

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**Meeting of the Operations Committee
Held in Committee Room, Livesey House, 7 St John's Hill
At 6.00pm on Wednesday 14 May 2025**

PRESENT

Councillors A Wagner (Vice Chair), B Bentick (substitute for Councillor Wilson), J Daniels (substitute for Councillor Vasmer), A Fejfer, K Halliday R Dartnall, V Moore, A Mosley and J Tandy.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Clare Turner (Deputy Town Clerk), Stuart Farmer (Operations Manager), Danny Powell (Operations Manager), Michelle Farmer (Committee Officer).

Also in attendance was Inspector Ben Tanfield and Sergeant Gary Lansdale of West Mercia Police.

01/25 ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF NEW COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

Councillor Wagner reported that Annual Council had nominated Councillor Vasmer to be chair and himself to be Deputy Chair. He would chair the meeting in Councillor Vasmer's absence.

02/25 OVERVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE

The Town Clerk provided an overview of the Operations Committee for all new Members of Council. This Committee was the successor to the previous Recreation & Leisure Committee. The overall purpose of this standing committee was to discharge effectively and economically the Council's operational duties particularly around horticultural and recreational and leisure activities and to develop policies in those areas. This committee concerned itself with the usage of Council land for leisure and recreation which included sporting facilities, play and general open space. Officers would update the Committee on grounds maintenance functions, climatic effects on managing land and overall permissions and licence for usage. Council also had the opportunity at times to adopt new development land and this Committee kept the oversight on the general policy for land adoption and the progress on new development sites. Much of the capital programme resolved around managing open space therefore this committee took ownership of the capital plan once budgets had been allocated.

Future projects for this committee would include the Conservation Management for the Quarry a Grade Listed Heritage Park that attracted 1.5m users a year, plans for strategic recreational sites like Monkmoor Recreation Ground and Shorncliffe Recreation Ground, the installation of new and refurbished play areas and the redevelopment of the Pavillion at the County Ground at Frankwell.

This Committee would need to consider any dedication of sites as Fields in Trust or Village Greens as both would have an impact on future usage and maintenance.

03/25 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chairman referred to the Committee Terms of Reference which had been agreed by Full Council on 12 May 2025. Members had no further comments.

RESOLVED:

That the Operations Committee Terms of Reference be noted.

04/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be received and accepted from Councillors Dean, Hancock-Davies, Vasmer & Wilson.

05/25 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.
------------------------	--

06/25 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 5 March 2025 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 5 March 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

07/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Town Clerk had no Matters Arising from the previous meeting.

Councillor Mosley asked if there had been any replies to the actions raised at the previous meeting from Rowley & Fenemere, the Environment Agency and the Angling Trust. The Town Clerk confirmed she had received no communications from the Environment Agency or Angling Trust, but Rowley & Fenemere had been in contact with her and they were very disappointed in the decision the Town Council had made at the previous Recreation & Leisure Meeting held on 5 March 2025.

08/25 SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM

Inspector Ben Tanfield and Sargeant Gary Landsdale from West Mercia Police Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) joined the meeting to explain the role of the Safer Neighbourhood Team to the Committee and new Councillors.

Seven SNT teams covered the wards for Shrewsbury and these teams were split between two sergeants. The teams consisted of 11 PC's and 10 PSCO's. Posters were available showing which officers covered which ward and these would be available from the Office Manager to display as they wished. The Inspector also suggested that members signed up to the Neighbourhood Matters page on their website. The Neighbourhood Matters messaging system enabled residents, businesses and community groups to keep in touch with local policing teams. They would receive updates on crimes, latest information on on-going incidents and learn more about what they were doing in your community.

The Shrewsbury SNT responsibilities were:

- Community engagement, including on social media and NHM (*Neighbourhood Matters*) and using the engagement van
- Longer term neighbourhood issues e.g. repeat nominals
- Service the DV RMPs (*Domestic Violence Risk Management Plans*) and DVPO (*Domestic Violence Protection Order*) RMPs
- Service the cuckooing RMPs
- Create and service the CMPs
- Follow-up visits to every victim of residential burglary
- Create and service the PSPs (*Problem Solving Plans*)
- OCGM (*Organised Crime Group Management*) updates for 'three Ps' work (*Protect/Prevent/Prepare*).
- Gather intelligence in relation to crime, especially drugs, obtain warrants and closure notices
- Stop-searches and other disruption
- Contribute to the various national and local campaigns such as Op Sceptre (*knife crime initiative*)
- Update and staff Op Crane in relation to the NTE (*Night Time Economy*)
- Service Op Bridger in relation to the local MP
- Service the Local Policing Charter priorities for town council wards, parishes and secondary schools
- High visibility patrol of crime and ASB (*Anti-Social Behaviour*) hotspots, working alongside Rangers and Quarry Security in the town centre
- Hotspot policing
- Travellers, site assessments and liaison with Shropshire Council
- Attend parish council meetings at least every three months or provide a report
- Attend Team Shrewsbury meetings
- Chair the Locality Meetings/BLT and bid for CCF funding
- Attend recruitment events
- Staff the football matches
- Work to assist in mapping hard-to-reach communities/DEI (*Diversity/Equality/Inclusivity*) work
- Vehicle crime
- Fast parcels
- Patrol cover

The OCC (Operating Control Centre) is based in Worcester, and this was the first port of call for reporting any crime. The report would then be cascaded out to the appropriate force/department.

Building strong relationships with local communities was the cornerstone of West Mercia Police's Local Policing Charter as the force reinforced its commitment to neighbourhood policing. The Local Policing Charter was based on three principles:- visibility, accessibility, engagement - and sets out the force's promise to ensure a two-way conversation to understand how local teams could respond to concerns and improve confidence in the service they delivered. The Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) would continue to engage with parish and town councils, with regular contact through written updates and engaging with communities both in person and via social media and the Neighbourhood Matters website, ensuring they were accessible to all. The Inspector encouraged all to look at the Charter. The Office Manager, Ruth Jones, collated the Policing Priorities she received from each Councillor every quarter. These were then sent to the Police, and they would report back every three months. He stressed that the information provided must be Police specific and the more information provided the better.

In addition to the SNT, the other police resources included 24/7 first response, serious and complex crime dealt with by CID, *some* traffic enforcement by the Road Policing Unit and if complaints were necessary the public could contact the Professional Standard Department or the IOPC (*Independent Office for Police Conduct*).

The Inspector also made members aware of *Police.uk* as this was a one stop shop for all graphs and crime data for the ward areas.

Councillor Halliday told the Inspector that the local PCSO's in Belle Vue were a great asset. Her question was on the issue of parking which created issues in her ward of Belle Vue. Some residents parked their vehicles on the entire pavement causing issues for other residents and she asked if the Police could be involved in resolving these issues. Inspector Tanfield commented that outside of London, parking on the pavement was not an offence. Any matters would need to be referred to the Highways Authority of Shropshire Council.

Councillor Halliday also asked about cyclists on pavements. Inspector Tanfield confirmed that this was within the police remit and that electric scooters were also an issue for the Police at present. The Police would get involved in this issue if it was encountered by them but in terms of threat, harm and risk it was low. If there were certain patterns/certain individuals though it should be reported via 101.

Councillor Mosley also commended officers in his ward and questioned the level of officer stability and asked if the Police were retaining staff and whether there was a complement of staff in Shrewsbury. The Inspector confirmed that they were not doing bad with vacancies and that they did try to avoid unnecessary moves with officers. There was a slight increase in numbers recruited and there was a town centre team now. There was also no problem with staff retention.

Councillor Mosley also asked whether it was still relevant to report crime each time and it was confirmed that the public should be encouraged to report any crime direct to 101 each time it occurs. Councillor Mosley also asked if the hours of PCSOs were changing but the Inspector commented that topic was currently in consultation so he could not comment further.

Councillor Bentick commended the PCSOs in his ward of Meole Brace as they made a big difference. He added that he did encourage residents to report any crime via 101. He asked the Inspector about Police attendance at community meetings as it would be great to have a regular Police attendance. The Inspector agreed and asked that if anybody wanted the Police to attend a community meeting to give them plenty of notice, so they were able to attend. Councillor Fejfer asked whether speed checks could be done around schools in the Monkmoor area especially at the start and end of the school day. Sergeant Lansdale said that the road in question had to be suitable for a speed gun but if Councillor Fejfer would like to email him direct he could discuss this further with him.

Councillor Moore commented on ASB with kids on dirt bikes in her ward. Residents also believed that this may be linked to other criminal activities but when residents tried to report the crime via 101, they had been kept on the phone too long before talking to somebody. The Inspector urged all residents to please keep trying to report any crime or if they were able to, report it online.

As there were no further questions, Inspector Tanfield and Sergeant Lansdale were thanked for their time to talk to Committee and left the meeting.

09/25 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on the Capital programme. Explaining that she had appended the existing plan, but this would need to be reconsidered at a later date. It was the intention to set up a meeting with Councillors to revisit their Vision Work and consider any additions to the plan.

In terms of updates, Tilstock & Raby Crescent Play Area Tenders had now closed and staff were evaluating submissions and would talk to the ward member.

The Town Clerk now had plans for the Dana Path works which would allow them to submit for planning permission. Colleagues in Estates were working with the Shropshire Horticultural Society and the Prison to seek the necessary permissions.

The Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk had a very productive meeting with 4AllFoundation about progressing development requirements at the Ditherington Community Centre so hopefully tendering would begin for window and resurfacing of the playground.

Stuart Farmer, Operations Manager, had commenced site visits with the Bus Shelter Contractor to complete the final phase of the replacement bus shelter programme.

Councillor Halliday commented that the local children had renamed Raby Crescent Play Area to Hermitage Green Play area.

Councillor Tandy enquired about a bus shelter on Gains Park Way that needed replacement. It was confirmed that this was on the list for replacement.

Councillor Moore enquired about the play area on Sutton Grange. The Town Clerk confirmed that they were unable to progress the play area on this site as there were still snagging lists outstanding with the developers. Severn Trent were also using the proposed play area site as their compound so unfortunately the situation was developer led at present.

RESOLVED:

That the new Capital Programme update be noted.

10/25 FISHERIES

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on the work of Shrewsbury Town Council Fisheries.

At Mousecroft Pool they had recently completed works to make further improvements and maintenance. A new gate with an added kissing gate had been installed complete with new fisheries signage and additional dog littering and control signage as per council templates. A new stone surface had been added to two thirds of the lane to improve drainage and repair potholes. They had also repaired part of the footpath around the pool and raised one part where it was tending to flood during the winter.

At Radbrook Pool there had been issues with three domestic runner ducks that seemed to have been dumped on the pool sometime last autumn. This had once again encouraged people to feed them with large amounts of bread which led to water quality problems. Also, rats were beginning to increase in numbers of which at some point would start to cause problems with local residents. To help resolve the situation they had found a new home for the three domestic ducks and after consulting with Cuan Wildlife Rescue, they could remove them as they were domestic ducks and take them to their new home. Additionally, they had installed new metal signage to educate people about over feeding ducks and not to feed them bread. They would supply Shrewsbury Town Council with two additional signs that could be used on Springfield Mere where there was similar duck over feeding problems.

At the beginning of June, they would be strimming around the fishing platforms on the Fisheries at Sydney Avenue, Monkmoor and Emstrey in anticipation for the new coarse fishing season which begins on June 16. The Quarry and County Ground would be strimmed at the end of September to leave it alone for the bees and wildlife.

Later this summer they would be replacing three river platforms at Sydney Avenue, Monkmoor and Emstrey as the existing were getting beyond temporary maintenance after winter flooding.

At Oxon Pool they would be adding one more platform on the pool this summer to once again improve access to an old platform location.

The coaching activities for juniors begins with the first event at Mousecroft Pool on May 24 followed by further events throughout the summer and working in partnership with the Angling Trust and the Canals and Rivers Trust with schools in Shrewsbury. They would also be adding some individual one to one days for youngsters with their parents. They were pleased the demand was increasing year on year.

Water testing continued on the river in eight locations in association with the Angling Trust Water Monitoring Network with Angling Trust. A new Freshwater and Campaigns Officer had been appointed to replace Kristian Kent. His name was Alex Farquhar, and he would be

providing up to date reports for the River Severn Catchment in a few days. The fisheries also test the pools frequently to prevent or take action should they have any water quality issues. Radbrook was tested more frequently as it could be more problematic than the other pools.

With the river season currently closed for coarse fishing they recently apprehended two individuals on the Reabrook without permits and environment agency licences. The two were currently being prosecuted by the Police for theft of fishing rights and fishing without a valid rod licence. This enforcement sends a message to anyone fishing illegally or without permission.

Councillor Bentick asked if the Town Council knew how many young people were using the coaching sessions. The Town Clerk commented that they were well attended, and they worked alongside the Town Council Youth team and other agencies. She confirmed she would obtain a figure of attendees and make Councillor Bentick aware.

RESOLVED:

That the Fisheries report be noted

11/25 RECREATION GROUND MATTERS

11.1 Grounds Maintenance update

Danny Powell, The Operations Manager reported on Grounds Maintenance. Once again, the weather had an impact on their Operational Work. Last year was one of the wettest on record, Sports fixtures were postponed, ground conditions were too wet for machinery to work, and the Spring bedding and baskets rotted because of waterlogged soil. This year they had the warmest/ driest Spring for 69 years. All summer sports had started on time, they have had to water our floral infrastructure, and they were up to date with their verge mowing. He commented that it would be nice to have a few days steady rain.

The Logistics Team had been busy with playground maintenance, Splash Park testing and painting, bus shelter cleaning and looking after the public toilets. They had also helped remove rubbish from two allotment sites.

Mechanics were now repairing machinery as it broke down and carrying out servicing to vans and machinery.

They had started to trim around street furniture on the main roads of the Town. The two members of staff on Stepping Up work, were being issued new work each week but were also going back over work already completed to spray weeds that were germinating and collect any litter. It was hoped to have three new members of staff on the Stepping Up team by the start of June. This would then allow them to start some of the larger jobs.

The Countryside Team had been carrying out their normal duties, path mowing, fencing and litter picking across their sites. Rural mowing had started again, and the two staff had started to mow the mop up round. The Tree Team were out every second week carrying out tree work across Shrewsbury.

The Town Council had also been notified by the War Graves Commission that they were taking the maintenance of war graves back in house, using their own staff to carry out the work. This was being piloted in this area before being rolled out country wide from next year.

The Amenity Team were now in the main time of year to produce plants at the Nursery. The Public Open Evening was being held on 21 May and had been advertised in several places.

The Town Council were producing plants for several other Councils this year which had been listed at previous meetings. Church Stretton Town Council would now be added to the list.

The spring bedding displays were now going over because of the unusually warm weather and were starting to be removed ready for the summer displays. This would leave some places without plants for several weeks. Hanging basket orders were now being taken ready for the summer months.

The large square planters that were removed from the Town Centre were now ready to go out. They had been asked that they were placed in the Station gyratory area and that new planters would be purchased for the Town Centre.

A competition for School children to design a floral planter had been judged and the winners chosen. The winning designs would be planted up in the square area planters this June.

From 1 April, they had moved the verge mowing staff into the Recreation & Formal Space team, so that all mowing was now under one team. The verge mowing started in March this year and they were already on to the third cut of the season. The dry weather was helping to slow the grass growth across all sites, this had improved the quality of the verges and large grass areas, with a reduced amount of grass clippings left on the surface.

All football had now finished on Town Council pitches and the renovation programme had started. A number of meetings had been held with the junior Clubs who use the Town Council facilities to look at next seasons fixtures. All summer sports fixtures were progressing with the good weather meaning no cancellations so far.

School maintenance contract restarted from April and the Turf Tank had been used to mark out the Running Tracks at all the schools in a quicker time than using normal marking equipment.

The maintenance of the General Cemetery had also been moved into this team as several of the verge mowing staff also worked in this location during the year.

Since the 1 April, the Town Council no longer carried out the Maintenance at Meole Brace Golf Course and Shelton Recreation ground. Shropshire Council own these sites and made the decision to remove them from the Town Council.

Monkmoor Recreation Ground had been visited twice by travellers in the past few months. Security had been looked at and improved but being a site which was used all year round for sport they must keep emergency access open in case an ambulance was required.

This update only covered the operational staff. The Office Admin staff also played an enormous part in the day-to-day operation of the Council as without the teamwork of all they would not achieve what they did.

Councillor Bentick asked if there was an update on the benches for Meole. Danny reported that there was now had an agreement with Men in Sheds to refurb ten benches, one being for Meole.

Councillor Bentick also asked when they would need to request the spring bulbs and it was confirmed in a couple of months' time.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

11.2 Greenfields Community Group request

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on a request from the Greenfields Community Group. Since purchasing land at Greenfields Recreation Ground, officers had been working with the Greenfields Community Group who were seeking improvements to the site. The Town Council had funded clearance, fencing improvements and pathways on the park. Tree planting and wildflower planting had also been completed.

Officers had tendered for adult gym equipment that the group had sought funding for, but could not come to an agreement on the most effective location on the park. All tenderers had suggested the same location, but the group demanded another which was not acceptable; this ultimately resulted in the Group returning the grant funding.

The Town Council had also tendered for solar lights and Committee resolved to fund 50% of the costs. The stumbling block was the funds from the Group as these were the proceeds from clawback of legal fees from the Supreme Court Hearing. A resident was claiming that the group did not have the locus standii to use those funds and was threatening legal action. The Town Council had previously resolved that they would not enter into a partnership until the legal status of these funds was established. The Group had forwarded a solicitor's opinion which suggested that the group had rights, but the opinion came with significant caveats, with no definitive view. This Committee now needed to determine whether they wished to risk accepting funds to complete this project or did hold off for now or fund the project in its entirety.

Councillor Tandy asked what the Town Clerk's recommendation would be, and she suggested that the Town Council needed to hold off until there was a definitive decision. A meeting had been set up with the Greenfields Community Group and Shrewsbury Town Council in the next couple of weeks.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the update be noted**
- ii) That a decision on funding solar lights be deferred pending a definitive decision on the status of the Greenfields Community Group funding.**

11.3 Meole Residents Association request

The Town Clerk reported to Committee that she had received a request from a resident of Meole Brace seeking the Council's support for the registration of Stanley Lane Recreation Ground as a Village Green. The Community had been actively involved in improving the area including new pathways, solar lights, tree planting and wildflower planting and were keen to secure its status in the long term. This was only a tentative request at this stage, but it was worth the Committee taking a viewpoint on preserving open space for the long term. Village Green Status may not necessarily be the best option, and they may need to look at Fields in Trust as an alternative route to protection. The Town Clerk asked if the Committee were mindful to suggest this route, then officers could work on detail ready for the next meeting.

Councillor Bentick reported that he had been involved with the Residents Group and they were concerned on possible development taking place on the green spaces and that it was important to ensure the land was preserved for the future.

RESOLVED:

(i) That the Town Clerk review options of open space preservation and report back to a future meeting of the Committee

(ii) That the Town Clerk respond to the resident.

12/25 STEPPING UP TEAM

The Operations Managers provided an update. Start dates had been finalised with some of the new members of the Stepping Up team whilst some were still being finalised due to staff completing their notice period. An Induction Day had been organised for the new team which would be held on 23 May. The new staff members will be informed what the ethos of the team will be, issued with their uniforms and shown around the Town Council sites along with Health & Safety briefings and a general welcome to the Town Council.

It was hoped that in a couple of weeks the team would be fully up and running. The Operations Managers informed Committee that they had received a good number of applications for the job positions and they had taken on a wide range of staff from all ages, genders and expertise.

Councillor Halliday felt that the Stepping Up team was a fantastic initiative and residents in Belle Vue were delighted with the jobs completed so far.

Councillor Tandy asked for a map of his ward showing Council ownership. This would be looked in to.

Councillor Mosley asked if there were now clear criteria for the work of the team and the prioritising of the jobs as there needed to be transparency.

Danny confirmed that a list of jobs had been collated, and resources would be spread evenly across the town.

The Town Clerk also stated that the Stepping Up Team would be visiting wards where issues could be listed. This would also determine what the Town Council could do and what would need to be referred to other organisations.

RESOLVED:

- (i) **That the report be noted**
- (ii) **Criteria be established to give Members clarity on what could be reported to the Stepping Up Team.**

13/25 COMMUTED SUMS

The Town Clerk gave an update on negotiations with developers and transfer arrangements. They had not reached any trigger points for any further Town Council involvement and would continue to liaise with planners on development progress:

- (i) ***Copthorne Barracks Play and Open Space*** – offsite contributions to play (£30,498 - £20498 for Shorncliffe Drive & £10000 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) - funds in relation to landscaping at the County Ground have been drawn down
- (ii) ***Barratt Homes/Bovis Homes – Mytton Oak Road*** – Phase 1 adopted. Snagging update for Phase 2/3 had been requested. No identified date for transfer
- (iii) ***Shrewsbury South Urban***
 - 1. Sutton Grange site – ongoing – likely transfer in 2024/25 – recent meeting with Taylor Wimpey to discuss logistics for transfer. Final snagging was being discussed.
 - 2. Bellway Homes site – discussion on land adoption and adoption of acoustic fencing
 - 3. Galliers site – early discussions on land adoption
 - 4. Community Centre – location on the site
- (iv) ***Radbrook College site*** – Open space adoption – officers met with Floreat Homes on site – likely adoption once all phases are complete.
- (v) ***Weir Hill*** – Agreements to adopt the land at a future time have been signed - meeting with Taylor Wimpey looking at the possibility of the countryside land to be transferred ahead of the POS on the development site.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

14/25 CLOSING REMARKS

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