

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee Held in Committee Room, Livesey House At 6.00pm on Monday 15th September 2025

PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

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

31/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillors Bernie Bentick and Alex Wagner.

32/25 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.
Councillor Wilson	Item 42/25 as portfolio holder of the Big Town Plan at Shropshire Council

33/25 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 14th July 2025 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 14th July 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

34/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Re Min 26/25 – Land Transfers – The Town Clerk reported that she had met with Estates that afternoon. Despite the Countryside Lease being agreed some time ago solicitors were insistent on adding more commercial related clauses into the agreement. Estates had agreed to remove these additions. Most of the plans had now been amended but there were a couple outstanding. Whilst the Town Clerk was unable to give a definitive date when the lease was to be signed, progress was being made and weekly meetings with Estates were proving useful.

35/25 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 5th July to 5th September 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 24th May to 4th July 2025 be approved.

36/25 BUDGETING TIMETABLE FOR 2025/27

A report on the timetabling for the 2026/27 Budget was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The RFO explained that the budget for 2026/27 needed to be set by the end of January 2026 and drew members' attention to the budgeting timetable. During the preceding months a series of meetings and committees would discuss various elements, such as inflationary pressures, wage increases, general assumptions on expenditure and also look at income streams and any changes to services. This allowed the Band D rate and the precept to be calculated in arriving at draft and final budgets.

Timetable

- *15th September 2025 – Policy & Resources Committee Meeting*
Following the Policy & Resources meeting, the Head of Resources would email all councillors and committee chairs to request any changes to current service delivery and ideas for inclusion in next year's budget for further discussion in conjunction with the visioning objectives and Shropshire Council issues.
- *w/c 13th October 2025– SMT & Leader*
Provisional date to discuss any developments and implications in advance of next Policy & Resources Committee.
- *w/c 10th November 2025– SMT*
Meeting to consider budget - operational and management factors to be considered for inclusion.
- *8th December 2025– Policy & Resources Committee*
Set budget principles and assumptions and look at forecasted outturn for 25/26. Consider impact of inflation on future budget as well as any details on pay settlements.
Consider Committee Chair submissions.
Consider submissions from individual councillors.
Set fees and charges.
- *w/c 15th December 2025 – SMT & Leader*
Meeting to consider draft budget to be submitted to Policy & Resources Committee.
- *12th January 2026 – Policy & Resources Committee*
Review and recommend 2026/27 budget to Full Council.

- *26th January 2026 – Full Council*

Approve the budget and submit precept request to Shropshire Council.

Councillor Wilson asked that these dates be diarised. Councillor Dartnall noted that there was a Committee Chairs' meeting on Monday where this would also be considered. Councillor Mosley asked that the capital programme also be circulated to members

RESOLVED:

- (i) **That the Report be noted;**
- (ii) **That provisional dates as outlined be set in relevant Member/Officer diaries**

37/25 END OF YEAR AUDIT

The RFO reported that the external audit report had not yet been received. The deadline for publication of the End of Year Accounts was 30th September 2025. This item would added to the agenda of the next Full Council meeting.

38/25 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

The Communications Update was circulated to all members prior to this meeting and the Town Clerk praised the Communications Officer for his work over the last few months. She drew attention particularly to the Bloom Portfolio and the video presented to the Bloom judges this year. The E-Newsletter was on the Town Council website which included a page-flipping feature.

The Town Clerk added that the take-up of press releases with news media had been excellent and the Town Council's social media had been well received. The Communications Officer had also dealt with a number of national media contacts, which had help spread Shrewsbury Town Council messaging and branding. He was now part of the Big Town Plan's Communications Group alongside Communications Officers from Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury BID. Councillor Wilson was pleased to learn that the Communications Officer was to be joining this Group.

The Communications Officer was also working with the Deputy Town Clerk and the Office Manager on a Communications Strategy which was to be shared with this Committee in December.

Councillor Dean commented that the public tree safety notices that had been issued were very good. He asked if a sub-brand was necessary to highlight the impact of climate change in Shrewsbury – similar to that for Stepping-Up. Councillor Wilson proposed that this could be added to the Communications Strategy and be discussed at next meeting of this Committee. Councillor Dartnall was in favour and commented that it was important to demonstrate to the public the work of the Town Council in this area, how it impacts them and what action they can take themselves.

Councillor Mosley asked about the newsletter distribution. The Town Clerk reported that the current newsletter was electronic and could be accessed from social media, the website and those who have subscribed. A formalised letter drop was being explored as some residents were not on social media nor looked at noticeboards etc.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

39/25 QUARRY MANAGEMENT PLAN TENDER

The Town Clerk reported that she had been in contact with several potential consultants about the development of a Quarry Management Plan. These consultants had previously been involved in the Big Town Plan and had good knowledge of the park. There was quite a lot of interest. This Committee had looked at the draft and, following discussions with the Town Centre Residents' Association through the Councillor for Quarry & Coton Hill, a few amendments had been made. Working with the Project Manager, the Town Clerk was to create an Invitation to Tender ready for Contracts Finder with an aim to have it live by the end of September. It was to remain open for 8 weeks, after which it was hoped that tender interviews be undertaken during the first week of December to bring a preferred tender to the next meeting of this Committee.

The Town Clerk was to circulate the Specification to this Committee for information.

Councillor Dean was keen to see involvement in the project from the whole town and not just residents who lived around the Quarry.

Councillor Mosley said it was important that councillors contribute to the end product. The Town Clerk said that she would email the Invitation to Tender to all councillors for a decision to be made at Full Council.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the verbal report be noted.**
- (ii) That the Town Clerk distribute the Quarry Management Plan Feasibility Study Invitation to Tender to all councillors ahead of Full Council.**

40/25 FEES & CHARGES REVIEW

A report by the Commercial, Markets & Events Manager on a Fees & Charges Review was circulated prior to the meeting. It was hoped that a full review of the Fees & Charges would take place in readiness for the 2026/27 budget.

Every 12 months officers go through a process of reviewing the fees and charges in respect of the wide variety of facilities operated across the borough, including outdoor recreation grounds, most notably football pitches, cricket fields and tennis courts. In addition, the scheme of charges document covers the hire costs of open spaces for all types of events and activities, the fees for allotment sites, the cost of trading from stalls in the Indoor Market and finally the fees set for the bowls and croquet clubs which operate under licence on Town Council sites.

The RFO explained that historically this review process had followed a consistent methodology where any general increase was initially based on the current rate of inflation, before any other relevant considerations were taken into account, such as increased operational or maintenance costs, together with any potential facility improvements which had been identified.

There had also been a drive in recent years to simplify the charges framework for everyone involved and increase the efficiency of the associated management and administration process.

To put everything into context there was c£326k of total income raised over the financial year, c£55k of which related specifically to income from sporting facilities.

The Town Council had now reached the stage where it was important to identify and address any remaining anomalies across its fees and charges portfolio to maintain consistency for all end users. It was therefore a timely opportunity to form a small working group to scrutinize and ultimately authorise this process with a view to making recommendations to the next meeting of this Committee. Councillors Wilson, Mosley and Vasmer volunteered initially to be part of this Working Group. The Town Clerk asked that the Working Group look at some of the current agreements with organisations that run, for example, the bowling clubs, croquet clubs, allotments, etc. The RFO was to organise a date for the Working Group to meet.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the verbal report be noted.**
- (ii) That a Working Group made up of Councillors Wilson, Mosley & Vasmer be set up to scrutinize the Fees & Charges with recommendations to be made to the next Policy & Resources Committee on 8th December 2025.**

41/25 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Town Clerk reported that she had been asked to review the Councillor Allowances. To consider the level of allowances, the Town Council had to be mindful of the views of the Independent Remuneration Panel for which Shropshire Council was responsible. In the past, the Town Council had sought its views on two occasions. Firstly, in early 2009 and ahead of the Council being formed, Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council did it in readiness for the set-up of Shrewsbury Town Council. This Panel granted an allowance of £1000 with expenses allowances fixed to the National Joint Council Allowances on Expenses. The Council sought the Panel's views again in 2011 and once more the Panel agreed that the £1000 allowance should remain. This sum had been paid to all councillors since that time. Inflationary indexation of £1000 since 2009 would mean that the sum would now be around £1500 but that didn't now reflect the increases in service delivery and responsibility the Councillors were expected to take on, and are likely to have going forward with a bigger service delegation.

The Town Clerk had contacted the Head of Legal & Democratic Services on how the Town Council would seek a review by the Independent Remuneration Panel. Ahead of that it seemed worthwhile updating the questionnaire issued to all Councillors 15 years ago as well as seeking details of allowances paid to comparable Town Councillors across the country.

At this stage no timescales were given on a Panel being set up as it was not certain if Shropshire Council retained its constituted Remuneration Panel. If it did not, it would have to advise on how Shrewsbury Town Council was to proceed.

The Town Clerk was seeking to determine whether there was an appetite to proceed with a review of the allowances.

Councillors agreed that obtaining feedback from Councillors and from other town councils around the country was sensible.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the verbal report be noted.**
- (ii) That the Town Clerk obtains feedback from Shrewsbury Town Council Councillors and seek examples of current allowances paid by similar sized Town Councils around the country.**

42/25 SERVICE DELIVERY WORKING GROUP

Councillor Wilson reported that the Service Delivery Working Group had met on Friday 12th September. The Town Clerk summarised proceedings as follows:

1. The Town Clerk & RFO had given an update on discussions around agreeing a new delegation agreement and financial sum following the expiry of the Horticulture SLA in March 2025. The Cabinet had agreed that an agreement would be by way of a service delegation, but it would appear that operational officers had wanted to develop a specification driven contract rather than an output driven contract in line with that Cabinet agreement. Staff were still awaiting costs and the agreement of a formalised document, a draft of which the Town Clerk had prepared and sent in February this year for consideration.
2. Discussions took place as to how the service delegation, and potential further delegation, fitted around a draft Memorandum of Understanding that had been sent to all Parish Councils by Shropshire Council's S151 Officer. Generally speaking the Working Group was supportive of the agreement and was to recommend to Full Council that it was signed.
3. Also discussed was what a Financial Emergency meant and what implications a S114 bankruptcy notice would have on the Town Council and its grounds maintenance work for Shropshire Council if no agreement was in place. To that end this Committee was asked if it would agree to the Town Council writing to the CEO and Leader of Shropshire Council demanding a meeting with the Working Group as a matter of urgency to address the lack of progress.
4. Land Transfers and their level of progress was discussed. The Town Clerk had already provided an update of the current situation. In relation to the Community Asset Transfers of the Grange Youth Centre and The Hive, the Town Council had maintained the Grange Youth Centre for some time, but it was seen as reasonable and responsible to seek a structural survey of The Hive as it was new to the Town Council. The Town Clerk asked this Committee to sanction this work.

5. When discussing the Memorandum of Understanding, the Working Group felt it was the right direction of travel but that any service delegation needed to be outcome and not specification driven.
6. And finally, a conversation about Stepping Up took place. It was thought that it would be helpful for all Councillors to have sight of the spreadsheet that the Operations team were working from, and the Town Clerk was exploring how that could be shared.

Councillor Dean said that Shropshire Council appeared to be wanting to micro-manage the work now undertaken by the Town Council which would result in slow progress – it needed to trust the Town Council to carry out the work.

Councillor Mosley added that there would be TUPE and management implications for the Senior Leadership Team at the Town Council in taking on further responsibilities. He asked how it would bolster and respond to these new demands. The Deputy Town Clerk said that, as the work was a function, it would still be possible to TUPE staff even if they were subcontractors.

Councillor Mosley was also concerned whether a contract would be binding on the commissioners considering the possible S114 status. He suggested taking legal advice on how firm any agreement would be with Shropshire Council. It was also important to know what the exit clauses were for Shropshire Council's contractors.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the verbal report be noted.**
- (ii) That Full Council sign the Memorandum of Understanding.**
- (iii) That the Town Council writes to the CEO and Leader of Shopshire Council demanding a meeting with the Working Group as a matter of urgency to address the lack of progress regarding the Horticultural Services Agreement.**
- (iv) That a structural survey of The Hive be carried out.**

43/25 SHREWSBURY BIG TOWN PLAN

The Town Clerk reported that Councillor Wilson sat on the Board as the Shropshire Council Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth whilst Councillor Wagner sat on the Board as the Town Council's representative. The Partnership agreement had now been signed by all three parties; this committed them to a £50k contribution each annually for the next 3 years. The Town Council had already paid its contribution for 2025/26.

The structure of the BTP going forward was considered. It was agreed that a number of sub-groups of the Board be set up as below:

- The Stakeholder Group was to continue, and potentially expand its role to look at any engagement requirements.
- Communications & Engagement Group working with the three Communications Officers from the three organisations to ensure consistence of communications messaging.
- Projects Taskforce looking at rolling out the delivery of the Movement Strategy.

- Devolution Group looking at the impact of loss of non-statutory services, like recreational and cultural assets but also economic growth and whether there was anything the Partnership needed to consider.
- Public Realm Management Group looking at operational matters including the areas that the Town Council was likely to have more involvement in, including Street Scene, CCTV, Design Code, Shop Front, A-Boards and the Ranger Project.

The Ranger Project was discussed in some detail and the necessary work and role they played in the town centre and it was suggested that if the Town Rangers, Quarry Security & Taxi Marshals functions were amalgamated under the Town Council where there might be a better consolidation of role and ultimately financing. The final confirmation of PCC Support was still awaited. The Town Council and the BID had allocated their resources, but there was a shortfall that originally Shropshire Council helped to fund. It might be that the Town Council needed to support the continuation of the function until agreements were sorted out.

In terms of projects, the Town Council had been keen to see support for:

- Design Code – this was to go out for consultation but, whilst this was very town centre based, the Town Council had always aspired to pursue that Shrewsbury Test townwide Design Code. Some enquiries were to be made about how that code could be extended and the likely costs involved.
- The Square Improvements – consideration was given to clustering various improvements into one overarching project which might ultimately result in the Town Council managing The Square as part of its wider delegation aspirations. This was to be looked at within the Public Realm Management Group.

The Town Clerk concluded that, as ever, time was running out. There were lots of exciting projects that the BTP was involved in. A meeting was set for 26th September to continue discussions.

Councillor Dean said that a whole town approach idea was very important. The Design Code was mostly for the town centre but some could apply for surrounding neighbourhoods too.

Councillor Mosley was concerned that it was being over-bureaucratized and that some of these activities were done as democratically elected members. He pointed out that BTP relied on others to deliver and were influential but questioned if it should have control. The Town Clerk said that, in terms of management, it would not impact on what was done and that she didn't believe BTP would dictate.

Councillor Wilson pointed out that Shropshire Council had not committed funding for the Rangers, whose work was very important, and that the BID had frontloaded funding to keep the initiative functioning. He also raised the question of what an appropriate governance model was if the Town Council became major funders.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal report be noted.

44/25 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.