

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Council Held Virtually on Microsoft Teams At 6.00pm on Monday 1 March 2021

PRESENT

Councillors Mrs G Burgess (Mayor), P Adams, J Dean (Deputy Mayor), P Gillam, N Green, Ms K Halliday, I Jones, A Mosley, Mrs P Moseley, P Nutting, K Pardy, A Phillips, K Roberts, D Vasmer & Mrs R Wall.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Andy Watkin (Responsible Finance Officer), Ruth Jones (Office Manager) & Carol Pullen (Committee Clerk).

87/20 WELCOME FROM THE MAYOR

The Mayor welcomed Councillors, Officers and members of the public tuning in to the Council's Virtual live-streamed meeting and ran through a few house rules. She also noted that the meeting was not being recorded and the Minutes would be published on the Town Council's website in the usual way.

88/20 APOLOGIES

RESOLVED:

That apologies from Councillors Mrs H Fraser & Ms J Mackenzie be accepted.

89/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Shropshire Councillors	Twin hatted members declared personal interests in matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council.
Councillor Burgess	Declared an interest as she has a business in the Town Centre
Councillor Dean	Declared an interest as he has a holiday home in the West of the town
Councillor Green	Declared an interest as he has a business in the Town Centre
Councillor Mosley	Declared an interest as he is Chair of Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings

90/20 SHREWSBURY BIG TOWN PLAN

Further to the Council meeting of 25 January 2021, this meeting had been convened to allow for greater discussion and any comments to be made collectively into the current consultation process.

Councillor Mosley opened the discussion by saying the process had begun over three years ago when the Big Town Plan Focus Group which consisted of the BID, Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Town Council had been formed and led to a series of consultation events. LDA Design were appointed as consultants to draw up the original vision which was the precursor to the current Masterplan. Glen Howells were appointed as consultants to develop the Masterplan and Movement Strategy and a series of stakeholder workshops had taken place helping to formulate the document. He said it should be borne in mind that there were two other plans closely linked to the Big Town Plan, one being the work done for the Big Town Plan on the Castle Street feasibility and the other a Report which would be going to Shropshire Council's Cabinet about proposals for the Riverside area.

He saw this as a big step forward to providing not only a Big Town Plan for twenty years to come but it also provided a plan for rescue and regeneration as a consequence of the declines that COVID had created. When discussing the document, it should be recognised that it was a vision for discussion, a vision for further work and a vision for the future. It offered an opportunity of engaging with residents about the type of town in which they would wish to live, work and play in, a medium to sell the town to those outside and a catalyst for development. It was not a blueprint and there were some areas which were weak and would certainly require further work. In his opinion the movement strategy was one area that would require further work.

The Mayor opened the discussion up to members. The Town Clerk would then collate and circulate the comments before feeding them back to the Big Town Plan Board.

Members made the following comments:

Movement Vision

- Members felt Movement Vision was weak and much more work was needed requiring significant financial investment to ensure expert advice be sought and given by someone with an understanding of the layout and current pitfalls of Shrewsbury Town Centre.
- There was support for the town centre becoming a low traffic zone but there needed to be consideration of the impact on the town as a whole and the effects any diverting of traffic may cause.
- When considering part time closure of certain streets and the possibility of more traffic using Town Walls it was suggested that robust traffic calming measures would assist in deterring traffic rather than it being seen as an easy route through.
- Some members expressed concern that the reduction of parking availability and traffic in the town could impact on an increase in traffic and indiscriminate parking in surrounding residential neighbourhoods.

- There was the hope that a Movement Strategy would go further than just low traffic neighbourhoods and would offer alternatives to encourage people to use other modes of transport to encourage more cycling and pedestrians such as improvements to the walkway from Bagley Brook, which was currently very narrow and overgrown.
- There should be as much emphasis on the bus station as there is on the railway station.
- It was recognised that many people chose to travel into town on the bus so there was a need to retain a central bus station and this could be enhanced by the inclusion of a coffee shop and a supermarket facility and it should be located near to the Railway Station.
- If people were to be encouraged to travel in by bus then improved Park & Ride car parks.
- Concern was expressed about the parking in front of Old Wakeman Building as that area was prone to flooding.

Station Quarter

- This appeared very much medium term and there was a need to look at careful and sensitive development with focus on developing the Old Canal Basin.
- Members liked the plans for the Station Quarter and the direct access to the railway platforms from Howard Street but consideration of any development in this area needed to take into consideration the impact on residents of Castlefields.
- Adequate parking was required near to the railway station, although members supported the creation of an out of town parkway railway station, which was still being explored.
- There was some concern on how these larger ambitious projects could be achieved when smaller projects that had been underway for significant amounts of time had not been delivered; projects like the Dana Footpath and addressing detritus under the railways bridges were examples in this area.
- Support to opening up of the front of the Library and the front of the Castle would make both buildings more user friendly.

Northern Corridor

- Members were pleased to see the Flaxmill highlighted as a catalyst for regeneration of the Northern Corridor but there was a need to ensure that cycling/walking routes along the Old Canal path were maintained so the street scene needed to be considered as important in this process. Councillor Mosely made reference to the poor maintenance of the Old Canal Path.

Abbey Foregate

- There were concerns that housing development proposals on the Asda site in Old Potts Way was unrealistic. Some members considered that area should be retained as

commercial and concern was expressed at the potential loss of a supermarket that supported a wide residential community and was within walking distance of the town.

- There were however counter arguments to not looking at changes of use in this area. The Big Town Plan was advocating the creation of 2000 sustainable homes within the town centre; this compared to the Local Plan which supported the creation of 2500 less sustainable homes in the periphery.

Historic Quarter/Frankwell & Riverside

- Members supported the potential moving of Smithfield Road, which would allow opening up of the river front.
- Car parking in Frankwell needed to be addressed as there would always be a need for people to use their vehicles to come into the town and the balance was enabling access to suitable car parks without clogging up the town.
- There were opportunities for commercial development in the Riverside area, hotel location, culture, expansion of the University. There was a real opportunity to use the area around Frankwell for cultural benefit.
- Members supported renaming of Frankwell Island to Frankwell Gardens and thought there may be opportunity to alter the road layout to revert back to gardens which had been there in the past.
- It must be remembered that Shrewsbury lends itself to culture already within the town and wherever possible repurposing, retrofitting and redeploying of existing buildings could be considered.

Other Observations

- It was no good developing public open space without thought to future responsibility and appropriate levels of resource to maintain it.
- The plan should have the impact of climate emergency as its primary focus, wherever possible retrofitting or repurposing buildings and where new builds are required ensuring energy and carbon usage is minimised

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Shrewsbury Town Council welcomes the Big Town Plan and supports it as a basis for ongoing consultation and development;**
- (ii) That the Movement Strategy be further investigated to understand the complexity of movement within Shrewsbury;**
- (iii) That further work be undertaken regarding bus movements with a view to the retention of a bus station in the Town Centre.**

91/20 CLOSING REMARKS

The Mayor closed the meeting and thanked all Councillors for attending and taking part in this virtual meeting.