

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL  
RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE  
7 SEPTEMBER 2022**

**Officer:** Helen Ball (Town Clerk)

**SAFE STREETS 4 FUNDING**

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To update the Committee on the submission of a Safe Streets 4 Funding Bid to the Home Office

**BACKGROUND**

In March 2022 the Home Office published the Prospectus for Safer Streets Fund Round Four – Protecting Public Spaces.

[Safer Streets Fund round 4 application process - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/safer-streets-fund-round-4-application-process)

Funding was available for interventions aimed at tackling neighbourhood crime, anti-social behaviour and improving the safety of public spaces for all. **Vulnerable Adults, Women and Girls (VAWG)** was the priority focus for this round of funding.

Applications could only be submitted by the Police & Crime Commissioner or the Local Authority. The PCC was keen that Shropshire benefitted from this round of funding as other areas within the force area had previously benefitted from earlier rounds.

Discussions took place with the West Mercia Problem Solving Hub regarding how the Police & Crime Commissioner in conjunction with the Local Authority could submit a bid to the Home Office to help address the ongoing issues around managing Publicly Accessible Space in the Shrewsbury town centre and the Quarry Park. This area had been flagged up in the Top 10 areas of concern for the force. It should also be pointed out that Shrewsbury has the highest level of licensed premises and consequentially the largest night-time economy within the force and has the largest events programme of any town attracting thousands of visitors.

The Force submitted a bid for Shrewsbury alongside 3 other bids within the force area. All were successful and grant awards were made public in late July.

**THE SHREWSBURY SAFER STREET BID**

The Shrewsbury Bid was developed by the West Mercia Problem Solving Hub as a collaboration between the Town Council, Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury BID, University Centre Shrewsbury and the Shrewsbury Street Pastors.

The bid is designed to address prevention of Violence against Women & Girls within the public realm both during the day and at night-time assisting individuals to find safe places, being able to go about their lives without harassment alarm or distress, being able to get home safely and be aware of the risks. The bid also addressed raising awareness of penalties particularly around the public space protection order.

The focus of the bid totalling **£548,178**

Project	Cost	Partner
Improvement to throw line and life buoy signage around the river loop	£43,700	Shrewsbury Town Council
Installation of Safer Routes Signage	£10,000	All partners
Targeted Campaign	£25,000	All partners
Purchase & installation of CCTV Cameras in hotspot areas & provision of a permanent CCTV/WMP OCC link	£92,950	Shropshire Council
Public Space Protection Order Campaign	£1,000	Shropshire Council
Detached Youth Work	£67,548	Shropshire Council
Shrewsbury Town Centre Rangers	£75,000	Shrewsbury BID
Quarry Security & Taxi Marshals	£168,480	Shrewsbury Town Council
Footpath Infrastructure Improvements Hills Lane	£20,000	Shropshire Council
Enhancements to Street Pastors & Provisions of a Safe Space in the town centre	£44,500	Shrewsbury Street Pastors

There are geographic parameters around this bid which predominantly addresses issues within the River Loop including the Town Centre and the Quarry Park with some scope to look at the immediate outliers of Frankwell, Porthill and Belle Vue.

As already mentioned, the primary focus is to address issues around VAWG, but the projects outlined also address other vulnerabilities including river safety, homelessness and alcohol & substance misuse.

The projects were based on a survey of women/girls who highlighted key concerns around the town centre both during the day and at night and an Environmental Visual Audit.

West Mercia Police will act as the Accountable Body and quarterly claims will be made on paid invoices. WMP Finance have provided Purchase Order Numbers for all funds allocated to partners. There is an expectation that partners follow their own procurement rules in spending the funds.

Currently there is a Working Group made up of all the partners to ensure that projects get off the ground in a timely fashion. Spending has been profiled over a 15-month period starting from July 2022 with all Home Office Funding being required to be spent by the end of September 2023. There is also a requirement to contribute match funding made up of physical funds and volunteer hours which will be required to be expended by March 2024. The extent of the Town Council's match requirement is £50k spread over Quarry Security and the capital outlay of throwline and lifebuoy infrastructure improvements.

## **OPERATIONALISING THE TOWN COUNCIL LED PROJECTS**

As the spend has had to be profiled over a monthly drawdown programme, it has been necessary to operationalise the projects as quickly as possible. Lengthy delays would result in loss of funding opportunity.

### **Lighting of Throwline Boards & Life Buoy Stations**

The key area of concern has been that whilst there are a number of physical measures (namely Throwline Boards and Lifebuoy Stations) to support individuals in distress in the river, their location is not always evident. None of the throwline boards or Lifebuoy Stations are lit and a number of the latter have become degraded over time and have lost any elements of luminescence that they once had as new.

All stations were plotted on GIS.

The practicalities of lighting these features have been the same as lighting Victoria Avenue in the Quarry as all do not have easy access to power, therefore solar technology has been explored.

A tender for works has been published with closing date for submissions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2022 with a view that contracts can be awarded, work completed allowing for drawdown of funding by the October funding schedule date.

This project has been shared with WSP who has also highlighted this as a risk within the ongoing Riverbanks Assessment which it is hoped will be published and available for Council discussion later in the month.

### **Quarry Security**

As members are aware Prosecure were appointed to address ongoing ASB/public safety issues in the park. The appointment although done in the interests of operational expediency followed the award criteria of the Town Ranger programme which Council chose not to proceed with. Prosecure provided the best value in terms of cost, deliverability, local knowledge, experience. Other reports being presented to Recreation & Leisure Committee show the benefits of the Quarry Security project so far.

Prosecure were initially commissioned to provide patrol cover and locking at key times and locking facilities at others. Two SIA staff had been deployed to provide the following cover:

Monday	18.00 - 20.00 – Locking Up
Tuesday	18.00 – 20.00 – Locking Up
Wednesday	18.00 – 20.00 – Locking Up
Thursday	13.30 – 19.30 – Patrolling & Locking Up
Friday	13.30 – 19.30 – Patrolling & Locking Up
Saturday	13.30 – 19.30 – Patrolling & Locking Up
Sunday	13.30 – 19.30 – Patrolling & Locking Up

As the days have got longer this longer patrolling cover has been amended to 14.30 – 20.30

Duties have included:

- Patrolling the Park including play area, toilets & Dingle
- Visiting the Butcher Row Toilets
- Closing Mardol Quay
- Closing Butcher Row Toilets
- Closing the two sets of Quarry Toilets, Splash Park & Dingle

A core team of 4 Prosecure Staff have been utilized on a rota which has provided excellent continuity and the staff liaise with both the Quarry Grounds Staff and the Neighbourhood Wardens & Toilet Cleaners to ensure a smooth handover. The Prosecure Staff have also got to know the key protagonists who cause antisocial behavior both in the park and around the Butcher Row Toilets.

Those Prosecure Staff keep themselves updated via a closed messaging tool to ensure that all are aware of any issues on other shifts and understand any matters that might need addressing. They in turn provide a weekly report to the Town Council which:

- Is added to the Town Council's ASB Logs
- Helps to inform multi-agency working through Team Shrewsbury
- Is passed onto relevant partners

Safe Streets 4 Funding has meant that patrols have extended to the following times from the beginning of August:

Monday	12.00 – 20.00
Tuesday	12.00 – 20.00
Wednesday	12.00 – 20.00
Thursday	12.00 – 20.00
Friday	12.00 – 22.00    22.00 – 04.00 (Taxi Marshalling)
Saturday	12.00 – 22.00    22.00 – 04.00 (Taxi Marshalling)
Sunday	12.00 – 22.00

A summer and winter operational timetable has been developed to maximise staffing in the months where usage in the Quarry is much greater.

The same Locking Up arrangements are continuing with extended patrols throughout the Quarry. Prosecure Staff are also able to patrol further into potential outliers where individuals might displace to with increased patrols in the park.

## Taxi Marshals

One of the key problems identified by the survey was the continued inability to access taxis late at night. This has been due to a number of factors including a general reduction in the number of taxi drivers, reduced numbers of taxis available late at night and particularly in the early hours when licensed premises close, reluctance of taxi drivers to take fares with individuals who are incapacitated, ASB around queues for taxis and a general feeling of lack of safety.

Discussions have taken place with Shropshire Council Licensing Officers who liaise with both Hackney Carriage Drivers and Private Hire Companies.

As part of the funding process a Scoping Exercise was commissioned. This included observations over the weekend of the 5/6 August. This highlighted some of the key issues in managing the night-time economy on the streets as well as locations for pick-ups of both Hackney Carriages and Private Hire. The Scoping Exercise also looked at best practice from elsewhere.

Based on that Scoping Exercise engagement has taken place with all taxi providers and licensed premises to best understand how this can be operationalized. As Experimental Orders will be required to convert laybys into late night taxi ranks, Prosecure have begun the Taxi Marshalling function primarily raising awareness, engaging with Licensed Premises Door Staff, engaging with other partners including the Police and Street Pastors and developing a presence in the town centre.

## Other Elements of the Safe Streets 4 Funding

Whilst other elements of the funding are being led by other partners, the choice of projects submitted within the bid were aimed to address a holistic approach to managing the public realm. It is envisaged that Team Shrewsbury will strategically oversee the operational delivery of all projects to ensure that the maximum benefit can be achieved.

## OUTCOMES

As the focus of the funding is to prevent Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG), this has become a key priority and in particular during the month that extended patrols have been operational.

The United Nations defines VAWG as ***“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”***

VAWG includes the following:

- Domestic Abuse
- Rape & Sexual Assault
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Early & Forced Marriage
- Honour Based Violence
- Spiritual Abuse
- Sexual Harassment
- Stalking
- Modern Slavery
- Forced Prostitution / Sexual exploitation

This funding relates to publicly accessible locations and already Security staff have identified VAWG related matters. It is not possible to go into details as a number have been reported to police for investigation.

The feedback of the extended security has been extremely positive. The small core team have been able to build relations with stakeholders and develop multi-operational activities as well as building trust and confidence with the public and in particular those who are vulnerable including Children & Young People and especially those at risk of exploitation, Homeless, Individuals prone to alcohol & substance misuse.

Prosecure are now providing an enhanced level of reporting which will allow us to track the outcomes of the funding and determine what to do once the funding is exhausted. Council will continue to be appraised of activity throughout this 15-month funding project through the Recreation & Leisure Committee.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (I) That the report be noted**
- (II) That Officers continue to report on progress to the Recreation & Leisure Committee**