

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Finance & General Purpose Committee Held at the Walker Theatre, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury

At 6.00pm on Monday 19 July 2021

PRESENT

Councillors: A Mosley (Chair), P Moseley (Vice-Chair), M Davies, R Dartnall, J Dean, N Green, A Phillips & D Vasmer

Also in attendance: Councillors B Bentick & E Roberts

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Andy Watkin (Responsible Financial Officer), Stuart Farmer (Projects Officer), Ruth Jones (Office Manager) and Carol Pullen (Committee Clerk).

22/21 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

23/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Shropshire Councillors	Those twin-hatted members declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council.
Councillor B Bentick	Declared a non-prejudicial interest in Item 5 Grants – Shropshire European Organisation cic as the applicant is known to him.
Councillor M Davies	Declared a non-prejudicial interest in Item 5 Grants – Shropshire European Organisation cic as the applicant is known to her. Declared an Interest in Item 13 – Property Disposal
Councillor N Green	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 10 – Markets. Declared a non-prejudicial interest in Item 5 Grants – Shropshire European Organisation cic as the applicant is known to him.
Councillor D Vasmer	Declared a non-prejudicial interest in Item 5 Grants – Shropshire European Organisation cic as the applicant is known to him.

24/21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 14 June 2021 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 14 June 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

25/21 MATTERS ARISING

Minute 15/21 – Security in the Quarry – Security staff had been commissioned until the end of August. The park had been exceptionally busy and there had been a significant number of incidences of young people drinking underage and over the last week swimming and jumping in the river.

Minute 15/21 – Vision for Policing in Shrewsbury – The Town Clerk had contacted Superintendent Bill regarding attendance at a future meeting. She had given him the dates of all Full Council, F&GP and R&L meetings until the end of September and the only date he could make was the R&L meeting this coming Wednesday 21 July.

Minute 18/21 – Weir Hill Costings – Matt Wilcoxon, the Countryside & Greenspace Manager had been asked to look at various options:

Plan 1: Largely non-intervention aside from safety issues and very basic access. Banks are left to naturally generate and will likely go to rough grass > scrub > woodland over 20 years.

Plan 2: Low input management with some access improvements. Banks are left to naturally generate with trees planted in some areas each winter.

Plan 3: Optimal management with access and infrastructure improvements. Fencing installed to allow light cattle grazing. Some 'parkland' trees with adequate stock protection to create a 'wood pasture' type habitat. (costs included for this, although likely to be partially sourced through grant funding and volunteers).

The Town Clerk had sent details to Councillors of the annual work hours – they varied between 73-111 hours, all easily doable within the current planned resource availability to the Countryside Team.

Minute 19/21 – Guidance about Land Disposal - Mr Redfern had been asked by the Deputy Town Clerk for Guidance and it was understand he had met with Councillor Mosley, but to date no formal guidance had been received.

Councillor Mosley confirmed that Mr Redfern had presented some proposals which were currently under consideration.

With regard to Weir Hill costings, Councillor Mosley proposed adopting Plan 3 which was the optimal grounds management option which he felt the area deserved and this would maintain it to a reasonable standard with costs being met from the existing budget.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Town Council move ahead with Plan 3 for Weir Hill.

26/21 COMMUNITY GRANTS

26.1 Update on Community & Councillor Grant Funds

The RFO reported that there was a total of £7,250 remaining in the Community Grant Fund for 2021/22 but this would need to cover both this submission period and the next one.

There had only been one Councillor grant spend of £730 within the current financial year.

26.2 Applications for Community Grants:

(a) Shropshire European Organisation cic – requested £2,000 funding to help with the cost of hosting the second Polish Congress in Shrewsbury. The conference would bring together minority groups from Polish and Eastern European backgrounds as well as people from a range of social enterprises, stakeholders and individuals who contribute or benefit from support to minority groups to improve lives and well-being. The conference will identify best practice and stimulate innovative ways of reaching the target audience and will directly benefit the development of community cafes and welfare activities in Shrewsbury which will reach a wider and more inclusive section of the local population.

The ability to hold the Congress event in September is dependent on the award of a Big Lottery Grant of £9,915 which has been applied for and the result of this application is expected in the next few weeks. Members would be mindful to award £1,250 towards the event if the Big Lottery application were successful.

RESOLVED:

That £1,250 be awarded to Shropshire European Organisation cic, dependent on the Big Lottery Grant application for £9,915 being successful.

(b) Kynaston Road Community (Harlescott) Centre – requested £2,000 for replacement windows and a boiler. Kynaston Road Community Centre had been closed for over three years and has become dilapidated and been subject to anti-social behaviour. Partners have come together and locals from the community, to take over the trusteeship and develop the Trustee Board in order to reinvigorate the charity and try to move towards reopening the building and generating income to continue improvement works. Although two small grants of £1,000 had been successful, during the last year many of the grants on offer had been Covid related and because the centre was not open previous to Covid they had not been able to apply. There had been much help from the local community to get work done within the building but to enable the building to open the two main jobs that needed doing were the windows and the boiler. They had visited the Hub on the Hill in Telford, a successful community project who were offering guidance and support on getting up and running. Cllr Mosley reported that at recent Youth Committee meetings the view had been expressed that members would like to support Kynaston Road Community Centre in moving forward but at the application before them was a little

premature and he suggested that they work on providing more structured application including a sustainable organisational structure.

Cllr Dean said he was encouraged to hear of the revival and thought it offered a great opportunity to renewable energy; there was much expertise in the county who could help with something more exciting to properly insulate the building and make it cheaper to run.

Cllr Mosley therefore proposed that the application be deferred and the applicants come back to the next round of community grants with a more detailed, more structured, more logical proposition and that they sought advice from Town Council officers for assistance in completing the application.

RESOLVED:

That the Kynaston Road Community Centre application be deferred and the applicant be encouraged to provide a more detailed application for consideration at the next round of community grants.

- (c) The Trinity Centre & Trinity Churches** – requested £1,000 to continue the provision of a pop-up café in the Trinity Centre Courtyard, Meole Brace. Following a successful trial period from June, a clear need had been identified for an outdoor Covid-safe, all age friendly hospitality venue. It was planned to host some one-off events between now and the end of September.

RESOLVED:

That £850 be awarded to The Trinity Centre & Trinity Churches for the CLOISTERS Pop Up Café in the Trinity Centre Courtyard, Meole Brace.

- (d) West Mercia Police** – requested £250 for the Steer Clear project, early intervention/prevention, children aged 10-17 to prevent knife crime. The funding would be used to provide refreshments at monthly workshops. The workshops would offer guest speakers from other organisations, and the hope is it will benefit young people and offer them other options instead of feeling the need to carry a knife. A similar initiative rolled out in Telford several years ago had proved very successful.

RESOLVED:

That £250 be awarded to West Mercia Police.

26.3 Funding Request from Shropshire Council Sports Development:

The Town Clerk reported that a funding request had been received from Sean McCarthy at Shropshire Council for any possible financial support from the CIL Neighbourhood Fund to fund the shortfall for the refurbishment of the Artificial Turf Pitch at Meole School. This was a facility primarily used by the Hockey Club. The total cost of the project was £280,400 with a shortfall of £28,053.20. They were looking at all sources to address the funding shortfall and any amount the Town Council could make towards this amount would help with that shortfall.

In terms of wider public access, the club would make better use of the facility as they were looking to expand the amount of teams they had. The facility would be available to hire for any clubs that wanted to use it, subject to availability. There would also be more community use during the school holidays i.e. holiday clubs.

The majority of funding so far had been from the CIL local fund maintained by Shropshire Council.

Councillor Mosley felt that members required more information regarding the current usage and the expected usage and where the facility would sit within other priorities the Council had identified in terms of something the Council might consider funding from CIL

Councillor Bentick was keen to support this, as he felt it would enable the hockey teams that already played to reach an elite level and from a general point of view improve the chance of local people to reach high levels of sport. He had not seen any information on the specifics of usage outside of the time when the hockey teams would be using the facility and agreed with other members that this information was necessary to enable an informed decision to be made.

RESOLVED:

That Shropshire Council be asked to provide a more detailed report, including usage data, for consideration at the next F&GP Committee meeting.

27/21 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 5 June-9 July 2021. No comments or concerns were raised.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 5 June-9 July 2021 be approved.

28/21 QUARTER 1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The RFO reported an overall positive variance of £610,359 compared to the budget for the first quarter of the 2020/21 Financial year. This was expected due to unbudgeted income received in the first quarter of £619,335 for CIL, S106 and grants, if this was discounted there was a small adverse variance.

Expenditure is a negative variance of (4,050). There are positive variance on staff costs due to budgeted pay increase not yet awarded by National Joint Council (NJC) and vacant posts yet to be filled, this is balanced out by some small overspends.

There is a positive variance on the income received of £614,409. This is, however, misleading due to unbudgeted income of £619,335 in respect of grants £24,153, neighbourhood fund

and S106 £583,864 and sale of assets £11,318, adjusting for these would result in an adverse variance of (£4,926). Covid had impacted the income streams but this was minor and now back to normal.

When comparing the first quarter to the same period in the prior year there is an overall positive variance of £252,026.

Expenditure was an adverse variance of £170,955 due to Covid last year in the corresponding quarter and reduced operational capacity and all round less spending as no suppliers available.

There is a positive variance on income compared to previous year of £422,981, this is due to larger sum received from neighbourhood fund/S106 of £344,416 and the effects of Covid last year on income, which was diminished across all aspects of income generation.

Cllr Phillips suggested it would be useful for the RFO's report to show comparisons against the equivalent 2019 quarter, which seemed a more appropriate base line measure pre-Covid and a near normal economy and society. This would help members understand the possible longer-term shifts in the budget post Covid. The RFO said that he would provide these comparisons at future meetings.

RESOLVED:

- (i) **That the RFO provide quarterly comparable figures for 2019 in future reports to F&GP.**
- (ii) **That the report be noted.**

29/21 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk reported that last year's capital programme had been updated and anything outstanding had been transferred onto the new programme with an additional column to reflect the quarter work was likely to start in. Officers had met before the meeting to look at progress and give a timeframe for work on these projects and the same colour coded format that been continued to enable members to follow progress.

The Councillor wish list had been circulated to members and the Town Clerk was still awaiting responses from some members.

Councillor Mosley thanked the Town Clerk and reminded those members who had not already done so to make their submissions.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

30/21 TENDER WORK

The Project Manager provided an update on current tendering works:

Current Live Tenders:

Supply of Mayoral Vehicle 100% Electric – closing date 30 July 2021 – currently 5 expressions of interest.

Old River Bed Project – closing date 6 August 2021 – currently 16 expressions of interest.

Recently Awarded Tenders:

Mary Webb Road Play Area – closed 27 May – 4 Submissions received – contract awarded to Proludic Ltd.

2- Supply of Small Electric Van – closing date 18 June – 4 submissions received – contract awarded to Renault UK – Budgen Motors, Shrewsbury.

Update on other tendering works:

Tranche 3 of footpath improvements was awarded to A.G.A Group following evaluation from the Projects Manager and Countryside, Greenspace Manager and Town Clerk. Start date for these works have been set as 9 August 2021.

Mary Webb Road Play Area tender had been awarded to Proludic Ltd, the same company who had recently installed the recent play area at Sweetlake Meadows. All documents had been confirmed and play value scoring completed by the Technical Officer for play.

The tender for the Old River Bed has been published with a closing date of 6 August, due to the complexity of the project, meaning if any alterations are required to the tender, tenderers can be informed in good time. A considerable time has been allowed between the closing date and the award date to ensure external funders are content with the selections and proposed works - currently 16 Expressions of interest.

Future Tendering Projects

The Project Manager was currently in the process of compiling the tender documents for upcoming projects in line with 2021/22 Capital plan. The first projects to be tendered for would be:

- 1- The Quarry Solar Lighting Extension
- 2- Stanley Lane Footpath and Solar lighting
- 3- Moston Road footpaths

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Having declared a prejudicial interest, Councillor Green left the meeting for the consideration of this item

31/21 MARKETS

In the absence of the Outdoor Recreation and Asset Manager, the Deputy Town Clerk reported that from week commencing 12 July, all stalls on the Council Market had been utilised. There was still a small waiting list of existing traders who wanted additional dates to operate within the market. Requests from new traders was quiet, a picture which had been observed nationally. There was also a list of traders who wished to expand their businesses, however with a slow turnover of stalls, which was good for the Council, prevented this from happening.

In the build up to Christmas, the market would be participating in the late night shopping events on the 24 November & 1, 8, 15 & 22 December. All stalls would be invited to participate and the doors would be open until 8pm. This event would involve the Town Council and its Markets Officers.

As reported at the previous meeting, certain traders had expanded their stalls into the aisles, making it difficult for customers and traders with deliveries to get past safely. Steps had been taken to ensure widths are being maintained for customer safety and comfort.

As Coronavirus restrictions were being lifted and mask wearing was no longer mandatory, Councillor Moseley asked whether mask wearing was being actively encouraged in the indoor Market.

The Deputy Town Clerk clarified that as with most of the Council's assets, there was signage indicating mask wearing was advised along with other measures such as hand sanitisers etc which would remain in place. It would be more difficult to impose in the market because of the joint running of the facility with Shropshire Council so their approval would need to be sought.

A discussion took place on whether the Council should have a clear policy on mask wearing in all its indoor settings for the foreseeable future. Councillor Bentick suggested that guidance be sought from the Shropshire Director of Public Health. Councillor Mosley referred to the fact that people who own buildings can impose mandatory mask wearing on those premises and he believed there should be an imposed mask wearing policy in buildings which the Council controlled. He also suggested that all face to face Council meetings should for the foreseeable future be conducted in masks and sought members support to take this recommendation to the next Full Council meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted.**
- (ii) That a recommendation be made to Full Council to agree a policy on mask wearing in all Council indoor settings.**

Councillor Green re-joined the meeting

32/21 UPDATE ON COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUP ACTIVITY

32/1 Civics Working Group

The Town Clerk reported on the work of the previous two Mayors, both of whom had seen their Mayoral Year affected by the COVID Pandemic. All Mayoral activities had been suspended during the various lockdowns and visits outside lockdown had been very restricted to ensure social distancing. Both Mayors had undertaken visits to local businesses who had opened back up. They had also both issued a number of positive messages during the pandemic to acknowledge and support the work of the community at large in helping residents through the period. It was envisaged that there would not be a return to business as usual and the Mayor would continue to play a huge role in enthusing the community at large as lockdown measures were lifted. The Mayor had reported on his recent activities since being elected; visits had been to promote businesses re-opening or new initiative being launched

A replacement Mayor's vehicle was being sought and as reported earlier in this meeting an Invitation to Tender had now been published with a submission date towards the end of July. Invitations had been sought for both purchase and lease.

The Town Clerk reported that traditional Civic Services and Events were being planned for the Autumn & Winter seasons. These events would still have to be signed off by both the Safety Advisory Group and Public Health Shropshire; officers had been given all proposed dates.

Unlike previous Civics Committees, that had met on an adhoc basis, it was the intention for this working group to meet quarterly and subsequently have more involvement in future planning of mayoral activity.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

32/2 Youth Working Group

In the absence of the Youth & Community Manager, Councillor Moseley provided an update on the summer holiday activities that Youth Services would be offering in Summer 2021. The service had received funding to offer five days a week for four weeks, although some of this provision would be in the evening. The funding allowed for the provision of activities and food for those attending. The service would be based out of the Grange and would include trips on a Friday. Two fully funded residential weeks at Longmynd Adventure Camp had been planned, but unfortunately the first one had to be cancelled due to a number of youngsters who were self-isolating.

In terms of detached work, the recruitment of detached workers was currently very difficult due to the number of people becoming qualified and a meeting shortly to look at long term plans for the service including how best to bridge this gap.

The Alternative Curriculum Project was going well, 44 young people had engaged with the service since it began. The current number enrolled was 15 with 9 more joining in September, which meant that the service was now at full capacity. A waiting list was now in place. Of those who had participated with the alternative curriculum, the majority were making very good progress.

Plans for boxing provision in conjunction with Shrewsbury Boxing Club were progressing but the club were due to leave the Grange shortly but they had not yet signed a lease for the new site as there were outstanding queries regarding business rates.

Externally funded projects:

- a) **Reach out to Music Project – with The Hive – Youth Music funded** – the funding for this programme was due to end in July 2021 but had now been extended until Christmas. The provision of funding for the project beyond this date would not be possible so alternative funding would need to be considered if a similar provision was to continue.
- b) **Youth Endowment Fund Grant** – this project was due to end. The project had been extremely successful in providing food and cookery demonstrations to young people via Zoom within the town throughout the COVID pandemic.

Youth Services were working closely with the newly formed Youth Service team at Shropshire Council

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

32/3 Climate Emergency Committee

Councillor Vasmer reported that the Climate Emergency Committee meeting had only taken place several days ago so the minutes of that meeting were not yet available to bring to this committee. He reported that it had been a very positive and encouraging meeting with participation from many representatives from outside of the organisation. There were lots of new ideas and it was hoped to take these on board and form a programme of work.

He drew members attention to the resolution taken at the last meeting of Full Council to support the Mini-Holland proposal. The Government invitation for Councils to make an application was open at the moment but despite the support of this Council and the BID and the offer of financial help in preparing the application, it appeared that Shropshire Council may not be willing to go forward with this. He asked this Committee to endorse supporting Shropshire Council in making the application.

The Town Clerk reported that she and the Executive Director of the Bid had met with the Active Travel Manager at Shropshire Council and there was consensus on how the bid would actually be presented. Despite the offer from the Town Council and

the BID to fund any capacity deficit, at this time there was no clarity from Shropshire Council as to why it is being dismissed.

Referring to the work of the Climate Emergency Committee, Councillor Dean suggested that consideration be given to widening reach capacity through social media and beginning to give more information to the public and that a proposal to support this be considered. He added that the role of that Committee was more of an ideas forum and he expressed concern for their capacity to take these ideas forward. Within the Shropshire Action Partnership there was much expertise and people already doing really serious work so he suggested consideration be given to formalising that relationship in order to carry through some of the projects.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update be noted.**
- (ii) That the Finance & General Purposes Committee endorse Shropshire Council in making an application for a mini-Holland Scheme in Shrewsbury and were willing to work with them to support this application.**

33/21 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.

Live streaming of the meeting ended.

Having declared a prejudicial interest, Councillor Davies left the meeting for the consideration of this item.

34/21 PROPERTY DISPOSAL

Members considered a request to purchase a commercial property in the ownership of Shrewsbury Town Council.

RESOLVED:

That as the Council has no immediate capital requirement or shortfall, the Town Council had no wish to move ahead with the sale of the property,

35/21 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked members of the public for attending and those that had logged in. All papers relating to this meeting could be found on the website www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk and the minutes would appear in draft on the website within the next month. He thanked Councillors attending and Theatre Severn and all staff involved in this meeting.