

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**Finance & General Purposes Committee
Held at Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury
At 6.00pm on Monday 03 December 2018**

PRESENT

Councillors A Mosley (Chairman), P Adams, Mrs H Fraser, I Jones (substituting for Ms J Mackenzie), N Laurens, Mrs P Moseley, A Phillips and D Vasmer.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Andy Watkin (Responsible Financial Officer), Rebecca Oliver (Committee Clerk) and three members of the public.

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Ms J Mackenzie.

47/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Twin-Hatters	All twin-hatted Councillors declared a personal interest in all matters relating to Shropshire Council.
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48/18 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 15 October 2018 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 15 October 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

49/18 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

50/18 PAYMENTS

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 1 October 2018 – 30 November 2018. No comments or concerns were raised.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 1 October 2018 – 30 November 2018 be approved.

51/18 BUDGET 2019/20

The RFO reported that the Fees and Charges report for 2019/20 will be tabled at the next meeting.

The Chair reported on the work that has taken place in preparation for the creation of the 2019/20 budget with group leaders having agreed the outline priorities, 13 Councillors have submitted revenue projects for consideration, the Town Clerk with Officers has worked through the Local Plan Review and the Chair has collated the information into a report which will be shared with the committee in January 2019.

In short the report supports the development of the Big Town Plan and focuses on making 'Green Shrewsbury' greener with more open spaces, footpaths and cycle ways and improving the connectivity between these. It commits to the Youth Services and pick up any shortfall in funding from Shropshire Council, it limits the increase to the precept and includes an investment strategy for spending CIL funds.

Not all requests from Councillors can be covered by the 2019/20 budget so it was agreed to develop a Medium Term Financial Strategy for the next three years which will go out to public consultation.

The RFO gave a brief overview of the current financial position of the Town Council. The capital funds include CIL, Neighbourhood Funds and Earmarked Reserves with some capital projects to be included in the next budget. The revenue budget will see some income from SLA and possibly the crematorium, depending on the result of the recent tender. The expenditure may be increased if there is a shortfall in funding for the Youth Service.

Officers do not have enough information to quantify the tax base but this will be agreed by Shropshire Council within the next two weeks. The Town Clerk stated the Medium Term Financial Strategy will be crucial as will the planning of CIL investment as funds have a timeframe for spending.

Councillor Phillips requested that the Greenfields Area is considered as part of this process.

52/18 INTERNAL AUDITORS

Members were in receipt of the Internal Audit Report 2018-19 (First Interim) following the Auditor's recent visit. Members noted the report which raised no issues. The next audit will take place in February 2019 when a 5 year plan will be considered. The RFO and his staff were thanked for their hardwork.

RESOLVED:

That the Report of the Internal Auditor be noted.

53/18 BIG TOWN PLAN

Members were in receipt of a report about Shrewsbury's Big Town Plan which had now been adopted by the three key partners; Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Town Council and the Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID). It involves around 40 stakeholders and is the result of a public consultation.

Shrewsbury Town Council contributed £25k towards the development of the Masterplan in 2017 and the Town Clerk asked Members to consider further funding to start the delivery of the plan. In order to employ a dedicated Officer to co-ordinate the next stages and to start implementing some of the priorities highlighted in the report, the Town Clerk proposed allocating £50k into each budget for the next three years. Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury BID would also contribute the same.

Members supported this in principle providing the other two partners match fund the £50k with the same commitment over three years. Members also discussed the best partner to lead on recruitment, the development of a business plan and monitoring of spend and activity. The Chairman reported that the BTP Board was scheduled to meet before Christmas to discuss this further.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the report be noted.**
- (ii) That the Town Council agrees in principle to contributing a total of £150k over the next three years providing it is match funded by Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury BID and subject to further details being shared i.e. job description of new officer.**

54/18 NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next meeting will take place on Monday 14 January 2019 to finalise the 2019/20 budget and precept recommendation to Full Council on 21 January 2019.

55/18 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That Press & Public be excluded on the grounds that the consideration of the following items may involve the likely disclosure of confidential information (s1(2) Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings) Act 1960).

Ahead of absenting himself, Councillor A Phillips reported that he had spoken to residents and he did not wish there to be any perceptions of him prejudicing any decision at the meeting. He and three members of the public left the meeting.

56/18 LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

The Town Clerk reported on the serving of a Pre-action Protocol for Judicial Review Letter before Claim served on Shropshire Council with the Town Council and CSE Developments (Shropshire) Ltd being identified as interested parties. Members were also made aware of a letter from the Greenfields Recreation Group. It was necessary for the Council to consider its legal position and respond to the Letter before Claim.

The Town Clerk gave a background overview of the Town Council's involvement in land adjacent to Greenfields Recreation Ground, details of the Letter before Claim together with Counsel's opinion and recommendations on a response.

The Town Clerk reported on the length of time matters in relation to land at/adjacent to Greenfields Recreation had taken in relation to responding to correspondence from the Greenfields Community Group, enquiries from the Planning Authority, witness submissions in relation to an Asset of Community Value Request and explanations to external bodies following local complaints.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Pre-action Protocol for Judicial Review Letter before Claim be noted;**
- (ii) That the associated Counsel's Opinion and recommended response be approved;**
- (iii) That the current legal costs be approved;**
- (iv) That Council supports the action of the Town Clerk;**
- (v) That a letter be written by the Leader of the Council to the Greenfields Community Group setting out the Council's position and that no further correspondence be entered into on this matter.**