

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**CLEAN RIVERS WORKING GROUP
HELD AT LIVESEY HOUSE, ST JOHNS HILL, SHREWSBURY & VIA TEAMS**

21 JUNE 2023

PRESENT

Councillors Rosemary Dartnall
Andy Jones (Shrewsbury Town Fisheries), Pete Lambert (Shropshire Wildlife Trust), Gareth Mead & Amanda Coffey (Severn Trent), Dilwyn Jones (Sabrina Boat), Alison Biddulph (Swimmer), Helen Watkinson (Pengwern Boat Club), Chloe Walker-Panse.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk)

01/03 APOLOGIES

Councillor Bernie Bentick, Julian Dean & Kate Halliday

02/03 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

Councillor Dartnall declared at interest as a Shropshire Councillor

03/03 INTRODUCTIONS

Everyone introduced themselves together with their interest in the River

04/03 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Councillor Dartnall presented the Terms of Reference of the Working Group. She advised that these could be reviewed and amended but the key priority in the short term was to assist with the Bathing Water Status Application.

It was acknowledged that this group had links to both the Task & Finish Group that Shropshire Council had set up to address clean water but also the Team Shrewsbury River Safety Group and it was imperative that groups did not duplicate work of others. The overriding ambition of most group however was to educate and raise awareness about river usage.

Working Group members were happy with the Terms of Reference.

ACTION – Distribute Terms of Reference for both the Shropshire Council Task & Finish Group and the Team Shrewsbury River Safety Group

05/03 WORK OF PARTNERS

Councillor Dartnall invited all attending to give an overview of the work they have been undertaking to address the Clean Water issue.

- (i) **Shropshire Wildlife Trust** – Their work had focused on campaigning and raising awareness of the cleanliness of the water. They have worked with pressure groups like Up Sewage Creek supporting them with training. They also worked with the Town Fisheries Bailiffs around the practicalities of data capture
- (ii) **Shrewsbury Town Fisheries** – There were 18 Bailiffs operating along the Fisheries and regularly looked out for pollution and reported any findings to the Environment Agency. Since May 2022 the Bailiffs had been operating the Angling Trust Water Testing Scheme and had taken 360 samples; this included testing for Electrical Conductivity, Temperature and Phosphate as this gave a simple yet pretty accurate gauge of the health of the river. All data is input into the Angling Trust and they in turn provide a regular Report; this could be circulated to partners. Fish deaths was a cause for concern. Increased temperatures over the last year has meant that fishing has had to be suspended at time

ACTION – Town Fisheries to share data with the Group (AJ)

- (iii) **Severn Trent** – There was currently a large long-term investment strategy into reducing the levels of phosphate in the water that was allowed to be discharged from water treatment plants; this work involved the Monkmoor, Oswestry & Welshpool Treatment Plants. This work was to be funded through the OFWAT Price Review Process; they were currently working on AM7 the regulatory period up to 2024.

There was also work being carried out of Overflows. Engineers were out at the moment installing flap valves to stop river back-up into the sewers, cleansing the sewers and where appropriate sealing manholes.

There is a long-term plan to future proof the system particularly given the requirement that CSOs will not be able to outflow more than 10 times in any year by 2050; often CSOs in Shrewsbury are outflowing 5 times that rate. There are 32 SCOs in Shrewsbury; work is underway to look at the worst performing. The positive for Shrewsbury is that it is an area that has been flagged as in need of work in the Water Industry National Programme for 2024

ACTION – Invite Outflow Engineer to next meeting (GM)

- (iv) **River Users**
 - a. **Sabrina Boat** – report any pollution to the Environment Agency if they see it. Their concern was more the increased levels of reed growth in the river in the last 12months, which has meant that they can no longer take out their small crafts. They had also witnessed streams of pollution at certain times of the year. This was due to the bio-film which sits on the river bed fermenting and rising to the surface. It was also noted that the river has changed somewhat particularly around the navigable channels and the levels of silt build up. It was acknowledged that the river was a dynamic system which not just involved the flow of water but sediment

ACTION – Make connections with EA Hydrology Team & EA Monitoring Team to understand the health of the river (AC)

- b. **Rowing Club** – are happy to be involved and liaise with the Severn Trent Ranger

ACTION – Contact details of the Severn Trent River Ranger to be circulated (GM)

- c. **Swimmers** – undertake litter picks of the are and look out for signs of pollution. They are currently gathering evidence to submit applications for Bathing Water Status in Ironbridge, Ludlow & Shrewsbury

06/03 BATHING WATER STATUS

Bathing water Status is a legal designation and requires the Environment Agency to test water quality weekly and investigate any evidence of pollution. They must also share the information in a more real time than currently. Severn Trent are also to publish their data real time by the end of the year.

Bathing Water Status requires:

- Landowner Consent and the group are having difficulty getting a response from Shropshire Council – Could the Town Council help to unblock barriers?
- Map showing location of facilities
- Data Capture of river users on 20 different occasions (10 in School holidays/10 in term time; 10 weekday/10 weekend) this is being done by volunteers
- Month-long consultation – It was hoped that the Town Council might help to facilitate this
- Water Testing – working alongside the Town Fisheries data. There was also a need to undertake bacteriological testing

ACTION – Raise land ownership with Shropshire Council (HB)

ACTION – Send exact locations for Bathing Water Status Application to HB (AB)

ACTION – Set up a page on STC Website for Bathing Water Status (HB)

ACTION – Provide details of proposed Consultation (AB)

The Application would need to be submitted by the End of September

07/03 NEXT MEETINGS

- Thursday 20 July – 5.00pm
- Wednesday 16th August – 5.00pm
- Wednesday 13th September – 5.00pm
- Wednesday 11th October – 5.00pm