

2022/23

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Shrewsbury

Town Council

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

brewsburytown

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL LIVESEY HOUSE, 7 ST. JOHN'S HILL, SHREWSBURY, SY1 1JD T: 01743 281010 www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk

DIRE

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

THE QUARRY & DINGLE — The Quarry & Dingle are used for a wide range of events, from the annual Flower Show, to bandstand performances and the Shrewsbury Food & Shropshire Kids' Festivals. We also welcome over one million visitors to see the spectacular landscaped gardens.

SHREWSBURY IN BLOOM — Shrewsbury is famous for its horticulture and the majority of the floral displays are the responsibility of the Town Council and its dedicated Grounds Maintenance Team. More than 300,000 blooms are grown in our own Greenhouse each year, with 30,000 plants

alone being used for the town's centrepiece in the Dingle, which won the Horticultural Excellence in the 2022 Heart of England in Bloom Awards.

PUBLIC FIELDS & OPEN SPACES — The Town Council looks after the majority of playing fields, recreation grounds and open spaces in Shrewsbury. In addition, we keep over 120 miles of highway verges and hedges trimmed and look after in excess of 30,000 trees throughout the town. We also manage more than 250 acres of Countryside Land within the town boundary. Many of these sites are Special Sites of Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and Community Woodlands.

PLAY AREAS, MULTI-USE GAMES AREAS, BMX TRACKS & SKATEPARKS — We look after more than 50 play facilities in the town. They are inspected weekly and kept in good order. We regularly upgrade our facilities with new play areas at Sweetlake Meadow and Mary Webb Road.

YOUTH SERVICES — Since the launch of Young Shrewsbury in 2016, we have run regular junior sessions in various locations in town and have recently added senior sessions, detached youth work and a Youth Forum based at the Hive in the town centre. Youth Workers are also contracted to work alongside a number of senior schools to support the education of some young people.

SPORTS FACILITIES — The Town Council owns a number of Recreation Grounds with sports pavilions, football pitches and cricket wickets, bowling greens, tennis courts and croquet lawns. These facilities are used by many local teams in the Shrewsbury area. We have been working with local sporting clubs to improve facilities. We also look after the Golf Course grounds for Shropshire Council.

Photo: New Wheeled Track Facilities at Upton Lane Recreation

COMMUNITY FACILITIES — We own Community Centres in both Ditherington & Castlefields which are run by local residents in the area. We have also installed noticeboards throughout the town and in each of the wards, to help residents keep up-to-date with what we do. We look after hundreds of streetlights and bus shelters through out the town.

TOURISM — The Town Council contributes greatly to improving the tourism offer in the town. We maintain the public conveniences in the town centre; we have an extensive planting programme and we spend upwards of £50,000 each year making sure the town has fantastic Christmas Lights and great Christmas Events to come to, including Carols in the Square.

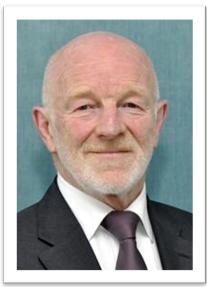








Shrewsbury
Town CouncilTOWN COUNCIL
OVERVIEW 2021/22



Shrewsbury Town Council, serving a population of over 70,000 residents, is one of the largest and most influential in the country. However, we are first and foremost a council that is firmly rooted in the community it serves.

With its motto of "Putting Shrewsbury First", the Town Council prides itself in being the voice of Shrewsbury, supporting local communities and local initiatives, providing good quality play and recreation areas for all, maintaining green spaces throughout the town, providing facilities and activities for the young and generally promoting the town as a great place to live, work and visit.

We work very closely with other organisations; namely Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Business Improvement District, the Emergency Services and Healthcare providers to ensure joined-up services.

2022 has been a year where the Town Council has accepted responsibility for its actions; has been a year when it has championed the concerns of its

community on a whole manner of issues and has been a year we have shown that we can deliver.

Three examples illustrate this vital core mission while other key developments in our services are described in the committee chairs reports:

Greenfields Recreation Ground, the sale of a parcel of land and the eventual quashing of a planning permission in the Supreme Court has obviously been a focus for much of our discussions. In June last year the Town Council published the report it had commissioned from a senior barrister and genuinely accepted our mistakes in failing to recognise our full legal responsibility in the sale of a part of the land at Greenfields. We are where we are and can't continue to look back but instead must now focus on how we can return the land for community use. There is a genuine willingness on the part of the Town Council to work with the community group and other stakeholders.

Councillors have actively championed the community's concern about the future provision of GP services in a large chunk of the town. Many residents had expressed their concerns that plans to amalgamate seven GP practices into one building would leave residents not able to access to community-based services. The Council's working group under the Chairmanship of Councillor Kate Halliday has challenged GP practices, the Director of Public Health, the Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group, the Shropshire & Telford Integrated Care Board as well as the NHS Executive nationally as to whether this is a project that truly benefits the patient. We note that Government has withdrawn the concept of the Health & Wellbeing Hub model; we will however maintain that watching brief.

Another campaign that has been initiated by the Town Council has been the cleanliness of the River Severn after it emerged that Severn Trent Water were discharging raw sewage into the river not just during storm period but also periods of dryness. The Town Council held a packed public meeting at the theatre which the Director of Operations for Severn Trent Water and senior officers of the Environment Agency as well as local and national campaigners attended. The Town Council has agreed to set up a working group to champion the need for Bathing Water Status in the town and the resultant activity around water testing that this would bring.

I also think that the work of local members within in their wards brings great credit to Shrewsbury Town Council. They often go well beyond their actual responsibilities to provide advice, support, representation and community development for individual families and groups throughout our town.

Obviously, none of this would be possible without the conscientious commitment of our staff in all areas of the organisation.

2022 saw spiralling costs (in particular for fuel) and this has greatly impacted not just how the Town Council operates, but also how our local residents are affected in their daily lives. The Town Council set up a Warm Rooms Fund to allow community groups to access funding to support their own fuel costs that would allow more community activity. The £5,000 budget was allocated within weeks and has allowed residents to find alternative activity rather than just stay at home. The Town Council has also been working with the Marches Energy Agency to develop a Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency Scheme and £75,000 of funding has been allocated to providing funding to Band A-C houses to access energy efficiency initiatives.

In 2022 Officers worked with West Mercia Police to submit a bid to the Safer Street 4 Fund and were successful in attracting over £500,00 of funding. Over £200,000 of that came directly to the Town Council to develop the Quarry Security and Taxi Marshal projects and to light all Throw line Boards and Lifebuoy Stations around the river. The fund has a primary objective in addressing violence against women and girls but it has proved beneficial in supporting a wide group of vulnerable people including those who are a bit worse for wear after a night out and need assistance to get home safely, to young people at risk of exploitation. Visits to the town not just from the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Local Government but also from the Police Constable and Police & Crime Commissioner have been well received and just shows what can be achieved when a community of partners works together.

The Council has been busy thinking about what the town and the Town Council will look like in the future. We are seeing that the new Local Plan is setting development boundaries for the town beyond the Town Council boundary, and we have been making representations not just to the Local Government Boundary Commission but also Shropshire Council for our boundary and wards to be reviewed. I am pleased to report that at local level we are pushing at an open door. We need to ensure that those new urban extensions feel part of Shrewsbury and we provide the necessary services.

Finally, this year saw both the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Queens Accession to the throne and her sad death four months later. The Town Council was involved in celebrating Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee with lots of Union Flags and red, white and blue planting but also reflecting the feelings of the people of the Town following her death. In September, Town Council staff rose to the challenge to work with Shropshire Council to organise the County Proclamation of the King in our very own Quarry. I was proud to receive letters of thanks from the Lord Lieutenant, the High Sheriff and the Chief Executive, Leader & Chairman of Shropshire Council thanking the Town Council for their valuable help.

We have a very special team at the Town Council with members and staff working harmoniously together to do what is right for the town and long may that continue.



THE MAYOR OF SHREWSBURY



Councillor Elisabeth Roberts

It doesn't seem two minutes since I signed my Declaration of Acceptance of Office and became the first Citizen of Shrewsbury. My theme for the year has been about community and bringing people together. I have been and shining a light in the neurodiverse community which my family are closely allied with and have been keen to increase the awareness of Autism, ADHD and individuals struggling with over-sensory stimulation and ways that safe spaces can be created for them.

I have been very humbled to meet lots of people, take part in lots of community activities and champion the cause of so many in my Mayoral Year, bringing multi-faiths together and celebrating multi-cultural activities. I have visited many schools to talk to students about my role and this has been very special for me as I work in education.

I have tried to show case the work of my two nominated organisations Omega, the National Association for End of Life Care based in Shrewsbury and the Harlescott Community Centre based in my very own ward. I have been ably supported this year by my twins, Erin & Ewan, and my youngest, Martha, who has been my Mini Mayor throughout.

As Mayor I am required to oversee the installation of Freemen and I was delighted to host an event in the Castle; a very traditional process in which the Town Clerk requires individuals to sign the Oath to be admitted to the Freeman Register. I have held many teas in the Castle this year; anyone who was booked onto the last tour of the afternoon on a Wednesday would finish up meeting the Mayor and it was fabulous to meet tourists from all over the world revelling in our town.

I have had a significant role in organisations who have Freedom Rights of the town exercising those rights. Firstly, the whole of the Royal Yeomanry Regiment alongside their Honorary Colonel HRH Princess Alexandra came to town followed by the crew of HMS Talent to hand back their Freedom Right as the submarine had been decommissioned by the Royal Navy.

As first citizen I had the absolute honour to read out the Proclamation of HM King Charles III in front of residents of Shrewsbury.

I have signed the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of the Town Council, attended the presentation of British Empire Medals to Shrewsbury residents and opened brand new facilities for both the Ark and Age UK.

Towards the end of my Mayoral Year, I presented my Mayors Awards to so many deserving individuals, community groups and businesses which culminated in my giving out a Lifetime Achievement Award to our Town Crier Martin Wood.

Finally, I wanted to pay my respects to some who are no longer with us. Sue Wood, the Town Criers Consort for 40 years sadly lost her battle with cancer this year; she was a stalwart champion not only of everything Shrewsbury but really championed disability rights. Our former Mayor's Officer Bob Handley passed away suddenly; he was everything Shrewsbury and supported so many Mayors as well as myself in my early days of being Mayor. Also past Mayoress Madeline Butcher who died after a long illness. I send my condolences to all their families.

It has been an honour and a privilege to be the Mayor of Shrewsbury, an office that dates back to 1638 and is one that continues to be steeped in history and tradition. I have met so many wonderful people and made great friends throughout my time in office. I wish my Deputy Mayor, Becky Wall every success as she takes over the chains of office; I am sure she will have a wonderful year.

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Finance & General Purpose Committee - Chairman Councillor Alan Mosley



This Committee is responsible for overseeing the general running of the organisation, setting policy and managing finances and is the driving force behind the direction of travel of the Council.

Throughout the year members have been working with senior staff to establish a long-term vision for the Town and the Town Council. This has included thinking about our values and aspirations over the next 5, 10 and 20 years and what do we need to do to make them happen. This work will be completed over the summer. Following consultation with all our staff we will engage with all residents in a major consultation exercise. This programme will also include an Action Plan with details of our specific development projects for the short and medium terms.

One of our biggest achievements this year has been establishing our new base for the Council in the heart of the town centre. We bought 7 St Johns Hill early last

year and, following some remodelling, I am pleased to say that we moved in last month. With a few snagging issues to resolve we hope to start using the premises for Committee meetings soon and it will be a great base to work from. As the only founding Town Councillor remaining and Leader of the Council I am delighted to say that we now have established a lasting and sustainable legacy for the Town that both residents and the Council can be proud of.

Due to sound financial management and despite rising cost we were able to declare a Zero increase in our Council Tax precept. At the same time we have been able to manage substantial projects across the town: Our new HQ, Monkmoor Meadows, Stanley Lane, Abbey Gardens, lifebuoy lighting, Upton Lane BMX and bus shelter replacements. and about to providing funding to the Ark to help rough sleepers turn their lives around, the list is endless.

Much work has also been committed to projects at Moston Road, Kynaston Road, Monkmoor Recreation Ground, River Safety, Bagley Beaver project, land purchase/adoption in Frankwell, Weir Hill and general play area development.

This Committee is also responsible for the Councils Grant giving functions. Each Councillor has his/her own designated pot to allocate and our main fund has awarded substantial grants to 14 different organisations from providing funding to the Shrewsbury Amateur Swimming Club to promote youth swimming to the Shrewsbury Repair Café to help buy equipment to reuse things we might have just thrown out. We have also provided funding to the Shrewsbury Ramblers to create another fabulous walking route guide and given funding to the Ark to help rough sleepers turn their lives around.

We have also set up other very specific funds including the Ukraine Support Fund to support their work in welcoming refugees following the invasion by Russia and also the Warm Rooms project to mitigate escalating fuel prices.

This Committee has addressed some important issues this year like those considered by the River Safety Project. The Town Council jointly funded the commissioning of an independent review of the River Severn following a number of river incidents. The Report has been well received by the families of some of the bereaved and we are seeing many of those recommendations being acted upon, not just by the Town Council but also by other partners. Personally, it has been humbling to work with the families of individuals as they strive to get positive actions out of the tragedies that have befallen their families.

The Big Town Plan and the Movement Strategy work comes under the Finance & General Purpose Committee and the Town Clerk and I have represented the interests of the Town Council on the Partnership Board. The Movement & Public Realm Strategy is developing well and we recognise that if we genuinely do want to reduce car journeys, some of the proposals need to be radical. Issues such encouraging active travel, investing in public transport, the need for a Bus Station and alternative solutions to the North-West Relief Road have always been at the forefront of our minds.

And finally, it's not always the big issues that touch this Committee. It has been wonderful to see that us providing the necessary funding has meant that part of the Sutton Road Cycle Way will be named after Mansel Williams, a dedicated Councillor in the Belle Vue Ward who championed that part of town, the need to cycle safely, his work for the English Bridge Workshop and his great passion, saving the Abbey Foregate Station building which is now the home of the Shrewsbury Railway Heritage Trust.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2022/23

Summary of the Shrewsbury Town Council Budget 2022/23 and where the money is spent



The notice of appointment of auditor and the exercise of electors rights will be publicised in June for a period to inspect the accounts commencing 1st July 2023 - 11th August 2023.

The accounts will be published on the website from 1st July 2023

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Recreation & Leisure Committee Chairman – Councillor Kevin Pardy



This year the remit of this Committee has been very broad with a huge focus on maintaining and improving our parks and open space.

The Committee receives regular updates on how our parks and open spaces are managed. We regularly review progress of the Council's Capital Programme which includes installation of new play areas and wheeled tracks for BMX and skateboarders; it often includes installation of drainage systems so that football pitches and recreation grounds can be used all year round and it involves installation of infrastructure that mean we can get around better like improved lighting, replacement bus shelters and new paths connecting communities together.

Bloom comes under this Committee, and this not just includes what the Town Council does for the annual campaign but what others can

do. We have given funds, staff time and resources to communities to help create community gardens and put a bit of colour into previously neglected areas; we have dug up rather dull grass verges and planted wildflower seed to create a very colourful oasis in the summer and we have facilitated the planting of thousands of trees which we all know are great for capturing carbon.

This year we have worked with the Lord Lieutenancy to promote the Queens Green Canopy. With a legacy donation from a local family, we were able to offer over 700 trees to local people and every single tree that we planted this year was logged on the Queens Green Canopy map to maintain a lasting legacy to our longest serving monarch.

This Committee also oversees events in the Quarry, and it has been wonderful to see all of our major events return after COVID. Every year the Quarry attracts 1.5million people to it; whether they are attending an event, coming to walk the dog, taking the kids to the Play Area & Splash Park or meeting friends for a coffee, it is one of the most visited places in the county and we are all very proud of it.

Our staff manage the events well and public safety is always at the forefront of our mind. We continue to see acts of extremism across the country, and we must always be vigilant. We would like to think there is no reason why such an occurrence would take in Shrewsbury, but we operate on the basis there is no reason why it wouldn't. There will be new legislation about protecting the public shortly and I am glad to report that staff are already knowledgeable about these changes and are ready to respond.

This leads me to Team Shrewsbury and Safer Streets. For the best part of 10 years the Town Council has led on Team Shrewsbury, the collection of all partners coming together to manage ASB and developing solutions to problems. They still work well together, and this Council plays an important part. Key priorities this year have been around River Safety following two tragic deaths last year, addressing rough sleeping and associated alcohol and substance misuse and tackling mental health issues for young people along with their vulnerabilities to exploitation and County Lines. Our senior officers have played a crucial part in being able to attract over £1/2m of funding to keep people safe on the streets. This has helped us to develop the Town Ranger, Quarry Security and Taxi Marshals Programmes keeping people safe across the whole town and into the neighbouring communities both day and night and I know there is work behind the scenes to make this a long-term sustainable project.

And finally, this isn't a committee that looks at the here and now, it is one that plans for open space and how we us it into the future. With negotiations with developers for the adoption of open space and play on new development sites to developing tree strategies that will outlive our children and grandchildren it is about making sure Shrewsbury continues to be a great place to live work and play.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Planning Committee Chairman – Councillor Nat Green



The Planning Committee remains the busiest of the Council's Standing Committees meeting every three weeks. The Committee considers over 1000 planning applications every year, virtually a quarter of the planning applications submitted to the Shropshire Council Planning Authority. With applications ranging from pruning trees in a Conservation Area to major development sites, the Committee uses its expertise of being local to the community to assess the merit of development. We generally look to the local Councillor to give us a flavour of local feeling and whilst I would always advocate registering comments on the Planning Portal in the first instance, do keep your local member informed.

Of interest to the Committee this year has been the work to create a Design Code. This concept came out of the Big Town Plan Vision; the creation of a Shrewsbury Test to ensure that future design reflected the Shrewsbury vernacular and gave a sense of the county town. The Shrewsbury Big Town Plan Partnership sought funding for the Department of Levelling Up,

Housing & Communities to develop a Design Code; funding allowed for a dedicated officer post as well as the appointment of LDA Design (who created the original Shrewsbury Vision Document) to develop the code. A number of the Committee have been involved in the workshops and the Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk have worked closely with officers to ensure that our views are reflected in the evolving document.

The Shropshire Local Plan continues its path to adoption; the Committee was heavily involved in the sections relevant to Shrewsbury with us setting up a Working Group to look at parcels of land for allocation as development sites. We have also been able to influence many of the Management Development Policies that make sure that we have the right kinds of development in Shrewsbury.

Part of the role of this Committee has been to hold pre-application discussions with major developers ahead of them submitting their applications into the system. These have included the Frankwell Quay Warehouse, the major development by the Meole Brace Park & Ride site, housing at the Shrewsbury West Urban Extension at Oxon, the potential for relocation of the Ambulance Station and the developments at Hencote.

We have also had much discussion about Conservation Areas. Much of Shrewsbury sits within a Conservation Area, but there remain pockets of the town that down but still have a very distinctive and special character. Some are protected by Article 4 Direction but some aren't and development has been permitted unchecked which has changed the nature of those areas. It is a long process but worth working on with local residents and planning specialists.

This year has seen applications for a number of 5G masts. Whilst there is an acknowledgement that if we want better mobile phone coverage, we have to have these masts, there has been the lack of thought around their placements; some have been suggested in very inappropriate settings and we have managed to influence the application being refused. I would say if anyone wishes to object, do get in-touch with their local Councillor to help press the case for refusal.

Any finally I want to return to Hencote and the latest application to build assisted care accommodation and a care home. The developer attended Committee and we expressed our concerns and went on to object to two applications, the first of which was refused by Planning Officers at Shropshire Council and subsequently went to appeal. There has been much press coverage about the process around how the unilateral agreement between Shropshire Council and the Planners was signed and ultimately influenced the manner in which the Planning Authority defended the appeal. It has greatly annoyed the Town Council and we did genuinely look at whether the whole process could be interrogated through a Judicial Review. Having received advice from five individual specialists, we had to come to the conclusion that there wasn't enough of a case for us to submit a Judicial Review application. That is not to say we have given up. I am writing a strong letter to Shropshire Council regarding their processes and this Committee will continue to robustly challenge the applicants future Reserved Matters Application given the huge disquiet that this has caused in the community. It has also started a process in what we do as a Council when applications are sent to appeal. We have always relied on the fact that our objections form part of the Planning Authority's Defence bundle. From now on we will make separate submissions to the Planning Inspectorate so that we can continue to make the representations we feel are in the best interests of the town.

CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Climate Change Committee Chairman – Councillor David Vasmer



This has been a very interesting Committee to chair for a number of reasons. First it is the only Standing Committee of the Council that has outside representatives that have a genuine seat at the table. We have members of the Environment Agency, Shropshire Council's Biodiversity Team, the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Friends of the Earth, the Shropshire Climate Action Partnership which is striving for the county to be carbon zero by 2030, the Civic Society and transport specialists from Gfleet a local company with a national reputation. This year our Committee work has been supported by the recruitment of an Apprentice, Alan Jameson. With a keen interest in Climate Change, Alan has been working on our Commonplace website and undertaking some valuable research.

Secondly Climate Change crosses over everything that we do as a Council and many of our thoughts have been around how the routine projects and every

day activity can be rethought to maximise our carbon neutral agenda and I thought I would pick a couple out.

This year has seen the Town Council move from renting offices at the library to buying a building at St Johns Hill. As part of that refit process, we were able to recommend energy efficient solutions to make an old building as carbon neutral as possible. Three members of our committee; Councillor Julian Dean, Rosemary Dartnell and myself were part of the St Johns Hill Working Group and I am pleased to say our suggestions for wall and roof insulation, glazing and heating were taken on board.

Our Recreation & Leisure Committee has been undertaking a large Bus Shelter Replacement project and our Committee was able to provide additional funds to make sure that as many Bus Shelters as possible have Sedum Roofs. Our own team at the Greenhouse are growing the sedum from cuttings and have so far planted three of the new bus shelters and there are plans for more in the Autumn. And every square metre of sedum roof captures 5kgs of carbon as well as other particulates and they are all bee friendly too as well as much prettier to look at.

And our Beaver Project to create a compound to allow a pair of Beavers to be set free at the Old Riverbed. I know the perception is that Beavers build dams and cause chaos, but they are hugely beneficial to our eco system and will greatly enhance the Old River Bed's capacity to capture Carbon.

As I have reported previously the Town Council resolved to become Carbon neutral by 2030 and much of this Committee's work is to understand its own carbon footprint and what we can do to reduce it. The development of an overall Action Plan has helped to keen the whole Council focused on Climate Change. We have done so much internally from buying electric vehicles to changing all of our footway lights to LED, from changing our maintenance routes reducing car miles to growing trees from seed locally and so much more.

Our carbon footprint is little more than that of 40 domestic dwellings, yet the Town has 35,000 domestic dwellings. So, we have a duty to promote good practice, celebrate where people have done great things locally and provide opportunities to learn from others. One of those best practice projects has been our support for an E-Cargo Bike Trial with the Shropshire Cycle Hub, encouraging residents and businesses to think about those short car journeys.

We are creating a Commonplace site where we can capture all of this great work being done locally; where people can share their stories and where we can begin to work together to get to that point in 2030 when the whole town is net zero. We are in 2023 now, only seven years away and I would very much like to see the Town Council's efforts accelerate over the coming years. We have established a very robust Climate Change Policy which makes us all think about the decisions we take and our Action Plan continues to develop.

My thanks go to all Town Council staff for all of their efforts in helping us to achieve our objectives in this area.

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL OFFICER CONTACTS

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Jim Goldsmith Countryside & Greenspace Manager	jim.goldsmith @shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk 07976 020247	Manages Countryside & Greenspace team with responsibility for cemetery, grass cutting, tree works	
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Shrewsbury Town Council

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