

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Recreation & Leisure Committee Held Virtually on Microsoft Teams At 6.00pm on Wednesday 26 May 2021

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

PRESENT

Councillors K Pardy (Chair), B Bentick, K Halliday, C Lemon, P Moseley (substituting for P Gillam), E Roberts, A Wagner, B Wall & R Wilson.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Head of Operations), Stuart Farmer (Projects Manager), Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager), Ruth Jones (Office Manager) & Carol Pullen (Committee Clerk).

1/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

That apologies from Councillor P Gillam be accepted.

2/21 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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3/21 CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN

At its meeting of 17 May 2021 Council made the following Chairmanship appointments:

Chairman Councillor Kevin Pardy
Vice-Chairman Councillor Kate Halliday

4/21 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members were asked to note the Terms of Reference for this Committee that had been approved by Full Council on 17 May 2021 and were set out in the Town Clerk's report which had been circulated to members prior to the meeting.

5/21 OFFICER DELEGATION

By way of background and for the benefit of new members the Town Clerk appraised that meetings were held as set out in the 1972 Local Government Act which stressed the need for meetings in a place and physical attendance at those meetings by both Councillors and the public. The Pandemic stymied this process in March last year when the country entered into a period of Stay At Home Direction, so regulations were established to allow for virtual meetings, which on reflection virtually every authority in the land thought was a good step with greater member engagement, greater public engagement, greater press engagement. Those regulations could only stay in place during the lifetime of the Coronavirus Act which had a hard end date of 6 May. Despite representations from every tier of local government, Government refused to make parliamentary time to make these temporary measures permanent. The Local Government Minister wrote to leaders of councils to suggest putting measures in place to either hold physical meetings or put in place a scheme of delegation to allow virtual meetings to take place, but placed a reliance on senior officers to in effect make the decision and it was the latter arrangements that this Council put in place. Council had held a Full Council meeting the previous week and members experienced the difficulties in holding a meaningful physical council meeting working to existing COVID regulations and the restrictions that placed on public attendance.

This meeting was in effect an informal meeting of the Committee whereby the Town Clerk as the person on whom delegated authority had been granted in this short-term period would make decisions based upon the recommendations of this Committee.

Members were asked to note that officers already had a vast scheme of delegation which allowed for decisions to be taken without the need to revert to Council for a decision; this document was circulated to members for information.

6/21 UPDATE ON RECENT WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

For the benefit of new members the Town Clerk gave a short Powerpoint presentation on the remit of the Town Council and setting out the types of projects this Committee got involved in.

As a general point of information Councillor Halliday said that herself and Councillor Moseley sat on Shropshire Playing Fields Association Committee and it had been acknowledged by that Committee just how much parks had been used during COVID. The Committee had wished to express their thanks for all the work staff had done in maintaining these facilities throughout.

The Operations Manager thanked Councillor Halliday and expressed his thanks to individuals, community groups and key workers who had stepped up to help throughout these challenging times.

7/21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 31 March 2021 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 31 March 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

8/21 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Minute 51/20 – CCTV cameras in the Quarry – repairs to the fibre cabling had begun.

Minute 51/20 – Performance Quality Standards – on our sports pitches – Phase 2 works on sports pitches had been commissioned and once those results came back, they will be presented to Committee.

Minute 54/20 – Welcome Back Fund – Shropshire Council were the accounting body for Market Towns, with the exception of Shrewsbury & Oswestry where it this was likely to go to the BID due to the complexity of the ERDF funding. This money would be spent on making the public realm better and the Town Council and BID were on message with what the funds needed to be spent on.

9/21 UPDATE ON OPERATIONAL DELIVERY IN LIGHT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

The Town Clerk provided an update on COVID related matters involving the Town Council.

The Town Council are currently working within Phase 2 of the Lockdown Recovery Roadmap. All sports facilities are open, all retail is open and hospitality has recently commenced indoor service. The only thing left to open in the Council's estate was the Community Centres which required COVID Risk Assessments and in the case of Ditherington consideration of major expense to bring it into a workable and safe facility. This would be looked at shortly with a view to report to the next Committee cycle.

Staff who were shielding should have returned to work by mid-June, although staffing remains an issue as some are still covering additional COVID affected/related duties. Staff have all the necessary PPE & Sanitisation facilities to keep them safe and all staff are encouraged to have lateral flow tests twice a week. The majority of the workforce have had their first vaccination and a good number have had their second.

Demands on the Senior Management Team have been considerable throughout covering additional COVID management activity as well as cover for recent sickness episodes within the team.

The Head of Finance has briefed the Finance & General Purposes Committee on financial projections for the year end. It is envisaged at this stage that the overall deficit outturn shall be in the region of £90k, but this will be dependent on how long and severe the current lockdown continues for.

The end of year accounts were due to be presented to the Finance & General Purpose Committee on the 14 June.

Staff have continued to maintain a high presence communicating to the public. All notice boards have COVID Updates, there is a special section on the [Website for COVID](#) related matters and social media regularly posts updates regarding COVID matters, also picking up on Public Health Shropshire matters.

Both the General Market and the Sunday Market are trading fully and trader levels are back to pre-COVID levels. Both Markets are still operating to COVID Regulations.

All Parks & Open Spaces remain open, unless they have had to be closed for flood reasons. The Quarry has been exceptionally busy as the public continue to use the facility for their daily exercise.

The Dingle has operated a one-way system with no seating. It is the intention to plant up for summer during the restricted access arrangements and then open up the site fully after the 21st June phase of the Recovery Roadmap is introduced.

Under current Government Guidelines, all play areas have remained open. All have been COVID Risk Assessed and new signage has been in place. A number of complaints have been received from the general public questioning the Town Council's decision to keep them open particularly when schools were closed. The mental and physical benefits of keeping these facilities open far outweigh risk of transmission. The current message has been for parents to act more responsibly when using these facilities and ensure they and their children continue to follow the HANDS-FACE-SPACE rules.

Commissioning of the Splash Park has been carried out. It is the intention to open it to the public from 28 May onwards.

The football season had now closed following a 2-week extension to meet fixture backlog; usual closed season preparatory work would now begin. Bowling, Croquet, Cricket & Tennis seasons are underway.

Toilets have remained open albeit some facilities within the toilet blocks being closed to ensure social distancing can be maintained. These measures will be reviewed in conjunction with the Government COVID roadmap.

There remain infrastructure problems with the Top Quarry facilities as water pipes have been damaged and an emergency feed from the depot is susceptible to poor supply during freezing conditions.

Butcher Row Facilities whilst open continues to be the target for drug use issues.

The grass cutting season had now resumed with operatives out working on Town Council and Shropshire Council land. Whilst the team benefitted from a cold dry start to the growing season, May's rain together with projected rises in temperature will see the grass bolt on.

Fisheries have remained open but are restricted to Shrewsbury residents use only where they can justify the activity as part of their exercise. Preparations are underway to ensure the Coarse Fishing facilities are ready for the start of the season on 16 June. All fisheries are regularly inspected by bailiffs which work with both Environment Agency Personnel and the Police.

All allotment sites remained open and were working to guidelines issued by the National Association of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners.

The Town Clerk and Head of Operations continue to attend the fortnightly Shrewsbury Recovery Taskforce meetings and have supported the work of the partnership throughout. All town-centre road closures are back in place and will continue in place until the 21 June. Discussions are underway regarding partial pedestrianisation of the High Street after the 21 June. Work continues with the development of a Local Traffic Zone for Town Walls.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

10/21 FOOTFALL

The Projects Manager provided an update on Footfall within the Town Centre and the Quarry.

Talks between the supplier of the counters and officers from Shropshire Council were ongoing with the view to extending this scheme town wide.

Quarry visitor numbers had continued to rise slightly since the January lockdown, with a slight drop off through May possibly due to the poor weather. Visitor numbers continued to track along the same numbers as non-event days from 2019 and the slight increase in the numbers also followed this same trend.

Visitor numbers in the square continued to climb throughout April and May.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

11/21 FISHERIES

The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager provided an update on the work of Shrewsbury Town Fisheries.

Since the last meeting, the coarse fishing season had closed and would reopen on the 16 June. Inspections were being made of all the fishing platforms and ongoing maintenance of the area was being undertaken. All this work should be completed in time for the commencement of the new season which should ensure safe access to the river and that visitors to the waters have an enjoyable experience.

Grants were obtained from the Angling Trust Fishery Improvement Fund to the sum of £4000 to enable five new platforms at the Emstrey Fishery. Also improvements to be completed at Mousecroft Pool with a grant of £5000 from the EA, with more Gravel paths being laid to ensure easier access for disabled anglers from the car park, and improvements to the general footpaths in the vicinity of the pool and the possible installation of a compostable toilet, due to the increased number of visitors.

The grants also allowed replacement pegs at Frankwell and new pegs at the Monkmoor fishery, which had a rolling programme of replacing old pegs and increasing the provision.

A junior academy was due to commence later this year and the Fisheries were seeking to ensure there were sufficient numbers of qualified bailiffs who had also been DBS checked. This was being supported by the Angling Trust who were keen to ensure youngsters got the best start in the sport and Total Angling who will provide equipment and bait.

The junior academy would also cater for the parents of the juniors with the objective of not only learning how to fish, but also have an educational aspect with the view of protecting the environment and wildlife. The Shropshire Wildlife Trust and various other bodies would have an input on these subjects, either practically or via website, blogs and films. The events would be timeslot based in the interim and these sessions will be bookable via a new section to be launched on the fisheries website. Up to eight coaches will be initially trained and DBS checked. These coaches will consist of six bailiffs and two members of the public and will all be fully qualified.

A grant had been successfully obtained from the Angling Trust for £2000 to help with the initial steps of the academy, and it was envisaged that there would be continued support from the Angling trust towards all processes.

Contact had already been made with Severndale SEN Academy with interest for their children. Fisheries management team had agreed to support Severndale in any way they can to enable their pupils to utilise our waters.

The Fisheries were also looking to work with Young Shrewsbury Youth Service to enable teenagers to participate in the sport and hopefully provide access to a sporting activity which is not expensive or competitive and provides a relaxing alternative activity.

Income for this time of year is down because during the start of the COVID Lockdown, all fisheries had to be closed until restrictions eased, it was decided to extend the duration of the existing permits to compensate for this. As lockdown eases and with the continued improvements to the fisheries, an increase in new members applying for the annual permits was expected.

RESOLVED:

(i) That the report be noted

(ii) That the Fishing Co-ordinator & Bailiffs be thanked for their continued work

12/21 TEAM SHREWSBURY

Prior to the meeting Members had received the Team Shrewsbury reports and the Head of Operations outlined the current issues.

Since the Spring the Quarry had suffered a significant level of anti-social behaviour involving youths congregating, underage drinking, drug use & dealing and general litter & detritus from people gathering and not taking their rubbish home. Litter collection poses a major issue with staff resources being expended to purely litter pick before any maintenance can take place and litter collection for onward recycling and disposal is six times higher than normal.

Since March the Council had commissioned security guards to patrol the park until 10/11pm on an evening to address the night time ASB. They had regularly reported issues, liaised daily with the police and had cause to move on a significant number of people causing ASB. Their initial commission was until the end of May, but there was a need to extend this provision until the summer months.

A special Team Shrewsbury Tactical Meeting had taken place recently with town centre focussed partners and Schools to discuss a multi-agency approach in tackling the current ASB issues occurring around the Town and in particular in the Quarry. A number of actions were tasked to partners to begin to collectively address issues and a joint press release to raise awareness around drink/drug related issues was being compiled and shared on the various social media platforms.

The Council could consider hosting additional events to make the site more busy and in effect police itself, make more formal use of the bandstand and possible busking locations to increase visitor numbers, use the park for personal training, installation of outdoor gyms (similar to Telford Town Park) but much of this could result in a rise in congregation which went against the grain of the current COVID regulations of keeping facilities free from formal activity. It also needed to be noted that the majority of ASB happened between 7-11pm when organised use of the park would not normally take place.

Shropshire Council are exploring the possibilities for using anti-urine paint where urination is an issue.

Currently there are 9 verified (possibly 14) Rough sleepers in the town centre. All had been offered accommodation but many were refusing to accept the offer. They were however requesting wash/toilet facilities during the evening and Shropshire Council and the Ark (who both receive funding to support the rough sleeping community) were requesting the Town Council to open facilities 24/7. This would place a huge financial resource issue on the Town Council who were already struggling to address the impact of inappropriate use of the public conveniences during the daytime economy. The Head of Operations suggested a number of alternatives owned by Shropshire Council for creating overnight toilet facilities for rough sleepers which would simplify measures given that they received funding from Government to address rough sleeping.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Outdoor Assets & Recreation Manager liaise directly with anyone wishing to host events in the Quarry.**
- (ii) That further consideration be given to the provision of 24/7 toilet facilities**
- (iii) That the Report be noted.**

The Deputy Town Clerk left the meeting

13/21 QUARRY MATTERS

(i) Quarry Events Programme

The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager reported that over the last year this committee had reviewed event activity in the park. At its January meeting it agreed to not accept bookings for any activity until 1 July to enable the park to be as open and accessible as possible to all. The park has been well used during the various lockdowns for leisure and recreation. This decision was again ratified at the committee's March meeting once Government had published its Recovery Roadmap. This decision was to communicate to all event organisers and events have either been cancelled or delayed to later in the year.

For an event to take place, activities needed to meet the current national guidelines and locally needed to be signed off by the Emergency Planning Team (taking guidance from both the Safety Advisory Group and Public Health Shropshire). As well as the standard Event Management Plans, COVID Risk Assessments needed to be carried out detailing all measures to reduce risk of transmission (Including hand sanitizers, suitable space, ventilation, social distancing, cleanliness, attendees logged plus test and trace where appropriate).

Much of the guidance that was raised during the pandemic, is to continue even though lock down is easing. The main reason for this is it is good practice, and it instils public confidence in attending a safe event in a safe environment.

A number of event organisers have chosen to cancel events this year and have booked for next year including the Flower Show. The Town Clerk & Head of Operations have held regular meetings with the Shropshire Horticultural Society this year to consider their options. The show is very expensive to host and committing such resources with limited assurance on visitor capacity was not an option. The society shall again host a Virtual Show and are looking at a number of initiatives that will promote horticulture both within the park and beyond. Officers have discussed their proposals and are happy that they can be accommodated safely.

Many of the Brass Bands who had been booked for the Bandstand Programme have cancelled bookings primarily because they have been unable to meet up and rehearse. Many have expressed a wish to perform on the bandstand in 2022 when the situation should improve.

Members suggested that perhaps local musicians could be approached who may welcome the opportunity to fill the vacant slots in the Bandstand and it was agreed that the Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager contact the Mayor and liaise with him about possible musicians this as he was particularly promoting music during his Term of Office.

(ii) Shrewsbury Park Run

The Deputy Town Clerk and Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager had been discussing the re-introduction of the Shrewsbury Park Run and Shrewsbury Junior Park Run with event organisers locally and nationally. The national body was keen to begin Parkruns on 5 June, had issued generic COVID Risk Assessments to land owners and had initiated a campaign of publishing those land owners who had agreed to host activity.

Officers had reiterated the greater need for public safety in the Quarry given its excessive use, detailed the decision of Council on not hosting events before 1 July and had requested site specific Risk Assessments given usual pinch points for the event. It was now understood that the national body had delayed restart until 26 June (after the next Roadmap Phase) as only a minority of landowners had been supportive of an early start.

Currently the start of Park run for Shrewsbury had been pencilled in for Saturday 3 July. Members were asked to review this date, particularly in light of representations that had been made to politicians.

(iii) Easement request by Shrewsbury High School

The Town Clerk reported that there had been a request from Shrewsbury High School to grant a formalised access to the Quarry from the rear of their site along Victoria Avenue and members were asked to consider this request.

Members expressed concern that granting a formal access could set a precedent not only for the Quarry but on other Council owned recreation sites. They were keen to learn more about their proposals and asked that the Town Clerk more information.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted**
- (ii) That the current Events Calendar be approved**
- (iii) That the Town Clerk contact Shrewsbury High School to seek more information regarding their request for formal access into the Quarry.**

14/21 SHREWSBURY IN BLOOM

The Head of Operations reported on the work of the Bloom Committee.

Work had included:

- The BID were co-ordinating the applications for summer hanging baskets in the Town Centre with a closing date of 28/5/21
- Hanging Baskets, Tiered Planters, Bollard Planters, Floral Pole Planters and Floral insert liners were all planted and were currently being acclimatised in the cool zone of Weeping Cross Nursery.
- A number of requests for assistance had been received from schools, community groups and volunteers.
- Updates on progress on the plant production programme were being streamed on social media.
- An independent Bloom Website had been approved and work was commencing on updating and downloading information.
- Background work had commenced on the Bloom Portfolio as this would be used as this year's Judging criteria. No Judges visits were planned due to Covid restrictions.
- Residents would be encouraged to participate in the Town of Flowers photographic competition which was due to be judged later this summer.
- Local Companies continued to support the Floral Sponsorship scheme.
- Visits to the Depot & Greenhouse could be arranged for new members of the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

15/21 RECREATION GROUND MATTERS

The Town Clerk reported that throughout the month of May there had been a series of unauthorised encampments on Town Council Land, Shropshire Council land and Private Land. Areas affected included Bowbrook Meadows (currently private and soon to be adopted Public Open Space), Springfield Recreation Ground (STC), Meole Park & Ride (SC), Frankwell Carpark (SC) and Shrewsbury Business Park (Private/SC).

In most cases the Gypsy Liaison Officer at Shropshire Council had involvement as did West Mercia Police who have powers to evict from site pending certain criteria being met.

In the case of the Bowbrook Site and Springfield Recreation Ground travellers had moved off on the instruction of the Police and staff had made good both sites including ways in which security could be reinforced to reduce the impact of unauthorised encampments.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

16/21 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Prior to the meeting the Capital Plan had been circulated to members. A number of projects had been progressed during COVID but there were still some in hand to complete and a number where funding had been allocated but progress by others was awaited. The Town Clerk had begun compiling the list for the 2021/22 Programme and progress would be reported at the next R&L Committee meeting.

There was a wish list from the last administration Councillors which she would circulate to new members to see whether these projects still had merit, whether they need amending or whether there were others.

It was planned to organise Ward Walks for new Councillors with Officers to help them better understand which areas within their specific ward were in Town Council ownership.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

17/21 COMMUTED SUMS

The Town Clerk gave an update on negotiations with developers and transfer arrangements:

- (a) **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) - **Discussions were taking place with Sean McCarthy, Leisure Services Project Officer at Shropshire Council about the triggers for these funds so Council could start to develop projects in these locations.**
- (b) **Barratt Homes/Bovis Homes – Mytton Oak Road** – scheduled adoption Autumn 2020 – Sign-off of Phase 1, paperwork exchanged, awaiting formal transfer; Snagging Phase 2/3 commenced - **Phase 1 had now been completed.**
- (c) **Shrewsbury South Urban**
 - i. Sutton Grange site – ongoing – likely transfer in 2021
 - 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

Nothing further to report.

- (d) **Sweetlake** – Development of play area and future adoption of open space – Play complete. Sign-off of Phase 1c,1b,1a, paperwork exchanged, awaiting formal transfer. Developer working through snagging list - **Phase 1 had now been completed and snagging for Phase 2 was well underway.**

- (e) **Crowmoor House** – s106 agreement for offsite play & open space contribution to be used for Upton Lane & Monkmoor Recreation Ground – two-staged payments on trigger on percentage occupied properties. Council to bankroll work at Upton Lane Rec; - **The Deputy Town Clerk & Cllr Mrs Moseley sat on the Stakeholder Group. Plans were underway for the BMX Track and details of finance triggers were awaiting.**
- (f) **Harlescott Infants/Juniors site** – Offsite contributions to sport – **Discussions were taking place with Sports Development.**
- (g) **Weir Hill Development** – possible adoption of open space – The Council had been offered the **Phase 2 Public Open space which included a large Countryside Park. Discussions were taking place with the Group Leaders and ward members for Abbey & Column, but an answer was needed by the developer by the end of May.**

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

18/21 CLOSING REMARKS

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked Councillors for attending and taking part in this virtual Town Council meeting and also thanked the staff involved in this meeting. All papers relating to this meeting could be found on the website www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk and the minutes would appear in draft on the website within the next month.