

## SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

### Meeting of the Council Held at the Walker Theatre, Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury At 6.00pm on Monday 21 March 2022

#### PRESENT

Councillors J Dean (Mayor), B Bentick, R Dartnall, M Davies, P Gillam, N Green, K Halliday, C Lemon, P Moseley, A Mosley, K Pardy, A Phillips, E Roberts, D Vasmer, R Wagner, B Wall & R Wilson.

#### IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Responsible Finance Officer), Ruth Jones (Office Manager) & Carol Pullen (Committee Clerk) & three members of public.

#### 99/21 WELCOME FROM THE MAYOR

The Mayor welcomed Councillors and Officers to the meeting. The Mayor advised that this meeting was being live-streamed but he noted that the meeting was not being recorded and the Minutes would be published on the Town Council's website in the usual way.

#### 100/21 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Davies & Gary Farmer (Head of Operations).

#### 101/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Shropshire Councillors	Twin hatted members declared personal interests in matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council.
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#### 102/21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 24 January 2022 were circulated as read.

#### RESOLVED

**That the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 24 January 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.**

#### 103/21 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

## **104/21ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **104.1 MAYOR & DEPUTY MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

Details of the Mayor & Deputy Mayor's engagements for the period 25 January 2022 to 21 March 2022 were circulated and noted.

The Mayor reported that since the last meeting he had attended a number of events including an annual visit to Shrewsbury School where his friendly open challenge to agree a timescale for the decarbonisation of their buildings had been well received. He looked forward to hearing more on this.

He had also attended the graduation ceremony for University Centre Shrewsbury, which had been a great celebration for those present, mostly newly qualified teachers.

Unfortunately it had been necessary to postpone the charity concert due to take place later this week as it had become clear that ticket sales were not going to reach the desirable minimum. Organisers of other events reported similar experiences as Covid continued to be widespread. It was hoped to reschedule the event as a charity fundraiser in the future.

He was pleased to report there had been an impressive turnout at the stand in solidarity for Ukraine meet in Shrewsbury last weekend.

### **104.2 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE TOWN CLERK**

There were none.

## **105/21PUBLIC QUESTIONS/COMMENTS**

The Town Clerk reported that standing orders had been followed in seeking questions ahead of the meeting, but she had accepted questions up until 4pm on the day of this meeting. None had been received.

## **106/21QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

None had been received.

## 107/21MOTIONS

### (i) Pets as Prizes Motion – Presented by Councillor Rob Wilson

This Council:

- is concerned about the number of cases reported to the RSPCA each year, regarding pets given as prizes via fairgrounds, social media and other channels in England - and notes the issue predominantly concerns goldfish;
- is concerned for the welfare of those animals that are being given as prizes;
- recognises that many cases of pets being as prizes may go unreported each year;
- supports a move to ban the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on Shrewsbury Town Council land;
- notes that Shropshire Council cabinet agreed to progress such measures on Shropshire Council land on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022. ([Date \(shropshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.shropshire.gov.uk)).

The Town Clerk appraised members that the Town Council did not allow the giving of animals as prizes to anyone booking its land. This issue had been recognised some years ago by Full Council and the Council were working to an existing resolution of the Recreation & Leisure Committee.

### RESOLVED:

That the Council:

- **support the RSPCA campaign;**
- **reiterate its ban on the giving of live animals as prizes, in any form, on Shrewsbury Town Council land;**
- **write to the UK Government, urging an outright ban on the giving of live animals as prizes on both public and private land;**
- **carry out a review of the current policies and the terms and conditions of the licences and hire of Council owned land and premises to ensure that they reflect the Council's position as regards giving of live animals (e.g., Goldfish, etc) as prizes.**

### (ii) Hybrid Council Meetings – As Recommended by the National Association of Local Councils

The Town Clerk reported that as members were aware the regulations allowing the Council to hold virtual meetings expired in May last year. NALC had joined forces with the Association of Democratic Service Officers and the Lawyers in Local Government to present a challenge to the High Courts and she had previously reported on the outcome of that challenge. Government put out a call for evidence on the benefit of virtual and hybrid meetings which officers had submitted details to but had not heard anything of the outcome of that call for evidence. NALC, ADSO and LLG had been running a petition to call for change and are now requesting all their member Councils to submit a motion to Council on the basis of what has been presented.

Members supported this motion and made reference to the opportunity of hybrid meetings giving more flexibility to councillors, a contribution to the Council's commitment to climate change by removing the necessity to travel to and from meetings and generally more engagement from members.

**RESOLVED:**

**That this Council supports the petition launched by ADSO and LLG on 5 January with regard to remote and hybrid meetings and agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities calling on the Government to change the law to allow councils the flexibility to hold such meetings when they deem appropriate within agreed rules and procedures.**

**(iii) Ban Both Sky Lantern and Balloon Releases from Council Property – Presented by Councillor Wilson**

This Council notes:

- For many years the Marine Conservation Society has run a campaign to make sky lantern and balloon releases illegal by classifying this activity as 'littering'. The Society has not been successful.
- The Society has also encouraged Local Authorities to ban these activities from property that the Authorities own.
- Shropshire's neighbouring Council of Worcestershire has banned both sky lantern and balloon releases.
- Hereford has banned sky lantern releases.
- Over the past 5 years, on average 3 balloons per 100m have been found during the Great British Beach Clean.
- Balloons marketed as 'biodegradable' can last up to four years ie as litter
- Animals, including livestock, can be injured through ingestion, entanglement and entrapment.
- Marine turtles are particularly vulnerable. The digestive tract of a juvenile green turtle, washed up dead near Blackpool in 2001, was completely blocked by marine litter including a large fragment of blue latex balloon.
- Animals get tangled up in balloon ribbons and string, restricting their movement and the ability to eat.
- Sky lanterns also pose a fire hazard to crops and to thatched roof properties.
- Shropshire Council resolved on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 to ban sky lantern and balloon releases from all Shropshire Council property ([Agenda item - Motions — Shropshire Council](#))

Councillor Phillips proposed that the Council go further by including a ban on the sale of Lanterns and associated products on any of its assets; these included the Markets. Members agreed with this proposal but felt there needed to be clarification on exactly what products would be included in this ban.

**RESOLVED:**

**That:**

- **All Sky Lantern and Balloon releases are to be banned from all Shrewsbury Town Council property;**
- **Request the Government to classify all such releases as littering, and thus they should be made illegal;**
- **Run a social media campaign to discourage all such releases within the County.**
- **The Town Clerk investigate the possibility of making it impossible to sell Sky Lanterns and associated products in outlets that the Council have control over.**

**(iv) North West Relief Road – Presented by Councillor Dartnall**

Given the Town Council's policy to strongly oppose the NWRR has been decided on at least two occasions in the last year, this motion requests a letter to be sent to Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport and to Baroness Vere, Transport Minister in the light of recent press reports about a potential government reset on new road funding projects. The letter should clearly communicate the Town Council's opposition to the construction of the NWRR in Shrewsbury as follows.

Shrewsbury Town Council does not accept the case for the NWRR has been made, instead the Town Council sees the proposed road as damaging to the town and its residents. The only beneficiaries, should this project go ahead, will be the developers involved in building the road and the many new homes that will fill the area subsequently.

Building a new road is an out-dated, financially risky response to the transport problems Shrewsbury faces. The most urgent transport need for our town is to reduce motor traffic volume and this can only be achieved via a modal shift: removing cars from the roads by improving public transport and creating safe walking and cycling routes, all of which will contribute to a modern, healthier, cleaner and more pleasant environment in our town. Shrewsbury Town Council wishes to move forward and does not want this damaging road forced on the town.

- Shropshire Council has yet to publish the Full Business Case for the NWRR. The latest estimate is for this to happen in December 2022. The current planning application relies on an out-of-date OBC from 2017, since when construction costs have escalated and the Climate Emergency has worsened.
- As we face the Climate Emergency, the NWRR project is claimed to be part of a decarbonising strategy. Comparing projected operational savings of 359 tonnes/CO<sub>2</sub> each year with 48,000 tonnes/CO<sub>2</sub> in construction means the road will take 120 years or more to show any net emission reduction. This is not a viable decarbonisation strategy. Continuing with the new road will hamper Shrewsbury's aims for Net Zero Carbon.
- Construction of the NWRR will increase road use overall in the medium term due to 'induced traffic' which is now well-understood. Shropshire Council's own modelling shows very worrying traffic volume increases between the north and centre of Shrewsbury even in the period immediately following the road's opening. The so-called NW Relief Road is not expected even by those who advocate for it, to relieve traffic pressure in Shrewsbury.

- Aside from the disastrous environmental case the NWRR will cause irredeemable damage to wildlife in several SSSI, compromise biodiversity on the west margin of Shrewsbury and change the local environment beyond recognition. The Environment Agency and Natural England have expressed disquiet for many aspects of the natural environment in the area of the road including grave concerns about potential contamination of the local water supply.
- The NWRR's planning application has received a record 4,500 public objections from Shropshire residents

In addition members made the following points

- The aspirations of creating a modal shift of moving people from cars to public transport and alternative travel was stymied by further reductions in the commercial bus routes. It had previously been announced that Arriva Buses were to change a number of bus routes in the county including the withdrawal of the No 20 service to Radbrook.
- Members commented on the unreliability of many services, with many being cancelled but the public not informed
- Members questioned the viability of the NWRR project given the continued delays in the application being ready for consideration by the Planning Authority. Initially it was to be considered before the 2021 Elections, but was put back to September 2021, December 2021 and now December 2022. Members questioned whether the project would remain on time and on budget.
- The fact that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the outer ring round was complete was no justification for the completion of the ring round

In presenting the argument against the Motion, Councillor Philips accepted the need for Shropshire Council to present a full transport strategy and review costings particularly given the increasing inflationary increases in raw materials, but he wished to stress the need for travel solutions for the rural hinterland of Shrewsbury and the fact that alternative travel solutions are not likely to extend beyond the town boundary and the likelihood of a regular rural bus route into the town seems remote.

In presenting an amendment to the Motion, Councillor Lemon reported on the quick manner in which Arriva had decided on changes to routes and communicated such with implementation being within a month

#### **RESOLVED**

**That a letter be sent to Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport and to Baroness Vere, Transport Minister outlining Shrewsbury Town Council's objections to the NWRR.**

**We strongly object to the Arriva Bus decision to withdraw service 20 from Radbrook Green to Shrewsbury Bus Station. This is an essential part of an already weak sustainable transport infrastructure in the west of Shrewsbury.**

**We welcome the council attempt to support this provision by extending 544/546 service, but we do not consider this adequate as this would provide a hugely reduced frequency.**

**We call on Arriva to reverse this decision. We further call on Shropshire Council to include route 20 as a subsidised route pending further decisions in the light of the 'Bus Back Better' bid.**

**(v) Development of Land at Churchcote – Presented by Councillor Lemon**

We are appalled to see the destruction of reedbeds during the nesting season associated with the development of land at Churncote off Welshpool Road, Bicton Heath. We call on Shropshire Council to use its full enforcement powers to prevent further unnecessary damage to the valuable ecology in the area.

The Town Clerk reported that she had spoken to the Case Officer to get the latest position. If there was ever any concern about ecology matters being contrary to a planning application, the Planners would first request a developer to submit a Discharge of Conditions application. In this case application number 22/01063/DIS had been submitted and was validated on the 8<sup>th</sup> March. SC Ecologist had already commented saying 'I have reviewed the submitted Construction Environment Management Plan (Ecology) by RPS Ecology dated 31 January 2022 and am happy with its content. Condition 7 can be discharged. I have and will be monitoring the site for compliance to ensure ecological features and species will be protected in accordance with this document'. The Town Council does not comment on Discharge of Planning Condition Applications as they are for the Statutory Planning Stakeholders to comment and a Parish Council is not a Statutory Planning Stakeholder. The SC Ecologist had been on site three times already and everything remained in accordance with that plan. The developers also had two Ecologists on site.

In terms of the removal of the three ponds, there was also an existing application which had been approved and had all conditions discharged apart from one so whilst extant remained a material consideration.

The only thing that was being reviewed was the creation of an additional access off Welshpool Road which the developer argued is for the Site Promotion Office; the Case Officer had argued that this could be met by using the permitted access as part of the original plan. There was no evidence to serve a stop notice on site and officers would continue to monitor the development. The Case Officer continued to keep both Councillor Wagner and Councillor Picton informed as this site straddled the town boundary.

Members felt that enforcement breaches were happening all too often. Councillor Mosley pointed out that as the Town Council were not the planning authority, its officers did not have the expertise or capacity to comment on enforcement and this was a Shropshire Council issue. He proposed that the Assistant Director of Planning be invited to come to a future meeting to appraise members on how enforcement was being managed and what support members could offer.

**RESOLVED:**

**That Shropshire Council's Assistant Director of Planning be invited to a future meeting of this Committee to appraise members on Planning Enforcement.**

*2 members of the public left the meeting*

**108/21 FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

The minutes of the informal Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 February 2022 were circulated as read.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the informal Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 February 2022 be received and adopted.**

**109/21 RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the informal Recreation & Leisure Committee Meeting held on 9 March 2022 were circulated as read.

Councillor Bentick pointed out that a resolution on Item 95/21 regarding Church Road Recreation Ground had been omitted from the resolutions. The Committee had agreed that officers would continue discussions with the Trinity Church with regard to the use of the Glebefields and he requested that this resolution be added.

**RESOLVED:**

**That upon the inclusion of "That Officers would continue discussions with the Trinity Church with regard to the use of the Glebefields" at Minute 95/21, the minutes of the informal Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 9 March 2022 be received and adopted.**

**110/21 PLANNING MEETINGS**

The minutes of the informal Planning Committee meetings held on 1 February, 22 February & 15 March 2022 were submitted as circulated and read.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the informal Planning Committee meetings held on 1 February, 22 February & 15 March 2022 be received and adopted.**

## **111/21 COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the External Complaints Committee Meeting held on 15 March 2022 were circulated as read.

Councillor Vasmer opposed the adoption of the minutes and requested that the matter be reconsidered. He believed that due process had not been followed and there was a danger that the process could be found to be false and not to be legally defensible and that the complainant should have been given the opportunity to make representation to the committee.

Councillor Mrs Moseley said that she was content that the process had been followed and understood that Councillor Vasmer's issue was not about the decision that had been reached but the procedures, something that could not only affect this case but would set a precedent for other cases. She agreed that it would be wise to review the policy and process to see if these needed amendment.

The Town Clerk advised that a new Committee would need to be convened to avoid any challenge of pre-determination and time was of the essence in resolving this matter given the start date of this Concession.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (i) That a new External Complaints Committee be established comprising:**  
  
**Councillor Alex Phillips**  
**Councillor Kate Halliday**  
**Councillor Rob Wilson**
- (ii) That the External Complaints Committee be convened to review the complaint and the Appellant be invited to the meeting to set out his case.**
- (iii) That the Council Procedure on Managing Complaints and the Terms of Reference of the Complaints Committee be reviewed.**
- (iv) That the minutes of the External Complaints Committee meeting held on 15 March 2022 not be adopted.**

## **112/21 WORKING GROUPS**

### **112.1 Civics Working Group**

The Minutes of the Civics Working Group meeting held on 27 January 2022 were circulated as read.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the Civics Working Group meeting held on 27 January 2022 be received and adopted.**

### **112.2 Active Travel Working Group**

The Minutes of the Active Travel Working Group meetings held on 3 February & 3 March 2022 were circulated as read.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the Active Travel Working Group meetings held on 3 February & 3 March 2022 be received and adopted.**

### **112.3 City of Sanctuary Working Group**

The Minutes of the City of Sanctuary Working Group meeting held on 25 January 2022 were circulated as read.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the City of Sanctuary Working Group meeting held on 25 January 2022 be received and adopted.**

## **113/21 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

Prior to the meeting a list of executive decisions made by the Town Clerk had been circulated to members. These were decisions that would ordinarily have been made by the Standing Committees but were currently informal meetings to inform the delegated decision making whilst current COVID regulations were still in place. There were no questions raised by members.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the report be noted and decisions accepted.**

## **114/21 SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE**

Councillor Mosley asked for members to support a proposal to provide money for a refugee fund to support local initiatives and this to be referred to Finance & General Purpose Committee to establish a process for allocating that funding. He also proposed that Council endorse the statement made by the four Group Leaders as reported in the latest STC Newsletter:

“Like many local and regional authorities across Europe, we strongly condemn the ongoing, multiple attacks on the sovereign territory of Ukraine. On behalf of the residents of Shrewsbury we send our full support and solidarity to the Ukrainian people and to our peers in local and regional government. We deplore the catastrophe we see unfolding as the values of humanity, freedom and democracy that we all hold so dear are viciously attacked by the Russian Federation. The escalation of violence, repeated bombings and attacks on

Ukrainian cities and territories targeting vulnerable people are a serious threat to the preservation of peace and democracy in our society. Locally, the Town Council will support local community groups and organisations here in Shrewsbury who are coordinating collections and deliveries to Ukraine and its neighbouring countries to support the people within Ukraine. We will also actively play our part in supporting any Ukrainians who find themselves seeking refuge in the United Kingdom and ultimately Shropshire and Shrewsbury. We are fortunate in Shrewsbury to have such caring organisations who have made Shropshire a safe and caring haven for refugees and we will continue to support them however possible. We are pledged to provide help however possible be it financial or, through the use of our Councillors, staff and assets. We will also seek to raise awareness and support for Ukraine through our media and networks to maintain that collective global pressure.”

Members were in favour of setting up the fund and endorsing the Town Council’s pledge of support and felt the City of Sanctuary Working Group had a role to play in determining ultimately how the funds might best be used.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That an allocation of £25k to support the Ukrainian efforts be approved;**
- (ii) That the Finance & General Purpose Committee consider the terms of any grant funding in line with the legal provisions of the Town Council.**