on the Riverside area particular in its envisaging the management of floodwater and its relationship to the design. He felt it was a good sign for the future.

Councillor Mosley added that he thought that the way the bus station was dealt with was quite innovative and seemed satisfactory. There was to be 4 different planning applications for the Riverside project and he suggested that a presentation at Full Council about these applications would be useful to raise awareness prior to the Planning Committee at which they would be considered.

Councillor Mosley also said that the application for the Shared Prosperity Fund was proceeding. The roll-out of implications was to be expected early next year although the success of the bid had not yet been confirmed.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

41/23 FULL ACCREDITATION

The Town Clerk introduced the three proposals for accreditation as below and had provided website links for Councillors to read before the meeting:

- (i) **Civility and Respect Pledge** - an initiative that was being jointly promoted by both the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) .

It was being introduced because there was no place for bullying, harassment and intimidation within the Council sector and this included any behaviour affecting councillors, clerks and staff. The pledge was easy for councils to sign up for and it would enable councils to demonstrate that they were committed to standing up to poor behaviour across the sector and to drive through positive changes which supported civil and respectful conduct.

In signing the pledge the council would commit to:

- put in place a training programme for councillors and staff - which the Council already had
- sign up to the Code of Conduct for councillors - which the Council already had
- have good governance arrangements in place including staff contracts and a dignity at work policy - which the Council already had
- seek professional help at the early stages should civility and respect issues arise – the Council already had mechanisms in place for this
- call out bullying and harassment if and when it happened
- continue to learn from best practices in the sector and aspire to be a role model/champion council, for example through the Local Council Award Scheme
- support the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge including sanctions for elected members where appropriate

So far 1328 councils across the country had signed up to the pledge which demonstrated the strength of feeling within the sector.

Councillor Dartnall and Dean voiced their support for signing up to this; there was a need to promote a positive atmosphere to the public. The Deputy Town Clerk said that it would sit alongside the Vexatious Complaints Policy.

- (ii) **White Ribbon Accreditation** – this was the UK’s leading charity that engaged men and boys to bring about an end to violence against women and girls. This had been a key theme for the Town Council for the Ranger Project and Safer Streets. The Town Clerk said that the Recreation & Leisure Committee should consider this issue when developing play and open spaces.

The reality was that most violence against women was committed by men. The Charity’s mission was to prevent men’s violence against women and girls by addressing its root cause ie harmful and dominant masculine norms. Through the Safer Streets funding it had been possible to collectively condemn some of that bad behaviour and promote equality and respect.

The organisation strived to change long-established attitudes, behaviours and systems around masculinity that perpetuate gender inequality and men’s violence against women. White Ribbon UK’s work was preventative, aiming to end violence before it starts. It aimed to make sure all men realised that they could take responsibility for thinking about their own actions, promoted equality and respect, and was prepared to call out harassing, sexist and violent behaviour when they saw it in others.

The organisation would show the Town Council’s commitment to ending men’s violence against women by becoming a White Ribbon Supporter Organisation and agree to take actions that would raise awareness and show that the Council were working to end violence.

These actions would include:

- encouraging all staff to make the White Ribbon Promise to never use, excuse or remain silent about men’s violence against women
- recruiting at least one volunteer man White Ribbon Ambassador (or woman Champion if there are no male staff who could undertake this role)
- holding at least one awareness and fund-raising event or activity a year
- ensuring that women who were experiencing violence knew where to get help

There was an annual fee of £150 to become a White Ribbon Supporter Organisation. The Deputy Town Clerk added that the Council would not be providing the help but would be a conduit to it. Councillor Phillips said that this was a good idea and that conversations with young people would be valuable too.

- (iii) **SANDS Embrace a Culture of Inclusion Covenant** - SANDS (Safe Aging No Discrimination) was a Shrewsbury based charity which took a targeted approach to increasing LGBT+ inclusion, challenging discrimination, promoting accessibility and equality of opportunity for LGBT+ people ageing in Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin. They worked with the LGBT+ community and service providers to develop inclusive practice in general, while focussing on the particular experiences and needs of LGBT+ people.

As part of SAND’s Campaign to EMBRACE A Culture of Inclusion, they encouraged health & social care providers and other organisations, groups and services which people may need or want to access as they age – to make ‘pledges’.

These 'pledges' were practical actions to ensure their service was welcoming and inclusive. These pledges were to take the form of a Covenant, to be revisited and celebrated.

The 5 Commitments:

1. Commit to providing the best possible quality services for older and old LGBT+ people
2. Commit to learning what life can be – and has been – like for different LGBT+ people.
3. Commit to vocally and visually supporting groups working with and for older and old LGBT+ people
4. Commit to creating meaningful opportunities for LGBT+ people and groups to 'influence' what the Council does
5. Commit to assess and evidence change, including work carried out to engage LGBT+ people (within the group/organisation and outside it).

The Town Clerk drew attention to the common themes running through all these initiatives ie Civility and Respect and Inclusivity – they were strong statements that stated that Shrewsbury Town Council did not and will not tolerate behaviour that marginalised anyone in its society as everyone had a valuable role to play.

Councillor Wilson said he would very much support all of the above. He asked whether the Town Council was supporting the Pride Festival that was taking place later this month. The Town Clerk said that the Council had supported members of Pride and discussed events in The Quarry.

Councillor Phillips drew attention to the Lottery funding received by Pride that was due to expire in 2024. The Town Clerk confirmed that another bid was being submitted but that even if it failed, the aims would still be necessary. The Deputy Town Clerk added that the draft Action Plan included similar aims.

RECOMMENDED:

That the following accreditations are ratified at the next meeting of the Full Council in September:

- (i) **Signing up to the NALC/SLCC Civility and Respect Pledge**
- (ii) **Applying for White Ribbon Accreditation**
- (iii) **Signing SANDS Covenant to embrace a culture of inclusion.**

42/23 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with s1(2) Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings) Act 1960, members of the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following items being considered involve the disclosure of confidential information.

Live streaming of the meeting ended.

43/23 GREENFIELDS RECREATION GROUND

Councillor Mosley reported that discussions had taken place with the developer and preliminary estimates had been received on re-purchasing the piece of land at Greenfields Recreation Ground. Information on this would be issued to the local community for their comments before the details were finalised. The process would take time.

Councillor Mosley added that no discussions had taken place regarding the maintenance or use of the land as it was not under the Town Council's ownership.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That further consideration be given to the land at Greenfields Recreation Ground at the next meeting of the Full Council.

44/23 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.