

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Held Virtually on Microsoft Teams

At 6.00pm on Monday 7th February 2022

Please note this was an informal virtual meeting of the Committee convened to assist the Town Clerk with carrying out the delegated powers granted to her by Full Council on 22 March 2021 & Finance & General Purposes Committee on 12 April 2021.

PRESENT

Councillors: A Mosley (Chair), R Dartnall, M Davies, N Green, P Moseley, A Phillips, E Roberts and D Vasmer

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources), Stuart Farmer (Project Manager), Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager), Ruth Jones (Office Manager) and Heather Phillips (Committee Clerk)

74/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Gary Farmer (Head of Operations).

75/21 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 Alan Mosley	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 6(ii) Grants (h) – to consider applications received in relation to Jane Mackenzie being known to him as a former councillor.
Councillor Pam Moseley	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 6(ii) Grants (h) – to consider applications received in relation to Jane Mackenzie being known to her as a former councillor.
Councillor Rosemary Dartnall	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 6(ii) Grants (h) – to consider applications received in relation to Jane Mackenzie being known to her as a former councillor.
Councillor Alex Phillips	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 6(ii) Grants (h) – to consider applications received in relation to Jane Mackenzie being known to him as a former councillor.
Councillor David Vasmer	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 6(ii) Grants (h) – to consider applications received in relation to Jane Mackenzie being known to him as a former councillor.
Councillor Elisabeth Roberts	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 6(ii) Grants (h) – to consider applications received in relation to Jane Mackenzie being known to her as a former councillor.

Councillor Nat Green	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 6(ii) (c) and (h) Grants – to consider applications received in relation to his involvement with (c) The Hive being a Board Member and (h) Jane Mackenzie being known to him as a former councillor.
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76/21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 10 January 2022 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 6 January 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

77/21 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

78/21 GRANTS

78/1 Update on Community & Councillor Grant Funds

The RFO circulated a Grant Summary 2021-22 prior to the meeting which listed the grant amounts awarded so far and those to be considered at the meeting. He reported that funds of £6150 were available as the Shropshire European Organisation had had to defer their event and had been asked to resubmit an application for a community grant later this year. Councillors were asked to consider making contributions from their Councillor Grant Fund to the Community Grant Fund applicants.

78/1 Applications for Community Grants

The Chair welcomed those who had joined the meeting on behalf of the Community Grants applicants. He asked them to give a brief overview of how much was being requested, what the funds would be for and what difference it would make to their organisation, the users of their service or facility, and what difference it would make to the residents of Shrewsbury. Members were encouraged to ask questions following the presentations and a summary of each is as follows:

- (a) Action for Children** – requested £2544.50 to fund a caravan holiday in North Wales for 4 of the residents at Sycamore House. The children range from 5 to 18 years of age and have learning and physical disabilities. The caravans are specially adapted for people with disabilities and are therefore expensive.

RESOLVED:

That £1000 be awarded to Action for Children.

- (b) **Darwin Community Centre** – requested £2000 to fund a new WC and the replacement of a leaky urinal in the Gents toilets. The Centre has not been able to undertake its usual fundraising activities due to nervousness during and after the Pandemic, and it has lost two of its regular bookings (a playgroup and Mad Cow Productions). The building is Grade II listed and concerns are growing regarding the sharply rising costs of gas and electricity. The Centre was willing to release some of their £9000 reserve should councillors agree to only partially fund the project.

RESOLVED:

That £1000 be awarded to Darwin Community Centre.

- (c) **The Hive (HMM Arts Ltd)** – requested £1940 to help fund weekly music workshops for 0–5-year-old children and to make improvements to the courtyard garden. Both these activities will help promote health and well-being. Due to the Pandemic, the music workshops cannot be run at full capacity but the costs for the activity are the same; subsidies for this are sought in the meantime. The courtyard garden is used regularly by many young people and, although it has a new pergola, it still requires a little improvement; the project would involve young people in order for them to learn new skills.

RESOLVED:

That £500 be awarded to The Hive for the music workshops together with a number of plants for the courtyard garden donated from the Town Council Nursery.

- (d) **Meole Brace Juniors Football Club** – requested £1000 for a portable defibrillator at the Meole Brace Primary School site and improved pitch maintenance for the growing club. Players come from across Shrewsbury and surrounding local villages. As the club doesn't own the facilities, they cannot access Football Association money but do contribute to the cost of the maintenance of the Meole Brace Secondary and Primary schools' pitches. Fundraising has been curtailed by the Pandemic and without funding membership fees will have to rise significantly for all members of the club.

RESOLVED:

That the applicant be encouraged to contact their local councillor with a view to applying for a Local Councillor Grants Fund for these projects.

- (e) **Meole Brace Secondary School** – requested £1499 for the installation of a defibrillator outside the school premises for use by the community. Whilst the school already has 2 defibrillators, these are only accessible during school time or when the Sports Centre be in use by the community. The School will pay for the installation and ongoing associated costs. Meole Brace Secondary School did not qualify for a defibrillator when a previous councillor raised funds for these a few years ago as it already had 2 on site. Parents and the local community have not yet been approached about raising funds for this project.

RESOLVED:

That the applicant be encouraged to contact their local councillor with a view to applying for a Local Councillor Grants Fund for this project.

- (f) **Old Shrewsbury Bowling Club** – requested £1252 for the purchase of a defibrillator for inside the Club House. The Bowling Club is a thriving club with around 120 members, many of which are fairly senior. The application to the Council was for the full price of installing a defibrillator but the Club was willing to fundraise any shortfall and look into installing the defibrillator outside the Club House in order for it to be accessible to members of the community.

RESOLVED:

That the applicant be encouraged to contact their local councillor with a view to applying for a Local Councillor Grants Fund for this project.

- (g) **Severn Community Charitable Trust** – requested £1469.92 for Pop-up BabyStops across Shrewsbury as an extension of the BabyStop baby share event that currently takes place in Castlefields. A large trailer has been donated to the Trust for this purpose. The aim of BabyStop is to reduce waste and support families in saving money, particularly those that fall through the gaps, by offering preloved baby clothes and equipment donated by local businesses and charities. Seven events have been held so far with over 50 families regularly attending. Events take place on a Sunday and there are no buses hence the reason for wanting to open pop-up BabyStops, particularly in previous Sure Start areas (ie North Shrewsbury, Monkmoor and the Meole estate) and these would be targeted first.

RESOLVED:

That £1000 be awarded to the Severn Community Charitable Trust together with £250 and £219.92 respectively from the Local Councillor Grants Funds of Councillor Alex Phillips (Bagley Ward) and Councillor Rosemary Dartnall (Column Ward) on the condition that a Pop-Up BabyStop event is held in their wards.

- (h) **Share Shrewsbury** – requested £1000 for professional marketing and advertising of a two-day virtual conference to raise public awareness about the impact of alcohol and for sharing latest research about support to promote recovery and mental wellbeing. The conference will have national and international speakers and they are offering their services for free in order to spread the alcohol harm message. Yarringtons are delivering the event at a reduced price. It will be of particular interest to NHS practitioners, local government staff and those working in the sector or in recovery. Shropshire Council and Wrekin Housing Trust are involved in the event and hope was expressed that Shrewsbury Town Council will come on board as a sponsor and partner.

RESOLVED:

That £500 be awarded to Share Shrewsbury.

- (i) **Shrewsbury & Oswestry Crucial Crew** – requested £1000 for their 2022 event to cover costs such as catering, children’s transport, T-shirts and workbooks etc. Crucial Crew is in its 28th year and over the last two years during Covid children were still able to benefit from the event via workbooks but in the meantime, income has been destroyed. Funds so far raised have come from local sponsors, including Rotary groups, and people in the community. Councillors were invited to attend the event as chaperones.

RESOLVED:

That £1000 be awarded to Shrewsbury & Oswestry Crucial Crew for the 2022 event but that £36 only would come from the Community Grants Fund. The remaining £964 will be made up of contributions from the Local Councillor Grants Funds of Councillor Alan Mosley £250 (Castlefields & Ditherington Ward), Councillor Rosemary Dartnall £250 (Column Ward), Councillor Pam Moseley £214 (Monkmoor Ward) and Councillor David Vasmer £250 (Underdale Ward); and that respective schools in those wards be notified of such.

- (j) **Shrewsbury Hockey Club** – requested £2000 for the refurbishment of the artificial turf pitch at Meole Brace Secondary School. The pitch gets waterlogged when it rains and is then prone to freezing, the lines have faded and there is little artificial “grass” left. £28K is required before the end of February and £12K has already been raised so far. It was reported that this matter had previously been discussed by the Committee when Sean McCarthy (Leisure Projects Officer – Shropshire) had presented a request for a contribution towards the project from the Town Council’s CIL Neighbourhood Fund. The Committee had asked that this matter be reconsidered once any final funding shortfall had been determined. The Committee felt that the Community Grant Fund was not the place to fill any shortfall more the discussion regarding Neighbourhood Funding

RESOLVED:

That the applicant be encouraged make a presentation to the next meeting of Full Council on 21 March 2022 to consider any shortfall that the Neighbourhood Fund might fill

- (k) Shrewsbury Summer Season Ltd** – requested £1000 to help to fund the 350th anniversary event of The Shrewsbury Dancing Master, John Weaver, in 2023. A small information leaflet is to be published and a commemorative installation is proposed in the location of Old St Chad's. The events to be held next year should pay for themselves.

RESOLVED:

That £300 be awarded to Shrewsbury Summer Season Ltd.

- (l) Shropshire Brass Ensemble** – requested £450 to cover mainly transport costs for 7 members of the group to attend the joint commemorations in August 2022 of the 80th Anniversary of the Dieppe Raids and the D-Day Landings in Normandy. The band would not only be representing Shrewsbury but also playing at various Normandy beaches.

RESOLVED:

That £450 be awarded to Shropshire Brass Ensemble.

79/21 UPDATE ON COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUP ACTIVITY

79/1 Climate Change Standing Committee

The Climate Change Standing Committee met on 13 January 2022 and the minutes were circulated to members prior to this meeting. It was noted that the proposals for an apprentice will be brought to a future Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting for consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be noted.

79/2 Youth Working Group

The Youth Working Group met on 20 January 2022 and the minutes were circulated to members prior to this meeting. It was noted that a new Youth & Community Officer has been appointed to replace Adam Purnell.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be noted.

79/3 Civics Working Group

The Civics Working Group met on 27 January 2022 and the minutes were circulated to members prior to this meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be noted.

80/21 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 28 November 2021 to 28 January 2022. These have been agreed by two signatories before the RFO and Town Clerk. No comments or concerns were raised.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 28 November to 28 January 2022 be approved.

82/21 QUARTER 3 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

Prior to this meeting the Quarter 3 Management Account 2021/22 report was circulated to members together with the Detailed and Consolidated Income and Expenditure Account for the Quarter Ended 31 December 2021.

The RFO added that there were no particular issues to bring to the attention of the committee. As it is 2 months until the end of the financial year, the RFO asked councillors to note the underspend in the budget; this is due to projects that may be carried forward to next year. He would be reviewing any budget underspends as the end of the financial year draws to a close.

Members enquired about the current volatility of the energy markets. The RFO advised that the current volatility in energy markets will not immediately impact the Council due to the forward pricing model of future contracts. This smoothed the peaks and troughs instead of creating huge highs and lows. This would be reviewed as part of ongoing budget monitoring.

RESOLVED:

That the Quarter 3 Management Accounts Report be noted.

82/21 TENDER WORK

A report on tendering activity and details on tendering progress was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

The Project Manager added that a number of projects are starting to reach completion where there had previously been delays on supplies or company staffing issues.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

83/21 INTERNAL AUDITOR

Prior to the meeting, a report on the Effectiveness of Internal Audit was circulated to members.

For the benefit of new councillors, the RFO explained briefly that the External Auditor views the year end accounts whilst an Internal Auditor, appointed by the Council, runs on a 5 year programme. The auditing process is thorough and robust. No concerns were raised at the audit.

The RFO also stated that there were no actions arising from the audit but consideration for future areas of the plan should be amended following any change of direction following the visioning exercise and MTFP.

RESOLVED:

That the report into the Effectiveness of Internal Audit be accepted.

84/21 RISK MANAGEMENT

The following Town Council papers were circulated to members prior to the meeting:

- (i) A report on Risk Management
- (ii) Risk Strategy Management
- (iii) Counter Fraud & Corruption Strategy

The Town Clerk explained to members that every year an assessment of risks to the Council must be undertaken. This is part of the Audit Process which feeds into the requirements of the Annual Return. It is broken down into two areas: general assessment of risk and an assessment of potential financial fraud and/or corruption. The Town Clerk oversees the general risk assessment and the RFO undertakes the financial risk.

To assess the Council's general risks, a piece of software called the Local Council Risk Service is used; this software is bespoke to Parish and Town Councils. Every year the Council uploads its service delivery, the kind of risks faced in carrying out its services together with the likelihood and severity of those risks if they were to happen. Following this, control measures are uploaded, and the likelihood and severity of risks is run again. The system then looks at whether additional action needs to be taken and produces an action plan. It also produces various checklists that staff use to control risk. The Town Clerk had circulated the Action Plan to all members of the Council.

The Town Clerk drew members' attention to the part in the Risk Management report where it is explained that COVID remains the biggest risk on various fronts from transmission of virus, financial loss, impact on facilities and impact on staff. It was emphasised that all controls possible have been put in place but that the fact remains that the likely risk of transmission of the virus and its severity is still high. All necessary measures in relation to all the risks identified in the Action Plan have been implemented (and not just COVID-related) and measures are in place to respond should the risks be borne out.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the existing Risk Management Strategy be re-affirmed.**
- (ii) That the existing Counter-Fraud & Corruption Strategy be re-affirmed.**
- (iii) That members note the updated Risk Assessments.**

85/21 INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Town Council's Annual Investment Strategy 2022/23 was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The RFO was optimistic about the returns on the Council's investments would start to increase.

A visioning exercise will take place to feed into decisions as to how funds might be used but that this is the proposed strategy for the coming year. It was noted that climate change will be taken into consideration by the Council and that it does not make any investments with organisations that might have interests in fossil fuels and its banks are based in the UK. The RFO will report back to this committee regarding the Council's investment policy in relation to climate change.

RESOLVED:

That the Investment Strategy for the financial year 2022/23 be accepted.

Councillor Green joined the meeting.

86/21 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

An update on the Capital Programme was circulated prior the meeting and the Town Clerk updated members as follows:

- Costings for **Stanley Lane Recreation Ground** works were progressing.
- The **Solar Lights** installation in The Quarry had been completed and some very good feedback received.
- **Greenacre Play Area** was out for tender.
- **Castlewalk Nature Trail** was all ready for build but awaiting Councillor consultation.
- Town Centre **office accommodation** was being progressed.

- **Dana Footpath** – Shropshire Horticultural Society cancelled the meeting before Christmas and a date for reconvening the meeting was awaited.
- **Cycle & Footpath Map** – The BID had £10k funding to commission the map with City ID who designed the wayfinding boards. The Climate Change Committee had agreed to fund the map printing.
- **Beaver Project** – Was still awaiting the DEFRA/Natural England approvals. The Countryside Manager and the Town Clerk had met with residents nearby and a meeting would be arranged onsite shortly.
- **Street Light Improvements** - Would start now the Solar Lights had been installed.
- **Height Barrier** - Tender had been awarded.

The Chair updated members on Moston Road Recreation Ground by making it clear that the *Resolution* made at the Finance & General Purposes committee meeting on 4 October 2021 *not* to proceed with the proposals for the grounds by Shrewsbury Academy, did not include the following works and that these projects were to proceed: the junior BMX track, picnic area, tree-planting, wild-flower areas and benches. The Town Clerk added that a meeting with Councillor Pardy would need to be organised to ensure clarity on what was required.

The Town Clerk reported that there were approximately 20 bus shelters to be refurbished in the new financial year and that the Project Manager was currently drawing up a tender proposal for them.

RESOLVED:

- (i) **That the update of the Capital Programme be noted;**
- (ii) **That the resolution at the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting on 4 October 2021 regarding proposals for alterations at the Moston Road Recreation Ground be rescinded and that projects previously listed be proceeded.**

87/21 MARKETS UPDATE

The Markets Update was circulated prior to the meeting. The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager added that Shrewsbury's Market Hall had been awarded Runner-Up in Britain's Favourite Market competition. Mystery shoppers were sent out to the top 10 markets and the resulting reports, which contained useful constructive criticism, would be circulated to stallholders. He concluded by reporting that numbers of visitors to the Market Hall had picked up since the Pandemic, but that recent stormy weather had affected the traders.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

88/21 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked members of the public 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 and all staff involved in the meeting.