

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL**  
**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
**Meeting held Virtually**  
**at 6.00pm on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021**

**PRESENT** – Councillors Julian Dean (Mayor), Elisabeth Roberts (Deputy Mayor), Alan Mosley (Leader), Rosemary Dartnall, Mary Davies, Phil Gillam, Nat Green, Kate Halliday, Pam Moseley, Kevin Parady, David Vasmer, Alex Wagner and Rob Wilson

**IN ATTENDANCE** – Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Ruth Jones (Office Manager), Seb Slater (Executive Director Shrewsbury Business Improvement District), Tim Pritchard (Shrewsbury Programme Manager Shropshire Council), PC Simon Lewis (West Mercia Police) and 17 Members of the Public

### **1/21 MAYOR'S WELCOME**

The Mayor welcomed those present to the Annual Town Meeting of the Parish of Shrewsbury. He advised that this meeting was an opportunity for the residents and electors of Shrewsbury to raise any issues of interest or concern regarding the town. Were any attendees residents of the neighbouring parishes of Bayston Hill & Bickton, they too were holding similar meetings. Due to the current Coronavirus Regulations and recent experiences of holding physical meetings with significant public access restrictions, it was felt that holding a virtual meeting to discharge the requirements of an Annual Town Meeting was more beneficial to the public at large and the Council would commit to holding a further Town Meeting later in the municipal year where the safe holding of physical meetings allowed greater public access. This meeting was being broadcast on the Town Council's Facebook Page.

### **2/21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The Mayor reported that emergency Coronavirus Legislation dispensed with the need for an Annual Town Meeting in 2020. The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019 were circulated as read.

It was proposed and seconded and:

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.**

### **3/17 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

Councillor Alan Mosley, Leader of the Council presented his Annual Report.

He was delighted to report that the Council had had a very successful year, not least by the way the Council had responded to the most extraordinary challenges ever seen within a lifetime. Many services were threatened but what STC did in the most professional, caring and effective way showed how local service delivery can be responsive and vitally important.

In the wake of 100-year floods which brought the town to a near standstill the Council were faced with the pandemic and the first of the Country's lockdown.

The Council worked immediately to keep people as safe as possible, including its own staff who quickly adapted to working from home. This not only involved Council services but working with others in both public and private sectors to make Shrewsbury safe and protect its amenities, economy and jobs as much as possible. The Council has also been at the centre of efforts to foster the Town's recovery so that everything has been done to ensure that the Town bounces back, thrives and regains vibrancy.

Councillor Mosley was proud to have been one of a good number of members who established and managed key support groups who provided vital help to 1,000s throughout their wards and particularly the more vulnerable.

The pandemic had been costly to the Council's budget and had impacted on services, including a move to virtual meetings. However, in most cases the Council had been able to offer near normal services, including the delivery of a very extensive capital programme. This has been testament to the quality and commitment of staff who deserved massive plaudits for their efforts.

However, it had been sad that so many important events and festivals have had to be cancelled, as was the Britain in Bloom competition. However, The town's great outdoors had attracted record numbers, including the fisheries, and many thanks again went to staff for ensuring areas have stayed open, well maintained and safe.

A large capital plan had resulted in improvements to play areas, green spaces, footpaths, Quarry lighting and transformation of the Council's footway lighting to LEDs. Many of these elements had been led by the Chair of Recreation and Leisure Cllr Kev Pardy.

The lighting had contributed to the Council's Climate Change agenda and Plan while the Council had also planted 3,000 trees, purchased electric vehicles and machinery, planted wildflower verges, green roofs on bus shelters, contracted with green power suppliers, added climate change mitigation to procurement criteria, have investigated solar and heat pumps solutions at the depot and lobbied hard for disinvestment in fossil fuels by the Shropshire Pension Fund.

The Council broke new grounds in establishing a Climate Change Emergency Advisory Group by drawing on the commitment and expertise of representatives from a wide range of environmental groups and thanks was given for their invaluable advice, guidance and support. A ring-fenced budget of £250,000 for climate change mitigation projects was also established.

The Council was now going a stage further and creating a separate committee to lead on the Council's Climate Change work. This will be innovative as comprising Members and 5 Co-optees onto the decision-making process and drawn from leading Groups and Agencies. The other important change will be that the Committee will deal not only with Council related plans but also endeavour to encourage local businesses, charities and other groups to develop and work towards their own plans. Under the Chair David Vasmer the Committee will control a significant sum which will be ring-fenced for a scheme of grants to help fund, encourage and facilitate Climate mitigation schemes.

Throughout the year the Council had been partnered by Shropshire Council and the Shrewsbury Business Improvement District in pursuit of a Vision for Shrewsbury – The Big Town Plan. A massive exercise which led to the appointment of consultants and involvement of Stakeholders before the publication of the Draft Plan and one of the largest public consultation exercises in Shrewsbury. Well over 2,000 people participating in a series of on-line presentations and a massive number of

comments followed which were currently being assessed by the consultants prior to re-evaluation of the Vision.

Much was approved though some areas will be reassessed including the movement strategy which was very much seen as inadequate. Means of addressing that in the light of ongoing discussion and recent developments is underway.

Unfortunately, Young Shrewsbury was hit hard by lockdowns and open access youth centres had to be closed. However, staff had been able to maintain much contact through social media, detached work and greater one to one and small group work with vulnerable young people and their families. Thanks to the initiative of the team the Council received £43,000 from the Youth Endowment Fund, so greatly increased the support for young people in the town.

Chair of Planning was Cllr Nat Green and meetings were every 3 weeks to deal with upwards of 1,000 applications a year. The Council didn't determine applications but were a leading consultee and frequently acted as a sounding board for developers and as a powerful voice for local residents.

The Committee dealt with tree management, highways matters and licencing.

There was a wide range of applications discussed from large: Flaxmill, Aldi, Housing development, to small scale such as house extensions and windows in a conservation area. The Local Plan review had been forensically examined in support of shaping the next 20 years of the area's development.

The Council had been consistent in requiring good design, adequate open space, play and community facilities. In all cases the Council sought to apply good environmental and climate change criteria to all building and other aspects of planning. The Planning Committee recently took one of its most important decisions – to oppose the building of the NWRR.

Next year Councillor Mosley hoped to report that the Council had been successful in further work on a new Capital programme and on the post pandemic rejuvenation throughout all areas of the town. The public could be assured that Town Council members and staff will be at the forefront, as usual, of all that is good about the town.

Councillor Vasmer echoed the sentiments of Councillor Mosley. It had been a difficult year for the Town Council but all had coped remarkably well and much thanks went to the staff for keeping a business as usual attitude to the Council's work. Councillor Vasmer looked forward to fuller reports on Climate Change in the Annual Report and wished to stress the need for amendments to the Big Town Plan Masterplan including the retention of a bus station in the town.

The Mayor thanked both Councillors Mosley & Vasmer for their update. He advised that the Council's Annual Report was available on the Town Council website

#### **4/21 POLICING**

PC Simon Lewis from West Mercia Police's Town Centre Safe Neighbourhoods Team provided an overview of policing in the town including the allocation of additional police resources in various Safe Neighbourhoods Teams throughout the town.

PC Lewis discussed in some detail issues facing the force in addressing pandemic related anti-social behaviour and in particular issues in the Quarry where this very evening police had broken up an organised gathering of 150 youths from across Shrewsbury, Telford and areas of Shropshire. The Police had been using powers to issue Dispersal Orders and powers to enforce the Public Space Protection Order to reduce the levels of ASB. Over the last few months, the police had seen the

decision by the Town Council to employ security guards as essential to addressing ASB, particularly as the CCTV cameras in the area had been down.

Members raised concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour in outlying wards of the town and the levels of police capacity in the town. Members were also keen to thank the police for their support in their wards and their regular presence including having the satellite police station tour their wards.

Members agreed that it would be useful to have a detailed discussion about strategic policing in the town focussing on wider police issues, powers available to the police and in particular the provisions of the Public Space Protection Order, CCTV provision in the town and in terms of Town Council services the provision of security personnel to keep the public safe.

The Mayor thanked PC Lewis for his attendance. He duly left the meeting.

## **5/21 COVID RECOVERY**

Seb Slater, Executive Director of Shrewsbury BID gave a presentation of the collective recovery of the town post-COVID by the Big Town Plan Partners. This had been an extraordinary year with floods and then COVID and another episode of flooding. The recovery work had been co-ordinated through the Shrewsbury Recovery Taskforce. The main campaign to encourage shoppers back to the town had been “Shrewsbury’s Open” and the colour theme had been changed to reflect the seasons and the levels of lockdown. Social Media and press coverage had been critical to the town’s bounce-back-ability. Also through COVID the Big Town Plan Team had developed the Shrewsbury Story involving many partners including Town Councillors. Currently footfall has positive and the Taskforce remained optimistic for the summer. Members noted the success of the pedestrianisation of the High Street; this had been mentioned regularly on the campaign doorstep.

The Mayor thanked Seb for his attendance.

## **6/21 MASTERPLANNING FOR SHREWSBURY**

Tim Pritchard, the Shrewsbury Programme manager for Shropshire Council gave a presentation on the many masterplanning works that are being undertaken either by Shropshire Council or the Big Town Plan Team. The Big Town Plan Team had worked well collectively and developed an ambitious Vision for the town. Masterplanning began in 2018 and had focused on four key themes:

- Connecting communities
- Quality & characterful Public Spaces
- Celebrating Heritage
- Growth Opportunities

A movement vision had been commissioned, but this required further work as it was critical to Shrewsbury’s success.

The masterplan had worked on a number of heritage locations:

- West End
- Frankwell & Riverside
- Station Quarter
- Northern Corridor

The Big Town Plan Festival had proved very successful with good attendance and good themes and the consultation that it kick-started had seen 880 respondents leave 2500 comments.

There are a number of emerging priorities:

- Growth
- Heritage Conservation
- Quality Open Spaces
- Movement

Key priorities were:

1. Movement
2. Public Realm
3. Riverside

Issues raised by members included:

- Cost of public transport
- Mobility issues for residents
- How well the festival was received
- Walking & Cycling
- Bus Station needs to stay but be more attractive
- When will the Low Traffic Zone be implemented
- Town Council's involvement in the process, particularly on delivering the green network
- Movement Strategy needed to be recommissioned and members would welcome sight of the Terms of Reference

The Mayor thanked Tim for his presentation

## **7/21 PUBLIC FORUM**

Mr Edwards raised concern that active travel seemed to always be a second thought. How can active travel be encouraged and people be incentivised to step away from their cars.

There was greater momentum not just through the Big Town Plan but the Climate Change Agenda and stakeholders were more committed to developing active travel solutions.

Mr Russell enquired how the momentum for opposing the North West Relief Road will continue now that the Town Council had opposed the planning application

Councillor Mosley assured the meeting that continued lobbying would continue. He and the Town Clerk were meeting the Leader & Chief Executive of Shropshire Council where he was sure this would be on the agenda

Mr Tocker enquired whether there were any plans for a Clean Air Zone.

Councillor Mosley advised that it is Shropshire Council that took the lead on air quality issues

## **8/21 NEXT MEETING**

29<sup>th</sup> November 2021

## **9/21 CLOSING REMARKS**

The Mayor thanked all those for attending the meeting and joining the broadcast via Facebook. He reiterated that there would be a further Town Meeting this year once the pandemic pressures lifted.