

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Finance & General Purpose Committee Held at Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury At 6.00pm on Monday 03 June 2019

PRESENT

Councillors A Mosley (Chairman), P Adams, H Fraser, I Jones, N Laurens, Mrs P Moseley, A Phillips & D Vasmer.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Andy Watkin (Responsible Financial Officer) and Carol Pullen (Acting Committee Clerk).

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Ms J Mackenzie.

1/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Twin-Hatters	All twin-hatted Councillors declared a personal interest in all matters relating to Shropshire Council.
Councillor A Phillips	Declared a personal interest in matters relating to the Quarry Swimming Centre as he is a shareholder in Serco.

2/19 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 8 April 2019 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 8 April 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

3/19 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Ref: Min: 76.2 Future of High Street Fund

The Town Clerk reported that she was still awaiting the outcome of the bid to the Future High Street Fund for Shrewsbury.

3.2 Ref: Min: 79/18 Neighbourhood Fund

The total received over the past 6 years should have read £1,002,428.22 and not £100,001,939.22. There is still a £500 difference and this has yet to be reconciled and will be reported back at a later meeting. The fund has not yet been spent.

3.3 Ref: Min 84/18 Greenfield Recreation Ground

The Town Clerk reported that a judicial review has been set for 17 July at Birmingham High Court.

4/19 PAYMENTS

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 1 April 2019 – 31 May 2019. No comments or concerns were raised.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 1 April 2019 – 31 May 2019 be approved.

5/19 END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS

Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) talked Councillors through the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2019, copies of which were also distributed prior to the meeting. This included the following documents:

- Annual Report
- Statement of Accounting Policies
- Annual Governance Statement
- Income & Expenditure Account
- Statement of Movement of Reserves
- Balance Sheet
- Annual Return

The RFO reported that actual income received of £2.85m excluding precept, which exceeded the budget of £2.2m. This was primarily down to S106 and CIL Neighbourhood Fund receipts of £549,000.

There were other small positive variances from Markets, Rents and Interest.

On the expenditure, the budget was exceeded due to accounting for unspent CIL and S106 monies. Other contributing variances were due to improvements at The Grange and Weeping Cross Centre Greenhouse stabilisation. There was a positive variance due to the resolution of Business Rates at the Sunday Market.

There was £1,133 surplus to general reserves after earmarking funds for Quarry footway lights, Climate Change fund and Lower Quarry Toilets.

Since the accounts had been prepared, the Judicial Review date had been set and Cllr Phillips asked whether, as the Council was cited as an interested party, it should as a matter of governance acknowledge the risk and therefore make provision for any liability.

The Responsible Finance Officer confirmed that it had been noted in Assertion 8 of the Annual Governance Statement and that if necessary any costs could be met from the Capital Receipts Fund, received from the sale.

The Town Clerk & RFO would review the Governance and Accountability Practitioners Guide and make a judgment based on guidance.

RECOMMENDED:

(i) That End of Year Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2019, incorporating the following be approved:

- a. Annual Report
- b. Statement of Accounting Policies
- c. Annual Governance Statement
- d. Income & Expenditure Account
- e. Statement of Movement of Reserves
- f. Balance Sheet

(ii) That the Annual Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2019 be approved and forwarded to the External Auditor for unqualified audit.

6/19 INTERNAL AUDITOR

There was nothing to report. The Internal Auditor was due next week and the RFO would report back at the next meeting.

7/19 CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Town Clerk presented the report into developing a Climate Emergency Action Plan and outlined what the Council do already and the resolutions agreed at Full Council in March, namely:

- Support the Declaration of a Climate Emergency
- Pledge to make the Council carbon neutral by 2030
- Call on Westminster to provide powers and resources to make this possible
- Sign up to the Covenant of Mayors (the Town Clerk as now done this)
- Request that the Finance & General Purposes Committee develop a detailed Action Plan in pursuit of the above objectives and report back within 6 months
- Call on Shropshire Council to support the Declaration of a Climate Emergency

The Town Clerk wished to seek direction from the Finance & General Purposes Committee as to how they wished to take the Action Plan forward and it was hoped she could report back to the next Climate Group meeting which was due to be held shortly.

Councillor Mosley made reference to the fact that £50,000 had been earmarked in the reserves under Climate Change.

Councillors considered the report and discussed how the Council could take this forward. They felt that more specialist advice and assistance was required to determine ways the Council could reduce its carbon footprint. Officers had provided the group with details required to assist with ascertaining the Council's Carbon footprint, which would act as a baseline from which to determine any action.

Councillor Mosley thanked the Town Clerk for making progress.

It had been recommended at the Recreation & Leisure Committee Meeting on 29 May that the Council consider initiating paperless meetings. Members were keen to pursue this but did feel in some instances paper documents were necessary. They agreed to work towards reducing the number of paper copies provided at meetings

RESOLVED:

- (i) That progress in relation to the Declaration of a Climate Emergency be noted.**
- (ii) That the determination of the Council's Carbon footprint be progressed and reported on at the next meeting for further work on the Action Plan.**
- (iii) That the Council progress towards paperless meetings.**

8/19 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Capital Programme progress plan had been circulated ahead of the meeting. The Town Clerk detailed progress since the last meeting.

8.1 Footpaths

The Countryside & Greenspace Team Leader was working on the identification and categorisation of the types of footpaths. Members would be contacted for their help in identifying any other paths that need to be included on the list and would be provided with photos showing the various specifications of footpaths.

RESOLVED:

That the update on footpaths be noted.

8.2 Streetlighting Lantern Replacement

The Town Clerk reported that all columns had been stress tested and it was found that 10 were in need of emergency repair. The lanterns had now been ordered and delivery was awaited. Contact had been made with Western Power to complete the

reconnections. A provision of £18k had been set aside in the 2018/19 accounts for replacement costs.

RESOLVED:

That the streetlighting lantern replacement continue.

8.3 BMX Track Redevelopment

Track lengths are being measured and tenders prepared.

RESOLVED:

That work on the BMX track redevelopment continue.

8.4 Meet Place

Little progress had been made on establishing Housing Plus' agreement to collaborate in a joint project to expand Meet Place.

RECOMMENDED:

- (I) That the Town Clerk make further enquiries with Housing Plus.**
- (II) That options around the installation of a demountable unit at Mary Webb be explored.**

8.5 Grange Youth Centre

Quotes had been received to complete the decoration commenced during the Caterpillar Community Day.

RESOLVED:

That the decorators be appointed at £900.

8.6 Defibrillators

Given the number of workforce at Weeping Cross, members of the Recreation & Leisure Committee had suggested a defibrillator is purchased for the site.

RECOMMENDED:

That a defibrillator be purchased for Weeping Cross.

8.7 Monkmoor Pavilion

A quote had been received to undertake external works & redecoration to the Pavilion.

RESOLVED:

That the decorators be appointed at £4,565.

9/19 TENDERING

9.1 Play Area Improvements – Church Road Recreation Ground

The design has been approved and the contract awarded with work due to begin on 8 July.

9.2 Play Area – Sweetlake Development

Tenders are being prepared.

9.3 Solar Lights – Quarry

The Town Clerk updated members on the recent installation of a Solar Light in the Quarry

This exercise showed that there was potential for sufficient lumens cover to define a safe route. The question however remains about the need to create some heritage feel to what are quite industrial columns and hiding the need for a large panel to capture solar energy.

Officers have been investigating the potential and believe that there are solutions on the market that could provide a solar option along the 1000m stretch for £2-3k a column. It is anticipated that approximately 20 lights spaced out at 25-35m intervals would be needed to provide an adequate lumen level.

This would not provide the same lumen levels as elsewhere along the river bank that benefit from permanent electricity hook-up and twice lumen levels. Lumen output would be approximately half that of a standard electric column but would be fine for delineation of the footpath.

It has already established that hook up to a permanent power supply is not financially viable;

In the tide of Climate Emergency, the Town Council would be seen as forward thinking in the provision of renewable energy lighting.

The Council has made a commitment to explore solar lighting in this area.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Officers proceed with invitation to Tender for the provision of solar lighting columns along Victoria Avenue in the Quarry.**
- (ii) That a budget of £60,000 (£3,000 per 20 columns) be set for the project.**

9.4 Tendering of the BMX Track

As referred to in Minute 8.3.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

9.5 Heathgates Allotments

A 6 x 10 anti-vandal unit had been sourced and a specification for the groundworks was being prepared.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

10/19 QUARRY POOL

The Town Clerk reported on past events regarding the need to redevelop the Quarry Pool. Recent meetings of Shropshire Council had established that the pool will stay in its current location and a sum had been set aside to undertake feasibility work with a view to further decisions being taken in the autumn.

Shropshire Council was committed to working alongside the Town Council in developing a facility that enhanced the existing leisure offer of the Quarry and had the potential to add to the dwell time and usage of both facilities. There were potentially other factors to consider in the location and the general wish for the facility to accord with the evolving Big Town Plan was evident.

The Town Clerk had discussed with the Head of Economic Growth the problems that the Town Council would need to address; namely:

- the wish to develop the Quarry depot to provide improved facilities and potentially a council base
- the potential that a redeveloped greenhouse facility might bring to improving the wellbeing of users of the park
- the poor drainage system that feeds the toilet blocks and its likely connectivity to the pool
- the need for an iconic venue for the park and whether a pool building can fulfil a number of uses
- the complexities of the footprint of the park – who owns what
- the usage numbers in the park

Discussions had begun with Sport England regarding potential funding. The key messages from the national funder was around developing facilities that enhanced well-being, encouraged people to become more active and creating accessibility and inclusivity for all.

Members considered their level of commitment to this project.

Discussions ensued regarding the greenhouse, which had been flagged in the latest Health & Safety report as needing urgent attention.

The Town Clerk said that as the greenhouse was curtilage listed and in a heritage park, then in requesting demolition the Council must provide a plan of what would be done with the land and the report of a structural engineer to confirm it was beyond any viable repair.

Councillor Mosley asked that Officers pursue taking whatever steps are necessary to demolish the old greenhouse.

The drainage issues would need to be linked to the whole Quarry Pool project as the infrastructure was outdated.

The Town Clerk reported that Shropshire Council have asked her to sit on their Officer Steering Group for the Quarry Leisure Complex.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Town Council looks to a collaborative approach to developing the Quarry Park & Quarry Pool under a single Masterplan and that the Town Council commitment to invest in this project.

Councillor Phillips wished it be noted that he abstain from any discussions regarding the Quarry Pool as he is a shareholder in Serco Group.

11/19 ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE

11.1 Grange Youth Centre

The Town Clerk had drafted an application to register the Grange Centre as an Asset of Community Value

Members were aware that the Grange School site was likely to be considered surplus to requirements since the creation of the Shrewsbury Academy on the Sundorne Campus. They wished to see community facilities retained as part of any residential development.

Councillor Adams enquired as to who takes over maintenance responsibility. The Town Clerk confirmed that STC currently undertake all maintenance at the Centre.

RESOLVED:

That the application to register the Grange Youth Centre as an Asset of Community Value be submitted.

11.2 Meole Brace Peace Memorial Hall

The Town Clerk had drafted an application to register the Meole Brace Peace Memorial Hall as an Asset of Community Value at the request of the Ward Member.

Members discussed whether the Town Council should be submitting this application as it may set a precedent for other community groups or whether it should be done by the community, which would require 21 signatures.

The Town Clerk reported that the law enables Parish Councils to submit and application on behalf of the community.

Councillor Laurens said he would appreciate the support of the Town Council in submitting the application. This facility was nearly 100 years old and provided considerable benefit to the community.

Councillor Phillips asked that it be made clear that if the Town Council supports the application it is not looking to take over management or maintenance of this asset and would be submitting the application on behalf of the community.

RESOLVED:

That the application to register Meole Brace Peace Memorial Hall as an Asset of Community Value be submitted.

12/19 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).

13/19 DANA GARDENS

Members considered a report from the Operations Manager on the options for the future management and/or ownership of Dana Gardens.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That a Solicitor's letter to residents be sent requesting removal of all items from Town Council owned land.**
- (ii) That the Operations Manager look to reseed the terraces with a wildflower mix once the land has been cleared.**

14/19 WEIR HILL

Members considered a report from the Town Clerk regarding a recent request to adopt public open space on land off Preston Street.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Town Council formally declines the request of Taylor Wimpey/Persimmon to adopt the open space at Weir Hill without Developer Contribution;**

- (ii) That the Town Council conveys the decision to Shropshire Wildlife Trust but continues to offer its advice and support were they to take on the site.**