

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee
Held in Council Chamber, Shirehall
At 6.00pm on Monday 5th December 2022**

PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

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

62/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillors Dean, Moseley and Wilson.

63/22 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 Nat Green	Declared a prejudicial interest in matters relating to the Budget and Markets.

64/22 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 26th September 2022 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 26th September 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

64/22 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

The Town Clerk provided the following updates on the minutes of the previous meeting as follows:

- (i) **42/22 Review of Policies** – the Working Group had met and amendments agreed. These policies would be submitted to Full Council in January for ratification and adoption.

- (ii) **50/22 Warm Rooms** – The Town Clerk and RFO prepared a Grant Form and Guidance as instructed. These were added to the Town Council website and an initial cut-off date of Friday 2 December 2022 was promoted. A list of the four applications received (amounting to a total of £2,800) was circulated to members prior to the meeting for consideration. Members discussed the potential for having an open application process similar to the Councillor Grants fund whereby the Town Clerk & RFO approve applications subject to reference to the relevant Councillor.

In considering applications, members were clear that the scope of the funding was to provide warm rooms during the winter, therefore any application that requested funding beyond that period would be restricted.

RESOLVED:

- (i) **That the following grants be awarded**

Grace Church, Shrewsbury	Harlescott Grange Community Hub, Kynaston Road	3½ hours per week	£1,000
The Roy Fletcher Centre	The Roy Fletcher Centre, Cross Hill	4½ hours per week	£525
Shropshire Supports Refugees	Riverside Centre (Town Centre)	Hub open 6 days per week	£500
Shrewsbury Unitarian Church	Unitarian Church, High Street (Town Centre)	5½ hours per week	£250

- (ii) **That the fund remain open and that decisions on the applications be delegated to the Town Clerk and the RFO with reference to the ward member.**
- (iii) **53/22 Land Maps** – The project to include a live map linked with Shropshire Council’s IGIS mapping system was progressing but the Ordnance Survey Licence agreement was still to be resolved.
- (iv) **55/22 Beaver Partnership** – The partnership agreement with Shropshire Wildlife Trust had been finalised and circulated to prospective funders to meet funding deadlines.
- (v) **58/22 Mansel Williams Way** – Shropshire Council Highways have been instructed to proceed with the signage for the cycle way but confirmation from them was still awaited.

65/22 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 17th September to 25th November 2022. These had been agreed by two signatories whereafter the RFO and Town Clerk authorised the electronic payments.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 17th September to 25th November 2022 be approved.

66/22 QUARTER 2 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated a report to appraise members of the financial position of the Council for the second quarter of the 2022/23 financial year, and the half year to date position.

The RFO highlighted that there was an overall positive variance of £21,590 compared to the budget as shown on the detailed and consolidated Income & Expenditure account report (also circulated).

Expenditure had a negative variance of (£53,307). Most of the variance was due to the payroll variance of (£36,031) which had taken into account the recent pay award.

There was a positive variance on the income received of £74,897.

RESOLVED:

That the Quarter 2 Management Accounts be accepted and approved.

Councillor Green left the meeting.

67/22 BUDGETING PROPOSALS

A report on Budget Proposals was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The RFO added that the current run rate had been applied with a factored in inflation of rate of 10% in conjunction with the budget and recent trends. Expenditure on utilities was set to rise with the colder weather. The aim was to achieve an outturn as accurate as possible and this formed the basis of the budget.

With regard to the impact of the Spending Review, the RFO noted that Referendum Principles would again not apply to the Parish Council sector. Recent publication of the Shropshire Taxbase was showing an above expected increase for Shrewsbury.

Councillor Mosley reported that Group Leaders had discussed the precept prior to the meeting and were unanimous that a 5% increase would be appropriate and would provide

the right balance to cover rising expenditure. Additionally, it was believed that it would not excessively impact on people's budgets during the current cost of living crisis.

The RFO reported on requests from members for inclusion in the capital programme; these would be investigated and presented at a later date.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the general principles implications be noted and agreed**
- (ii) That the Fees & Charges be approved**

Councillor Green re-joined the meeting.

68/22 INTERNAL AUDITOR

The RFO reported that the report of the Internal Auditor following his first inspection of the 2022/23 Accounts had been received and had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. The Internal Auditor was scheduled to make 3 visits during the 2022/23 financial year. There were no issues arising from the report. Councillor Mosley expressed congratulations.

RESOLVED:

That the Internal Auditor's Interim Report for the 2022/23 financial year be noted.

69/22 TENDER WORK

Prior to the meeting, a report on Tender Works, together with information on Tender Progress, was circulated to members. The Project Manager detailed a request for additional funding for the sedum roofs for the bus shelters to be funded from the Climate Change Budget; this had the support of the Climate Change Standing Committee.

Councillor Roberts enquired about lighting at Kynaston Road and asked when the agreed plan of installing solar lights would be implemented. The Town Clerk advised that this was not part of any of the three programmes of work for the area as solar lights had not been approved by members. Councillors requested that the lighting should be investigated and costings drawn up.

Councillor Dartnall asked what fuels the new 110hp tractor and 4x4 pickup truck used. The Project Manager said that they both ran on diesel as no viable alternative was currently available. However, he would consult with the Town Council's mechanic about the use of bio-diesels that have less environmental impact, as suggested by Councillor Phillips.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted.**
- (ii) That the cost of £18,050.00 for the sedum roof provision be approved from the climate fund.**

Councillor Green left the meeting.

70/22 MARKETS

A Markets Update report was circulated prior this meeting. The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager added that the barriers that protect the site of the Sunday Market were in need of repair due to accumulated damage over time and would take longer to repair than anticipated.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Councillor Green re-joined the meeting.

71/22 UPDATE ON COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUP ACTIVITY

The minutes of the last meetings of the Health & Wellbeing Hub Working Group and the Youth Services Working Group were circulated prior to this meeting.

71/1 Health & Wellbeing Hub Working Group

The Health & Wellbeing Hub Working Group met on 13th October and 17th November 2022. Councillor Dartnall commented that a meeting with the ICS was still awaited. The NHSE had also declined an invitation to meet.

Councillor Mosley expressed his thanks to all those who had worked on the Health & Wellbeing Hub Working Group.

71/2 Youth Services Working Group

The Youth Services Working Group met on 17th November 2022. No further updates were reported.

RESOLVED:

That the updates from Working Groups be noted.

72/22 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The 2022/23 amalgamated Capital Projects Action Plan update was circulated prior to the meeting.

The Town Clerk updated members as follows:

- **Cycle Map** – a draft map was received and was then returned to the BID with comments.
- **St John's Hill** – the Town Centre office accommodation work was on track for completion in March and the Working Group had met recently.

- **Kynaston Road Rec** – Clarification about Play Specification was still awaited – this was in order to allow all three tenders to be published at the same time. Wheeled Track & Drainage Tenders were ready to go.
- **Moston Road Rec** – Officers met Councillor Parry regarding the wheeled track design; he was keen to pass details to his residents. He proposed to report back in early 2023 so the tender award was on hold for now.
- **Ditherington Community Centre** – Discussions had taken place with the Marches Academy about turning the Centre into a community hub.
- **Beaver Project** – The licence to release beavers onto the Old Riverbed had been granted from Natural England & Defra but, there was confusion as to whether that included the construction of the compound. Clarification from DEFRA was still awaited. A flood risk assessment had been submitted and was awaiting ratification. The Town Clerk had signed the partnership agreement alongside the CEO of the Wildlife Trust; which was then forwarded to national funders to release funding within certain timescales. The Projects Manager was working on the tender revisions. Councillor Mosley enquired as to what time of year beavers can be migrated; officers were still working on late summer.
- **War Memorial, Quarry** – The Town Council was at an impasse between Conservation Officers and Stonemasons; assistance was sought from the Head of Planning to help resolve this.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

73/22 RIVER SAFETY

Prior to the meeting a report on River Safety and Shropshire Council's River Severn Shrewsbury Safety Review was circulated to members. The Safety Review was jointly commissioned between the Town Council and Shropshire Council. A number of officers and elected members had met with WSP who had prepared the report. The Safety Review proposed a series of recommendations, one of which was to create a Working Group to pursue recommendations and hold partners to account. This was similar to the views held by Team Shrewsbury and their partners who have been carrying out a number of actions. Shropshire Council's Cabinet was to consider this Report at its meeting next week the recommendations of which were the same as those under consideration in the Town Clerk's report.

Councillor Mosley acknowledged that there was overwhelming sympathy for bereaved families and that the Safety Review included some comments from those directly affected as well as other Shrewsbury residents. It also listed near-miss incidents that could easily have resulted in tragedy. He considered it a well-measured and serious report. The Working Party would meet and report this issue. He asked for comments.

Councillor Green said that the report was thorough and that its recommendations were sensible, measured and realistic. The recommendation for the installation of gates at strategic points of access to the river would have to be discussed.

Councillor Vasmer said that the report and its proposals was a good starting point and that urgent action was now required. Councillor Mosley added that installation of solar lighting

of life saving equipment had been started which was evidence that some safety measures were already being taken.

Councillor Parry was pleased that a Safety Review had finally been done and that he hoped that it was some consolation to bereaved parents and families that action was now underway.

Councillor Mosley commented that there was a need for CCTV as recommended in the Review and that the area that seemed most prone to accidents was in Castlefields and he proposed that CCTV should be installed at Castle Walk Bridge. He also cited that there seemed to be a lack of taxis in the Town, particularly in the early hours of the morning, when people are more vulnerable and that this situation seemed to be worsening. The Town Clerk said that the Taxi Marshalls were checking that taxis had a valid fare. Councillor Dartnall said that a night bus had been suggested previously and that perhaps funding could be sought for this.

Councillor Roberts had recently accompanied the Street Pastors one evening and had learned that Albert's Shed were piloting the sale of anti-spike strips to try to establish the extent to which drinks are being spiked. Results were due in late December/early January.

Councillor Mosley highlighted the role that licensees of clubs and pubs had in keeping people safe i.e. paying attention to the state people were in as they leave the premises. Councillor Dartnall agreed and added that this was a main concern expressed by parents.

Councillor Parry championed raising awareness of the dangers of the river via schools, colleges, etc.

Councillor Davies highlighted the lack of toilets late at night and that provision of facilities during the night should be pursued; males were in the most at-risk group.

Councillor Mosley concluded that there was general support for the report. A timetable and action would be developed and would be used by the action group on a regular basis to check progress.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Town Council notes the publication of the Report;**
- (ii) That the Town Council supports the establishment of a Water Safety Action Group under the auspices of Team Shrewsbury Group to coordinate all partners in the review, detailed design and delivery of the proposed actions to be set out in an Action Plan, to improve river safety in Shrewsbury;**
- (iii) That the Town Council establishes its own Working Group consisting of Councillors Mosley, Parry, Dean & Green to consider any implications of the Report on the Town Council.**

74/22 DITHERINGTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

A Report proposing signing of a Service Level Agreement with 4 All Foundation to provide community services from Ditherington Community Centre until January 2024 was circulated prior to the meeting. The 4 All Foundation was the charitable arm of the Marches Academy Trust.

The Deputy Town Clerk said that in recent years the Centre has, for a variety of reasons, not been able to recover since Covid but has been in decline for the last 10-15 years.

The Agreement was a solution that should improve usage, facilities and enrich the lives of the local community. A Community Engagement Officer was to be appointed to run community projects and the Town Council was to continue looking after the building and receiving any income raised. It was hoped that some youth activity could also take place to complement activities run by the Town Council.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Report be noted;**
- (ii) That the Council agrees to the principle of entering into a service level agreement with 4 All Foundation / The Marches Academy Trust to offer community provision at Ditherington Community Centre until January 2024;**
- (iii) That the Town Clerk be given delegated authority to sign the service level agreement on behalf of the Town Council.**

75/22 ECARGO BIKE BUSINESS

A report on the E-cargo Bike Scheme was circulated prior to this meeting. It was proposed that some of the Climate Change fund is used for an E-cargo Bike Library for Shrewsbury. The request was for £27,500 by the Shropshire Cycle Hub for a 2 year period.

The Town Clerk and RFO had met the chair of the Shropshire Cycle Hub to better understand the scheme and evaluate the proposal. It was proposed that the Town Council purchases 2 E-cargo bikes and loan them out to the Cycle Hub instead with the expectation that the Hub obtains further bikes from other funders. This was deemed proportionate to the situation and would support the climate and Active Travel aspirations.

Councillor Dartnall said that anything the Council could do to get the scheme off the ground was positive as this was the future for delivery services. She supported the Town Council retaining ownership of the bikes and suggested Town Council branding.

Councillor Vasmer enquired whether the Cycle Hub had other partners; it was presumed that the partner they had referred to previously was still interested.

Councillor Phillips was happy to back to the scheme but still had some reservations.

Councillor Parry mentioned that the Shropshire Cycle Hub had an outlet in Oswestry so it was important to ensure that the bikes the Town Council purchase remain in Shrewsbury.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the Report be noted;**
- (ii) That the Council allocates £13000 for the purchase of 2 E-Cargo bikes on the understanding that the remainder of the project can be funded and there is a better understanding of likely CO²e savings from the scheme.**

76/22 ADDITIONAL BLEED UNITS

A report on installing additional bleed units within existing defibrillators in the Town was circulated prior to the meeting. The Office Manager added that 2 had already been installed at Monkmoor Recreation Ground and the Market Hall. It was established that inspections of the bleed units would be carried out when the defibrillators were inspected. The kit would need to be replaced every 2 years.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Report be noted;**
- (ii) That the Committee supports the recommendation of the Recreation & Leisure Committee to purchase and install bleed control kits;**
- (iii) That a budget allocation of £576 to purchase the bleed control kits is provided.**

77/22 VISIONING UPDATE

The Town Clerk reported on the first Visioning Session looking at the rationale for a Strategic Plan and the overall aspirations for what needed to be achieved. The session also looked at a SWOT Analysis and Values & Behaviours. This was the start of a number of sessions which would help the Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk to write the Strategy.

Councillor Mosley commended the work of the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk in putting together the sessions; he had found the exercise very useful.

78/22 PROVISION OF SANITARY PRODUCTS IN TOWN COUNCIL TOILETS

A report on free provision of sanitary products in Town Council toilets had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Town Clerk reported on the difficulty in operationalising the request for whilst addressing the issue of period poverty was a strong one the ability to operationalise it was hard and one that hadn't been fully achieved elsewhere. She had spoken to period poverty charities, other Councils as well as providers of dispensing machines. Various options were contained within the report.

Councillor Dartnall, who had initially raised the issue recognised the difficulties operationally but sought to trial the initiative within the Town Council's estate. It was suggested that the Grange Youth Centre would be a good place to start.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted;**
- (ii) That dispensers and materials as identified within the report be purchased;**
- (iii) That the initiative be trialled at Grange Youth Centre.**

79/22 ST JOHNS HILL OFFICE UPDATE

A report on the planned works for St Johns Hill Office was circulated prior to the meeting. The Projects Manager reported that he was overseeing the project and would have the first of fortnightly updates on the 14th December. He would continue to keep the Working Group and the Finance & General Purposes Committee updated.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted;

80/22 BIG TOWN PLAN

A report from the Leader of the work of the Big Town Plan had been circulated prior to the meeting. In presenting his Report Councillor Mosley highlighted a number of activities:

- (i)** The Movement Strategy was coming to a conclusion and the New Year would see the report being published. He had been pleased that the commission was looking at initiatives that were independent of the decision on the North West Relief Road and would be designed to reduce traffic regardless of outcome.
- (ii)** The Mini-Holland Project, funded by the Department for Transport following the Town Council's submission for funding was working alongside the Movement Strategy; it was to be the accelerating deliverer of the Movement Strategy.
- (iii)** The Design Code Development was initially focussing on the town centre but had the potential to really become the Shrewsbury Test. He had attended two separate workshops; one for wider stakeholders and one for Councillors. Whilst not hugely attended there had been serious and intelligence conversations and he urged councillors to attend future sessions given its importance.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted;