

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Held in Committee Room, Livesey House At 6.00pm on Monday 7th April 2025

PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources), Clare Turner (Deputy Town Clerk), Stuart Farmer (Acting Operations Manager and Projects Manager), Ian Thorpe (Commercial, Markets and Events Manager), Andy Hall (Youth & Community Manager) and Heather Phillips (Committee Clerk)

96/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillors Green and Phillips.

97/24 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.
------------------------	--

98/24 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 3rd February 2025 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 3rd February 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

99/24 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

100/24 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 25th January to 31st March 2025. These had been agreed by two signatories before the RFO and Town Clerk uploaded for payment. No comments or concerns were raised.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 25th January to 31st March 2025 be approved.

101/24PREPARE END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS

The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated a report to appraise members on the process for the year end accounts for 2024/25 and relevant submission dates. He added that the accounts were in line with the outturn carried out in the budget process in January.

The Council must approve the Accounts, Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and relevant schedules by 30th June 2025 which must then be submitted to the external auditors, PKF Littlejohn, by 1st July 2025. The RFO provided the timetable as follows (subject to confirmation of dates from external auditor):

- 29/04/25 – Close down 2024/25 accounts system after all invoices raised, purchase invoices posted and year end adjustments made
- 26/05/25 – Draft Accounts prepared for meeting with the leader
- 02/06/25 – Draft accounts for F&GP to consider
- TBC – Internal audit visit/remote final year end check
- 30/06/25 – Council meeting to agree Accounts and sign the AGAR
- 01/07/25 – AGAR and working papers sent to PKF Littlejohn to meet 1st July deadline
- 01/07/25 – Notice of appointment of date for exercise of elector's rights for the 2024/25 accounts for a 30 day period commencing 1st July 2025.
- 30/09/25 – latest date for completion of Annual Return by PKF Littlejohn
- 30/09/25 – Notice of conclusion of the audit and right to inspect the annual return published.

RESOLVED:

That the Report and timetabled dates be noted.

102/24INTERNAL AUDITOR

Prior to the meeting, the Internal Audit Report 2024/25: Interim Update was circulated to members. No issues had been raised as yet.

Councillor Wilson commented that the report was always excellent and credited the RFO and staff for the report being merely a formality each time.

Councillor Dartnall asked what the auditor meant in the Conclusion by “no major issues or concerns have been identified?” The RFO explained that the auditor only checks a sample of the accounts so would be unable to say that they are 100% correct.

RESOLVED:

That the Internal Audit Report 2024/25: Interim Update be accepted.

103/24 YOUTH ACTIVITIES

A report on the Youth Service and its recent activities was circulated prior to the meeting. The Youth & Community Manager drew notice to the following:

- Youth activities returned week commencing 24th February and all clubs held at The Grange, Ditherington, The Hive and The Lodge, Monkmoor, were back up and running as usual.
- Congratulations were given to Hive Youth Club members who took part in a litterpick of the town centre and Quarry as part of the Big British Spring Clean.
- HAF (Holiday Activity Fund) funding had been agreed for Shropshire for 2025 and HAF clubs were planned for Easter break at The Grange.
- The AC (Alternative Curriculum) delivery was continuing, and all attendees were from Shrewsbury Academy.
- The Youth Town Council met on 20th March. The Youth Councillors, supported by Town Councillors, met with Julia Buckley MP and received a presentation from Lisa Freudmann regarding the Shrewsbury Moves Festival. The Festival took place on 21st March and the Youth Councillors attending were praised for their representation of the Council and the young people of Shrewsbury.

The Youth & Community Manager thanked all those councillors who came to support the Youth Council at the Shrewsbury Moves Festival. Councillor Mosley added that the Youth Council was one of the major successes of youth activity.

When looking at the youth club attendance statistics, Councillor Mosley asked if any trends had been noted. The Youth & Community Manager said that attendance was generally consistent with the exception of the Monkmoor football group where numbers had fallen due to weather and travellers being on site. Shrewsbury Town Football Club kept records of attendance figures and the operational delivery of these sessions was being discussed. Initial discussions had also taken place with the Deputy Town Clerk re offering youth opportunities in this area during the summer.

The Town Clerk asked how the county Youth Strategy work was cascading down to the Youth & Community Manager. He replied that the county Strategy had not yet been finalised but that, when it was, it was hoped that the Town Council strategy would be dovetailed into it. Councillor Wilson asked if the Town Council strategy could be advanced despite this so that it was not kept waiting – it could be reviewed to fit when the county Strategy is settled. This issue was to be tabled for the next meeting of this committee. Councillor Dartnall asked that the statutory requirements also be considered when discussing the strategy.

Councillor Mosley asked about Shropshire Council's service. The Youth & Community Manager said that they had a team that were doing detached work around the county and running school projects but that the Town Council had not been consulted or involved. Shropshire Council were also undertaking a re-structure.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted.**
- (ii) That Youth Strategy be tabled at the next meeting.**

Andy Hall left the meeting.

104/24TENDER WORK

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

The Projects Manager summarised as follows:

- There was a live tender on the website for 2 new play areas at Raby Crescent and Tilstock Crescent.
- The refurbishment of the Quarry gates was progressing with the return of the gates expected in the next few weeks.
- The Splash Park surfacing was underway and commissioning of the existing equipment was planned to follow this work with the park set to open for the summer. Councillor Moseley asked about the play equipment and the Projects Manager said it would be the same as before.
- Future tenders were for the re-surfacing of the outside space at Ditherington Community Centre and the Greenhouse ventilation solutions.

Councillor Dartnall asked about progress on the long-awaited play area at Sutton Grange. The Project Manager and the Town Clerk explained that there were a number of issues to be resolved including a long list of snagging prior to any formal transfer of land.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report be noted.

105/24MARKETS UPDATE

The Markets Update was circulated prior to the meeting. The Commercial, Markets & Events Manager said that a key point was that the Market had been very busy since January, especially Fridays and Saturdays. Traders were happy. He added that this success was a positive to build on this year but that the ageing building and space availability had its challenges.

New canopies had been installed on the trading floor. These were positively received and allowed more light to the stalls. They also complied with fire-retardancy regulations. Councillor Wilson said that the canopies improved the look of the market.

The Commercial, Markets & Events Manager said that he was working with Shropshire Council so that the market could be approached as a whole, particularly in building visibility and looking at new signage and maps.

The Sunday Market's operators were going through a difficult trading period but it was hoped that footfall would increase as the weather improved and some marketing undertaken. The operators were still pursuing the inclusion of car boot stalls and had therefore been asked for evidence to bring to this committee that it would increase trading; the evidence provided so far had been anecdotal. Councillor Mosley asked why car boot stalls had been excluded from the site and the Commercial, Markets & Events Manager explained that they were difficult to manage as goods had to be checked to avoid counterfeits and/or illegal items. Councillor Mosley said that the experience for customers

would not be enhanced with the inclusion of car boot traders. Also, the West Midlands Showground provided large car boot events.

The Town Clerk added that lead market officers from MHCLG were to visit the market and a provisional date of 7th May had been set.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

106/24CAPITAL PROGRAMME

An update on the Capital Programme was circulated prior to the meeting and the Town Clerk pointed out that it was not yet colour coded and that all projects on the list were either outstanding or had arisen from the visioning exercise. Of particular note were:

- Tilstock Crescent and Raby Crescent play areas were out to tender.
- Splash Park resurfacing was underway.
- The Dana footpath submission was ready to go to Shropshire Council.
- CCTV – a new workstation for monitoring CCTV had been purchased and 4 non-functioning cameras had been replaced. 5 additional cameras were also to be installed. Work was also being undertaken on a few technical issues that had arisen in bringing the system up to date. Approximately £15k out of the £40k allocated had been spent to date.
- Ditherington Community Centre - window and door replaced and resurfacing of the outside space re-surfacing was planned.
- Bus shelters – the replacement of 30 bus shelters in the final phase (3) of the project was being prepared. Councillor Wilson asked if checks had been made that there was a bus service serving all the replaced bus shelters and the Project Manager assured him that they had.

Councillor Mosley asked if the estimates for the Dana footpath had been received; the Town Clerk said she would chase these up. The Shropshire Horticultural Society had forwarded Heads of Terms to Shropshire Council as well as confirmation of the extent of their land holding. There remained a query about ownership of the wall which required breaching. Shropshire Council were making enquiries with Shrewsbury Prison.

Councillor Moseley asked about progression on the paths at Upton Lane. The Town Clerk said that this wasn't listed as the project was to be carried out in-house.

Councillor Vasmer asked if Monkmoor Recreation Ground was now in the ownership of the Town Council. The Town Clerk said that the asset transfer from Shropshire Council had been delayed due to its staffing issues but that weekly update meetings were scheduled with Estates.

RESOLVED:

That the update of the Capital Programme be noted.

107/24CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked members of the public that had logged in. All papers relating to this meeting could be found on the website www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk and the minutes would appear in draft on the website within the next month. He thanked Councillors and all staff involved in the meeting.