

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Operations Committee Held in Committee Room, Livesey House, 7 St John's Hill At 6.00pm on Wednesday 3 September 2025

PRESENT

Councillors D Vasmer (Chair), B Bentick (substitute for Councillor Wagner), J Dean, K Halliday, B Jephcott (substitute for Councillor Wagner), A Mosley, J Tandy and R Wilson.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Clare Turner (Deputy Town Clerk), Stuart Farmer (Operations Manager), Danny Powell (Operations Manager), Michelle Farmer (Committee Officer) and Max Ball (Communications Officer).

28/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies be received and accepted from Councillors Hancock-Davies & Wagner.

29/25 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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30/25 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held on 9 July 2025 were submitted as circulated and read.

Councillor Halliday requested a correction to Min 22/25 Capital Programme as Raby Crescent had been renamed Hermitage Green and not Heritage Walk.

RESOLVED:

That upon correction of Min 22/25, the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held on 9 July 2025 be received and adopted.

31/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

There were no Matters Arising for consideration

32/25 BUDGET SETTING PROCESS

The Town Clerk informed committee that this item was for noting purposes. The Responsible Financial Officer had taken a report to the previous Policy & Resources Committee held on 14 July about engaging with the standing committees regarding setting the budget for 2026/27.

There was one Operations Committee meeting scheduled for the 5 November ahead of the Policy & Resources Committee starting budget setting on the 8 December. That meeting sets the policy direction for the budget and a draft budget would then be prepared for consideration on the 12 January which then recommended the final budget to the Full Council meeting on the 26 January ahead of the 31 January 2026 deadline.

Over the next meeting of this Committee time would be set aside to consider any funding requirements this Committee had for the RFO to consider as he developed the budget.

At the request of the Communities & Environment Committee, all Councillors were contacted to ascertain any individual ward specific requirements. Details of these requests would be presented to the standing committees, depending on where they fit.

In considering any budgetary item, they had to be mindful of their general powers to deliver and that it aligned with the Town Council Corporate Plan and the six pillars of;

- Building Resilient Communities
- Supporting Shrewsbury residents to live active and healthy lives through the provision of quality services
- Preserving Shrewsbury's Heritage
- Creating a greener and better-connected Shrewsbury
- Advancing a sustainable, resilient and efficient organisation
- Taking Positive action to tackle climate change

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update be noted**
- (ii) That the Town Clerk issues reminders to all Councillors**

33/25 RECREATION GROUND MATTERS

33.1 Grounds Maintenance Update

Danny Powell, Operations Manager, updated the Committee on Grounds Maintenance. Once again, the ongoing hot dry weather they had been having an effect. On the plus side this had reduced the grass growth, and staff had been redeployed to undertake some work elsewhere earlier than normal. On the negative side, most of the fine turf grass surfaces and football pitches had been burnt off and would require a more intensive renovation programme this autumn to get the surfaces back to standard for next year. He expected football pitches to lose a percentage of their grass coverage this season, as the season had started on dry dead grass and the playing of games would wear this away quite quickly. This would then require more renovation next spring to replace the lost sward coverage.

The floral decorations across the Town had been kept alive by continuous watering, but at times they had replaced several dead baskets. The irrigation system in the Dingle had broken on several occasions and this had resulted in hand watering by staff to keep the plants alive. The irrigation system and the fountain in the Dingle would be looked at shortly and possibly replaced.

The weather also had an impact on the tree stock across the town, with an increase in dead trees which required removal. Trees had already started to shed their leaves, and they had a number of limbs falling from mature trees. Summer Branch Drop (SBD) was the spontaneous and unexpected falling of large, heavy branches from mature, apparently healthy trees during warm weather, often after a period of drought. The Tree Team had work that would occupy them until the end of the year.

The Countryside Team the Ash Die back survey was underway and was 75% complete. The team had cut about 7.5ha of meadows for hay and they had a reduced number of bails made this year because of the hot dry weather reducing grass growth.

The continued checking of the Beaver compound and health of the Beavers was ongoing.

Wildflower areas, once they had finished flowering and seeds produced, had been cut down. Paths had been cut on the countryside sites.

The mowing of Rural areas which they maintained had been carried out when required. The Tree team had been carrying out tree maintenance along with their mowing rounds.

The Amenity Team had produced some wonderful floral displays across the town in very difficult conditions. During the two Britain in Bloom judging days, they were on hand to show the judges the sites they maintained. The Nursery had started to take cuttings ready for next season and had collated the number of bedding plants they would need for next summer. The Spring Bedding was being produced in the nursery, ready to go out this autumn and Spring flowering bulbs had been ordered. They would start to remove the summer bedding displays at the end of September/early October.

In the next few weeks, the pruning of shrubs across estate/ roadside beds would start.

From the start of the new school term, Condoover College pupils would return to the greenhouse one day a week and this year they were also be accommodating two students from Derwent College for one day each.

The seasonal watering staff had now finished and returned to school and college. The Operation Managers personally thanked them for their work in the Town Centre this summer.

In regard to the Recreational & Formal Space team, the hot dry weather had reduced the need to cut their large grass areas and street verges this summer on a regular basis. The staff had been redeployed in the Old Cemetery strimming the grass down, which usually does not happen to November. They had also removed the epicormic growth on the trees in the Quarry and had assisted in general maintenance on Recreation Grounds and in the cemetery.

With schools returning this week, hedges had been cut, and sports pitch markings with the erection of goal posts had been carried out ready for the new school year. They were coming towards the end of their summer sports seasons and were now planning the end of season renovation programme.

The football season on Town Council pitches had started and staff had been getting the pitches ready. The Turf Tank marker was now in its second year and had reduced the time it took to mark out pitches from scratch. A staff member marked out eighteen pitches in two days on his own, in the past this would have taken two staff members just over five days to accomplish.

The long dry summer had meant that there were no fixture cancellations, and the Evening League Cricket and Rounders Leagues were now finished. Bowls and Saturday Cricket had about three weeks to completion. As stated before, the weather would mean that they would have to overseed their playing surfaces more this year because of the grass dying. They were also aware that they may have to

mow verges for a longer period this year as when rain arrived and the soil temperature was warm then grass would grow for a longer time period.

The logistics team had started hedge cutting across the town and would take the next four months to complete. As the tractor cut the hedges, staff were following behind to finish those pieces that were missed. Once this had been completed then they could look at hedges which needed hand cutting.

The playgrounds had been very busy this summer and maintenance of them was ongoing.

The mechanics had been carrying out maintenance of vehicles and machinery.

The Stepping Up team had been out working across the Town.

Councillor Halliday commented that the town looked great this year and suggested writing a letter of thanks to the seasonal watering staff as a thank you. All members were in agreement.

Councillor Tandy asked if it would be possible to let ward members know when work was going to be completed in their wards. It was agreed that they would be notified as much as they could, but locations could change at the last minute.

Councillor Wilson commended the students from the college that were at the greenhouse, and they should celebrate the fact that staff do this work with college students.

Councillor Jephcott asked what hedge cutter was being used at present and it was confirmed it was just the flail as it was more robust and sustainable due to the length of hedges the Town Council had to cut.

Councillor Dean commented on how the Grounds Maintenance role had changed due to climate change and asked if it could be reported on how the challenges were shifting. It was agreed that a report could be produced highlighting the changes.

Councillor Bentick asked if gutter clearing was part of the Town Council role and it was confirmed that it was not.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update be noted**
- (ii) That a letter of thanks be issued to the seasonal watering staff**
- (iii) That the change in grounds maintenance role be looked at due to climate change**

33.2 Public consultation for Shorncliffe Recreation Ground

The Town Clerk informed committee that she had made contact with Camlin's Landscape Architects in Abbey foregate with a view to progressing some feasibility work for this site. Hopefully, they would have shortly resolved land ownership and responsibilities so they would be able to progress. The Town Clerk was hoping to report further but she was awaiting contact to meet the staff on site with the ward member. The ward member was keen to engage in meetings.

Councillor Wilson confirmed that the Town Council would take over the Shropshire Council part of this project land. He commented that Camlin's were a good company, and they were awaiting the designs and once received they could then look at the budget.

Councillor Mosley commented that this project had been ongoing for some considerable time, and he was interested in where the money was coming from and that they should see the plans before they were made public. He also commented that a report on the financial cost of the Town Council taking on these areas from Shropshire Council should be produced as it would impact on the Town Council's budget.

Councillor Wilson commented that it needed to be an open consultation on what the public wanted.

The Town Clerk confirmed that further updates on this would go to the Service Delivery Group for discussion and then to the Policy & Resources Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

33.3 Unauthorised encampments

The Town Clerk reported to Committee that there had been two unauthorised encampments on Town Council land since the last Committee meeting, one at Upton Lane Recreation Ground and the other at Springfield Recreation Ground. In terms of the former, travellers moved off within the required timescales and in terms of the latter, travellers left before notice was served. Access to Upton Lane was by bolt cropping the lock to the gate by the Kingdom Hall of the Jehovah's Witnesses whereas access to Springfield Recreation Ground was down a grass bank from the road. Cleansing of the site was undertaken by staff once travellers had vacated.

Efforts had been made to safeguard all of the Council's vulnerable sites with various measures including height barriers, bunding, enhanced locks and various wooden and hooped bollards. In the past they had looked at addressing access risk, but there

would always be residual risk on all of their sites. If travellers wanted to get on a site, they would usually find a way. They had to strike a balance between protecting a site and not making it so robust it impacted on daily life. These two sites were a case in point. They had measures in place for these sites, but further mitigation would require significant infrastructure, similar to what they did on Shillingstone Drive some years ago. The Town Clerk welcomed this committee's steer on this issue and enquired as to what extent they wanted the Town Council to do more.

Councillor Wilson asked if there were any further actions and the Town Clerk commented that they could install metal hoops at the Springfield site, but this would not work on Upton Lane as it was an open site.

Councillor Tandy and Bentick asked if there were designated sites available for travellers and if any other councils had put measures in place effectively.

The Town Clerk stated that there was a plan for a traveller site proposed by Shropshire Council, but she believed that this was still at the planning stage. Councillor Bentick asked if the Town Council could contact Planning Department to see when the site may be active.

Councillor Jephcott commented that the application by Shropshire Council was withdrawn for further alterations.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update be noted;**
- (ii) That the Town Clerk consult further with the ward members regarding any further mitigation measures**

33.4 Installation of Bioswales at Roundhill Green

The Town Clerk updated committee on scheduled works to Roundhill Green by Severn Trent Water. They were currently undertaking a large programme of works to segregate sewage water from surface water with the aim of reducing the discharge for sewage into the Combined Sewer Outflow at Coton Hill. The installation of Swales would enable surface water to be captured within the open space rather than going into the drainage network. Works were scheduled to start this week. This would require the Play Area to be closed, but residents had been informed by Severn Trent Water, and they would be able to stay connected with Severn Trent if any issues arose.

Councillor Halliday said that this installation was good news, and the Town Council should give themselves a pat on the back as it was due to the work completed on

achieving bathing water status and their focus on river pollution that pushed Severn Trent in to completing this project. She was also pleased to hear that Severn Trent were consulting with local residents.

Councillor Wilson fully agreed but also thanked Councillor Halliday for her work in the Clean River campaign. He also agreed that this was a good scheme.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted

33.5 Greenfields Recreation Ground

The Town Clerk referred to the latest communication by the Greenfields Community Group. The Group wanted to undertake a number of initiatives at Greenfields Recreation Ground as part of their legacy. The Group would then be disbanded. Given the comments made by the Chairman of the Group about the Town Clerk's alleged obstruction to everything that happened on the site, the Town Clerk left this Committee to make the decision about the installation of benches within the Countryside area of the Recreation Ground. However, the Town Clerk did stress to the Committee, that whilst the Group wished to install such infrastructure, the Town Council maintained the occupiers liability of that site as the corporate owner and infrastructure on that site had to meet the robustness of a public park and not a domestic situation. The Committee also needed to note that picnic benches were a lovely idea, but in the right setting and to consider the circumstance in the event those benches were not used for the purpose they were intended. It was not the first time that the Town Council had to take out such infrastructure.

The Town Clerk also informed Committee that there were continued communications with Dr Day regarding the Greenfields Community Group finances. Dr Day had sent objections to the Town Council's External Auditor and felt that the Town Council should not be in receipt of infrastructure paid for by funds that were being inappropriately used. Assertion 8 of the Town Council audit showed that no funds were held by the Town Council from the Greenfields Community Group and this was confirmed by the Responsible Finance Officer. Dr Day's argument was if the Town Council agreed to the benches being sited on Town Council land, they were in effect accepting funds. The Town Clerk stressed that this process needed to be resolved before any benches could be put in place.

Councillor Jephcott supported the idea of the picnic benches. He believed that the vast bulk of the finances from the Greenfields Community Group were raised by the group. He was hopeful that he could come to an agreement with the group and the financial donors. Councillor Jephcott proposed that the Committee to agree to picnic bench locations on the park.

Councillor Jephcott further proposed that the benches that were removed from the concrete bases in the park be put back in place as the park was not a magnet for Anti-Social behaviour. The Town Clerk confirmed that the benches removed from the concrete bases were removed before Shrewsbury Town Council was set up and the Town Council didn't have them.

Councillor Bentick commented that the Town Council had a policy on benches to be placed at the request of residents and that Greenfields was not the only group in the ward. Other groups may wish to have benches installed until the issue of funding was resolved.

Councillor Dean agreed to the benches at Greenfields as new benches would go into the Capital Programme. He commented that despite the difficulties he hoped that the Town Council would not be put off working with other community groups.

Councillor Wilson stated that benches originally removed were important and asked if the Town Council had any spare benches that could be used. He also did not oppose to the picnic benches, but they need to be clear on funds first.

Councillor Jephcott said he would continue to liaise with the group and donor and try to resolve the issue. He commented that the picnic benches suggested by the group would not cost that much and they would be donated to the Town Council and subsequently maintained by the Town Council.

The Town Clerk requested specification details of the suggested benches ahead of the Town Council agreeing to maintain them.

Councillor Mosley asked if there would be any cost at all to the Town Council and it was confirmed by Councillor Jephcott that there would be no cost as the Greenfields Community Group would pay.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Town Council seek to install benches on the concrete bases from existing Town Council stock**
- (ii) That the Town Council agree in principle to picnic benches being installed subject to clarification on the group's funding status.**
- (iii) That Councillor Jephcott carry out consultation with all Greenfields residents.**

33.6 Rowley & Fenemere

The Town Clerk reported that the previous Recreation & Leisure Committee had considered a request from the Rowley & Fenemere Angling Association to install fishing infrastructure on Castlewalk Recreation Ground to provide safe locations for their member anglers to fish. The club purchased the rights quite some time ago from

the Ditherington Anglers who whilst not having actively fished the waters of late have had the rights ever since the recreation land was sold to the Corporation.

The Committee declined the application in March of this year.

The Chairman of the Club had subsequently appealed to the Leader of the Council for this decision to be reviewed. The Town Clerk had prepared a report that set out the past history of the site so that members of the Committee were aware of the facts before considering the appeal.

The Town Clerk had previously said that allowing a controlled amount of infrastructure on site and having arrangements in place for regular updates with the Club stood a greater chance of managing fishing on this site than a cart blank refusal. Officers already worked very well with the Shrewsbury Town Fisheries on places like the Quarry, County Ground and Sydney Avenue, so there was no reason why this wouldn't happen here. The Town Clerk had always found the club well-intentioned and they were a respected club amongst the angling community.

The Town Clerk informed Committee that she had received eight complaints via email from residents which had been circulated to members.

Councillor Wilson said that the proposed swims were low impact and they would actually assist West Mercia Search & Rescue when working in the river. He believed that Rowley & Fenemere were being reasonable in their request and it should be agreed.

Councillor Mosley stated that feelings were running high with residents and that they were not talking about three swims but actually fourteen. The Club's long-term objective was to do three swims, then another three etc. There were a large number of anglers who fish with a lot of angling equipment, and this changes the character of the area and a risk to local wildlife. He recognised the rights, but he did not feel that the Council should encourage infrastructure in this area. There was conflict between the current users of the area and the anglers, there was a need to keep the area as wild as possible.

Councillor Wilson replied that people had the rights to fish and this issue had already taken up significant officer time to try and resolve. Rowley & Fenemere were only talking about three swims in this instance.

Councillor Halliday commented that this path was used regularly and there needed to balance the rights of the club and the town. She asked the question whether there would be a benefit for a public consultation so residents could have their say.

Councillor Jephcott asked how many swims were proposed on the banks of the River Severn as it seemed general fishing practice as swims were small, discreet structures. He agreed that fourteen would be too many but that three was reasonable. He also enquired to the length of the riverbank in question.

The Town Clerk reported that the rest of the town fisheries had platforms, not swims and that the length of the bank was from Castlewalk footbridge to the railway bridge. Fourteen swims were the club's final aspiration and the chosen locations for the three swims had substantial gaps between footpaths.

Councillor Bentick commented that the likelihood was that if the club wanted fourteen swims, they would get fourteen swims. There needed to be space where additional ones were located and also listen to the local residents. He did agree that the amount of space used was large, but it did not impinge on the footpath. He also agreed that a consultation would be an option.

Councillor Vasmer commented that this was within his ward and that he did not think the Committee should change the decision previously agreed by Council as they would be setting a precedent. He would not support the recommendations set out in the report that:

- (i) That the appeal be upheld;
- (ii) That permission is granted for the installation of three swims in the locations as presented, with any further requests being considered on a case-by-case basis;
- (iii) That officers be given delegated authority to work with the Club to re-establish relations and develop a Memorandum of Understanding

Councillor Dean commented that the committee could not overturn a decision that had originally been made.

It was decided that a vote would take place:

- 2 Councillors for the recommendations
- 4 Councillor's against
- 1 Councillor voted to abstain.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the appeal is not upheld**
- (ii) That officers be given delegated authority to work with the Club to re-establish relations and develop a Memorandum of Understanding**

34/25 TREE MANAGEMENT

34.1 Amendments to the Tree Strategy raised at the previous meeting.

The Town Clerk apologised for her non-attendance at the last Operations Meeting. At the previous meeting, the Tree Strategy was added to the agenda, but the Town Clerk was not present for comments. From the minutes of the previous meeting, it was

understood that she would receive comments about the Strategy to be considered at this meeting, but she had not received any comments.

The Town Clerk had read the minutes and there appeared to be some inconsistencies regarding tree pruning and what it said in the Strategy and the sentiment at Planning. The Town Council still advocated that tree pruning was not a healthy activity for a tree as it created weaknesses and a tree would always establish stress triggers as a result of pruning. They often found there would be excess growth the following season. Reference to planning was different. Experience showed that applications for tree felling were often made because the applicant did not want a tree rather than it was a tree in terminal decline and needed to be felled. They would always recommend that if that tree were a healthy tree pruning was the lesser of two evils. There was also comment about them changing their approach to pruning overhanging trees belonging to others. In the same way as hedges overhanging pavements, the Town Council did not have the authorisation to undertake such private work, and they had to work with Shropshire Council Highways who had the authority to issue improvement notices.

There was also mention about the Town Council taking on Shropshire Council's trees. The Town Council already managed a large amount of Shropshire Council's trees and there were already plans to take on the management of the Castle and Cemetery Trees. Officers at Shropshire Council were also interested in talking to the Town Council about a greater role in management rather than just maintenance of trees.

From a history of this document point of view, they had developed this Strategy over a number of years, and it was a very good document; so much so that Shropshire Council created their Strategy based upon the Town Council's. The Town Clerk hoped that helped to clarify the document.

Councillor Jephcott commented that it was a comprehensive document but that he would like to alter some aspects of the strategy. He did not want to stop the Town Council in their work at present and stated he would like to review and improve the document in the coming months. He was happy for the document to be adopted at this meeting but would like to make some amendments.

Councillor Bentick commented that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy would increase the tree canopy area which would include Shrewsbury.

RESOLVED:

That the Tree Strategy be adopted subject to Councillor Jephcott reading the document suggesting slight adjustments at a future review period.

34.2 The impact of summer conditions on trees

The Town Clerk reported to members the need to highlight the stress this hot dry summer was causing on their tree stock.

Town Council trees were facing increasing challenges as a result of climate change. Rising temperatures, longer periods of drought, and more frequent heatwaves were placing significant stress on their tree stock.

When trees experienced climate-related stress, they may show visible signs such as yellowing or browning leaves, early leaf drop, dieback in the crown, or a general decline in health. They had also significant seed creation – acorns were in abundance in Oak Trees this year. In severe cases, prolonged stress could lead to significant limb drop and death of trees, and they had both this season.

Beyond their appearance, these pressures reduced growth, weakened structures, and made trees more vulnerable to pests and diseases.

Healthy trees were essential to the community. They provided shade, reduced heat in the streets, stored carbon, and supported wildlife. Protecting them was vital for both people and nature.

This meant them having to take significant steps to safeguard their trees by:

- Planting more resilient species that could better withstand heat and drought and equally flooding and high-water tables.
- Improving soil and site conditions to give trees the best opportunity to thrive.
- Monitoring tree health closely so they can act quickly when risks were identified.
- Ensuring watering and maintenance were carried out, especially during dry periods.

But the Town Council also needed residents to play their part too by looking out for signs of stress in local trees and reporting any concerns. Also to support planting schemes and helping them care for green spaces.

There was always going to be a residual risk from limb drop and trees falling. Recent limb drops had been investigated. All those effected had been inspected under their Strategy regime and none had any visible signs of decay. They needed to continue a watchful eye of their tree stock should this hot dry weather continue. A draft communication seeking the public support in helping them to care for these trees will go out on social media platforms shortly.

Councillor Wilson & Dean commented that communication with the public was vital, and the story must continue to be told.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted**
- (ii) That the Communications Officer sends out public information on the Town Council website and social media platforms**

Councillor Mosley left the meeting.

34.3 Tree management plan for the Quarry

The Town Clerk reported that whilst the Tree Strategy looked at trees across the whole of the Town Council's Estate there was a specific need for a Tree Management Plan for the Quarry. The trees in the Quarry were of vital importance. They had been financially assessed using the I-Tree software and they were worth tens of millions of pounds in terms of their benefits to the community, society and the environment.

They had all been inspected in accordance with the Town Council's Tree Strategy and there were six that needed to be felled with a sizeable number in need of restorative work to counter any starting decline.

The plan was to continue to preserve the tree stock and develop a suitable replacement programme. That probably meant they had to look at replacing 10-15 trees every year from now on. Lime Trees had an 80–100-year lifespan. Many of the ones along Victoria Avenue were a good 20-year-older than that and they had the disadvantage of sitting in flood water or a high-water table for half the year.

The Arboriculture Report clearly set out the need to understand any impact of disease, ground compaction and general age of trees. It recommended that the Town Council look at specialist work including air-spading and tomography equipment. This was not cheap, but it was fair if you looked at the value of those trees. A PiCUS test, also known as PiCUS Sonic Tomography, was a non-destructive method used to assess the internal condition of trees, specifically for detecting decay or cavities. It involved sending sound waves through the tree trunk and measuring how quickly they travelled, with faster speeds indicating sound wood and slower speeds indicating decay. The results were visualized as a tomogram, an image showing areas of decay or cavities. Investigations had been made around the best options to undertake sonic tomography. Given the amount of Lime Trees in the Quarry, commissioning an Arboriculturist was cost prohibitive. PiCUS Testing equipment was available at around £23,000 which would mean that by the time a quarter of the trees were tested, it would prove a return on investment compared to an average professional rate of around £400 per tree. This equipment would prove beneficial for the Council's wider tree-stock as well as the contracted tree-work they undertook for Shropshire Council. It would help staff gauge which trees need to be removed.

The recent tree survey identified that areas of the Quarry were in need of decompaction. This would be done by air spading. An air spade was a specialised tool that used a high-speed jet of compressed air to excavate soil. It is particularly useful in situations where traditional digging could damage tree roots, underground utilities, or other sensitive areas. By precisely directing the airflow, the air spade loosens and removes soil without causing damage, making it a valuable tool for arborists, landscapers, and utility companies. At the same time, it was also possible to add nutrients to the soil; it had also been recommended to try to inject biochar into the ground to nourish the soil. This was specialist work and contractors were being sought.

Councillor Halliday asked if training would be provided on the specialist equipment and it was confirmed that they would. Staff would also receive constant support from Picus.

Councillor Bentick asked if the equipment could be loaned out to their councils and used as an income generator and this was agreed that it could.

Councillor Wilson confirmed he was happy to purchase the equipment and asked if there would be a need for additional staff which the Town Clerk confirmed there would be a need.

Councillor Jephcott supported the idea of using technology, but he needed to be convinced that the reports provided were robust so that trees were not felled when they could be pruned. There needed to be clear evidence.

Councillor Bentick asked if early disease was detected with this machine and it was confirmed yes. If disease was shown in the tree, it was rapid deterioration as the tree becomes compromised and must be removed.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Report be noted;**
- (ii) That the urgent tree works be approved;**
- (iii) That specialist PiCUS Testing Equipment be procured;**
- (iv) That specialist Air Spading work be commissioned;**
- (v) That a Quarry Tree Management Plan be developed.**

35/25 FIELDS IN TRUST

The Town Clerk informed Committee that they had raised previously a request to consider Village Green Status on Stanley Lane in Meole Brace and they had also received previous request for Fields In Trust status applications at Greenfields Recreation Ground, this was following an unsuccessful application for Village Green Status.

The Town Clerk had been looking into both schemes and the difference between the two approaches. On the whole Fields in Trust was more favourable and whilst committing land to recreational space for the future, it did provide flexibility to maintain the land for the benefit of recreation.

The Town Clerk had spoken to Fields in Trust, and they were keen to work with the Town Council on developing a Deed which fitted the collective aspirations of the community, the Town Council and fitted into the Fields in Trust ethos. They would help them to understand which sites could be considered for this approach. The Town Council needed to consider which site they would want to look at for this process. Some did not fit as they had various licences and leases, and some had commercial operations on site, so the Town Clerk suggested exploring some of their sites and picking 2-3 to test the process. She had already looked at all of their traditional Recreation Grounds:

- Stanley Lane – Yes
- Greenfields Recreation Ground – Yes
- Kynston Rd Recreation ground – Possibly
- Moston Road Recreation Ground – Possibly
- Waincote – Yes
- Church Road Recreation Ground – Questionable
- Monkmoor Recreation Ground – Questionable
- County Ground – Questionable
- Springfields Recreation Ground – Questionable
- Castlewalk Recreation ground – Yes

The Town Clerk recommended to start with Stanley Lane and Greenfields and then possibly add in Waincote and Castlewalk.

Councillor Wilson was very much in support of this and suggested setting up a working group with relevant members present, dependant on the locations that were selected.

Councillor Bentick fully supported this scheme and would be happy to be part of a working group.

Councillor Jephcott commented that residents want to protect parks and that Fields in Trust was the most robust. He also would like to be involved in the working group. The Town Clerk did inform Councillor Jephcott that Greenfields had previously applied for Village Green Status but had not been successful.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Report be noted;**

- (ii) That the Council supports the registration of Recreational Land under Fields In Trust**
- (iii) That Stanley Lane and Greenfields Recreation Ground be considered first;**
- (iv) That an Operational Working Group be established to develop all necessary documentation alongside ward members for those chosen areas;**

36/25 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk updated the Committee on the Capital Programme.

The Play Area tenders were taking their time to validate as more questions have had to be asked of the tenderers.

It was believed that Heads of Terms had been agreed between Shropshire Council & Shropshire Horticultural Society regarding the land in front of the Castle, but she was not sure solicitors had been fully instructed.

The Town Clerk had been having conversations with a number of consultants about the Quarry Conservation Management Plan so they would start to build up the tender proposals now.

In regard to Meole Brace wheeled sports track, the Operations Manager has had to ask interested tenderers to re-send their tenders due to an issue with quarantining of the submissions by Shropshire Council IT system.

An update was provided on the solar lights following the news that Zeta Lighting had gone into administration. Staff members of the original Zeta team were now setting up on their own and were looking to work with the Town Council's electrical contractor on the supply of solar lights. If there were any queries on solar lights they should be sent to Stuart Farmer, Operations Manager.

Councillor Jephcott informed committee that he had contacted the Town Council electrical contractor to push them along quicker with light installation in Greenfields as he felt it was not moving quick enough. The Town Clerk informed Councillor Jephcott that any operational instructions must come from staff and not Councillors. They had a possible solution to the solar lights but there would be at least a 12-week lead time from the date the order was placed – this could not be made any shorter.

Councillor Wilson asked if there was an update on Upton Lane, but it was confirmed that there was not but hopefully there would be for the next meeting. Councillor Wilson also commented on bus shelters within the town and that Town Council should talk to Richard Davies and Clare Evans from Shropshire Council before any Town Council commitment on bus shelters.

Councillor Tandy commented that there were two new bus shelters within his ward that needed to be moved to a location where they would actually be used. The

Operations Manager confirmed that the new bus shelters only replaced existing ones and that locations had not changed.

RESOLVED:

That the new Capital Programme update be noted.

37/25 SHREWSBURY IN BLOOM

The Operations Managers updated the committee on Shrewsbury in Bloom. Both of the Bloom judging dates had gone well and they were now awaiting the results that would be announced in October.

As the Chairman of the Bloom Committee, Stuart Farmer thanked all staff, Councillors, Bloom committee members and volunteers who had assisted on the days and had shown Shrewsbury in a great light.

Councillor Wilson agreed and asked if this could be communicated to all staff as the town looked stunning. He thanked all for the work that was done.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted

38/25 STEPPING UP TEAM

The Operations Manager, Stuart Farmer, provided an update on the Stepping Up Team.

The stepping up team had been making an impact in all areas of the town, the team were also key in the preparations for the Towns entry in to both the Heart of England and Britain in Bloom campaigns this year by clearing footpaths and generally tidying along the routes. The foreman of the team also met with the Britain in Bloom judges to explain the team's role within the Town.

Since the previous meeting, the team had been on a number of training courses to upskill, these included Chapter 8 roadworks signage, Manual handling and Sharps Awareness.

Planned ward visits had begun with the first two taking place over recent weeks in the Abbey and Bagley wards, with works in Abbey ward taking place this week and planned works for the Bagley ward commencing on 22 September.

The dates of the ward visits had been diarised with the ward members and other organisations who had been encouraged to attend, planned visits between this meeting and the next were:

- Battlefield 17 September – Works planned 13 October.
- Belle Vue 8 October – Works planned 3 November.
- Bicton Heath 29 October – Works planned 24 November.

The Operations Manager maintained the master spreadsheet of works with these being added to from public enquiries, councillor requests and latterly from the ward visits.

The team also had a spreadsheet with all tasks that had been identified either by staff themselves, by Councillors, by the public and of late forwarded by Shropshire Council because their team have not the resources to do them. Each task was reviewed to determine whether;

- it was the responsibility of others and if it was, they were informed
- they had the capacity and resources to undertake the work
- whether there were any timeframes that needed to be considered for the work to be done (for example, working out of nesting periods, knowing when other traffic management functions were being undertaken at the same time, any embargos and whether there were clusters of work in one area).

Upon that staff allocated jobs to the Stepping up Team. Some of the bigger projects that had been carried out of late included walkways through the Reabrook Estate and walkways along Featherbed Lane.

The team had also completed several weekends of litter picking within the Town Centre generating a considerable amount of waste. An agreement with Shropshire Council had been reached regarding access to the recycling centre to dispose of the waste from the Town Centre.

Re-visits to some of the sites had also been required to maintain the areas. These had included areas such as the Sutton Bridge which was mostly due to leaf litter and weed growth. This would continue to be an issue and was something that the manager of the service was very conscious of. Time had been allocated for some re-visits to prevent the build-up occurring again wherever possible.

The team had received demonstrations on several machines over recent weeks, which included path scraping machines and Town centre vacuum and cleaning machines. The machines would be sourced from local suppliers where possible; this

gave the Town Council the best back up service possible for repairs, servicing and spare parts.

Stuart confirmed that new machinery had now been ordered and there was a lead time of around 4 weeks.

Councillor Wilson commented that he was pleased the equipment had been ordered and feedback from members had been good in regard to the stepping up team. He also enquired if the team was now at full capacity and it was confirmed it was with a new member of staff starting the end of September.

Councillor Jephcott thanked officers for the site visit in his ward and commented that it would have been helpful if the Housing Authority had also joined. He would also like to complete the site visit for the Heath Farm section of his ward.

Councillor Bentick commented that the ward visits needed to be at least three hours.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report are noted.

39/25 COMMUTED SUMS

The Town Clerk provided an update on negotiations with developers and transfer arrangements. They had not reached any trigger points for any further Town Council involvement and would continue to liaise with planners on development progress:

- (i) *Copthorne Barracks Play and Open Space*** – offsite contributions to play (£30,498 - £20498 for Shorncliffe Drive & £10000 for Silks Meadow – to be paid on 75% occupancy) and open space (£115,000 for sports pitches & associated facilities at County Ground – paid on 50% occupancy) - funds in relation to landscaping at the County Ground have been drawn down
- (ii) *Barratt Homes/Bovis Homes – Mytton Oak Road*** – Phase 1 adopted; Snagging Phase 2/3 commenced. No identified date for transfer. Significant work has been made on site, and it is hoped transfer will take place later in the year. The developer has also asked us to adopt the railings on site.
- (iii) *Shrewsbury South Urban***
 - 1. Sutton Grange site – ongoing – likely transfer in 2024/25 – recent meeting with Taylor Wimpey to discuss logistics for transfer. Following a hiatus in work the Technical Director of Taylor Wimpey is pressing adoption. Solicitors have been appointed to develop transfer documents.

2. Bellway Homes site – discussion on land adoption and adoption of acoustic fencing
3. Galliers site – early discussions on land adoption
4. Community Centre – location on the site

(iv) **Radbroke College site** – Open space adoption – officers met with Floreat Homes on site – likely adoption once all phases are completed, however no indication of time.

(v) **Weir Hill** – Agreements to adopt the land at a future time have been signed -meeting with Taylor Wimpey looking at the possibility of the countryside land to be transferred ahead of the POS on the development site. Persimmon has sought solicitors to develop transfer documents, and it is hoped transfer will take place later in the year. Taylor Wimpey was leading on the initial Phase III works and they are keen to have a conversation about the possible adoption of that countryside space so that it links up with Phases I & II land.

The Town Clerk added that the Bellway Homes site was virtually ready for adoption and was with solicitors.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

40/25 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Chair thanked Councillors for attending and taking part in this Town Council meeting and thanked the staff involved in this meeting. All papers related to the meeting could be found on the website www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk.