

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL**  
**CITY OF SANCTUARY WORKING GROUP**  
**VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**  
**MONDAY 7 AUGUST 2023**

**PRESENT**

Councillors Phil Gillam & Kevin Pardy

Helen Ball (Town Clerk) & Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk) – Shrewsbury Town Council

Amanda Jones & Robert Douglas – Shropshire Supports Refugees

Maggie Phillipova-Rivers – UK City of Sanctuary

**01/23 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Julian Green and Kate Halliday.

**02/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Those twin-hatted Councillors declared an interest as Shropshire Council in the event matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with the unitary council were discussed.

**03/23 CITY OF SANCTUARY ACCREDITATION**

AJ reported that ideas for the accreditation would need to come initially from Shrewsbury Town Council although Shropshire Supports Refugees could support with examples. HB replied that unfortunately the Town Council had little control over the provision of direct services to asylum seekers as it had no statutory duties. That all sat with Shropshire Council.

AJ asked if there was anything that the Town Council could do to make the town more friendly and accessible. HB responded that most Town Council assets were free to everyone anyway.

PG added that it would be a good idea to publicise that access to assets are free to encourage them to actively engage with Town Council facilities.

HB added that the group needed to be aware of officer resource and that this would need to be balanced with other priorities. AJ agreed that they group needed to be realistic about whether or not applying for accreditation was achievable.

AJ added that it would also be helpful to get any publicity materials translated into a number of other languages. Shropshire Supports Refugees could help with facilitating this.

HB then asked if there had been any progress in identifying courses or other methods of training for both Councillors and officers of the Town Council. RD replied that he would look into this.

AJ asked if any work had been done to look at other town councils who had applied for accreditation. HB replied that it had and that Sevenoaks appeared to be the one furthest along the application progress. They had kindly shared their action plan with her which AS had updated and circulated to the whole group before the meeting.

PG said that he was perfectly happy to compose a letter to asylum seekers and other visitors, welcoming them to the town and explaining what facilities were available and free to them. It was also suggested that this contain information about services such as Street Pastors, Town Wardens, and allotments.

PG also asked if a visit with a couple of the current asylum seekers staying in the Lion Hotel could be arranged so he and other councillors could welcome them formally. AJ replied that it could but it would be best if this were done at the Shropshire Supports Refugees headquarters. She was happy to facilitate such a visit.

RD pointed out that the activities included in the accreditation could be those which are welcoming to any group, not just asylum seekers. AJ added that there were already lots of events and activities taking place in Shrewsbury that would benefit people from elsewhere.

The group agreed that they would start the work for the accreditation process by focussing what had already been done to support refugees such as the Town Council supplying grant funding for Refugee Week of £1500. AS said that she was happy to start pulling this part of the accreditation application together but she would need the input of the rest of the group. The group could then start focussing on what activities they might want to do in the future such as updating signposting, creating a map of international shops, cafes etc, potential mural spaces and promoting allotments.

MFR explained that there were currently a lot of online resources being developed. She also suggested that the group take a look at the myth busting information that Newcastle City Council had publicised. In addition she suggested that any publicity included the learned experience of asylum seekers in the town.

KP asked if there was potential for a buddying system for asylum seekers. For example, he had had a free football ticket the week before and would have happily taken someone else along. He would like to see councillors becoming more proactive in offering to help. AJ said that she had a WhatsApp group of around 40 members and would be happy to circulate details of such offers.

MFR agreed to share the Sevenoaks assessment with AS so that she could see what kind of feedback they had had.

AJ asked if it would be possible for someone like HB to write an article for the local press saying how welcoming Shrewsbury was. AS added that it would be useful if this was a video accompanied by a press release which could be shared on social media and on relevant web pages. MFR said that the experiences of lived experiences would also be extremely strong in this format adding that it would be beneficial if individuals could explain what sanctuary means for them.

MFR stated that the group were in a good place compared to other towns. They could already demonstrate that they were stable and working closely together to support asylum seekers. She also suggested that the group consider creating a flag as part of the process as this had worked well in other places.

She also explained that there was now a town and parish council sub-group which members of the Town Council were welcome to attend. The next meeting would be on 11 September 2023 and she would circulate further details.

RD updated the group on the Schools of Sanctuary project locally explaining that both The Wilfred Own School and Coleham Primary School were now signed up.

## **ACTIONS**

The following actions were AGREED by the Working Group.

1. A letter was to be created welcoming asylum seekers to the town – this would be added to various websites and social media pages (PG)
2. The letter would be translated into various relevant languages (AJ)
3. Appropriate training for councillors and officers would be investigated further (RD)
4. A visit to some of the current occupants of the Lion Hotel would be explored and coordinated (AJ/PG)
5. The possibility of automatic translating from the Town Council website would be investigated (AS)
6. The application process for accreditation would be commenced (AS)
7. Comments on the draft Strategy and Action Plan would be returned to AS (All)
8. The Myth Busting information publicised by Newcastle City Council would be investigated (AS)
9. A Powerpoint presentation on current struggles would be created (AJ)
10. The Sevenoaks assessment would be shared with AS (MFR)
11. Involvement in the process would be discussed with the BID (HB)

## **04/23 ACCREDITABLE WORK DONE LOCALLY**

Discussed under 03/23 CITY OF SANCTUARY ACCREDITATION.

## **05/23 SHREWSBURY TOWN OF SANCTUARY ACCREDITATION**

Discussed under 03/23 CITY OF SANCTUARY ACCREDITATION.

## **06/23 FUTURE MEETING DATES**

It was agreed that the future working group meeting dates would be:

- Monday 18 September at 2.00pm
- Monday 30 October at 2.00pm
- Monday 4 December at 2.00pm