

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
Meeting of Council
Held in the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Shrewsbury at
6pm on Monday 29 January 2024

PRESENT

Councillors B Wall (Mayor), B Bentick, R Dartnall, M Davies, J Dean, P Gillam, C Lemon, P Moseley, A Mosley, K Pardy, A Phillips, D Vasmer, A Wagner & R Wilson.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources), Michelle Farmer (Committee Clerk) and two members of the public.

74/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillors Green and Halliday.

75/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Shropshire Councillors	Twin hatted members declared personal interests in matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council
Councillor Alex Phillips	Declared an interest in the Greenfields item on the agenda as he is the ward member

76/23 MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

The minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 13 November 2023 & 4 December 2023 be submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Full Meeting of Council on 13 November 2023 & 4 December 2023 be approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

77/23 MATTERS ARISING

The Town Clerk reported that a meeting had been arranged with the Architect Team for the Smithfield Road Scheme for Wednesday 7 February between 6.00pm – 8.00pm at Livesey House.

78/23 ANNOUNCEMENTS

78.1 MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Mayor & Deputy Mayor's engagements for the period 2 December 2023 to 20 January 2024 were circulated and noted.

The Mayor reported that since the last meeting she had a full diary and had attended several activities including attending the Rifles Regiment Awards and Dinner in London in the presence of their Colonel in Chief HM The Queen. There had also been many Christmas carol concerts and dinners the Mayor had attended. The Deputy Mayor had nothing further to add.

78.2 TOWN CLERK ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Clerk had no announcements to report.

79/23 PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

The Town Clerk reported that standing orders had been followed in seeking questions ahead of the meeting, but she had accepted questions up until 4pm on the day of this meeting.

There were no public questions at this meeting.

80/23 MOTIONS FROM MEMBERS

80.1 Support of a Town Centre Swimming Pool – Presented by Councillor Alex Wagner

Councillor Wagner presented his motion to Members. He commented on the importance of keeping a swimming facility within Shrewsbury Town Centre that could be accessed by residents from all parts of the town, especially those that do not have access to a car. He stated that the idea of a single out of town swimming pool would be an anomaly. The Quarry Pool was a real community facility. The Town Centre was the only accessible location for people in Shrewsbury and within walking distance of thousands of parking spaces.

He proposed the following to Council:

This Council noted:

- 1) Uncertainty regarding the future of the Quarry Pool, which Shropshire Council said they had made 'no decision' over.
- 2) Recent proposals for a new swimming facility at Sundorne, which had been proposed in previous years as a replacement for the Quarry Pool.
- 3) The 2023 spend of over £400,000 on the Quarry Pool to fix the roof and improve other parts of the facility.
- 4) The importance of keeping a swimming facility within Shrewsbury Town Centre that could be accessed by residents from all parts of town, especially those who do not have access to a car.
- 5) The Quarry Pool was a leisure attraction that benefitted the economy of Shrewsbury by: a) drawing in families looking for a day out with children and those attending swimming lessons every week and, b) attracting people from town and beyond looking for a day out combining some healthy exercise in the pool with time visiting the shops or going out for something to eat.

This Council resolved to send a letter to the Chief Executive and Leader of Shropshire Council making clear the Town Council's view that a swimming facility should continue to be provided within Shrewsbury Town Centre.

Councillor Dean supported the motion but commented that the north part of the town also deserved a facility, the Town actually deserved both.

Councillor Pardy wholly supported the motion but advised against detracting from the Sports Village site and supported the unitary authority's decision to go ahead with plans for the competition pool facility at Sundorne. He was hopeful that the direction taken by Shropshire Council would settle a longstanding issue and concentration was now needed on the Sundorne pool.

Councillor Dartnall also supported the motion commenting that the Quarry was a central feature, and the park was a magnet for families. Investment was needed in the centre, and they should welcome investment in Sundorne area for competition swimming.

Many Councillors raised the point could both sites be protected.

RESOLVED:

That the Council write to the Chief Executive and Leader of Shropshire Council making clear the Town Council's view that a swimming facility should continue to be provided within Shrewsbury Town Centre.

80.2 Cooperative Council Innovation Network affiliation – Presented by Councillor Julian Dean

Councillor Dean presented his motion to members. He explained that the Cooperative Council Innovation Network brought together organisations and promoted project work with improving services being the aim.

This council recognised that the unprecedented challenges facing the public sector and local communities meant that traditional top-down governance models and economic growth were no longer fit for purpose. Discussions in their visioning exercise sessions had confirmed that they wanted to promote community action, community engagement, and civic empowerment that could transform communities. This approach would help deliver innovative programmes designed, led, and delivered in partnership with communities and other sector partners, maximising the social dividend they brought. The Cooperative Council Innovation Network existed to bring together councils, cooperative organisations and others who shared this vision. In recent years the CCIN had helped Local Councils develop projects such as Burntwoods 'Enabling a dementia friendly Burntwood' and Woughton's 'Social Return on Local Council Provision'. The CCIN also provided opportunities for both members and officers from like-minded councils to network and develop projects, together with third sector partners.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Town Clerk approach the CCIN to investigate the option for Shrewsbury Town Council to join CCIN (at an estimated cost of £500pa) and to bring back recommendations to a future meeting of full council.**

80.3 Neurodiverse Friendly Town – Presented by Councillor Julian Dean

Councillor Dean expressed his concerns regarding Neurodiversity and that as a society were they inclusive. There should be more friendly facilities for young neurodiverse people to visit. Recent years had seen an increasing awareness of the scale and impact on individuals of living with neurodiversity conditions. Many groups and individuals in Shrewsbury had worked to ensure neurodiverse people were catered for, welcomed and valued as members of the community, however there remained scope for the town to become more 'neurodiverse' friendly.

Councillor Dean therefore asked that the Town Council agreed to establish a working party to consider measures that would enable the town to be considered as a Neurodiverse Friendly Town. They asked the Town Clerk and members to nominate people in the community with experience and expertise to contribute to this work. They asked that staff and members researched similar projects elsewhere, to help inform their work. They asked that the working party to look to bring forward proposals to the Town Council by the end of 2024. It was also commented that this project existed in Ireland that promoted Neurodiverse Friendly Towns, but they had not found anything similar for the UK so far).

Councillors Phillips, Wilson and Lemon all voiced their support for this motion.

Councillor Wilson also commented that there was a Neurodiversity Umbrella Project – ADHD Foundation and he would send information out to all Members.

RESOLVED:

- i) That a Working Group was established to include Councillors Lemon, Dean, Parry, Roberts and Wall.**
- ii) That a date for the Working Group be arranged and invitations sent out**

80.4 Car parking charge increases – Presented by Councillor Alan Mosley

Members of Shrewsbury Town Council had great concerns about the recently announced car parking charge increases and changes to the evening and Sunday charging policy. They therefore called upon Shropshire Council to recognise the serious issues for residents, workers, businesses and visitors.

The proposed hikes, ranging from 29% to 67%, would have a profound and serious impact on the Town's economy and attraction without any other mitigating improvements to town centre access, for example public transport, park and ride, highways infrastructure, active travel. Hence, the new charges posed a significant risk to the Shrewsbury town centre economy and its on-going post- Covid recovery.

The swingeing increases for Abbey Foregate and Frankwell would have a particularly serious impact on those commuting to work, especially those on low income, where they had no affordable or convenient alternatives.

The changes were contrary to proposals within the recently published Movement Strategy aimed at encouraging parking outside of the river loop and establishing a suite of active travel measures.

Changes to Sunday and early evening charges would have a particularly serious impact on those employed in the night-time, hospitality and cultural economy and on visitors and residents in the town.

Many would be deterred from using designated car parks and would seek on-street parking around the town centre, much to the detriment of local residents.

Recent surveys and submissions by Shrewsbury Bid provided evidence that there was massive concern about the adverse impact on businesses of all types.

There had been a complete failure by Shropshire Council to have any meaningful engagement with businesses or the wider public on the rationale and potential impact of the changes.

The Shropshire Council Cabinet recognised the need for a new Parking Strategy to be developed and for a review of the role, structure and staff in the Parking Services operation. Members felt these should be completed and with full consultation, before such significant proposals were introduced.

Furthermore, the changes were contrary to the themes within the Shropshire Plan:-

“We'll develop Shropshire as a vibrant destination that attracts people to live in, work in, learn in and visit.

We'll deliver excellent connectivity and infrastructure, and increasing access to social contact, employment, education, services and leisure opportunities.

We will communicate clearly and transparently about what Shropshire Council delivers, signposting to the right places for services and support, and listen to what communities say about their place and what they need.”

This motion called for a halt to the current plans for changes to evening and Sunday car parking arrangements and where increases in charges were above the current rate of inflation.

Councillor Wagner fully supported the motion and said there had been zero consultation and businesses were concerned. The Town Council needed to stress to Shropshire Council that the price increases would hit the businesses hard. If prices did need to increase they needed to provide alternatives including improvements to public transport and Park & Ride services.

Councillor Dean fully supported the motion but wished to submit an amendment stating that they called on Shropshire Council to cancel any above inflation increases until the Parking Strategy review was completed and consulted upon. He also asked that a review be undertaken on edge-of-town centre parking where visitors continued to park without charge, impacting on local residents. He further asked that additional revenues from parking charges in Shrewsbury be clearly and visibly invested in developments towards the realisation of the principles behind Shrewsbury Moves; including better public transport and active travel options across the town. He added that this was a bad message given out.

Councillor Wilson had also proposed an amendment to this motion but this was withdrawn during the meeting.

Councillor Phillips commented that the Park and Ride charges would be coming into place from April and the increases outside of the loop remained lower than within. Tough decisions had to be made regarding finance but regrettably the state of Shropshire Council's finances meant that something needed to be done.

Councillor Dartnall stated that the Parking Strategy was important. The Town Council needed to write to the Scrutiny Committee to give local views. Councillor Mosley said he would ask to talk to the Scrutiny Committee. He commented that this was additional revenue and any surplus income must be spent on parking provisions.

Councillor Phillips was against the amendment to the motion. All other members were in agreement.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Clerk draft a letter and circulate to all Members for approval.

81/23 BUDGET 2024/25

The Head of Resources reported to members the budget for 2024/2025. The budget needed to be agreed and the precept requirement submitted to SC S151 officer by no later than 31 January 2024.

The draft budget was presented to Finance & General Purposes Committee last week where they had spent the majority of the meeting looking and discussing in detail the forecast outturn which helped form the basis of the budget for next year 2024/25 with assumptions made and applied and any savings identified to offset rising costs and any other impacts on the budget.

The Finance & General Purposes Committee had sought to increase the grants budget but within the same revenue budget and precept requirement. The Head of Resources had offered suggestions on how this could be accommodated.

The budget put before Members this evening was in the usual format by cost centres as opposed to nominal analysis for each expense heading. They were forecasting a £1,060 deficit for the current year.

Expenditure had increased due to inflation on costs to £4,505,555 but apart from inflationary increases to budgets there was a £60,000 addition for Quarry Security and also grants funds had increased by £20,000. There was also an increase in income streams to £4,501,671, however, to balance the budget this had required an increase in precept to £66.42, a £3.16 increase on Band D. This would raise £1,770,089 to balance out a small deficit of £3,884, covered by general reserves.

The Head of Resources concluded that the precept was low when benchmarking against towns in Shrewsbury and nationally. Most houses were also Band B which would be a £2.46 increase, but they had to quote a Band D equivalent, which equated to a 5% increase. The budget still enabled the Council to provide excellent unreduced services and still had a good pipeline of capital projects going forward from good financial management in previous years. He commended this budget for agreement by Council.

Councillor Mosley was delighted to present a balanced budget. He thanked all staff and Councillors involved stating the Town Council were able to continue to provide services to represent all residents. He detailed an ambitious programme for 2024/25 which included

- Climate Change & Nature Recovery actions
- Beaver compound
- Shorncliffe Drive vision
- Dana Footpath works
- Improvements to sports pitches
- New & improved play areas
- Improvements to Quarry gardens
- Improved pathways
- Support for Big Town Plan
- Continuation of the Rangers Project
- Increased Grant provision
- Development of the Vision Action Plan

The budget was good news for the Town Council and its residents which could have been worse, if not value for money.

Councillor Dean supported the budget and recognised that they had one of the lowest precepts in the County.

Councillor Wilson commented that the Town Council was value for money. They needed to get the Visioning Action Plan ratified for this year and in regard to fees and charges they needed to see next year how often they were used and charged.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the forecast out-turn for the 2023/24 Financial Year as presented be accepted;**
- ii) That the proposed Fees & Charges as agreed by both the Finance & General Purpose Committee and the Recreation & Leisure Committee be approved;**
- iii) That a Revenue expenditure budget of £4,505,555 be set against a Revenue Income budget of £4,501,671 with the deficit of £3884 being taken from General Reserves;**
- iv) That a Precept be levied against the Taxpayers of Shrewsbury of £1,770,089 equating to a Band D Levy of £62.42.**

82/23 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Town Clerk reported that Finance & General Purposes Committee discussed the proposed Community Governance Review and it was agreed that commentary similar to that which was presented to the Local Government Boundary Commission be forwarded to Shropshire Council. The Town Clerk had circulated that commentary to members. She had also spoken to Graham White regarding the process, and he was happy to receive those details even though the closing date for First Stage comments had now passed. He said there would be further opportunities for the Town Council to make commentary as the process continued.

RESOLVED:

That Council supports a Community Governance Review for Shrewsbury following the same rationale that was presented to the Local Government Boundary Commission for the Shropshire Council Division Review

83/23 MOVEMENT & PUBLIC SPACE STRATEGY

The Town Clerk reported that the Movement & Public Space Strategy Consultation was now live and there was opportunity to comment online and at St Mary's Church. Hard copies had been given to members at this meeting. Council needed to make comment on proposals so the Town Clerk suggested the Active Travel Working Group be convened to discuss this strategy with an invitation being extended to all Councillors. The invitation would also be sent to PJA Associates asking them to attend the meeting to give an update on key recommendations. Councillor Mosley hoped that the Active Travel Working Group could also consider the LUF2 consultation.

RESOLVED:

That a date for the Active Travel Working Group be arranged.

84/23 CHANGE TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Wilson requested the change of Committee Membership on the Planning Committee and Recreation & Leisure Committee. The purpose of this was so Councillor David Vasmer could prepare and concentrate on his mayoral year. It was agreed that the changes would come into effect now.

RESOLVED:

- i) That Councillor Alex Wagner replace Councillor David Vasmer on the Planning Committee**
- ii) That Councillor Mary Davies replace Councillor David Vasmer on the Recreation & Leisure Committee**

85/23 POLICIES

The Deputy Town Clerk reported to Members that as an employer the Town Council had a number of HR (Human Resources) policies which they reviewed on a regular basis. The Town Council also created new HR policies as required.

The Deputy Town Clerk presented the following Policies for approval:

- Disclosure & Barring Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Health & Safety Policy Statement
- Induction & Probation Policy
- Job Share Policy
- Leave Policy
- Maternity Leave Policy

- Menopause Policy
- Officer Code of Conduct 2023
- Officer Code of Conduct 2024
- Parental Leave Policy
- Redeployment Policy
- Redundancy & Compensation Policy
- Stress Management Policy
- Training & Development Policy
- Violence & Aggression at Work Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

The Deputy Town Clerk outlined the process for both renewal of existing policies and creation of new policies. The Deputy Town Clerk reviewed policies alongside advice and templates from both ACAS (Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service) and trade unions as well the Council's contracted HR advisory service, Work Nest.

Once the Deputy Town Clerk was content with the drafted policy, it went through the following process for consideration and approval:

1. SMT (Senior Management Team)
2. Staff Consultation for 30 days
3. JCC (including union reps) (Joint Consultative Committee)
4. Personnel Committee
5. Full Council

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that there were three new policies;

- Flexible Working Policy
- Stress Management Policy
- Violence & Aggression at Work Policy

Some of the other policies listed had been revised.

Councillor Dean commented that it would be good to encourage more female representatives i.e. on the Joint Consultative Committee.

Councillor Pardy raised an issue on the Leave Policy regarding retained firefighters stating the information shown on the policy was not correct.

Councillor Phillips commented that Council should consider wider diversity inclusion and was there any guidance on this. The Deputy Town Clerk responded that there was an Equality Policy, but this may be better placed on the Joint Consultative Committee Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED:

- i) **That the policies as presented to Council be accepted and adopted.**
- ii) **That the Deputy Town Clerk reviews the Leave Policy and bring back to Full Council for adoption.**

86/23 RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee held on 17 January 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 17 January 2024 be received and adopted.

87/23 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 4 December 2023 and 22 January 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 4 December 2023 and 22 January 2024 be received and adopted.

88/23 PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 21 November 2023, 12 December 2023 and 9 January 2024 were submitted as circulated as read.

Councillor Moseley commented that she was not present at the meeting on 9 January 2024 and Councillor Halliday had been Chairman of that meeting. As Councillor Halliday was not present at Full Council this evening, Councillor Dartnall proposed the adoption of those minutes on their behalf.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 21 November 2023, 12 December 2023 and 9 January 2024 be received and adopted.

89/23 CLIMATE EMERGENCY & NATURE RECOVERY COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Climate Emergency & Nature Recovery Committee held on 11 January 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Climate Emergency & Nature Recovery Committee meeting held on 11 January 2024 be received and adopted.

90/23 WORKING GROUPS

90.1 JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 24 January 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Joint Consultative Committee meeting held on 24 January 2024 be received and adopted.

90.2 CLEAN RIVER WORKING GROUP

The minutes of the Clean River Working Group meeting held on 24 January 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Clean River Working Group meeting held on 24 January 2024 be received and adopted.

90.3 CITY OF SANCTUARY WORKING GROUP

The minutes of the City of Sanctuary Working Group meeting held on 22 January 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the City of Sanctuary Working Group meeting held on 22 January 2024 be received and adopted.

91/23 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with s1(2) Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings) Act 1960, members of the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following items being considered involve the disclosure of confidential information.

The Mayor advised that live streaming of this meeting would now stop. She thanked members of the public for logging in. All papers relating to the meeting could be found on the website www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk

92/23 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Personnel Committee meetings held on 16 November and 7 December 2023 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 16 November and 7 December 2023 be received and adopted

93/23 GREENFIELDS RECREATION GROUND

Members were provided with an update on the re-purchase of Greenfields Recreation Ground. Councillor Mosley stated that conversations had taken place with the developer as they wished to resolve the matter as soon as possible. An offer had been made and agreed and completion was hoped soon. Pressure was on solicitors to get swift action.

94/23 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Councillor Mosley had asked for this item to be added to the agenda to gain some understanding on the Service Level Agreement in place with Shropshire Council. The Town Clerk provided an update.

RESOLVED:

- i) That a Service Level Agreement Working Group be created;**
- ii) That the working group members be Councillor Mosley, Councillor Wagner, Councillor Wilson, Councillor Dean, Councillor Moseley and Town Council staff.**

95/23 CLOSING REMARKS

The Mayor thanked members and staff for their attendance and closed the meeting.