

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
Meeting of Council
Held in the Council Chamber, Shirehall, Shrewsbury at
6pm on Monday 18 March 2024

PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources), Stuart Farmer (Acting Operations Manager) and Michelle Farmer (Committee Clerk). Also in attendance was Amanda Jones (Shropshire Supports Refugees) and two members of the public.

96/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

No apologies received as all Councillors were present.

97/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

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|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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 |

98/23 MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

The minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 29 January 2024 be submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Full Meeting of Council on 29 January 2024 be approved and signed as a true and accurate record.

99/23 MATTERS ARISING

The Town Clerk reported that:

- **Min 80.1** – Support of a Town Centre Swimming Pool Motion – This had been discussed with officers and a representative would be attending the next Recreation & Leisure Committee on 8 May 2024 to discuss the consultation with members.
- **Min 80.2** – Co-operative Council Innovation Network – The Town Clerk was struggling to seek clarification as to membership arrangements. It seemed that Town Councils could not be full members but could be associate members.
- **Min 80.3** – Neurodiversity Friendly Town – A Working Group meeting had been scheduled for 20 March 2024
- **Min 80.4** – Carparking charge increase Motion – This had been discussed with officers and representations had been sent to Shropshire Council

Minute 94/23 - Service Level Agreement. Councillor Mosley reported that a Working Group had been arranged and had met on 13 February with a further meeting being held on 20 March. The Town Council were working with Shropshire Council on future work streams. There was need for some confidentiality at this stage, but he assured residents that there would be full transparency when able.

100/23 ANNOUNCEMENTS

100.1 MAYORAL ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Mayor & Deputy Mayor's engagements for the period 26 January 2024 to 17 March 2024 were circulated and noted.

The Mayor reported that since the last meeting she had a full diary and had attended several activities including Stand with Ukraine Day and the High Sheriff Shropshire Outstanding Young Citizenship Awards 2024. She had also attended Severdale Specialist Academy's career week which had been a special and emotional day.

100.2 TOWN CLERK ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The Town Clerk reported that the annual Mayors Awards Ceremony would be held on 8th April and all Members were invited to attend.
- The Annual Town Meeting would be held on 22nd April. The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk were looking at innovative ways of engaging the public. It was anticipated this would be the launch of the Town Council's Action Plan.
- Public consultation for Shrewsbury Sports Village was now open. It opened Friday 15 March and would close on 9 May. Members could consider representations at the Recreation & Leisure Committee on 8 May 2024

101/23 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.

One question had been received this evening from Mr David Sandbach:

A news article had been printed about a new purpose-built Shifnal and Priorslee Medical Practice. Mr Sandbach asked if the Town Council had any meetings with the S&TICB which would resolve the need to improve GP services in Shrewsbury? What progress had Shrewsbury Town Council made in respect of the resolving the alleged Shrewsbury GP crisis and the proposed Cavel Centre plan?

Councillor Mosley confirmed that he had not seen the question from Mr Sandbach prior to the meeting and he would send him a written response as soon as possible.

102/23 MOTIONS FROM MEMBERS

There were no motions from Councillors.

103/23 CITY OF SANCTUARY

The Deputy Town Clerk and Amanda Jones from Shropshire Supports Refugees provided a presentation to Council.

Shrewsbury Town Council agreed to apply for City of Sanctuary status in June 2021:

That this council was committed to support an initiative to make Shrewsbury into a recognised 'Town of Sanctuary' welcoming those fleeing violence and persecution in their own countries. They recognised their potential contribution to their town, and also recognised that a comprehensive, co-ordinated and forward-looking approach was needed if the welfare of people moving into the town, and community cohesion between new and existing communities, were to be supported effectively. To this end, they:

Acknowledge the contribution of refugees and people seeking sanctuary to the town of Shrewsbury

- Were willing to add their organisation's name to the list of supporters of City of Sanctuary
- This council would work to implement the City of Sanctuary pledges through its actions and policies, and with its partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors.
- This council was committed to support an initiative to make Shrewsbury into a recognised 'Town of Sanctuary'
- They called on Shropshire Council to apply for 'City of Sanctuary' Status.

Since then a working group had been established and work was underway to submit an application for City of Sanctuary status.

Amanda Jones provided Council with her presentation stating that 117.2 million people would be forcibly displaced or stateless in 2023. She went on to explain that the UK had offered protection to 175,142 people in the year ending June 2023. 154,254 (88%) were offered a safe and legal (humanitarian) route to the UK in the year ending June 2023.

There were:

- 102,807 people granted Ukraine Visa and Extension Schemes visas
- 43,368 people granted Hong Kong BN(O) visas
- 4,671 people granted Family Reunion visas
- 3,408 people resettled and relocated, including 2,570 under Afghan schemes

The figures of Refugees and people seeking Asylum in Shrewsbury were (estimated):

- Syrians: Approx. 20 families
- 1 Asylum hotel Approx. 100 people
- Hong Kong Approx. 25 Families in Shrewsbury
- Ukrainians Approx 500
- Nationalities in the hotel were Iran, Iraq , Kurdish ,Sudanese, Eritrean, Tamil, Afghans and Syrians
- Apart from certain nationalities like Albania, 92% of people were expected to get their leave to remain status.

She went on to explain the reasons why people were here which were the Effects of long-term political unrest in a country i.e war, food and sometimes water shortages, Sexuality, Destruction of infrastructure, Attacks from own government, Police and political structures.

The fear of what would happen if they remained was stronger than the fear of going into the unknown and risking death; going back was never an option. Refugee camps were dangerous and miserable with gangs rule and corruption being rife in the UN and security teams. They had come here for a reason, and this was to start their lives again.

Amanda Jones explained that there was support in place, facilitating as many people as possible. They tried to be a support network that their friends & family would've been and tried to help them create a support network of their own. They educated the community on refugee experiences and vulnerability using local and national platforms, bringing the refugee community together with local authority, statutory bodies and the third sector. They aimed to empower refugees and asylum seekers to stand on their own two feet and tried to ease the pressure on local services and infrastructure.

The Shropshire Supports Refugees Hub acted as a place of safety and welcome for people seeking sanctuary in Shrewsbury and Shropshire. People were encouraged to make themselves at home, use the Wi-Fi and access the support services. They could make their own food in the kitchens, and they hosted drop-in support sessions from their partners such as The Housing Options team and Enable employment services. The local authority resettlement team had an office with them also and there were monthly visits by Axis Counselling, Women's Aid and the Job Center which were just a few of their partners.

They did as much awareness sessions as possible attending 23 schools, hosting refugee week, arts projects, short films, videos and talks. They also had many local partnerships involved and the more they could get involved the better it would be.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained to Committee what Shrewsbury Town Council could do. There were criteria that had to be met to get the Town of Sanctuary status and she asked that Councillors remembered refugees in what they did and how they behaved. If Councillors had any further ideas she requested they contacted her.

Councillor Gillam, who was Chairman of the City of Sanctuary Working Group, thanked them both for their presentation and for all who were involved in the project, and Councillors who had embraced the City of Sanctuary project. It was a joy and a privilege to meet these people who wanted to make a good future for themselves.

Councillor Pardy was in full support of the work that was happening and requested people visited their Hub and have a chat with them.

Councillor Roberts echoed comments made and also reminded people that the hub was open to all and to get to know the people who were there.

Councillor Dean commented that the situation in Shrewsbury was peaceful and they should all be proud of the work that had been done to date and it was a tribute to all organisations involved. Facts needed to be shown and recorded as the government had taken away their safe routes.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted**
- (ii) That the Town of Sanctuary Strategy and Action Plan be received subject to further consideration by the Working Group and Full Council.**

104/23 UNIVERSITY CENTRE SHREWSBURY

The Town Clerk reported that she had circulated a letter received from the Deputy Provost explaining their intention to withdraw higher education courses from Shrewsbury. The Town Clerk had emailed the Executive Director of Place for a position statement from Shropshire Council. Shropshire Council had a £62 million budgetary challenge at present. They had supported the University but could no longer continue to do so but it was still there ambition to support Higher Education. There was commitment from them but people needed to be aware of the budgetary resources they faced.

Councillor Dean commented that this was a loss to Shrewsbury and the tone of the letter received was concerning. He hoped that negotiations would lead somewhere and a new site could be found so new people could also be recruited.

Councillor Mosley echoed Councillor Deans comments. He was disappointed that the University seemed to be blaming Shropshire Council for the situation. He commented that he could remember the 'buzz' when the University first came and it was seen as a step forward as Shrewsbury was catching up with many other large towns and cities in the country.

Councillor Wagner commented it was a shame that Shrewsbury would end up with no University. He believed the university had become collateral in Shropshire Council's decision to leave Shirehall, with the University's departure opening up the potential for Shropshire Council to reoccupy the Guildhall as a headquarter.

Councillor Pardy also said that this was a sad situation and commented that Shropshire Council had always committed money too early and sadly had no foresight.

RESOLVED:

That the topic would be referred to the Service Level Agreement Working Group for further discussion

105/23 TRANSPORT CONSULTATIONS

The Town Clerk updated Council on a number of movement related matters, for which consultation was sought.

- (i) Movement Strategy – There had been a really productive meeting of the Active Travel Working Group and the notes had been distributed to assist members in providing a more formalised response.
- (ii) Active Travel Quarter Consultation – This consultation had caused concern locally and there had been a cross-party letter from all those members in the area expressing concern. Members were asked to consider whether that letter would form the basis of a corporate response
- (iii) LUF2 proposals at Chester Street – This was a project that the Big Town Plan Partnership sought funding for but initially looking at more of a public realm intervention, it was now more of a highways improvement project. It also didn't fit well with the delivery plan for the Movement Strategy and members may wish to make representations to detail the timings of the project.

Much of the above needed to stress the need for the Movement Strategy being the defining policy for movement in Shrewsbury and as such all movement related disciplines needed to have regard for such.

Councillor Dartnall commented that there were lots of Active Travel items mentioned. They had discussed the Movement Strategy at the Active Travel Working Group, of which Council supported the strategy. In regards to Active Travel there were some disagreements on how suitable the proposal was and there were concerns implementing out of sequence as it may impeded the final implementation of the Movement Strategy. Councillor Dartnall proposed that the consultations were discussed at the Active Travel Working Group.

Councillor Lemon agreed with the comments raised by Councillor Dartnall stating that the three schemes were originally positive to improve road and public safety but there were

substantial issues within the schemes and he welcomed discussions at the Active Travel Working Group.

Councillor Green was also in agreement and he had concerns regarding LUF2 as residents in the location were confused and angry about the consultation process.

Councillor Bentick agreed and stated that sections had been removed from the plans and there was a lack of coherence. The current plans did not meet standards and needed to be reviewed and changed.

Councillor Mosley agreed stating it should be delayed for further investigation and proposed to put forward a view to Shropshire Council to seek lengthening of the timescale for more investigation and research; delay any implementation of the plan.

Councillor Wilson was also in agreement with comments made and stated the problem as the way schemes were being funded which was from all various varieties. Shropshire Council should commit their own funding and agree to extend as some proposals were atrocious.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Council requests a delay in process to allow for further input.**
- (ii) That a meeting of the Active Travel Working Group is arranged as soon as possible**

106/23 VISIONING

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that there had been a number of meetings in order to agree the draft action plan and what had been provided to them was the latest version following their recent meeting.

At that meeting, they had discussed the next stage in agreeing the strategic action plan and how they wanted to include public consultation within the process. Following that discussion, the Deputy Town Clerk had drafted a set of questions that would allow them to do this and these had been shared with Members.

The Town Clerk suggested that the public consultation was raised at the Annual Town Meeting which would be held on 22 April 2024.

Councillor Mosley proposed that they adopted the action plan as a basis for public consultation.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Action Plan be approved for formal consultation**
- (ii) That launch plans be set to coincide with the Annual Town Meeting.**

107/23 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Town Clerk reported that Shropshire Council proposed to make the following amendments to Town Council's internal/external boundaries:

Shrewsbury:

- That the Bicton Urban ward of Bicton PC be moved into the Bowbrook ward of Shrewsbury Town Council
- That the Upper Edgebold Ward of Great Hanwood PC be moved into the Radbrook Ward of Shrewsbury Town Council
- That the Hendrick Crescent ward of Atcham PC be moved into the Sutton & Reabrook ward of Shrewsbury Town Council
- That the portion of Berrington Parish to the north of the A5 be moved into the Sutton & Reabrook ward of Shrewsbury Town Council and that the LGBCE be asked to adjust the unitary boundary accordingly
- That the Pimley Manor ward of Uffington PC be moved into the Sundorne ward of Shrewsbury Town Council

Proposals for changes to the Town Council external and internal boundaries were proposed. Members needed to consider whether these were appropriate and whether there were any other measures required to be considered.

Councillor Bentick commented that at the south end of Meole Brace, there were a couple of roads that currently sat in Bayston Hill parish and he questioned if they should be in Meole Brace. The Town Clerk confirmed that the roads in question were within the new proposed boundary and should be in Meole Brace ward.

Councillor Mosley asked whether the amendments were what we had asked for and the Town Clerk confirmed that they were following the urban extensions.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Community Governance Proposals by Shropshire Council be approved**
- (ii) That a request be made for the recognised extensions to the Meole Estate, which are in Bayston Hill be incorporated into the town boundaries.**

Councillor Dartnall left the meeting.

108/23 ANTI SPIKING INITIATIVE

The Town Clerk reported that following a presentation by 1st & Bowery at Recreation & Leisure Committee on 6 March, it was requested that the item be brought to Full Council for agreement. The Anti-spiking initiative wasn't designed to stop spiking nor was it an initiative that would tell you what you had been spiked with, but it had a good efficacy on picking up the elements that made up over 600 substances. This was a project that was currently being promoted by West Mercia Police and there had been a promotional session in the town centre. Members of the Committee were impressed by such a simple and easy tool that could and would help people to remain safe in the night-time economy and the Committee sought the support of Council to fund the £700 costs for Phase 2 of the initiative.

Councillor Halliday welcomed this very good initiative and Councillor Wagner commented that it was an important scheme for the night time economy and he proposed that Council agreed to funding the initiative to make the town safer.

Councillor Pardy fully agreed and commented that anybody who was a parent would agree that this was needed.

RESOLVED

That Council agree to fund the £700 for Phase 2 of the Anti-Spiking initiative

109/23 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS TENDER

The Acting Operations Manager reported to Council that the Town Council procure its Christmas Lighting on a 3-year lease. The previous lease expired in January and throughout November & December 2023, the Town Council went out to tender for the next 3 years of Christmas lighting with a closing date of mid-January 2024. Following this tender process there were submissions from five suppliers all of which met the budget, and all were evaluated against tender criteria.

Once the Acting Operations Manager had completed the necessary due diligence, a working party with Councillor Mrs Moseley and Councillor Wilson was arranged in which all proposals were considered. Following this, it was agreed to award the new 3-year contract to the current supplier, Turnock Ltd. It was a unanimous decision as it was felt that the displays encapsulated Christmas in a more fun and colourful way than others.

It was hoped to include further lighting between the St.Johns Hill junction and Rowleys House on Barker Street but this was dependant on the current infrastructure being suitable.

RESOLVED:

That the Christmas Lights Tender be awarded to Turnock Ltd

110/23 RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee held on 6 March 2024 were circulated as read.

Councillor Mosley commented that the Committee moved to a motion on the last section of Min 92/23 which was agreed by the Recreation & Leisure Committee. He proposed that the minutes be amended to state express concern and deplore the ongoing delay of the Dana Footpath and call upon all parties to resolve the issue and get the works carried out.

RESOLVED:

That further to amendments to 92/23 to reflect Councillor Mosley's proposal, the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 6 March 2024 be received and adopted.

111/23 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 5 February 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5 February 2024 be received and adopted.

112/23 PLANNING COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 30 January 2024, 20 February 2024 and 12 March 2024 were submitted as circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 30 January 2024, 20 February 2024 and 12 March 2024 be received and adopted.

113/23 WORKING GROUPS

113.1 ACTIVE TRAVEL WORKING GROUP

The minutes of the Active Travel Working Group meeting held on 12 February 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Active Travel Working Group meeting held on 12 February 2024 be received and adopted.

113.2 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WORKING GROUP

The minutes of the Service Level Agreement Working Group meeting held on 13 February 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Service Level Agreement Working Group meeting held on 13 February 2024 be received and adopted.

113.3 SHREWSBURY IN BLOOM WORKING GROUP

The minutes of the Shrewsbury in Bloom Working Group meeting held on 22 February 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Shrewsbury In Bloom Working Group meeting held on 22 February 2024 be received and adopted.

Members of the public left the meeting.

114/23 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

115/23 PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Personnel Committee meetings held on 7 March 2024 were circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Personnel Committee meeting held on 7 March 2024 be received and adopted

116/23 GREENFIELDS RECREATION GROUND

Members were provided with an update on the re-purchase of Greenfields Recreation Ground. It was progressing well and an agreement had been reached but there would need to be an Extraordinary Full Council meeting convened to agree final settlement figures.

117/23 CLOSING REMARKS

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