

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Council Held at the Walker Theatre, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury At 6.00pm on Monday 13 September 2021

PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

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

41/21 WELCOME FROM THE MAYOR

The Mayor welcomed Councillors and Officers to the meeting and members of the public tuning in to the Council's live-streaming. He noted that the meeting was not being recorded and the Minutes would be published on the Town Council's website in the usual way.

42/21 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

43/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Shropshire Councillors	Twin hatted members declared personal interests in matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council.
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44/21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 28 June 2021 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 28 June 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

45/21 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

46/21 ANNOUNCEMENTS

46.1 MAYOR & DEPUTY MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Mayor & Deputy Mayor's engagements since taking office in May were circulated to members. As lockdown had eased there had been an upturn in invitations received.

The Mayor invited members & a guest to join him on a history tour of Shrewsbury on 28 September at 10.00 am by courtesy of Town Guides Nigel & Bridget Hinton. The tour would finish at the Castle and all were invited to join him for refreshments in the Mayor's Parlour afterwards. He asked that those attending consider a small contribution to the Mayor's Charity fund.

The Mayor reported that given the Town Council had declared a Climate Emergency, he was in the process of preparing some notes that he hoped could be included in information sent to those organisations requesting the Mayor's attendance. He intended this to offer advice and tips on how to reduce carbon footprint and to help spread the word. Included would be a short a short survey to encourage feedback if they so wished.

46.2 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE TOWN CLERK

There were none.

47/21 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. The following questions had been received:

Question – Crossing Point on Ellesmere Road

1. Marcus Watkin (Bagley Ward) - I would like to raise a question for this evening's meeting. It concerns Ellesmere Road and the safety of pedestrians. Redrow the developers of Limetree Meadows as part of the planning conditions have paid the council £50,000, part of section 106 money. This money was specifically earmarked for a pedestrian crossing on Ellesmere Road, three and a half years on from this payment the crossing has not been installed, I wanted to ask when it is proposed to be installed, because the council have only five years from when the money was paid to install this crossing, if it's not then all the money has to be repaid to Redrow homes. The safety of pedestrians on Elsmere Road is paramount especially with more children attending the school and trying to cross the roads, I personally am in a wheelchair and I find it very

difficult to cross.

There was recently a VAS sign installed close to the school, but this seems to be having little effect on traffic speeds because we operate a community speed watch group on Elsmere Road at this point and we have reported many hundreds of vehicles to the police for speeding and will continue to do so with the backing of the police.

A pedestrian crossing close to the school will we feel slow the average traffic speed down considerably. We look forward to hearing about when the crossing will be installed before there is a serious accident.

Also is there any chance you can give the local council a nudge about the mini roundabout at the Coton Hill /Ellesmere Road as the hole (which I've reported at least 4 times now) is very dangerous and needs sorting.

2. Alastair Cartwright (Bagley Ward) - "When will the pedestrian crossing that Redrow contributed £50K for, be installed in close proximity to the Greenhills Primary School on the Ellesmere Road"?

I am a resident of the Lime Tree Meadows estate on the Ellesmere Road (SY1 2QT) and was told by the builder, Redrow that a crossing would be installed. I am also a member of the Community Speedwatch Group and very familiar with the traffic issues on this road. We have been here since 2017 and nothing has been done.

Answered by Councillor Alan Mosley, Leader of Shrewsbury Town Council

Councillor Mosley reported that for many years Parish councils were invited to submit areas of Road Safety Concern to Shropshire Council so that Highways Officers could prioritise any Highway spending. This process was withdrawn a few years ago following reductions in Highways budgets and to his knowledge had not been reinstated.

Planning Obligations, Planning Conditions and the drawing up of S106 Agreements were dealt with by Shropshire Council as would the installation of a crossing point on the Highway. The Town Clerk had made enquiries with the Assistant Director of Infrastructure (which included Highways) to get an update on progress with a crossing point for Ellesmere Road and at the time of writing this response no update had been received, but he would happily forward any response received in due course.

In relation to the pothole, he confirmed confirm that the Town Clerk had reported it to Shropshire Council earlier in the day so hopefully this would be resolved.

Referring to the questions regarding a crossing point on Ellesmere Road, Councillor Phillips said that at the time of the planning decision it had been assumed that an area next to the Redrow development would be developed with 36 houses. This had not happened and although Redrow had contributed £50,000 there was a shortfall, believed to be in the region of £20,000. Given the importance of this crossing point and the potential footfall that would be generated as the development of the Flaxmill progressed enabling more walking routes from the Redrow development, he asked members to consider contributing the shortfall from the Council's green funds. This would provide a solution by encouraging green transport as well as helping to reduce speeds on the Ellesmere Road and would deliver on the Council's green transport agenda. The Leader asked that Councillor Phillips bring this to a future meeting for further discussion

Question – Motion of Pedestrianisation – Wayne Faulkner (Cophorne Ward)

As a Cophorne Resident, and physically disabled person on crutches, I would like to submit a question to the Full Council regarding the pedestrianisation.

With regard to the Equality Act, how can Shrewsbury Town Council legitimately support the effective ban on Disabled people from access to the Town Centre, for three months of the Summer, and how can the Meeting support the motion to reinstate this effective ban on the Disabled for another two months after the Disabled have pointed out that both Councils and BID are actually supporting the unfair and discriminatory practice of an effective ban on Disabled Access to the Town Centre?

If anything all existing on-street parking within the Town Centre should only be provided to the Disabled, enforced using an ANPR System, a 10 mph speed limit, removal of all kerbs, painting or coloured stone marking Disabled Parking, and full adherence to the Equality Act to ensure that the Disabled are included within the Big Town Plan. In addition, the above should also be introduced in the Butcher Row area of the Town Centre, as the Disabled are effectively chased out of that area by having to share access for a very limited period with all other vehicles, I've not been able to park there since the restrictions were introduced.

The current experiment did everything possible to exclude and discriminate, and the motion that the Town Council has on the agenda leaves the council open to prosecution under the Equality Act, and makes anyone that personally proposes and supports this motion guilty of a Hate Crime against the Disabled.

I urge the council and councillors to see that both the pedestrianisation experiment and this motion to reinstate it, leaves the council and councillors open to prosecution.

Answered by Councillor Alan Mosley, Leader of Shrewsbury Town Council

Councillor Mosley responded that the Town Council was an active partner of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan Partnership and both officers and members had been involved in developing measures that had helped support social distancing in the town centre. These measures which included road closures also promoted more active travel options like walking and cycling. When the Lockdown measures were lifted in July, this Council were supportive in these local measures being continued. This was debated at Shropshire Council's Cabinet where it was agreed to continue the closures with a view to consulting on more permanent solutions. As part of that Cabinet Report, there was an Equality Impact Assessment undertaken and we can happily forward links to that report.

Later in this meeting the motion on pedestrianisation will be debated. For the Council it came as a complete surprise as it had not been discussed at a Big Town Plan Board Meeting but we sincerely hope that any review or plans to trial other forms of pedestrianisation will take into account the reasonable and legitimate concerns around accessibility.

Question – Creating Wildlife Areas – Rob Mileto Ecological Consultant, Ecotech

Many councils are now letting the grass grow to create 'managed messiness' for wildlife to thrive (see <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jul/10/went-to-mow-but-stopped-how-uk-cities-embraced-meadows-revolution-aoe>). Yet the Town Council seems to

be mowing nearly all greenspace every 6 weeks and/or using herbicides to kill off grass, rotivating and then planting annual wildflower mixes that will need similar continued intervention each year. This is less sustainable and valuable to wildlife than 'managed messiness' and the latter adds toxins to the environment. Hence my (public) question for the/a Town Council meeting is:

What plans do the Town Council have to create 'managed messiness' for wildlife to thrive in, without the need for frequent mowing or herbicides and where will these be?

Answered by Councillor Alan Mosley, Leader of Shrewsbury Town Council

Councillor Mosley reported that this was something that had been discussed the Countryside & Greenspace Manager who had recently made a presentation to the Recreation & Leisure Committee about naturalising our grass verge maintenance. He went through the biodiversity value of every form of grass verge management from cutting regularly to not cutting at all.

Since that time the teams had been more selective in how they mowed areas with some areas referred to as being left as managed messiness. The Town Clerk & Head of Operations had been discussing with Highways Manager how the cutting regimes could be reduced on the areas the Town Council cut for Shropshire Council as a Grounds Maintenance Contractor. Grass verges in some of the less urbanised areas of the town were having verge cutting widths reduced with only a 1m wide strip being cut to maintain impression of tidiness. On the estates the Council faced the opposing residential expectation that grass should either be beautifully cut or not cut at all. There had however been some positive in-roads in certain wards like Radbrook where the teams had worked with the elected member and the public to change cutting regimes.

Much of this was about changing public perception and the introduction of wildflower verge planting in high visibility areas like Robertson Way and Shelton had been key to that. Granted they do not provide the biodiversity value of managed messiness but they do go further than mown grass. This year the teams had been introducing perennial mixes and a good example of that was at Shelton Fields which would reduce the levels of pesticides and the constant need for spraying and rotivating

Within the Council's wider estate Countryside Parks like Copthorne Park & Rea Valley areas were left to naturalise leaving places for habitat to thrive; many of the Recreation Grounds had naturalised buffers between boundaries and many community woodlands had been created.

Given the size of the Council's estate it would be impossible to achieve complete change overnight and it required input from local members and the public at large.

48/21 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

None had been received.

49/21 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The minutes of the informal Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 19 July 2021 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the informal Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 19 July 2021 be received and adopted.

50/21 RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the informal Recreation & Leisure Committee Meeting held on 21 July 2021 were circulated as read.

In proposing the minutes Councillor Pardy referred to the recommendation in Minute 32/21 of those minutes, that Councillor Elisabeth Roberts replace Councillor Kate Halliday as Vice-Chairman of the Recreation & Leisure Committee. Members were content to ratify this recommendation.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the informal Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 21 July 2021 be received and adopted.

51/21 PLANNING MEETINGS

The minutes of the informal Planning Committee meetings held on 6 July, 27 July, 17 August & 7 September 2021 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the informal Planning Committee meetings held on 6 July, 27 July, 17 August & 7 September 2021 be received and adopted.

52/21 CLIMATE EMERGENCY COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Climate Emergency Committee Meeting held on 15 July 2021 were circulated as read.

In proposing the minutes Councillor Vasmer reminded members to feed their ideas into the Action Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Climate Emergency Committee meeting held on 15 July 2021 be received and adopted.

53/21 WORKING GROUPS

53.1 Civics Working Group

The Minutes of the Civics Working Group meeting held on 8 July 2021 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Civics Working Group meeting held on 8 July 2021 be received and adopted.

53.2 City of Sanctuary Working Group

The Minutes of the City of Sanctuary Working Group meeting held on 13 July 2021 were circulated as read.

In proposing minutes Councillor Halliday stressed the need for this government given the evolving issues in Afghanistan and the potential need for settlement of families from further afield.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the City of Sanctuary Working Group meeting held on 13 July 2021 be received and adopted.

53.3 Youth Working Group

The Minutes of the Youth Working Group meeting held on 14 July 2021 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Youth Working Group meeting held on 14 July 2021 be received and adopted.

53.4 Active Travel Working Group

The Minutes of the Active Travel Working Group meeting held on 20 July 2021 were circulated as read.

In proposing the minutes Councillor Wilson reported there had been an enthusiastic discussion with many ideas put forward and it was hoped to further develop these.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Active Travel Working Group meeting held on 20 July 2021 be received and adopted.

54/21 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

Prior to the meeting a list of executive decisions made by the Town Clerk had been circulated to members. These were decisions that would ordinarily have been made by the Standing Committees but were currently informal meetings to inform the delegated decision making whilst current COVID regulations were still in place. There were no questions raised by members.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and decisions accepted.

55/21 MINI-HOLLAND

The Town Clerk presented a report on the Mini-Holland bid. She and the Deputy Town Clerk had found it an interesting exercise as they were tasked with writing the bid. The outcome of the bid was awaited. In summing up the Town Clerk said that this type of funding process going through Local Authorities and excluding Parish & Town Councils seemed to be the norm. She had spoken in detail with the Chief Executive of Shropshire Council to see how Shrewsbury could collectively make best use of these type of grant funds. His view was that any money coming into Shrewsbury & Shropshire was a good thing and the quicker they could get sight on these type of funds the better. She did though think that there may be requirements for the Council to help fill capacity as they had done with this bid. The Chief Executive had spoken also about the County Deal process they were looking at and he was going to raise Town Council involvement in this process.

The overriding message learnt from this process had been to be brave and bold about developing Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plans.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.**
- (ii) That the work of Members & Officers of the Town Council be recognised in the bid preparation.**
- (iii) That the Town Council seeks discussions with SC regarding the development of a Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan for Shrewsbury**

56/21 SHROPSHIRE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SURVEY

The link to the Shropshire Public Transport Survey had been circulated to members prior to the meeting so that members could begin to construct any comments. The deadline date for the online poll had been extended to 17 September so there was still time to make comments.

Some members had attended a briefing session in which it was reported that the consultation process had already attracted 2400 responses. Officers had discussed proposals including the development of a rural and urban bus network, links between buses and trains. Plans were ambitious and would be rolled out over a 3-5 year period.

Councillor Dean reported that he had asked whether Shropshire Council had the capacity to make appropriate and strong bids and had been reasonably reassured that at this stage they had taken on some extra expertise to do this, but as each stage came up they would then have to bid separately for money towards capacity in order to make the next bid.

57/21 PEDESTRIANISATION TRIAL OF THE TOWN CENTRE - MOTION

The Council noted the sudden ending of the Shrewsbury Town Centre Pedestrianisation Trial (Experimental Traffic Regulation Order) by Shropshire Council on 1 September by two months early. Despite the close working relationship built up between the Town Council and Shrewsbury BID during the creation Shrewsbury's Big Town Plan, neither organisation were consulted by Shropshire Council before a decision was taken to end the Pedestrianisation Trial.

Councillor Green, in presenting his motion, expressed his dismay that members had learned about the abandoning of the trial of pedestrianisation by SC. This had been a planned trial by all cross parties, backed by the BID and the majority of businesses in the centre of Shrewsbury. The result of this trial was to form the basis of the low traffic zone in the centre of Shrewsbury, an outcome that was almost universally desired. This was an experiment that covered an extremely complex task of removal of unnecessary traffic from the town centre, expansion of pedestrianisation and the maintenance and access to all. It was recognised that some of those with disabilities felt it hindered their access to the town and it was hoped this would be addressed as a result of the trial. To simply abandon the trial completely was disappointing and created a massive disruption to the data. He urged the Council to support the motion.

A discussion ensued about the pedestrianisation scheme in Shrewsbury. Members fully supported the scheme and agreed that it had been a useful exercise. They recognised that there were improvements that needed to be made and were disappointed by the sudden and premature ending of the trial and particularly the lack of explanation by Shropshire Council.

There appeared to have been little engagement with key disability network groups and many blue badge holders had felt excluded from the town centre between 11-4 when the roads had been closed.

Members agreed that consideration must be given to the provision of more disabled parking spaces and accessibility to the town.

Councillor Mosley read out the piece he had written for the latest Town Council Newsletter which highlighted the collaborative work that had been done by the Recovery Task Force in developing social distancing measures and the success in increasing footfall. Reverting back to pre-COVID measures was a retrograde step.

Councillor Vasmer echoed both Councillor Mosley & Councillor Green's words, adding that this decision had resulted in the abandonment of what appeared a successful trial. He was aware that a number of people with disabilities had been given fines due to the lack of disabled parking spaces and their genuine complaints had then not been listened to. This was an appalling and absolutely disgraceful.

Councillor Phillips agreed that the Town Council were owed an explanation as to why the trial was stopped was necessary when it appeared over the summer that businesses and leisure had thrived and this added to the vision for Shrewsbury becoming a resort town and supported a motion to ask Shropshire Council to explain the reasons for their decision.

Councillor Green urged members to support the Motion, he said the specific abandoning of the trial was universally held to be a bad thing. It was recognised that the trial had caused difficulties for some, particularly those with disabilities but the nature of such a trial was to establish the problems and consider how to address them before proceeding. This should have been a decision for the people of Shrewsbury and a decision for the long-term future of the town.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes:

- 1) The sudden ending of the Shrewsbury Town Centre Pedestrianisation Trial (Experimental Traffic Regulation Order) by Shropshire Council on 1st September by two months early.**
- 2) That despite the close working relationship built up between the Town Council and Shrewsbury BID during the creation Shrewsbury's Big Town Plan, neither organisation was consulted by Shropshire Council before a decision was taken to end the Pedestrianisation Trial.**

58/21 HORSESHOE BUS SERVICE - MOTION

Councillor Bentick presented a Motion for the development of a horseshoe bus service Which would link suburban communities in Haughmond Hill, Sundorne, Monkmoor, Cherry Orchard, Sutton, Oteley Gardens, Meole, Radbrook, Copthorne, Bowbrook and Bicton with local facilities including health, education, sports, leisure, retail and business.

He noted:

- The Government's recent Bus Back Better Campaign which called on Shropshire Council to construct a comprehensive Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)
- The Government's Active Travel Policies pressing the development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) , Mini Holland Bids, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and School Streets Initiative

- Shropshire Council's support for the Shrewsbury Big Town plan and the Government's Active Travel Policies
- There was an urgent need to dramatically reduce our carbon footprint, reduce private car usage and reverse the 50% decline in bus travel since 1982
- Current bus services in Shrewsbury did not link places that people need to visit – a poor service for those who do not own car and not one that would encourage car owners to leave their vehicle at home

It was generally agreed that an enhancement to the public transport was necessary but members were concerned that more data, consultation and costs to the proposed scheme were required.

Councillor Bentick assured members that that there had been consultation with bus users groups to establish optimum times for the buses and he had taken advice from Shropshire Council on how this scheme could be implemented. There was a £3 billion Transport Transformation Fund and Shrewsbury & Shropshire deserved a share of this. There was £50m to deliver the first All-Electric Bus Town or City and Shropshire must provide a high quality Bus Service Improvement Plan Bid for Shropshire's fair share of the Bus Back Better Fund

Members supported the proposals for of a route that linked the periphery of the town but some were concerned that some parts of their wards were not included.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That this Council supports the proposal for a new Shrewsbury Peripheral Bus Route.**
- (ii) Include this in its submission to Shropshire Council's bus consultation and lobby Shropshire Council for it to be an integral part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).**
- (iii) Encourage the use of buses by Shrewsbury's residents by all means possible.**

59/21 VISIONING EXERCISE

The Town Clerk presented a report seeking Council's approval in undertaking an in-house visioning exercise to develop a Strategic Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan to assist the Town Council in its service delivery over the next 4 financial years ending in the 2025/26 financial year.

The aim of a Strategic Plan was to give Shrewsbury residents a clear understanding of what the Council was trying to achieve and how it intended to deliver. It would recognise the pressures and changing context of what the Council finds itself in from Government issues around reducing budgets, the devolution agenda and the need to create resilient

communities to Community issues around increased demands, rising expectations and changes and the demographic profile of the town to bigger global impacts of Climate Change and COVID.

Following a discussion with Group Leaders, the Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk would, pulling on their previous experiences, facilitate the Visioning Exercise in-house.

This would be done by a series of Workshops:

- Initial Member Workshop looking at the basic Vision, Mission Statement and Values, SWOT analysis of the Council
- Follow-up Session establishing the Corporate Priorities and Key Objectives of the Council
- Third Session delving into more detail around the Actions that would meet those priorities and objectives

Allied to those sessions, the Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk would facilitate:

- Staff Visioning Session to capture any thoughts and aspirations that the Council's employees have
- Stakeholder Session to capture any thoughts fellow stakeholders and partners have about how the Council could operate more effectively and efficiently in the future

The outcome of all of these sessions will be considered at a final Member Workshop designed to develop the plan.

These sessions would best work as physical meetings but there would need to be consciousness about the COVID position at the time and whether such meeting need to revert to virtual ones.

For this to work efficiently it would require all members commit to active participation, they come with an open mind and that all suggestions are tabled for consideration.

Proposed timetable:

Initial Session	W/c 27 th September
Follow-Up Session	W/c 18 th October
Action Plan Session	W/c 15 th November
Final Session	W/c 29 th November
Finance & General Purpose Committee	6 th December

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the contents of the report be noted.**
- (ii) That the plan for the Visioning Exercise be agreed.**
- (iii) That members of Full Council commit to active participation in this exercise.**

60/21 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Mayor 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.