

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Recreation & Leisure Committee Held in the Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury At 6.00pm on Wednesday 29 May 2019

PRESENT

Councillors K Pardy (Chair), N Green, Ms J Halliday, I Jones, N Laurens, Mrs P Moseley (substituting for Councillor Ms J Mackenzie), A Mosley and D Vasmer.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager), Stuart Farmer (Projects Officer) and Carol Pullen (Acting Committee Clerk).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Ms J Mackenzie & K Roberts.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Ms Halliday, new Councillor for the Belle Vue Ward to the Committee

01/19 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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02/19 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 09 April 2019 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 09 April 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

03/19 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

72.2 Ref: Min: 72.1 GIS Plotting

The new tablet has been used to collect data and plot locations of trees.

76.4 Ref: Min: 76.4 Drainage Issues

The Town Clerk reported that the formal drains at the junction with the play area were complete, however at the Greyfriars end of Victoria Avenue the Quarry grips still needed to be dug into the verges to alleviate water ponding.

Councillor Nat Green joined the meeting

04/19 2019 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk updated Members on all of the capital cross-town projects.

4.1 Footpaths/Cycleways

The report of the Countryside & Greenspace Team Leader was circulated. The report was noted including identification and categorisation of the types of footpaths.

Members would be contacted for their help in identifying any other paths that need to be included on the list.

Councillor Parry suggested members be provided with photos showing the various specifications of footpaths.

4.2 Street Lighting Lantern Replacement

The Projects Officer presented details of the recent column stress testing results.

The Projects Officer explained that visual checks had been done on cast iron or concrete columns from top to bottom, due to their composition. Ten column failures had been identified, these include:

- Brook Road (Abbey)
- Castlewalk x 2 (Underdale)
- Hodgkinson Walk (Harlescott)
- Quarry (Quarry & Coton Hill)
- Ripple Close (Column)
- Simpson Square (Castlefields & Ditherington)
- Woodlea (Column)
- Greyfriars Bridge approach (Belle Vue)

There are two further columns on Castle Walk which would be replaced to ensure all columns along the footpath were the same.

Councillor Jones asked how surface rust was being combatted and whether protective paint could be used on the columns.

The Town Clerk confirmed that painting was not favoured as it can mask defects. Columns would continue to be regularly inspected and new columns would be set in concrete to avoid ponding at the base.

All other columns were structurally safe so it was intended to replace the twelve and continue with the LED upgrade.

4.3 Countryside Interpretation Boards

Members considered the report prepared by the Countryside & Greenspace Team Leader.

Members discussed the siting of panels at relevant points where they will be seen by users. It is difficult as the site has multiple access points and user routes. Positioning them at main junction points rather than entrances might be the most effective solution.

It will not be known how many panels can be produced for the site until discussions have taken place with a design and manufacturing company, but it is likely to be 3 to 4 given the budget allocated. The panels should last at least 10 years.

Councillor Mosley felt £10,000 for 3-4 panels sounded expensive but the Town Clerk explained that much of the cost was in setting up the artwork. She would ask the Countryside & Greenspace Team Leader to look into the content.

Councillor Jones enquired as to whether the boards would include the Belle Vue area which contained a mining heritage history often unknown to the public.

The Town Clerk clarified that it was currently only the Rea Valley that was being proposed.

4.4 Meet Place

The Town Clerk reported that she had now contacted Housing Plus twice and was still awaiting a response as to whether they were willing to match funding allocated by the Town Council and Trinity Church.

The Youth Committee had suggested a Portacabin on Mary Webb Road as a option. Councillor Mosley stressed the need to insure sustainability and usage by other groups if this option were pursued.

4.5 Grange Youth Centre

Quotes had been sought for decoration of the toilets and high roof. A quote for £900 for the works had been received from David Wood Painter & Decorator.

4.6 The Tendering of the BMX Track

Track lengths are being measured and tenders prepared. It is hoped any outstanding balances can be used for the major refurbishment of Upton Lane.

4.7 Development of Heathgates Allotments

A 6 x 10 anti-vandal unit has been sourced and a specification for the groundworks is being prepared.

4.8 Defibrillators

The Town Clerk asked Members to consider the purchase of a defibrillator for Weeping Cross Centre given that 30-40 STC staff are based there and the site is shared by staff from Veolia. The Town Clerk suggested she seek advice from West Midlands Ambulance Service about most suitable positioning and purchase.

4.9 Abbey Gardens

Councillor Mosley reported vast improvements to Abbey Gardens and asked that the operative now based from there be congratulated.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the footpath report be noted and Officers send details to all members for their consideration of footpath areas in their Wards.**
- (ii) That the urgent replacement of 12 number Columns be agreed and funded from the 2018/19 allocated Capital Replacement Budget.**
- (iii) That the Countryside & Greenspace Team Leader progresses work on the Interpretation Boards.**
- (iv) That the Town Clerk contact Housing Plus CEO for an update on the Meet Place and explore options for a Portacabin on Mary Webb Road as a backstop option.**
- (v) That David Wood Painter & Decorator be appointed to undertake decorations to the toilets and high roof space at The Grange Centre.**
- (vi) That the update on the BMX track tendering be noted.**
- (vii) That the choice of the Community Shed and specification for groundworks at Heathgates Allotments be accepted.**
- (viii) That a defibrillator be purchased for Weeping Cross Depot.**
- (ix) That update on all other Capital Projects be noted.**

05/19 TENDERING

- (i) Church Road Recreation Ground**

It was reported that the tenders have been evaluated. Ray Parry Play has been appointed and fit out is scheduled to commence on 8 July.

- (ii) Sweetlake**

Following discussions regarding anomalies in the S106 Agreement, funding has now been allocated for the development of the play area. Specifications are being developed.

06/19 QUARRY

0.61 Update of Events for 2019

The Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager (OR&AM) circulated a list of events due to take place in the Quarry and other locations during 2019. The Kids Fest had been very successful although a small amount of damage had been caused by the foam party. This had now been rectified. A very successful Wacky Races event had taken place during the Bank Holiday weekend, accompanied by good weather they had enjoyed a footfall of 17,000 during the course of the day.

There had been a request to hold a Beer Festival later in the year but Officers felt this would be direct competition for local traders and may not portray a good image for the Quarry. The Classic Car Rally at Church Road Recreation Ground had been a success.

06.2 Safety Advisory Group Meetings and the need for closure of the Park for set-up of Major Events

Last year Officers authorised the closure of large portions of the park to ensure safe set-up of the Food Festival and the Rock Concert. These events have large infrastructure with big equipment moving around quite confined locations and keeping public safe whilst they walked around these locations was becoming very difficult.

Following discussions with members of the Emergency & Regulatory Services it is the intention to close off portions of the park ahead of event opening to ensure safe set-up practices are used during the large events.

At this stage the likely events where an early closure will take place will include the following:

Food Festival 29/30th June – Closure Friday 28th
Shrewsbury Rock 13th July – Closure Friday 12th
Flower Show 9/10th August – Closure Thursday 8th
Oktober Fest 4/5th October – Closure Friday 3rd

Officers will ensure that during those early set up closures, public thoroughfares between Porthill Bridge and the top Quarry Gates will remain open as will access to the Play Park. Routes will be clearly marked and notices will be posted in key locations and on the Council's website ahead of the event.

06.3 Footfall Activity

The results of the data gathered by the Geosense counters were circulated for April and May 2019. As expected, results were higher during May and had hit 1 million on Bank Holiday Sunday when there had been an event together with good weather.

06.4 Solar Lights

Following the successful solar light test, the Town Clerk gave a report on further discussions with manufacturers.

Lighting is available via electric underground trunking from the entrance to the Quarry off Victoria Avenue to the 5-Ways Junction. From there only a couple of lights are in situ; these being spurs from Highway Lighting Stock in the vicinity.

Enquiries had been made regarding the potential costs for installation of a power supply, erection of columns and the necessary re-instatement of the resin-bond set. This had been costed in excess of £500,000.

Alternative provision had been looked at and a local manufacturer offered the use of a solar column for a year to determine efficacy particularly in the environment of mature tree cover that sheds Honey Dew Fungus.

This exercise showed that there was potential for sufficient lumens cover to define a safe route. The question however remains about the need to create some heritage feel to what are quite industrial columns and hiding the need for a large panel to capture solar energy.

Officers have been investigating the potential and believe that there are solutions on the market that could provide a solar option along the 1000m stretch for £2-3k a column. It was anticipated that approximately 20 lights spaced out at 25-35m intervals would be needed to provide an adequate lumen level.

This would not provide the same lumen levels as elsewhere along the river bank that benefit from permanent electricity hook-up and twice lumen levels.

In the tide of Climate Emergency the Town Council would be seen as forward thinking in the provision of renewable energy lighting;

The Council has made a commitment to explore solar lighting in this area. Members stressed the need for appropriate designs in this highly sensitive area.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the update on events for 2019 be noted.**
- (ii) That the need for closure of the Quarry Park for set up of large events be accepted.**
- (iii) That the update on footfall for April and May be noted.**
- (iv) That Officers proceed with Invitation to Tender for the provision of solar lighting columns along Victoria Avenue in the Quarry;**
- (v) That a capital budget of £60,000 (£3,000 per 20 columns) is set aside for the project.**

The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager reported full occupancy of the market with four traders on the waiting list plus another five existing traders on the waiting list who are wanting a full week or more space. One trader will be retiring in June.

The last late night opening had not been so well attended but it was thought that this may be because it was a Bank Holiday weekend.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager be noted.

08/19 RECREATION GROUND & OPEN SPACE MATTERS

Castle Walk Recreation Ground

Following concerns from residents, Councillor Mosley and Councillor Vasmer had met with the Countryside & Greenspace Team Leader to look at standards of maintenance in the Castle Walk Recreation Ground.

Castle Walk is a well-used area of public open space, with a mix of trees, grass, wetland and wild areas. It has a more natural feel than the short mown open space of the main recreation ground. There is a surfaced path going from the cycleway to the railway, and several other less formal paths on both side of the cycleway. Aside from a few areas where branches are impeding the path, the accessibility of the site is very good.

A report was circulated within which the Countryside & Greenspace Team Leader had listed and addressed each of Councillor Mosley's points with actions and rationales, however, Councillor Mosley felt that the amenity open space was diminishing. One area had been taken over by nettles, the riverside path had not been mowed and nettles are growing through the railings onto Castle Walk Footbath. The mowing frequency had been reduced and it appeared that the accessible space was becoming less and less. He felt it was important to ensure a balance between accessibility and naturalness. The land cannot be used for ball games as the grass is too long. He asked for clarification on who is responsible for managing the Castle Walk area.

Councillor Laurens felt the Castle Walk Recreation Ground had two separate feels, one area from the river to the weir would make a good countryside park with the other area as amenity area.

The Operations Manager explained that under the current staff structure the area is maintained by three different teams. The Neighbourhood Wardens who do weekly inspections including play areas, litter picking and the removal of drug paraphernalia, the Amenity Mowing Team who cut the riverside areas (subject to climatic conditions) and the Recreation Team who maintain the large areas with the tractor and rotary deck.

The Town Clerk agreed to look at ways to improve the clienting of the area. Due to staffing levels, if it were to be moved to the Countryside & Greenspace Team then other areas may need to be re-defined.

RECOMMENDED

- (i) That the Town Clerk visit the site and discuss maintenance with the Team Leaders.**
- (ii) That the Chair (Councillor Parady) visit the area in order to gain more of an understanding of Councillor Mosley's concerns.**

09/19 FISHERIES

The new website has been developed and is now ready to go live. Permits can be purchased online and advice can be obtained from the website.

A group of volunteer Bailiffs have been recruited and are working alongside Town Council staff.

£11,000 has been secured from the Environment Agency to improve pegs. The Angling Trust are amenable to another bid for improvements to local fisheries.

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council had now taken over management of Shropshire Council Fisheries at Oxon Pool and Emstrey. Work needs to be done to see how these Fisheries can be managed to ensure maximum benefit.

RESOLVED:

That progress on developing the Shrewsbury Town Fisheries be noted.

10/19 TEAM SHREWSBURY

The Operations Manager provided an update on Team Shrewsbury. Due to the lack of Police in the Town Centre, every incident has to be reported on 101. During April there had been 32 items of drug paraphernalia found in public toilets and 22 in public open spaces.

Councillor Pardy asked whether this was an increase on previous years and requested that a chart be prepared to show statistics from previous years.

Councillor Halliday enquired whether sharps bins had been trialled. The Operations Manager reported that there were sharps bins in all the public toilets.

Paul Ruscoe (Cleansing Operative) had been asked to attend Full Council, at a convenient time, to give an operational overview of the problems faced by the Cleansing Team.

RESOLVED:

That the Team Shrewsbury update be noted.

11/19 SHREWSBURY IN BLOOM

The minutes of the Shrewsbury in Bloom Committee meeting on 25 April were circulated. The Operations Manager provided an update:

The Weeping Cross Open Evening held on 22 May 2019 had been a huge success with 205 people attending in two hours. The public were amazed by the facility and the number of plants.

It had been suggested that a video tour of the greenhouse be done and made available on the Town Council's website.

The Operations Manager and Councillor Keith Roberts are finalising the Bloom Judging route and details of this will then be circulated

Councillor Laurens proposed a Vote of Thanks to all staff involved in the Open Evening.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the minutes of the Shrewsbury In Bloom Committee meeting held on 25 April 2019 be received and accepted.**
- (ii) A Vote of Thanks be given to all staff involved in the Greenhouse Open Day.**

12/19 GRASS CUTTING

The Operations Manager reported that grass cutting was going well, having started early this year due to the milder weather and the addition of the new mechanic which has meant more repairs being done in-house resulting in less down time for machines. There have been some issues with the Shropshire Council Contractors not having weed sprayed round obstacles which the mowers are not able to get up close to.

Discussions had also taken place with Shropshire Council over the possibility of the Town Council taking over the weed control contract but there had been no further developments.

A discussion followed on the confusion for the general public of who does what, particularly as some areas are maintained by Severnside and some Shropshire Council areas maintained by the Town Council under the Service Level Agreement, all with differing specifications. Members are receiving concerns from their constituents.

The Town Clerk fully understood the concerns of residents but the frequency of cuts had been reduced in line with the reduction in the SLA four years ago, which meant that differing standards were inevitable.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

13/19 CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Town Clerk presented a report into developing a Climate Emergency Action Plan and outlined what the Council do already and the resolutions agreed at Full Council in March, namely:

- Support the Declaration of a Climate Emergency
- Pledge to make the Council carbon neutral by 2030
- Call on Westminster to provide powers and resources to make this possible
- Sign up to the Covenant of Mayors (the Town Clerk has now done this)

- Request that the Finance & General Purposes Committee develop a detailed Action Plan in pursuit of the above objectives and report back within 6 months
- Call on Shropshire Council to support the Declaration of a Climate Emergency

The Town Clerk had produced the Report through research and brainstorming with others and whilst some things would be relatively simple to implement, others would not and more research would be needed. More staff resources may be needed to take this forward.

Councillors felt that the 6 month target to develop a detailed Action Plan was not realistic and the Council should not be held to this timeframe.

Councillor Laurens proposed that Council meetings become paperless. Councillors supported working towards paperless meetings but felt that in some instances paper copies were necessary so it was agreed that paper copies should be made available only if requested.

Councillor Mosley asked that the Town Clerk be congratulated on the work she had done in bringing together a group of interested parties and taking the development of a Climate Emergency Plan forward.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the report be noted.**
- (ii) That the Finance & General Purposes Committee look to initiating paperless meetings.**

14/19 COMMUTED SUMS

The Town Clerk updated on outstanding developer discussions/negotiations:

- (a) Radbrook College Site – Play Areas Complete
- (b) Copthorne Barracks Play and Open Space – offsite contributions to play and open space – awaiting progress with Pavilion Extension
- (c) Shelton Hospital Land Transfer – Adoption & Maintenance of open space – awaiting completion of landscaping
- (d) Barratt Homes/Bovis Homes – Mytton Oak Road – planned adoption for the start of the 2019 grass cutting season
- (e) Shrewsbury South Sustainable Urban Extension
 - i. Sutton Grange site – ongoing – unlikely to transfer in the next financial year
 - 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

- (f) Ingleby Way – Adoption & Maintenance of open space – now ready following clarification of hedgerow ownership;
- (g) Holgate Drive – Adoption & Maintenance of open space - awaiting completion of snagging;
- (h) Belvidere Paddocks – Adoption & Maintenance of open space – ready awaiting transfer;
- (i) Arlington Way – Adoption & Maintenance of open space – Contracts Signed;
- (j) Shrewsbury Town Football Club – Offsite contribution to the improvement to football playing surfaces at Radbrook Recreation Ground – awaiting tender proposals for pitch levelling
- (k) Weir Hill Development – Adoption requested and Finance & General Purposes Committee to consider.
- (l) Sweetlake – Development of play area and future adoption of open space – refer to Minute 05.19.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

15/19 HEALTH & SAFETY

The Council retains the services of Ellis Whittam to provide advice on Health & Safety. As part of the contract, they visit the Town Council 2 days a year to undertake Health & Safety Audits. As a matter of routine, they visit the two key locations of the Council; namely Riggs Hall and Weeping Cross and then on a regular basis visit peripheral depots.

The 2019 Audit covered the Quarry, Riggs Hall and Weeping Cross

There were no areas of non-conformance within either Riggs Hall or Weeping Cross, which given the space constraints of the former and the busyness of the latter is commendable.

At the Quarry a total of 6 non-conformances were noted – 5 of which were rated as “Medium Priority”.and all will be easily rectified under existing Budgets, Maintenance and Training Plans

The Town Clerk detailed the High Priority area pertaining to the derelict greenhouse. Simple ‘avoidance’ of this unsafe structure is no-longer an option - as it sits firmly in the middle of the Quarry Depot site, with walkways running around it. Of greater concern is that the fact that the Toilet Cleansing Operatives require regular access to an Inspection Chamber located between the derelict Greenhouse and the rear of the Upper Toilets - in order to rod the sewers. This rodding activity is required on at least a weekly basis to keep both the toilet facilities and the Horticultural Society’s sanitary system running. Such is the state of the structure that staff have recently been forced to construct a ‘temporary’ shelter over the Inspection Chamber in order to reduce as much of the immediate risk to the Cleaning Operatives as possible.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That Finance & General Purpose Committee look to developing a brief for the redevelopment of the site**
- (ii) That a structural engineer be commissioned to determine the structural integrity of the facility.**
- (iii) That discussions take place with planners/conservation officers to determine scope of works.**
- (iv) That this be fed into discussions with Shropshire Council regarding the pool redevelopment given the mutual use of underground utilities within the park.**