

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Held in Committee Room, Livesey House At 6.00pm on Monday 24 July 2023

PRESENT

Councillors: A Mosley (Chair), R Dartnall, J Dean, N Green, P Moseley, A Phillips, D Vasmer and R Wilson.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources), Stuart Farmer (Acting Operations Manager), Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager) Michelle Farmer (Committee Officer) and Sally Nicholson (Mayoral Secretary) and 4 members of the public.

13/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

All Councillors were present

14/23 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 Green	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 22/23 Markets Update. Also declared an interest in item 17/23 Grants as he is a director/Trustee at the Hive
Helen Ball (Town Clerk)	Declared an interest in item 17/23 as she is a director and trustee at The Hive

15/23 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meetings held on 5th June 2023 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meetings held on 5th June 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

16/23 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minute 6/23 End of Year accounts – End of Year Accounts had been submitted to the External Auditor who had until 30 September 2023 to complete the audit.

Councillor Wilson raised a question regarding the end of year accounts as he was concerned regarding the lack of concrete news regarding Greenfields and could a written report be produced, also asking how would additional costs be paid for.

Councillor Mosley advised that the Town Council's solicitor and the developer's solicitor had exchanged letters, indicating a way forward. No further updates could be presented. The Town Council's solicitor had written to other parties and replies were awaiting. He could provide no timescales at this time. Regarding additional costs, this was something that had to be considered. He is planning to issue a letter to the Greenfields Community Group with a synopsis of what had happened and the Town Council commitment to repurchase the land. This letter would go out in the not too distant future.

Councillor Vasmer suggested that this should be an exempt item at the next Finance & General Purposes meeting in September.

Councillor Phillips asked members to give thought to the short-term dealing of the park and the need to make sure the area is made safe. Councillor Mosley commented that the Town Council could not undertake work on land they did not own. They could look at a legal view to request work was undertaken and they would raise this with their legal advisor and the landowner.

Minute 118/22 E-Cargo Bikes - Councillor Dartnall requested an update on the E-Cargo bikes. The Deputy Town Clerk informed the Committee that the bikes were currently being sourced and she would keep all Councillors updated.

17/23 GRANTS

17.1 Update on the spending of the Community Grant and Councillor Grant Fund

The RFO circulated the current list of Community Grants and Local Councillor Grants awarded to date and the funds Councillors had available. There would be more grants to consider in January 2024 and the total budget for this round of Community Grants was £4650.00.

17.2 Applications for Community Grant Funds

Representatives from the organisations that had applied for funding were present at the meeting and were welcomed by the Chair. Each were asked in turn to give a brief overview of the application and answer any questions from members.

- a) **Millingtons Charity** – requested £750 of funding for a provision of a defibrillator to the external wall of sheltered accommodation. They had no way of dealing with an emergency other than ringing 999. The defibrillator would be used in an emergency situation for both residents of the Almshouses and members of the public near to their location. The nearest defibrillators in the area were located inside the Theatre Severn and at the University of Chester site.

Councillor Wilson asked if the defibrillator would be added to the British Heart Foundation and ambulance service list, and this was confirmed.

Councillor Mosley asked how accessible it would be to other users due to the defibrillator being situated on an outside wall. Councillor Dean confirmed that local residents and traders within the area would be made aware of its location.

RESOLVED:

That £250 be awarded to Millingtons Charity from the Community Grant Fund and £500 would be awarded from Councillor Dean's Ward grant.

- b) **Severn Hospice** – requested £1,900 for a large, refrigerated patisserie unit for the community café at Severn Hospice in Bicton Heath which would increase food capacity and help future hospice funds. The idea of the café was to serve patients and families. The business had expanded, and the equipment was no longer viable. New equipment would double the capacity and enable them to serve more people. Profits from the cafe went to the Hospice.

RESOLVED

That no money would be awarded from the Community Grant Fund, but that Councillor Wagner would award £766.67 from his Councillor Ward Grant.

- c) **The Hive** – requested £2,000 to fund improvements to the Hive's kitchen/café bar area and to support the delivery of movement workshops for Under 5's. The Hive was an important part of Youth Services and a well-used facility. The facility needed an upgrade in terms of kitchen equipment, and they sought funding to help keep their early years music and movement workshops running.

Councillor Green and Helen Ball (Town Clerk) left the meeting.

RESOLVED

That The Hive would be awarded £750.00 for the Under 5's workshop element of the application and not the kitchen upgrade. Councillor Green would also award £750.00 from his Councillor Ward Grant.

Three members of the public left the meeting.

18/23 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 26 May to 17 July 2023. These had 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 26 May and 17 July 2023 be approved.

19/23 QUARTER 1 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated a report showing members the financial position of the Council for the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year, for the 3 months to 30 June 2023.

Overall, for the quarter there was a positive variance of £453,180 compared to the budget. Quarter 1 was always distorted by Neighbourhood Funds etc.

There was also a positive variance on expenditure of £35,793. The majority of the variance was due to the cumulative underspend on salary costs of £62,525, which if discounted along with the temporary staff cost of £36,960 left a small positive variance of £10,228.

There was a positive variance on the income received of £417,387. This was however misleading due to unbudgeted income of £375,329 in respect of the Neighbourhood Fund, grants and sale of assets. Adjusting for this would result in a positive variance of £42,058. Inflation and rising interest rates had increased returns on investments by £25,351 more than budget.

As this was Quarter 1 there was no different year to date figures, they would appear next quarter. Looking to the future, the effect of decreasing inflation at the time of writing on costs was uncertain, especially in relation to pending pay award. Income from investments was increasing and would continue throughout the year.

RESOLVED:

That the Quarter 1 Management Accounts be accepted and approved.

20/23 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

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

- The Cycling Map was complete and was reviewed last week by the Active Travel Working Group. This would be published as part of the Shrewsbury Moves Festival
- Work to the War Memorial in the Quarry had been commissioned and they awaited a start date
- Wheeled Track at Kynaston had been commissioned and work had started
- Infant Play Area at Kynaston had been commissioned and they awaited a start date
- Drainage works at Kynaston had been commissioned and work would start after the school holidays in September
- Upton Lane Play Area was out for tender with closing date of 4/8
- Moston Road Wheeled track was complete
- Monkmoor Tennis lights had been commissioned and the contractors had started on site today
- Beaver Project needed a variation to the Natural England permissions as vegetation clearance was required in the nesting season on the SSSI; Officers were currently in discussions with both Natural England and the Environment Agency. They hoped to get this progressed soon.
- Nature Trail physical works would be undertaken in the Winter. Staff were currently working on the Interpretation Boards which they hoped to install in the Spring.
- Dana Footpath works was still ongoing. Officers had met the SHS and Estates on site and thought progress was being made. Mention was made of the SHS likely ownership of the boundary wall; the SHS do not wish to proceed until this matter is resolved. This was high on senior officers' radar, and they hoped for a resolution shortly.

Councillor Wilson asked for an update on Shorncliffe (in terms of land transfer and vision) and Radbrook Recreation grounds. The Town Clerk reported that for Radbrook, Officers had met with potential users on site and the tender was being finalised at present. Regarding

Shorncliffe, details of survey work was still awaited from the contractor and Shropshire Council Estates had appointed a new officer to take the transfers forward.

Councillor Mosley commented that he was upset in the lack of progress with the Dana footpath. This was an important walking route into town and was concerned how it was taking so long. Efforts needed to be made to get this resolved. He asked that all concerned in this matter got together around a table to make progress.

Councillor Phillips commented on Greenfields and the work to the ground. The Greenfields Community Group had ideas regarding the improvements of the land once the legal issues had been resolved, this should be an item for consideration at a future meeting. The Town Clerk asked why these ideas not been issue raised at one of the Visioning sessions or in response to the numerous emails sent to members asking for suggested projects in members' wards. Councillor Phillips had replied that his suggestions had been submitted just before the meeting and that therefore there had been no opportunity to do so previously.

Councillor Vasmer asked for progress on the tennis court refurbishments. The Town Clerk advised that staff were to meet and re-visit proposals including whether additional tennis courts were needed or whether alternative provision could be made on-site. Councillor Vasmer asked if he could be included in any further meetings regarding this issue.

RESOLVED:

That the update of the Capital Programme be noted.

21/23 TENDER WORK

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

The Operations Manager highlighted the following:

- **Further Bus Shelter Replacements** - The second phase of bus shelter replacements had been agreed with the contractor, replacements were due to commence towards the end of the month. The shelters that were not compatible with sedum roofs were to be completed first.
- **Moston Road Wheeled Sports Track** had been completed and the Council was now in receipt of the required RoSPA report for the facility. This had been very well received by local users and the site had been very busy since the fencing was removed.
- **Monkmoor Tennis Courts Lighting** - The contractor had been to site and a start date had been proposed towards the end of the month and an estimate of two weeks work had been identified.
- **Kynaston Road Projects** - Work had started on the wheeled sports track. The drainage project had a proposed start date of early September, and they awaited a proposed start date for the play area refurb.
- **Upton Lane Play Area** - The tender was now live with a closing date of 4 August. This had received plenty of interest from all the usual suppliers as well as some suppliers that had not tendered previously The Acting Operations Manager had

attended several site visits with interested tenderers who all saw the site had potential due to it currently being a blank canvas.

Councillor Dean queried the tendering process and asked if the Town Council were asking contractors questions regarding reducing their carbon footprint, nature recovery etc. It was an important message to get to contractors and suppliers on the need to move forward.

The Acting Operations Manager confirmed that they did ask for carbon costs within their tender documents and that tender documents were a work in progress and certain criteria could be changed within them. It would also depend on the organisation and their size as to how much they do reduce their carbon footprint. The Deputy Town Clerk and Acting Operations Manager would look at this issue and bring a report to the next meeting and the Climate Change Committee.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the report be noted;**
- ii) That a Report on Climate Change mitigation in Tendering Proposals be prepared for both the Finance & General Purpose Committee and the Climate Change Committee**

Councillor Green left the meeting

22/23 MARKETS UPDATE

The Markets Update was circulated prior to the meeting and the Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager updated members.

The Indoor market continued to operate with 100% occupancy and no arrears. Recently some of the food and drink outlets had expanded on to the footpath outside during the weekends, taking advantage of the road closures. Some traders expressed concerns that during recent large events, footfall was down due to visitors not being allowed out of the Quarry. The complainant was assured they had an agreement with all events that visitors could come and go from the event, as it was good for the town's economy.

The late nights in the market were scheduled for Saturday 23rd September, Saturday 28th October and Saturday 2nd December.

The Sunday Market Manager reported that the Sunday Market had been extremely fortunate over the summer with the weather and avoided any cancellations or early closures. The Manager had reviewed the layout of the site and reconfigured the car boot so that any voids on the site had been filled. This had given a more structured appearance and had proven popular with the majority of the people. The car boot attendance remained fair and doubles when the show ground cannot be used due to it hosting events. Advertising on social media was still continuing and was proving a valuable tool for bringing in new casual traders, carbooters and public.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Councillor Green re-joined the meeting.

23/23 YOUTH ACTIVITIES

In the absence of the Youth & Community Manager, the Deputy Town Clerk provided an update on Youth activities.

The Summer term had gone well with numbers up at all sessions. The Hive had plenty of targeted creative sessions in the Spring and Summer terms.

Monkmoor New Lodge sessions had returned to normal numbers. The sessions had been led by the Youth & Community Manager and other staff members when required. As the centre was closing for redevelopment in August, it was felt unwise to recruit another contracted leader in charge for this period.

The Grange and Sundorne sessions continued to be popular with end of summer term trips planned.

Alternative Curriculum had gone from strength to strength over the last 12 months with students attending from Mount Pleasant School, Shrewsbury Academy & TMBSS. Originally this programme was funded by Shrewsbury Town Council, however this was not sustainable. The schools had acknowledged the benefit of this provision and now paid an agreed amount through their various funding streams for students to attend. Going forward, from the start of the September 2023 term, AC would generate an income of £1000+VAT per week term-time. This would meet expenditure.

The HAF (Holiday Activity Fund activities) for 2023/24 Easter HAF went well with no issues. HAF sessions funding had been agreed with Shropshire Council for the summer HAF delivery from both the Grange centre and Monkmoor recreation ground. These 18 sessions would be delivered over the six-week school's holiday.

Temporary Premises (New Lodge Monkmoor) The Summer term Thursday night youth sessions at the New Lodge Monkmoor were due to finish on 20 July 2023. The New Lodge is due for demolition at the end of August to make way for SYA's new headquarters to be built. Therefore, they would not have access to this space until January 2024 at the earliest. They had contacted various hirers of space in the area including Crowmoor & Belvidere schools and local churches with no success. They were now planning to expand their delivery from the Monkmoor Recreation Ground with the Mobile Youth trailer and introduce more detached youth work in the area including play areas around Upton Lane.

In May 2023 Young Shrewsbury submitted a bid to the Thriving Children and Families grant fund and Young Shrewsbury (STC) had been successful in being granted £20,000 from this fund subject to agreeing key objectives with Shropshire Council.

Councillor Moseley commented that she had approached Crowmoor School as an alternative venue for New Lodge, Monkmoor but this was not possible; but Crowmoor Church may be a possible venue. The Deputy Town Clerk would report this to the Youth Manager.

Councillor Mosley commented that the attendance figures for some of the youth clubs appeared quite low i.e. Grange Juniors and Sundorne. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that they were promoting these venues and trying to encourage new members to join.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

24/23 WORKING GROUPS

The Deputy Town Clerk reported to committee that as well as the four standing committees, the Town Council currently had a number of working groups. Concerns had been expressed about the amount of time these took for both members and officers and whether all of these should continue to function. The report was designed to appraise the committee of these in order for it to make a decision about which ones should remain.

The Committee Structure was agreed at Annual Council in April and Youth Services and Civics Working Groups had already been removed.

Councillor Dean suggested that Active Travel should consider incorporating an overview of the Big Town Plan, looking at the movement strategy. Councillor Mosley reported that the Big Town Plan would now be a standing item on the Finance & General Purposes agenda.

Councillor Wilson suggested 'Task & Finish' Groups as an alternative as many of the working groups that had been set up, the topics had been resolved.

Councillors were in agreement that the Health & Wellbeing Working Group should now cease as the proposed GP hub was now dismissed. It could be resurrected at another time if required.

It was agreed that the River Safety Working Group and the Quarry Working Group would be given one more chance as attendance had been very low on both.

RESOLVED:

That Council reviews the Working Groups on an annual basis, prior to Annual Council.

25/23 BIG TOWN PLAN AND RELATED PROJECTS

Councillor Mosley reported that the Partnership had been pressing on with the Movement & Public Realm Strategy and a revised plan had been submitted to the Movement Strategy Working Group. The aim was for this to be presented to the Shrewsbury Moves Festival in September. They were not at the stage to roll out projects.

The Design Code work had now been completed and the draft documents had been submitted to DLUHC for sign off before they would be presented to the various partners decision making meetings for approval to commence consultation. This was funded by Levelling Up Funds.

Officers were continuing to work on the larger Levelling Up project which included some elements of public realm work by the station.

The Partnership had submitted a bid to the UKSPF for an Active Travel project which included:

- Cycle Hire Scheme with 60 bikes
- Brompton Bike Pod
- Cargo Bike Hire
- More Rickshaws

- 6-seater Electronic Vehicle
- Safe & Secure Cycle Storage
- Shop Mobility Equipment
- Associated Project Management

Project costs were £490,034 and the bid secured £343,024 with £147,010 of match funding that the Partnership will fund over two years.

The chairman confirmed to Committee that the Big Town Plan would remain an item on the Finance & General Purposes agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

26/23 VISIONING

The Town Clerk reported that the visioning exercise was continuing well, and they thanked the members who had attended the sessions. She and the Deputy Town Clerk were now at the stage of prioritising all the action points that member submitted under the six key priorities of:

- Building Resilient Communities
- Supporting Residents to live active and healthy lives
- Preserving Shrewsbury's Heritage
- Creating a Greener & Better-connected Shrewsbury
- Maintaining a sustainable, resilient and efficient organisation
- Taking Positive action to tackle climate change

The last session looked at prioritising those actions around Urgency and Importance and they had started streamlining actions and adding detail ready for the next session on Wednesday evening. They also had a Staff Session booked for a few weeks so they would get their feedback and then continue with the write up of the document. The aim is for the document to be ready for public consultation in September, signoff in November and start to use for budget setting in January.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.