

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee Held in Committee Room, Livesey House At 6.00pm on Monday 14th July 2025

PRESENT

Councillors: R Wilson (Chair), B Bentick, R Dartnall, A Fejfer, E Micklewright, A Mosley, D Vasmer and A Wagner

IN ATTENDANCE

Clare Turner (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources) and Heather Phillips (Committee Clerk)

17/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillor Julian Dean and Helen Ball (Town Clerk).

18/25 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 Wagner	Item 28/25 as Deputy Leader of Shropshire Council
Councillor Wilson	Item 25/25 as portfolio holder of the Big Town Plan at Shropshire Council

19/25 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 2nd June 2025 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee meeting held on 2nd June 2025 be approved and signed as a correct record.

20/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Re Min 15/25 – Quarry Management Plan – The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the specification documentation was circulated before the last meeting of this committee and the comments received were being reviewed and where possible incorporated into the revised specification, prior to the start of the tender process. It was intended that this tender would be published after the summer recess.

21/25 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 24th May to 4th July 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 24th May to 4th July 2025 be approved.

22/25 QUARTER 1 ACCOUNTS

The Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated a report on the Quarter 1 Management Account 2025/26 showing members the financial position of the Council for the first quarter of the 2025/26 financial year, for the 3 months to 30 June 2025 and added the following:

- Overall for the quarter there was a positive variance of £44,214.
- There was a positive variance for Q1 on expenditure of £85,081 which was driven by no provision for the 25/26 pay-award and vacant posts £45,322 and delay in Town Team recruitment £41,596 which, if factored into budget and removed, would give rise to a negative (£1,838). Over the various expenditure headings there were small positives and negatives due to timing of expenditure, and taking all into account would come in around budget.
- Income in Q1 was always distorted by the Neighbourhood Fund but not this year as the delay was on the Shropshire Council side and was expected shortly. There was a negative variance of (£40,867) due to the SLA value not yet agreed. Like the expenditure, and taking into account small variances and timings, income was on budget with the exception of the SLA.
- The Balance Sheet continued to be strong although net current assets showed a slight decrease as no monies had been received from Shropshire Council for the Q1 SLA. Shrewsbury Town Council had working capital to ride this out but missed out on investment returns.
- Looking to the future, other than pressure arising from Shropshire Council, there were no current short-term concerns. In the long term, reduction in Bank of England base rates was to mean lower income, but this was hard to predict.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Quarter 1 Management Account report be noted and that income and expenditure was broadly in line with budget, subject to SLA clarity.**
- (ii) That it be noted with Bank of England base rates falling there will be an impact on interest received in future years. Consideration be given to future investment returns given the current positive variances.**

23/25 COMMUNICATIONS

A Communications Update was circulated to members prior to the meeting. The Deputy Town Clerk summarised that the current focus was on the Shrewsbury Bloom judging preparations, including the bloom portfolio (now printed and available) and judging route. The issue currently affecting the Bloom team was keeping on top of the watering for the past few weeks due to the hot weather and sunshine. All blooms were to be in situ by Friday with the work in the Quarry currently being undertaken for the main pole feature. Press releases had received positive comments for: the lime tree removal in the Quarry; the support from Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS) relating to the refill of the Dingle pool (which had been at a very low level) which coincided with SFRS using this as a training exercise; and the pollarding of the trees at Springfield Mere. These press releases helped with public understanding. Works were continuing on developing a draft Communications Strategy for the Town Council.

Councillor Wilson expressed his thanks to SFRS for their support at the Dingle pool.

Councillor Bentick asked that the Bloom route, with accompanying information, be sent out to members and the Deputy Town Clerk agreed that she would do this. Councillor Wilson wished good luck to all the staff involved with Bloom.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

24/25 POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

The Policy & Resources Committee's Forward Plan was circulated to members prior to this meeting. This had been agreed at the last meeting of the Full Council. Councillors were asked for any comments.

Councillor Wagner commented that some minor changes had been made to provide better clarification.

Members held a discussion regarding the requirement for an Independent Remuneration Panel to be set up by Shropshire Council to enable the review of Councillor Allowances at Shrewsbury Town Council to take place. It was requested that the timings for the Councillor Allowances review to be updated within the forward plan and its impact if Shropshire Council doesn't provide the panel required.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan be accepted.

Councillor Wilson left the meeting.

Councillor Vasmer took over as Chair.

25/25 SHREWSBURY BIG TOWN PLAN

Councillor Wagner, as Town Council representative for the Big Town Plan, updated members that, as Mayor, he had signed up to renew the Big Town Plan together with the Town Clerk. At the first meeting the 5 themes were renewed and Councillor Wagner briefed members as follows:

Shrewsbury Moves – Councillor Wagner was pleased to announce that Shrewsbury Moves had been nominated for an award. He added that the promotion of E-bike hire was underway and the last mile delivery using E-cargo bikes was expanding. Cycle pods had been installed in the town as a pilot scheme and all the spaces have been booked. Alterations to the Abbey Lawn side of Abbey Foregate were moving forward.

Shrewsbury Enterprise – The Shrewsbury BID was taking the lead on this, offering business support and investment advice as part of the initiative.

Natural Shrewsbury – The Quarry Park was the main part of this initiative, but its focus was also on clean rivers and greening the town. Works to Roushill Park had been delayed.

Original Shrewsbury – The shop front guide and design code were being extended to the wider town area. The existing Town Council events programme was predominantly based around The Quarry – an opportunity to extend it to a town-wide events programme was being explored.

Cleaner Safer Shrewsbury – A set of priorities was to be devised by the Town Council and subsequently discussed with Shropshire Council.

The Big Town Partnership was working well but a more coherent communications strategy was now required.

Councillor Mosley said that the cancellation of the North West relief road would have implications for Shrewsbury Moves. Councillor Wagner said that the design modelling was now able to be done on the status quo rather than on two different scenarios, which would also save money. Councillor Mosley asked that work gets underway urgently to show the implications of not having the NW relief road and so that plans can be made as soon as possible.

Councillor Mosley asked about Roushill Park as works had not yet started. Councillor Wagner said that discussions with the contractor were taking place and the plan would differ slightly from the original.

Councillor Bentick asked that if detail of the presentation could be shared in advance of the meeting. The Deputy Town Clerk agreed. Councillor Wagner said that the Partnership Agreement could be shared and that it was in the public domain.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

Councillor Wilson returned and resumed his role as Chair.

26/25 LAND TRANSFERS

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Town Clerk had had a meeting with Shropshire Council representatives, Steve Law and Miranda Garrard, to discuss any issues and blockages on the current tranche of land transfers. The Town Clerk was to provide more detailed information at the next meeting but things were progressing.

Councillor Bentick said that there were small parcels of land owned by Shropshire Council outside of those previously mentioned that would be better under Town Council ownership and needed improving. The Town Clerk was aware of these.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

27/25 NEW SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that weekly meetings on the SLA continued to take place and that the Town Council were now able to review the latest draft of information and methodology from Shropshire Council, which was to be completed by the team this week and comments provided by return.

RESOLVED:

That the updated be noted.

Councillor Wagner left the meeting.

28/25 DEPUTY LEADER'S LETTER TO PARISH COUNCILS

The Town Council's response to the Deputy Leader of Shropshire Council's letter to parish councils was discussed at Full Council on 30th June 2025 and the updated response letter had been sent by the Town Clerk. Members were to be updated once any further information or requests were received.

Councillor Wilson added that Shropshire Council had replied thanking the Town Council for its comprehensive response and would be sending a more fulsome response in due course.

Councillor Wilson said that during a meeting of SALC, where all parishes were spoken to, it was established that the Town Council would remain independent. Shropshire Council were to initiate a pilot scheme soon and hoped that the Town Council would be part of it. There was a Sub-Committee meeting in September to discuss this matter further.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

Councillor Wagner returned.

29/25 BELVIDERE BRIDGE

Councillor Wagner circulated an update on Belvidere Bridge to members prior to this meeting and comments were invited. Councillor Dartnall emphasised how important this bridge was but that the responsibility for it was Network Rail who had received £250k from the Weir Hill development nearby to improve it ie widen it for 2-way traffic and improve pedestrian safety. So far £40k had been spent. Shropshire Council were keen to move this issue forward because phase 3 of the Weir Hill development was imminent and were asking for the Town Council's help to put pressure on Network Rail to move this forward.

Councillor Dartnall said that if £250k had changed hands then there must have been some sort of agreement between Shropshire Council and the contractors at Weir Hill, so she was questioning why improvements were stalling.

Councillor Vasmer welcomed this report and said that pressure needs to be put on Network Rail especially as they have now made additional demands on the planned improvements. It did not appear that there was a paper agreement as to whether Network Rail would cover the rest of the costs but as the money came from S106 there must have been some sort of agreement. Shropshire Council had £210k left (which came from S106 monies) to spend on these improvements but Network Rail were not yet allowing works to proceed.

Councillor Dartnall said that this issue needed to be taken forward and would be happy for the Town Council to respond. Improvements to the Bridge would affect the whole of the East of Shrewsbury.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Town Council write formally to Network Rail to:**
 - a. Make clear the strategic importance of Belvidere Bridge for movement around Shrewsbury, and the clear expectation residents have of seeing improvements given significant funding has been secured.**
 - b. Reiterate the urgent need for footway widening and safety improvements.**
 - c. Express dissatisfaction with Network Rail's approach, particularly the refusal to proceed after funding was secured through the Weir Hill development.**
- (ii) Support Shropshire Council's efforts to re-engage with Network Rail and push for a workable solution to allow traffic and pedestrian safety improvements.**
- (iii) Request a collaborative review with Network Rail to explore alternative options that meet both safety standards and community needs.**

30/25 CLOSING 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.