

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
Meeting of Council
Held in the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Shrewsbury at
6pm on Monday 26 June 2023

PRESENT

Councillors B Wall (Mayor), B Bentick, R Dartnall, M Davies, P Gillam, K Halliday, C Lemon, P Moseley, A Mosley, K Pardy, A Phillips, E Roberts & R Wilson.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources), Stuart Farmer (Acting Operations Manager), Michelle Farmer (Committee Clerk) and 12 members of the public.

17/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillors Dean, Green, Vasmer and Wagner.

18/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Shropshire Councillors	Twin hatted members declared personal interests in matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council
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19/23 MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

The minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 2 May 2023 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Full Meeting of Council on 2 May 2023 be approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

20/23 MATTERS ARISING

There were no Matters Arising for consideration.

21/23 ANNOUNCEMENTS

21.1 MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Mayor & Deputy Mayor's engagements for the period 1 April 2023 to 17 June 2023 were circulated and noted.

The Mayor reported that since the last meeting she had a full diary and had attended several activities including the Armed Forces Family Fun Day which brought together various associations who supported the Armed Forces.

She had also attended RAF Shawbury for their annual reception & RAF Cosford for an inter-faith Community Fun Day. The Deputy Mayor was not able to attend the Council meeting so no further announcements were made.

21.2 TOWN CLERK ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk reported to Councillors that on 12 June 2023, she had sent an email to all, detailing the various Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) proposals and provided a SharePoint link to the list so that members could make comments regarding their wards. Only three Councillors had commented to date and the closing date for comments was Friday 30 June.

There would be an open evening at Livesey House on Wednesday 28 June to which all Members had been invited. The Town Clerk asked if they had not yet replied to the Mayor's Secretary email, could they please do so.

22/23 PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

The Town Clerk reported that standing orders had been followed in seeking questions ahead of the meeting, but she had accepted questions up until 4pm on the day of this meeting.

Councillor Mosley would be answering the public questions as the Leader of Shrewsbury Town Council.

Question One was from Colin Harper:

"It was now twelve months since the Redfern Report and four months since the Supreme Court Judgment. Was there anything that Helen Ball would like to say to the Greenfields Community Group?"

Councillor Mosley replied stating that as Mr Harper was aware, the political group leaders had taken on an active role in liaising with the Greenfields Community Group. They continued to be the key point of reference.

Question Two was from Alyson Lanning:

"Could Councillor Mosley please update the Council on progress with regard to the negotiations with solicitors - for both the council and the developers (CSE Developments) - involved in the return of Greenfields Recreation Ground, following the judgment of the Supreme Court in March 2023."

Councillor Mosley replied stating that the Council had continued to be kept informed of progress whether through Full Council or through the Finance & General Purposes Committee. Their Solicitors continued to await details from CSE Developments Solicitors. When they had any further updates they would provide an update to the Council.

Question Three was from Peter Day:

1. "Deed of Dedication - Could the Council provide an update on the Deed of Dedication for Greenfields Recreation Ground and other parks?"

Councillor Mosley answered to say that the Town Clerk had an extremely productive meeting with Fields In Trust who gave detailed guidance on how to register land. In the case of the Greenfields Recreation Ground they advised that no progress could be made until the land completely rested with the Town Council. In the case of other parcels of land, officers were reviewing activity on various recreation grounds to determine fitness for inclusion in a broader scheme. The Town Clerk would be reporting back to the next Recreation & Leisure Committee.

2. **“Internal Audit 2023 - The internal auditors; Auditing Solutions Limited - provided ‘appropriate assurances’ about the robustness of financial practices Agenda item 11. However Auditing Solutions Limited made no reference to the Redfern KC Inquiry 2022; that the National Auditor under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 found ‘serious governance weaknesses’ (letter to Alan Mosley Leader of the Shrewsbury Town Council 16 April 2022) and that the land disposed of, Greenfields Recreation Ground, was held under a statutory trust and a public asset. The national auditor set out that ‘robust procedures’ must ‘be put in place’ but there was no reference to the Public Interest Report; the Redfern KC Inquiry or the outcome of the Supreme Court 2023 under governance or assets of this internal audit 2023 by Auditing Solutions Limited.”**

Councillor Mosley responded by saying that the Role of the Internal Auditor was to review the financial policies in relation to those set out in the Annual Governance & Accountability Return. The Council’s internal auditor was aware of all matters relating to Greenfields Recreation Ground, which continued to be reported in the Council’s accounts as a contingent liability.

3. **“Internal Audit 2023 - Was the internal auditor Auditing Solutions Limited aware, had access to copies, and did they read the Redfern Report 2022 before their report 2023 into the accounting and governance of Shrewsbury Town Council was published for accounts 2023? This would seem like an omission in both governance and assets to ignore the inquiry and judgment.”**

Councillor Mosley answered stating as previously reported the Internal Auditor was aware of all matters relating to Greenfields Recreation Ground. There was no need to reference such within their report as the recent audit was in relation to the 2022/23 accounts

4. **“Can Auditing Solutions Limited therefore be requested to update and comment on the Redfern KC Report 2022 or the recommendations made in Redfern Paragraph 150 (and 151) and by the National Auditor PKF Littlejohn LLP and the outcome of the Supreme Court 2023 in this audit?”**

Councillor Mosley replied stating that Paragraph 150 states “The RFO (Responsible Finance Officer) discharged his duties during the dispute to the standard set out in the regulations. Perhaps the RFO might consider identifying the Capital Receipt Funds deriving from sale of parcels of land in Shrewsbury Town Council’s ownership”. He could confirm that the RFO did consider the matter and explained his rationale for not separately identifying funds at the last Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting.

Paragraph 151 related to a procedure in relation to future sale of land. Details of recommendations were incorporated in the new Asset Disposal Policy that was agreed by Council on 20th January 2023.

5. **Internal Audit 2023 – “The proceeds for the sale of Greenfield’s Recreation Ground has always been listed as part of Capital Receipts Fund (earning interest). It has never been ring-fenced and as stated in Redfern Report QC 2022 comment iv and 150 (151) the proceeds of the disposal to avoid confusion should be ‘itemised’ - see below 150 Redfern Report. Further reassurances given by the RFO in the email correspondence with Greenfields Community Group the RFO Shrewsbury Town Council that STC would**

apply this Redfern recommendation in YE23 accounts below”

Councillor Mosley replied stating he referred Dr Day to his answer to his previous question. The RFO considered the suggestion by Mr Redfern and gave his rationale for not proceeding with the suggestion at the last Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting.

Eleven members of the public left the meeting.

23/23 MOTIONS FROM MEMBERS

MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR CHRIS LEMON

Councillor Lemon informed Members that an amendment to the wording in his motion had been received and he was in full agreement with the amendment, but he wished to convey the sentiments for his presenting his initial motion.

He explained to Committee that the 'Future Fit' programme with its stated intention to transform acute hospital services and help improve outcomes for communities across Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and mid Wales had been stuck on the drawing board for several years now. Many attendees present at the meeting attended the original public consultation exercise at Shrewsbury Town Football Club and were presented with an early exercise in leading questioning from the local health authority. One of the proposals which eventually followed the consultation was that of concentrating emergency care at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, thereby leaving the County with just one fully functioning Accident & Emergency Department. This proposal had met with huge public resistance, with a series of pop-up street surveys in Shropshire towns asking if participants would keep both fully functioning A&Es consistently returning 'Yes' votes over 90%. The result from the Shrewsbury public survey was 94.3%. There clearly was strong public opinion that both the RSH and PRH should retain full A&Es, and this was reflected in several Shropshire Town Councils including Oswestry, Bishops Castle and Ludlow as well as the Telford & Wrekin Council passing similar motions.

It might be said that as long as there was a fully functioning A&E at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, people within the town did not have anything to be too concerned about. This ignored the bigger picture. All were aware of the immense strain on NHS services at present and that patients were regularly advised to avoid using A&E because of extreme pressures on resources, and that earlier this year the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin Integrated Care System area was the worst performing in the country. If the Princess Royal A&E were to be downgraded as proposed, that would only add to the pressures on the department at the RSH, and there was very little confidence that the reorganisation of services proposed by Future Fit, with most of the measures originally planned to provide some services at outlying community hospitals long since stripped out, would compensate or cope with the inevitable increased demand.

Whilst Shrewsbury Town Council was not in the decision-making chain for this matter, it had recently shown itself more than willing to become involved in health matters which could be to the detriment of its residents, namely the proposed Cavell Health Hub. In taking the lead by asking serious questions of the Integrated Care Board, it no doubt played a part in bringing that issue to the attention of many more people than would otherwise have been the case, especially when other elected representatives clearly had no appetite to enter the fray, or to represent the views of residents who had major concerns about what was being proposed.

The proposed motion aimed to reflect concerns felt by people in Shrewsbury about the consequences of another major change to health service which would directly affect them. If passed, it would involve the Town Council asking the bodies involved in making the decision to have only one fully functioning A&E in the county to think again. This must be reasonable considering how old the data of the original proposal was based upon.

The Strategic Outline Case for the Hospitals Transformation Programme was formally approved by central Government in August last year, with the Outline Business Case (OBC) setting out the plans in more detail now in development. The OBS stage was expected to be completed in around twelve months following the Strategic Outline Case being signed off, which could well be before Council meets again in September.

The following motion was therefore proposed:

Shrewsbury Town Council recognised the data used to inform the decision to close one of the counties A&E departments was now nearly ten years old. It called on NHS Shropshire Telford and Wrekin, Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, NHS Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit, and NHS England – Midlands to commit to re-evaluating the Future Fit/Hospitals Transformation Programme.

Councillor Lemon added he would like to add to the end of his motion that Shrewsbury Town Council requested a copy of the outline business case.

Councillor Halliday seconded the motion stating the business case needed to be seen and the correct route to take was to ask for a re-evaluation.

Councillor Mosley commented that members were not happy with the package that had been proposed to Shrewsbury on the grounds of outdated data and requested it be re-evaluated.

Councillor Pardy asked if the motion should be postponed until the business plan had been seen. This was a national problem, and it would be difficult to decide without seeing the business plan.

Councillor Lemon added that the motion was asking to re-evaluate due to the data rather than making a decision.

RESOLVED:

That Shrewsbury Town Council recognises the data used to inform the decision to close one of the counties A&E departments is now nearly ten years old. It calls on NHS Shropshire Telford and Wrekin, Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust, NHS Midlands and Lancashire Commissioning Support Unit, and NHS England – Midlands to commit to re-evaluating the Future Fit/Hospitals Transformation Programme. Shrewsbury Town Council requests a copy of the outline business case on grounds of outdated data.

24/23 END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS & SUPPORTING STATEMENTS

24.1 End of Year Accounts

The Responsible Finance Officer had prepared the End of Year Accounts in accordance with the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2011, which had been discussed and approved by the Finance & General Purposes Committee. The Responsible Finance Officer had provided an extensive summary of the accounts at the last meeting.

The RFO reported that he had made reference to the Town Council's resolution 27/22 within Assumption 8 of the Annual Governance Statement and Note 20 Contingent Liabilities of the Annual Accounts.

Overall, the result was better than budgeted and better than expected which had generated a surplus.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Annual Report for the financial year 2022/23 be adopted;**
- (ii) That the Statement of Accounting Policies for the financial year 2022/23 be adopted;**
- (iii) That the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year 2022/23 be adopted;**
- (iv) That the Income & Expenditure Account for the financial year 2022/23 be adopted;**
- (v) That the Statement of Movement of Reserves for the financial year 2022/23 be adopted;**
- (vi) That the Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2023 be adopted.**

24.2 Annual Governance & Accountability Return

The Responsible Financial Officer had prepared the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the period 2022/23. This had three sections:

1. Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 confirming the Council acknowledged its responsibility for ensuring that there was a sound system of internal control including arrangements for the preparation of the accounting system. This was to be signed by the Mayor & Town Clerk.
2. Accounting Statements 2022/23 taking key financial information from the End of Year Accounts. This was to be signed by the Mayor & RFO.
3. External Auditor's Report & Certificate 2022/23. This would be completed by the External Auditor upon the conclusion of the external audit

Once completed and signed, this form would be forwarded to the Town Council's External Auditor before 01 July 2023. At this point the accounts and Annual Return would be made public.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year 2022/23 be approved and signed by the Mayor & Town Clerk;**
- (ii) That the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 prepared following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities, be approved and signed as by the Mayor and RFO**

25/23 INTERNAL AUDITOR

The RFO reported that the Internal Auditor had completed the final audit and there had been no matters arising and was able to sign page 3 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR). The return would be sent to the External Auditor by the end of the month. The RFO was thanked and congratulated.

RESOLVED:

That the Internal Auditor's final audit report for the financial year ending 31st March 2023 be accepted, and page 3 of the AGAR submitted to External Auditor.

26/23 BOUNDARY COMMISSION

The Town Clerk reported that Council had made original representations to the Local Government Boundary Commission regarding the electoral review of Shropshire Council. The recommendation was that the Council's external boundary should be the A5/A49/proposed NWRR and that Town Council wards should be co-terminus with the Shropshire Council Divisions. This would allow for very clear development boundaries, community cohesion, ironing out anomalies from the original boundary review in 2009, have a clear understanding of responsibility for community infrastructure, and there be no confusion between Shrewsbury Town Council and Shropshire Council wards at elections.

It was felt that the Local Government Boundary Commission had not fully appreciated the rationale for the Town Council's proposals. Whilst some areas had changed others had stayed the same. The Town Council hadn't lost any areas. The Town Clerk had spoken to Officers at Shropshire Council there was still intent on undertaking a Community Governance Review of Parish Council boundaries and remained supportive of the Town Council's proposals and convey this within their submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission. Their argument was that it would be sensible to make the changes at this stage rather than seeking further changes at the Community Governance Review Stage.

The Town Clerk understood that some members had made comments about internal boundaries to Shropshire Council so it would be helpful if they were to apply to Town Council boundaries also.

Comments were to be submitted by the 10 July 2023, so the Town Clerk suggested that Council set up a Task & Finish Group to finalise the submission as they didn't have any further opportunity to come back to Council with commentary before the deadline date.

Some Councillors were not happy with suggested changes to their wards and that certain areas need to be included (section South of Thieves Lane) and to extend out to the A5.

Members agreed to forming a working party of one meeting with two Labour representatives, two Liberal Democrat representatives, one Green representative and one Conservative.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That a Task & Finish Group made up of two Labour, two Liberal, one Conservative & one Green Party Member to discuss a response either via email or meeting;**

- (ii) **That the Town Clerk submit a response to the Local Government Boundary Commission in relation to the proposed Boundary Changes to Shropshire Council and consequently changes to the Shrewsbury Town Council boundary.**

27/23 PLACE PLAN

The Town Clerk reported that Shropshire Council was required to publish its Investment Plan for each year and in particular its funding priorities for CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy). The CIL 123 List came from the Place Plan and in the case of Shrewsbury it was one of 18 different plans around the county. In the past the Town Council had submitted all of its investment requirements into the Shrewsbury Place Plan which then formed the basis of how the Town Council spent the CIL Neighbourhood Fund. The Place Plan hadn't been updated since before COVID and Shropshire Council had in the meantime looked to change its format from a physical document to an on-line database that could be uploaded to, amended as a project progressed and ultimately signed off once completed. That database was now in place and Shropshire Council had requested all Parish Councils send their inclusions to their Place Plan by the 7 August. The Town Clerk had spoken at length to Mathew Mead, the Place Plan Officer for Shrewsbury, about the fact that Council was in the process of finalising its Vision & Action Plan and would really want all of that detail added into the Place Plan. He was happy for that process to continue and had offered to attend the September meeting of Council to discuss this in more detail. The Town Clerk had gone through the existing Place Plan and would make sure that members considered all of those inclusions during the Visioning Exercise.

RESOLVED:

- (i) **That the update be noted;**
- (ii) **That Mathew Mead, Place Plan Officer be invited to the next meeting of Council**

28/23 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 11 April 2023, 17 April 2023 and 5 June 2023 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 11 April 2023, 17 April 2023 and 5 June 2023 be received and adopted.

29/23 RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee held on 10 May 2023 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 10 May 2023 be received and adopted.

30/23 PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 4 April 2023, 25 April 2023, 16 May 2023 and 6 June 2023 were submitted as circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 4 April 2023, 25 April 2023, 16 May 2023 and 6 June 2023 be received and adopted.

31/23 CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Climate Change Committee held on 27 April 2023 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Climate Change Committee held on 27 April 2023 be received and adopted.

32/23 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

32.1 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 23 April 2023 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Annual Town meeting held on 23 April 2023 be received and adopted.

32.2 Actions from the Annual Town Meeting

The Town Clerk reported that the Annual Town Meeting was not a Town Council meeting albeit being chaired by the Mayor and serviced by Council staff. Council was required to consider any recommendations from that meeting. The Town Clerk confirmed that there were no recommendations, so it was a matter for Council to purely accept the minutes of the meeting, which would be approved at next year's Annual Town Meeting.

33/23 WORKING GROUPS

33.1 JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 19 April 2023 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 19 April 2023 be received and adopted.

33.2 ACTIVE TRAVEL WORKING GROUP

The minutes of the Active Travel Working Group meeting held on 31 May 2023 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Active Travel Working Group meeting held on 31 May 2023 be received and adopted.

33.3 QUARRY WORKING GROUP

The minutes of the Quarry Working Group meeting held on 9 May 2023 were circulated as read

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Quarry Working Group meeting held on 9 May 2023 be received and adopted

33.4 CLEAN RIVER WORKING GROUP

The minutes of the Clean River Working Group meeting held on 21 June 2023 were circulated as read

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Clean River Working Group meeting held on 21 June 2023 were circulated as read.

34/23 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.

The Mayor advised that live streaming of this meeting would now stop. She thanked members of the public for logging in. All papers relating to the meeting could be found on the website www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk

35/23 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Personnel Committee meetings held on 25 May 2023 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 25 May 2023 be received and adopted.

36/23 CLOSING REMARKS

The Mayor thanked members and staff for their attendance and closed the meeting.