

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

**Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee
Held Virtually on Microsoft Teams**

At 6.00pm on Monday 4th April 2022

Please note this was an informal virtual meeting of the Committee convened to assist the Town Clerk with carrying out the delegated powers granted to her by Full Council on 22 March 2021 & Finance & General Purposes Committee on 12 April 2021.

PRESENT

Councillors: A Mosley (Chair), R Dartnall, M Davies, J Dean, N Green, K Parady, A Phillips, E Roberts and D Vasmer

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Andy Watkin (Head of Resources), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Stuart Farmer (Project Manager), Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager), Ruth Jones (Office Manager) and Heather Phillips (Committee Clerk)

89/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor P Moseley.

90/21 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 Nat Green	Declared a prejudicial interest in Item 11 Markets.

91/21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 February 2022 were submitted and circulated as read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 February 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

92/21 MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

93/21 UPDATE ON COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUP ACTIVITY

93/1 Climate Change Standing Committee

The Climate Change Standing Committee met on 31 March 2022. The minutes were not yet available. Councillor Vasmer updated members as follows:

- (i) There was overwhelming support from members of the Climate Change Standing Committee to go ahead with the purchase of Commonplace Licences, of which 10 can be bought for £18K (as opposed to the usual £6K per licence per project). Funding will come from the Climate Change budget in the first instance and will be funded by the 10 projects, some of which are external to the Town Council. Commonplace is a tool for communicating and interacting with the public about projects in the local area. A briefing session for councillors will be arranged before the next meeting of the Full Council and Mark Holleron (Business Development Manager – UK North, Commonplace) will be invited to speak.
- (ii) The Committee received a presentation from the Shropshire Cycle Hub putting forward a case for funding for an E-cargo Scheme in the town. Whilst the proposal was looked on sympathetically by members, the Cycle Hub were asked to improve its Business Plan and make a further presentation to the Active Travel Working Group.

RESOLVED:

- (i) **That the update from the Climate Change Committee be noted;**
- (ii) **That a package of 10 Commonplace Licences is purchased.**

94/21 PAYMENT SCHEDULES

Prior to the meeting, the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) circulated the Schedule of Payments for the period 29 January to 31 March 2022. These have been agreed by two signatories before the RFO and Town Clerk. No comments or concerns were raised.

RECOMMENDED:

That the schedule of payments passed for payment for the period 29 January to 31 March 2022 be approved.

95/21 PREPARE END OF YEAR ACCOUNTS

Prior to this meeting a report on End of Year Accounting was circulated by the RFO to appraise members on the process for the year end accounts and relevant submission dates.

The Council must approve the Accounts, Annual Return and relevant schedules by the deadline of 30 June 2022 which must then be submitted to the external auditors, PKF

Littlejohn, by Friday 1 July 2022. The Internal auditor will complete the inspection of the 2021/22 accounts and sign page 3 of the Annual Return prior to submission.

RESOLVED:

That the Report and timetabled dates be noted.

96/21 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

An update on the Capital Programme was circulated prior the meeting and the Town Clerk updated members as follows:

- Works at Stanley Lane Rec had been awarded but a start date was awaited
- A New Play Area for Greenacres had been awarded but a start date was awaited.
- Castlewalk Nature Trail: the conclusion of the Councillor Consultation was awaited. Councillor Mosley reported that he would distribute the comments from a Councillors meeting in the next few days.
- The purchase of Town Centre accommodation was progressing.
- Height Barriers on recreation areas had all been installed.
- Beaver compound at Old Riverbed: further information had been sent to DEFRA & Natural England; approvals were still awaited.
- Officers were working on play area specifications for Bowbrook Meadows and Upton Lane Recreation Ground.
- Upton Lane Recreation Ground: contractors working on the BMX tracks were onsite.
- Quarry Working Group: a date to meet had been set.

The project list had been given an additional column, entitled Lead Officer, for ease of reference.

Councillor Pardy enquired on progress of proposals for works at Moston Road Recreation Ground. The Town Clerk reported that the Head of Operations would be in contact to arrange a site meeting to discuss proposals.

Councillor Dartnall enquired on any work to install Vehicle Activated Signs. The Town Clerk reported that the Council had a number of Vehicle Activated Speed sign locations and signs were rotated on a schedule. Any further locations would need to be considered by the Highways Authority.

Councillor Roberts enquired about improvements to Kynaston Recreation Ground. The Town Clerk reported that there were three areas of improvement: improvements to the drainage, infant play area and skate ramps. A meeting with the young people had been convened for the Easter Holidays and discussions were ongoing about accessing developer contributions to fund some of the works.

Councillor Mosley queried the installation of a new gate and height restriction barrier at St Michael's Recreation Ground. The Head of Operations advised that the

layout had been determined to facilitate tractor access but deter encampments. Wooden bollards on the other side of the Recreation Ground had also been extended to the end of the grass area and one further bollard was awaited before this work was fully complete.

The Town Clerk was asked to update members on bus shelters. Seventeen out of 100 bus shelters were identified as in need of immediate repair and tenders were invited. Many of the tenderers advised that the shelters were in need of replacement not repair. Therefore, the Project Manager was now looking at replacement options. There are also imminent and significant changes being made to bus services around the Town and the impact of these changes on the bus shelters needed to be assessed. Councillor Mosley requested a proposal/presentation at the next meeting of the Committee detailing bus shelter options and corresponding costings.

Councillor Dean enquired on potential developments at Silks Meadow. The Town Clerk reported that £10K is available for improvements to the pavilion at Silks Meadow and that once the funding has been released from the Copthorne Barracks Development a consultation process will begin with the Bowling Club.

Councillor Vasmer enquired of progress at Monkmoor Recreation Ground being transferred to the Town Council and proposed works commenced. The Town Clerk reported that despite constant chasing progress was slow with transfers, and staff had been tasked to start the plans for tennis court improvements and floodlighting.

Councillor Mosley enquired on any progress with the Football pitch improvements Expression of Interest. The Town Clerk reported that most of the football pitch improvements now didn't qualify for funding but it was hoped that much of the levelling and sand-banding works could be done in-house.

RESOLVED:

That the update of the Capital Programme be noted.

97/21 INTERNAL AUDITOR

Prior to the meeting, the Internal Audit Report 2021/22: Interim Update was circulated to members. No issues were identified. The RFO was thanked for his efforts.

RESOLVED:

That the Internal Audit Report 2021/22: Interim Update be accepted.

98/21 TENDER WORK

A report on tendering activity together with details of the progress of tenders was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

The Project Manager added that 8 of the solar lights installed in The Quarry were affected by the recent flooding which breached the average flood levels. Undulating ground was not foreseen by the Council nor the tenderers; the Project Manager was working on a resolution.

The Project Manager was working on a solution for Bus Shelter improvements, and he was overseeing contractors on-site at Upton Lane Recreation Ground.

The Council has recently purchased an electric Kangoo van, but members were advised that the lead time on the delivery for electric vehicles at the moment was extremely long.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Councillor Green left the meeting.

99/21 MARKETS UPDATE

The Markets Update was circulated prior to the meeting. The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager reported that traders were now on the new scale of charges for 2022/23.

A programme of late-night openings and promotional events was being organised for the Indoor Market. The Sunday Market had seen new traders recently and activity levels were anticipated to rise as the weather improved and now that COVID restrictions had been lifted.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

Councillor Green re-joined the meeting.

100/21 UKRAINE SUPPORT FUND

Committee members were asked to consider the terms of reference of any grant funding to support the crisis in Ukraine following a report to Full Council on discussions held between Group Leaders regarding supporting the Ukraine efforts. An allocation of £25k into a fund had been agreed.

The Town Clerk had investigated what the Town Council could legally do with the funds and what it may feasibly do to support the crisis in Ukraine. The Council had to operate within its Powers and Duties and, whilst it operated with the benefit of the General Power of Competence, it still had to ensure that any expenditure created environmental, social or economic benefit to the Town.

The Town Clerk reported that conversations had taken place with Amanda Jones from Shropshire Supports Refugees, Kate Feijfer from the Shropshire European Organisation and also Oksana Chapman, a Ukrainian living in Shrewsbury. These organisations were extremely pre-occupied with activating resources to provide immediate relief in Ukraine however they

were also looking ahead towards the longer-term support of prospective refugees who might come to live in Shrewsbury.

In the meantime, members were asked to consider the proposal that the Town Council sets up a grant fund which could support groups of volunteers and charities giving aid to the crisis. It was suggested that the set up would be similar to the Coronavirus Battle Fund that was put in place during the Pandemic.

It was agreed that a simplified version of the Community Grants Fund application form be drafted and circulated to members for comment before releasing into the public domain. Grant applications would be considered by the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Clerk establish a Grant Application Form and Guidance to support the Ukrainian crisis; details of which would be circulated to members for approval and published with all future allocations being considered by Finance & General Purposes Committee.

101/21 STREET TRADING

A report on Street Trading was circulated to members prior to this meeting. The Street Trading Policy 2018 to 2023 was currently being reviewed by Shropshire Council with a revised document due to come into effect from 1 April 2023.

The Town Clerk reported that over the years in-depth discussions with Licensing Colleagues at Shropshire Council regarding Street Trading Policies had taken place allowing the Town Council to inform and influence policy. Street Trading in Shrewsbury had always been restrictive to maintain the viability of the Market. There were two key exception sites: The Square and The Quarry, which allowed for events and activities to take place, but even so some restrictions in the Policy were sometimes costly and bureaucratic.

An informal consultation had opened and would run from Monday 21 March 2022 to Sunday 17 April 2022. Town Councils across the county were being asked to review the current Street Trading Policy and submit any requests for amendments they may have. Submissions would be considered before a final draft is put out for formal consultation.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk & Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager review the existing Policy and provide any commentary to Shropshire Council based on their operational knowledge and experience of the policy.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Clerk submit any appropriate commentary on the Street Trading Policy to Shropshire Council.

102/21 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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.

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with s1(2) Public Bodies (Admission of Meetings) Act 1960, members of the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following items being considered involve the disclosure of confidential information.

Live streaming of the meeting was ended.

103/21 PURCHASE OF PROPERTY

The Town Clerk updated members of the Committee on the proposed purchase of new office premises in the town. It was hoped to exchange contracts shortly with a view to completion in May, minor improvement works in early summer and moving in late summer. The Working Group would be convened to discuss proposals.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Clerk's update be noted

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked Councillors and all staff involved in the meeting.