

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**Meeting of the Recreation & Leisure Committee
Held in Room SGH019 at The Guildhall, Frankwell
At 6.00pm on Wednesday 6 July 2022**

PRESENT

Councillors: K Pardy (Chair), B Bentick, P Moseley (substituting for P Gillam), D Vasmer and B Wall.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Head of Operations), Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager), Ruth Jones (Office Manager).

01/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be accepted from Councillors Gillam, Lemon and Wagner.

02/22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY & NON-PECUNIARY) IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Shropshire Councillors	Those twin-hatted members declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council.
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03/22 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 4 May 2022 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 4 May 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

04/22 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Town Clerk reported that there were none that were not included on the agenda.

05/22 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk reported the following:

- That a start date had now been confirmed for work at the Greenacres Play Area.
- That operational and youth staff were currently carrying out consultations with residents and young people about what they would like to see at various sites.
- That Officers had met with the Shropshire Wildlife Trust regarding the Beaver Project, about a Heritage Lottery Bid that was being submitted. As part of that bid, a Partnership Agreement was required. She and the Countryside & Greenspace Team Manager had been

working on a draft. This would be presented to Council for approval in September. Council was still awaiting a licence from Natural England, but this was a long, drawn-out process.

- That Councillor Bentick had convened a meeting about the money that had been ringfenced for improvements to the Meet Place. He would like to seek approval for the money to be used for feasibility work for a community centre on land the Council owned at Mary Webb. This would need to be considered in more detail by this committee and the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Capital Programme report be noted.

06/22 FOOTFALL

The Town Clerk updated the committee on the Project Manager's report about footfall in the town. The Town was continuing to see an increase in new visitors and that there had been understandable spikes in visitors on the days that big events took place. The Chair asked how new and repeat visitors were distinguished. The Town Clerk explained how the system registered the mobile phone pulses that were given out, as phones sought wi-fi networks. The individual pulse was saved, so that any repeat visits could be recognised.

RESOLVED:

That the Footfall Report be noted.

07/22 FISHERIES

The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager reported that overnight parking on Sydney Avenue had recently become an issue. Signage was being increased and further action would be taken if it did not work. Councillor Moseley added that overnight parking had also been an issue at Monkmoor but Andy Jones at Shrewsbury Town Fisheries had recently put up new signage so this would hopefully help.

The Town Clerk added that the bailiffs had recently had throwline training and that the new canoe concession in the Quarry was also offering this for free to the public.

RESOLVED:

That the Fisheries report be noted.

08/22 TEAM SHREWSBURY

The Office Manager provided an update on Team Shrewsbury activities. The majority of issues had reduced compared to 2021, however alcohol, drug and rough sleeper issues had increased, particularly in April. It had however been reported that alcohol-related litter was on the increase in the Quarry during the late evening.

The town had been successful in retaining the Purple Flag for the seventh consecutive year which was a great help in promoting vibrant night-time economy.

A date for the River Safety meeting was to be finalised and this would then be circulated to all councillors.

The Security Team in the Quarry had been a great asset and had recently dealt with a number of very difficult incidents. Staff and some members of the public had reported that they felt much safer in the park since Prosecure had started, however issues were starting to occur after they had finished for the evening.

The Chair asked how the Council normally received feedback on issues from the public. The Town Clerk responded that this was sometimes directly to staff and the security officers but also via email, phone and social media.

RESOLVED:

That the Team Shrewsbury Report be noted.

09/22 RIVER SAFETY

The Town Clerk followed up on her update regarding river safety at the previous meeting. She reported that a lot of work had been undertaken by various partners across the town to address the issue, but it was not an easy problem to fix. Resolving issues regarding river safety would require education, physical barriers and greater public awareness. The actions undertaken so far had been:

- Running the national Don't Drink & Drown Campaign
- Throwline Training of Security Door Staff, Street Pastors and Public Sector Workers including Town Council Staff
- Local Awareness campaigns
- Installation of Throwline Boards
- Better Lighting
- Installation of additional Lifebuoys
- Installation of berries and fencing in key locations

The Assistant Director of Homes & Communities at Shropshire Council had been tasked by Shropshire Council to undertake a risk assessment of the river. Long-standing members of the Council would recall a similar review that was commissioned jointly by Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Town Council. The current proposal had been circulated to the Town Council and the Group Leaders had been made aware of the proposal but had been unable to commit to part funding the work. Unable to wait, Shropshire Council had commissioned the work through WSP, and a Working Group had been established to meet fortnightly for this short piece of work with the Town Clerk being on that Working Group (also included were Highways & Environmental Maintenance, Shropshire Fire & Rescue and the Royal Life Saving Society).

The Town Clerk added that the issue of river safety was being taken very seriously across the town and that she would report back on actions from the working group to future Recreation and Leisure and Finance and General Purposes Committees. It was anticipated that this was likely to be end of August/beginning of September.

Councillor Moseley added that a motion had been put to Shropshire Council by Councillor Halliday that they should also work with Strategic Licensing and licensees across the town as alcohol was often a contributing factor to issues with safety and the river. This had been unanimously supported and a briefing was being prepared.

The Head of Operations added that 23 Town Council were scheduled to receive throw line training, adding to the overall number of employees who were now trained.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the report be noted.**
- (ii) That Shrewsbury Town Council supports the development of a Risk Assessment and undertakes to pay half the fee alongside Shropshire Council.**
- (iii) That the findings of that Risk Assessment and subsequent recommendations are brought to a future meeting of this Committee and Finance & General Purposes Committee ahead for further consideration.**

10/22 THE QUARRY

- (i) Quarry Events Programme for 2022**

The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager reported on the events programme. The next few weeks would be particularly busy with Lets Rock, Queens Baton Relay and the Flower Show.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

- (ii) Minutes of the Quarry Working Group – 19 May 2022**

The Town Clerk reported that the first Quarry Working Group meeting had taken place and that items such as upgrading the depot, the greenhouses and conservation management had been discussed.

Future meetings for this group were to be scheduled.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Quarry Working Group meeting held on 19 May 2022 be accepted and approved.

- (iii) Review the power supply to the Quarry**

The Town Clerk reported that, as part of the refurbishment in 2000 of the Quarry under a Heritage Lottery Funded Project, much of the ducting that is used today was installed. Over time this has been added to, to meet the needs of a number of uses and the general wear and tear of usage as well as the ravages of long periods of flooding had brought into question the efficacy of the power supply.

Added to this, members have previously had discussions about tempering the use of diesel generators in the Quarry particularly as Council looks to seek carbon neutrality by 2030.

A number of the large events utilised the power supply in the Quarry; the Council in turn recharged use back to the event organisers. This was not an exorbitant sum and far cheaper than hiring in generators and paying for fuel.

Some event organisers used generators more than others and mention was made at a recent meeting about the fairs using generators. The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager had discussed this with the Showman's Guild who have already begun to address the sustainability of event power as a national body.

The Town Clerk and Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager had also been discussing the provision of power with the Shropshire Horticultural Society who had been responsible for installing a number of features over the years. Between the Town Council and the Shropshire Horticultural Society Electrical Engineer, there would be an attempt to plot all power infrastructure.

To ensure the Town Council's continued sustainable use of power in the Quarry, there was a need to undertake an electrical survey to determine the scope, usage, viability and potential of the power supply and be in a position to resource infrastructure change.

Councillor Moseley asked how users of the Quarry are charged for power usage. The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager explained that meter readings were taken before and after each event and the event organiser was charged for any excessive usage.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the Report be noted.**
- (ii) That Officers look at appointing an Electrical Engineer to undertake a survey of power infrastructure within the Quarry and that the report be presented to a future Recreation & Leisure Committee and Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting.**
- (iii) That Officers work with event organisers to review power needs in terms of size of supply and locations.**
- (iv) That Shrewsbury Town Council lends its support to the endeavours of the Showman's Guild in addressing the sustainability of event power at a national level.**

(iv) Quarry Security

The Town Clerk reported that at the last meeting of the Recreation & Leisure Committee she had presented a paper regarding the development of a Town Ranger Service. The report was prepared on the back of growing anxiety of town - centre based staff, six of whom had suffered abuse from individuals. Two of those six staff had been signed off on long term stress at work.

The Committee had resolved to not proceed with the Town Ranger Scheme, but instead invited staff to speak to members. As the issue was immediate and having a significant impact upon the welfare of staff, the Town Clerk had had to make a decision to commission security staff to provide patrol cover and locking up services. The Council had a statutory duty to protect its staff under Section 2 of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.

They had started this work in April and since then had dealt with a number of extreme ASB issues including:

- Protecting a young woman from Sex Traffickers
- Catching Drugs Deals & Usage
- Rescuing an intoxicated minor from the river
- Going to the aid of an elderly lady who had become seriously unwell
- Identifying the perpetrator of a knife attack in the town

- Providing Education to young people under the influence of alcohol and other substances
- Removing individuals from the park who were causing ASB

The key benefit of all of this had been improved morale with the operational staff. Productivity had increased, sickness absences had reduced and the general feeling of a happy workforce had improved exponentially. The public had also been reporting back via social media how beneficial the security staff were, changing the atmosphere in the park.

The Town Clerk also reported that she had been working with the West Mercia Police Crime Reduction Hub to submit a bid to the Home Office for Safer Streets 4 Funding. This would allow for expanded coverage in the park, the development of a Taxi Marshalling Scheme and a Town Rangers Scheme to be run by the BID. They were awaiting the outcome of this application.

The security detail would need to stay in place, certainly until the end of the summer, at which time it would be reviewed, and a further report be submitted to Council.

The Head of Operations shared with the Committee photographs of the kind of paraphernalia staff were finding in the Quarry, toilets and wooded areas on a regular basis, this included both needles and sharp objects.

Councillor Bentick suggested that the current finishing time of security staff may be too early. The Town Clerk agreed but was having to try to maximise the budget currently available.

Councillor Moseley asked what the cost per hour was of hiring Prosecure versus employing the Council's own staff. The Town Clerk reported that given on-costs, it was cheaper commissioning Prosecure than requesting staff work overtime.

Councillor Pardy said that he respected the decision that the Town Clerk had taken to employ security staff. He added that the Town Council had a responsibility to ensure that staff were not in danger and he wouldn't want them to think that the Committee didn't care about them. He wanted to make sure, however, that the Town Council continued to put pressure on the police as keeping the town safe was their job. It was appreciated that there was a lack of policing in the area, but it was still their responsibility.

The Town Clerk suggested that Prosecure be invited to a future meeting.

Councillor Vasmer suggested that the proposed motion be amended to include a thank you to Prosecure for all of their hard work.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the report be noted.**
- (ii) That Prosecure be asked to provide a Quarterly overview of progress.**
- (iii) That the reports from Prosecure continue to be fed into the Team Shrewsbury Partnership.**
- (iv) That this Committee Reviews progress at an Autumn meeting with a view to making long term decisions about the future safety and security of both Council staff and assets.**
- (v) That thanks be given to Prosecure for the work they are carrying out on behalf of the Town Council.**

(v) Use of the Quarry for corporate events

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council had been approached to see if it would be prepared to allow corporate events to take place in the Quarry. This was different to other events that took place as the public had the option to buy tickets for these if they so wished. Corporate events would be restricted.

Members were not supportive of this.

11/22 SHREWSBURY IN BLOOM

The Head of Operations reported on a number of recent Shrewsbury in Bloom events. The open evening at the Weeping Cross Depot on 9 June 2022 had been highly successful and had seen a large number of visitors, including a number of newcomers. They had received a lot of positive feedback from visitors both at the event and afterwards.

Heart of England in Bloom judges were due to visit on 26 July 2022. The route had been prepared and preparations were well underway for this visit. This was the first time that they would be visited by the Bloom judges in three years and the visit would focus on areas such as:

- The Castle
- Coleham and its resilience after the floods
- Allotments
- St Barnabas Food Hub
- Monkmoor Meadows

RESOLVED:

- **That the notes of the Shrewsbury In Bloom Group Meeting held on 7 June 2022 be accepted and approved.**
- **That the update on the preparations for Shrewsbury in Bloom 2022 be noted.**

12/22 TREEWORCS

The Head of Operations reported on the following tree works:

(i) Black Poplar – Coleham Head

The tree had been inspected recently and would unfortunately need removing due to the shedding of its limbs. This work would need to go out to tender.

(ii) Lime Tree Epicormic Growth – Quarry Park

The Town Council had undertaken major works in removing deadwood from the Lime trees in the Quarry. This had caused the trees to develop significant epicormic growth which would need to be removed.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

13/22 LOCAL POLICING CHARTER PRIORITIES

The Office Manager reported that the next submission for the Local Policing Charter was due in September. Requests for areas of concern will be forwarded to Councillors next month, for approval at the Recreation & Leisure Committee on 7 September.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

14/22 RECREATION GROUND MATTERS

The Head of Operations reported on fencing needs at Ashfield Road Recreation Ground. The site was secured by part security fencing and part natural hedges and holes had been created in the hedges by dogwalkers and children to access the main road which was dangerous. These vulnerable areas would be fenced off.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

15/22 OFFICIAL CONTROLS (PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS) REGULATIONS 2020

The Head of Operations provided an update on operational compliance of the Official Controls (Plant Protection Products) Regulations 2020, stating that the legislation had changed and that the Town Council now needed to report the usage of chemicals on the DEFRA website.

Town Council did try to use non-chemical solutions wherever possible, but these were still needed when dealing with issues such as Japanese Knotweed.

The UK as a whole needed to start to reduce its use of chemical solutions and accept that weeds will need to be left to grow.

Councillor Pardy asked what the evidence was on the use of organic solutions and the Head of Operations added that these were improving all the time. His hope was that all solutions would be 100% organic in the future.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

16/22 COMMUTED SUMS

The Town Clerk gave an update on negotiations with developers and transfer arrangements:

- (a) Copthorne Barracks Play and Open Space** – offsite contributions to play (£30,498 - £20498 for Shornccliffe Drive & £10000 for Silks Meadow – to be paid on 75% occupancy) and open space (£115,000 for sports pitches & associated facilities at County Ground – paid on 50% occupancy) – An update has been sought from the developer.

- (b) Barratt Homes/Bovis Homes – Mytton Oak Road** – Phase 2/3 transfer documents have been signed & sealed and invoice for remaining S106 money forwarded to the solicitor. Shropshire Council are in receipt of the play area funding and will transfer once the land transfer has been completed.
- (c) Shrewsbury South Urban**
- i) Sutton Grange site – ongoing – likely transfer in 2021/22
 - ii) Bellway Homes site – discussion on land adoption and adoption of acoustic fencing
 - iii) Galliers site – early discussions on land adoption
 - iv) Community Centre – location on the site
- (d) Sweetlake** – Development of play area and future adoption of open space – Play is complete. All open space had been adopted. We are awaiting final CIL Local Payments for play.
- (e) Crowmoor House** – s106 agreement for offsite play & open space contribution to be used for Upton Lane & Monkmoor Recreation Ground – The payment is with Shropshire Council – awaiting transfer.
- (f) Harlescott Infants/Juniors site** – Offsite contributions to sport. Initial discussions have taken place with Sports Development at Shropshire Council on how the contribution might be spent in the north of the town. Kynaston Road Recreation Ground has been identified for drainage works.
- (g) Radbrook College site** – Open space adoption – officers met with Floreat Homes on site – likely adoption later in the 2021/22
- (h) Weir Hill** – Adoption of Countryside Park – Agreement to adopt had been signed.

Councillor Bentick asked why Fix My Street for Sweetlake was saying that the land had not yet been adopted. The Town Clerk responded that the open space had been adopted but the Highways may not yet have completed their adoption.

Councillor Bentick reported that he had made a Freedom of Information request and ascertained that the CIL contribution for Sweetlake was £645k. He wanted to know what infrastructure would be provided on the site. The Town Clerk responded that 5% is automatically top sliced and only about £60/70k came to the Town Council. CIL money wasn't automatically spent in the immediate area but rather it was added to one pot and priorities across the town were decided by the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

17/22 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked Councillors for attending and taking part in this Town Council meeting and also thanked the staff involved in this meeting. All papers related to the meeting could be found on the website www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk.