



**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL  
RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE  
25 NOVEMBER 2020**

Agenda No

**5**

**Responsible Officer:** Helen Ball - Town Clerk

**OPERATIONAL UPDATE IN LIGHT OF COVID**

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***Purpose of Report***

To inform members on council work since the last Full Council meeting in September 2020 and particularly in light of the current lockdown.

**(i) Staffing & locations of workforce**

Staffing currently remains a problem with 3 on long-term sick leave and 4 on shielding.

A number of staff have been required to self-isolate as they or their family members have come into contact with COVID cases.

Staff mental wellbeing remains a cause for concern throughout all tiers of the organisation with many staff having faced some significant personal issues which have been impacted by COVID. This has already been flagged to the Group Leaders. This latest lockdown has been a real dampener to staff morale. Senior Management Team are looking at measures that capacity and resilience can be improved to support staff.

**(ii) Operational Functions**

**Quarry and Dingle**

The Quarry continues to be a well-used facility and footfall is relatively high. The Dingle has been open during core hours with a one-way system in place and has generally worked well; this will continue through the winter.

The Quarry hosted Remembrance Day commemorations on the 8<sup>th</sup> November. A much scaled back event than normal, focussing on wreath laying, organised to meet new regulations. It still attracted some 500 observers but was well received by those in attendance. The proceedings were filmed and broadcast live with viewers from all over the UK and into Europe.

No other events are scheduled for the remainder of the year. Parkrun has been suspended, albeit many still run the course independently.

**Castle Grounds**

Staff continue to maintain the Castle Grounds. To date we still do not have any progress on the installation of a path through from the Dana.

**Toilets**

All toilets have been revisited and revised COVID RA have been carried out with the assistance from external H&S consultants.



The following facilities are open:

- **Butcher Row** – only one unisex cubicle open. DDA toilet remains closed due to experience of past usage. Changing Places facility is available to those that genuinely need it.
- **Lower Quarry** – Gents (1 cubicle/1 urinal); Ladies (1 cubicle) & Disabled open
- **Upper Quarry** – Gents (1 cubicle); Ladies (2 cubicles) & Disabled open
- **Abbey Foregate** – Gents (1 cubicle/urinal trough); Ladies (2 cubicle) & Disabled open
- **Sydney Avenue** – Disabled open by the café
- **Hills Lane** - has been closed pending transfer of lease to 10 & 6 on the condition of accessibility of public conveniences to anyone.

Cleansing operatives have seen a spike on drugs usage in all toilets during Lockdown.

### **Play Areas**

All play areas remain open and social distancing guidelines apply.

### **Sports Facilities**

The following facilities are closed under the Lockdown Regulations

- Meole Brace Golf Course
- Grass and Hard Surface Tennis
- Bowling Greens
- Croquet Lawn
- MUGAs
- Skateparks
- BMX Tracks
- Football Pitches (including changing facilities)
- Cricket Wickets (including pavilions)

Radbrook Recreation Ground has been handed back from the contractor and had its first cut in October. This is a priority area for feeding, aerating and mowing this winter to ensure it is playable by August 2021.

The delay in the start of the football season, exacerbated by the month long delay in the season due to Lockdown 2 is likely to have significant maintenance implications in 2021 with the season unlikely to be completed until May/June at which time, grass growth is at a maximum and the summer sports (cricket, bowls, croquet) will have begun. Depending on the seasonal growth there may be a need to prioritise some of the low use areas to meet sports fixture requirements.



## Open spaces

- All open spaces and Recreational Grounds remain open
- Monkmoor Recreational Ground is operating on Dawn-Dusk hours given significant ASB on site
- The Monkmoor River Bed project is nearing completion albeit awaiting for 2 structures to arrive. 1000 trees/hedgerow are to be planted in the autumn/winter period. A grant of £7000 has been awarded by the EA for landscape/hedgerow/tree planting further upstream. This will see 2500 trees being planted. The current arrangements are such that group tree planting sessions are unlikely to take place. This means that staff and the current group of volunteers will be relied on to plant trees. If any members wish to help, their assistance will be greatly appreciated.
- The Tranche 2 of the Footpath works have started with Hillside Drive, Mousecroft and Summit Close (Reabrook) complete. This leaves White Hart & Kenton Drive and the Old Cana at Sundorne to finish. Staff have been impressed with quality of work and the level of finishing. There is about £20k of the £100k budget remaining. A further tranche of works is being prepped for tender.
- There are four parcels of development land that are due for transfer imminently.
- There were only two bonfires on Town Council Land; Kynaston Road and Wingfield Garden, which both require SFRS attendance. Staff are picking up the detritus. A lot of ASB was reported at both sites and there has been damage to both residential property and council gates and fencing.
- Hedge cutting and shrub bed maintenance has begun.
- It is intended to construct a drain between the Frankwell Carpark and the County Ground to prevent flood water run-off from the carpark and ponding in the car parking area in the County Ground.
- Winter bedding has now been completed
- The Information Boards for Reabrook have now been produced and will be installed over the Autumn/Winter period. This will hopefully be the first set of a number across the countryside estate.

## Ash Die Back

All the Ash trees have been inspected and have been scheduled High-Medium-Low priority. The Tree Team have been working on the High Priority Schedule and will move onto less priority. Staff are also working on the next phase of the Action Plan and plans for replacement planting.



## **Grass Cutting**

- Shropshire Council grass cutting was scheduled to finish at the end of September but teams were out cutting grass into October.
- Some high profile Town Council sites are still being cut as grass is continuing to grow.
- Rural Team have now reverted to Winter Tree Maintenance.
- Verges are being identified for locations to reduce cutting to improve the natural habitat. Rather than being completely left they will have a strip mown at the edge of paths and highway to keep sites tidy.
- Four locations are being found to prepare for wildflower management.
- Many residents are asking for various areas to be left. Officers are encouraging those residents to liaise with their local neighbours and their ward members to determine whether there is an appetite for change. Officers have previously reported that opinion on grass cutting is divided between those that want grass left and ones that want it cut.

## **Cemetery**

Because of the mild autumn, grass is still being cut in the new part of the cemetery. The old cemetery is having its annual trim. Staff are being supported by two sets of volunteers; a regular friends group and a Probation Service Group of people and a supervisor doing 3 days a week.

## **Bus Shelters**

Two bus shelters are being prepped for installation of sedum roofs.

## **Christmas Lights**

Lights are in the final stages of installation and are scheduled to be switched on in the latter half of November. This year will be a mix of old lights and new lights from the new scheme. Lockdown 1 restricted construction capacity and supply of materials. The revised scheme has been agreed and costs have been amended to reflect this change.

## **Shrewsbury Town Fisheries**

Both river and pond fishing are still open and operating to social distancing rules. All competitions have been cancelled. Membership is approaching 1000, a three-fold increase in 18 months. A considerable amount of peg work has been carried out this year with the help of funding from both the Angling Trust and the Environment Agency.