

## SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

### Meeting of the Recreation & Leisure Committee Held Virtually on Microsoft Teams At 6.00pm on Wednesday 22 September 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), J Dean (substituting for C Lemon), P Gillam, N Green (substituting for A Wagner), E Roberts, B Wall & R Wilson.

#### IN ATTENDANCE

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

#### 35/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

##### RESOLVED:

**That apologies be accepted from Councillors B Bentick, C Lemon, A Wagner, Helen Ball (Town Clerk) & Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk).**

#### 36/21 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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#### 37/21 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 19 July 2021 were submitted as circulated and read.

##### RESOLVED:

**That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 19 July 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.**

## **38/21 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Minute 24/21 – COVID** – The Government had now launched its Autumn/Winter COVID Plan and Officers were reviewing its content to ensure that in the event there was the need to implement Plan B it could be done as smoothly as possible.

**Minute 27.2 – Parkrun** – This was going well and would be celebrating its eighth birthday this week.

**Minute 27.5 – Lime Tree in the Quarry** – this had been removed successfully, it was an exceptionally diseased tree. A replacement would be planted in a suitable location.

**Minute 29.2 – Queens Green Canopy** – Deputy Lord Lieutenant Robert Bland would be visiting Weeping Cross shortly to chat through how the Town Council could support the initiative in the county.

**Minute 29.3 – Treeplogger** – installation was progressing, there had been an inception meeting last week and it was hoped it would be operational quite soon.

**Minute 30/21 – Beaver Project** – tenders for the works had been received it was hoped that the tender would be awarded shortly.

Councillor Parry enquired whether there was any progress regarding the County Ground. The Operations Manager confirmed that the vision for the improvements to the pavilion was yet to be finalised. Once this was done and funds which would include some \$106 monies were secured, the next stage would be entering into discussion with clubs regarding the tenure and the licence. Details of any agreement would then be presented to this committee for approval.

## **39/21 FOOTFALL**

The Project Manager reported that within the last few days it had come to light from Elephant Wi-Fi who managed the footfall counters that there had been an ongoing issue with counting. This was down to the Apple having changed the way their mapping addresses were presented and had resulted in some visitors not being picked up by the counters. Now that Elephant Wi-Fi were aware of this issue they had worked on a resolution for current visitors and were working through historic visitor numbers so it was hoped that this would be rectified, and he could offer a further report at the next meeting.

In general, the visitor numbers for all locations had seen a slight increase over recent months. The increase of new visitors also indicated a return of holidaymakers and day-trippers to Shrewsbury. The number of new visitors overtook the repeat for the months of May and June, and this had remained broadly the same throughout the summer months.

An overview of the Shrewsbury counters for July and August comparing it nationally showed that Shrewsbury was still above the national average for daily footfall. Whilst figures appeared to be stabilising over the last few months, visitor numbers were down considerably on 2019 numbers, but these were expected to increase over time with the reintroduction of large events within the town and as confidence grew.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Report be noted.**

**40/21 FISHERIES**

Members had received the Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager's report. He reiterated that fisheries were going well. Tree work had started in conjunction with the Town Council's tree staff and in partnership with Sabrina Boat who had provided a boat for accessing trees on the river. It was hoped this work would be finished in readiness for the first national competitions later in October.

The Bailiff/Water-keepers continued to provide voluntary contribution to maintenance and security of the fisheries. There were currently twelve and they have been kitted out with uniforms and body cameras. There was close partnership working with the Police, Environment Agency, other Angling Clubs and residents.

It was noted that the Shrewsbury Town Fisheries wished to thank, Shrewsbury Town Council, Shropshire Council, The Environment Agency, The Angling trust, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, the fisheries team of volunteers and its members who had all helped improve the fisheries for the benefit of all concerned and the wider community. Membership had doubled every year was now just short of 1600 members, which was an achievement interested parties could be proud of.

**RESOLVED:**

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

**41/21 TEAM SHREWSBURY**

The Officer Manager reported that discussions were taking place regarding the potential closure of 70 steps due to continuous ASB issues in the area including urinating/excrement & drug taking/dealing & the potential risk in terms of other offences (robbery, assault etc). Public Rights of Way (PROW) would be required to formally consult with the public. Shropshire Council Environmental Maintenance were currently compiling statements from partners for submitting to Highways and PROW. Members of this Committee were asked to support an application to close this PROW. Although the area was being regularly cleansed the level of anti-social behaviour was potentially leaving the public and operatives at risk.

Adding to this, the Operations Manager said there were still ASB issues in public toilets and concerns about the number of rough sleepers around the Butcher Row area. The Town Clerk was meeting shortly with partners from the BID and Officers from Shropshire Council to discuss a more collaborative approach to addressing ASB issues in the town and more partnership working. The potential of purchasing and deploying mobile cameras was still being investigated but there was obviously key legislation around that which must be followed.

In the Quarry things had improved slightly due to the darker nights although littering was still a problem.

Councillor Green said that as a rule he was loathe to see public rights of way being closed, but having walked down 70 steps and witnessed the poor condition he supported the closure for the foreseeable future but hoped this would be kept under regular review and a longer term solution to re-opening it be sought.

Councillor Wilson expressed concern about river safety. Although some sections of the river had been fenced off a while ago there were still large areas of the river path which were not. He was aware that this may be the responsibility of Shropshire Council but asked if the Town Council could take this up with colleagues at Shropshire Council. He referred to Water Lane which was completely unfenced and large sections between St Julian's and the Weir.

The Operations Manager said he would record Councillor Wilson's concerns and ask the Town Clerk to raise this with those dealing with river safety issues.

In supporting the closure of 70 steps Councillor Roberts made reference to running clubs who in the past had used the 70 steps regularly during training, particularly during the Winter months because it was lit and she hoped that a longer term solution to re-opening it could be sought.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the Report be noted;**
- (ii) That this Committee support the request from Environmental Maintenance to support a request to close 70 steps.**

## **42/21 QUARRY MATTERS**

### **42.1 Events programme in the park**

The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager reported on the current events programme for the Quarry. The list was constantly changing with either cancellations or activities taking advantage of the spaces created in the diary. The events programme was coming to an end with the Octoberfest in early October and then smaller charity events leading up to Christmas.

Data received from Let's Rock from UK Live which indicated where tickets had been purchased from showed just under 10% of the ticket sales were from Shrewsbury, just over 20% from the Shropshire area, just under 30% from the Midlands and Wales and just under 40% from the rest of the country and overseas. It was pleasing to note there had been so many visitors to Shrewsbury.

All activities were complying with COVID Guidelines and any additional recommendations forthcoming from the Shropshire Council Resilience Team must be complied with.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the update be noted.**

**42.2 Update on permission to demolish the Quarry Greenhouse**

The Operations Manager updated the Committee on executing the wish of the Council to demolish the Greenhouse at the Quarry and build a contemporary garden. The Quarry Greenhouse was built at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and was a functional greenhouse until the late 1990s when it fell into disrepair. The fabric of the greenhouse had become more and more unusable and for several years it had been fenced off.

The site had a number of constraints; namely:

- There have been many repairs over a long period of time and there is very little left of the existing Victorian greenhouse
- There is asbestos sheeting on the racks within the greenhouse which would require specialist removal
- Underneath the greenhouse is a large concrete rainwater reservoir

Previously Officers had met with the Head of Planning and a Senior Conservation Officer to determine any approach to removal.

A recent structural survey had identified that it was not viable to repair and should be demolished.

Whilst not within the Curtilage of the Grade Listed Heritage Park it was afforded protection by its principal listing of Quarry Lodge given that the structure was built before 1 July 1948.

The facility also sat within the Shrewsbury Conservation Area.

Enquiries had been made with specialist conservation planners to determine a course of action to see its demolition and the site re-use.

It was evident that the Council's wish to demolish and convert into a Contemporary Garden was not straight forward and enquiries would need to be made with both the Conservation Team, Shropshire Council and Historic England. There would be a need to have a plan which retained the historic value of the site regardless of its condition.

This would also add to the need to undertake a piece of work to determine a future vision for the park which officers had previously identified as a requirement to enable programmed work to be planned and funded.

Councillor Pardy reported that Councillor Mosley, Leader of the Council, had contacted him earlier and asked this committee to consider the setting up of a small working party to discuss the future of the Quarry Greenhouse site. He had proposed this consist of himself, Councillor Pardy & Councillor Vasmer. Councillor Pardy also

felt it would be useful for the Ward Member, Councillor Green to be included. Councillor Green confirmed he would be happy to do so.

Councillor Dean said that although he was not against the proposal, as there was already a visioning exercise planned about the wider strategy for the Town Council, which would include discussion on best use of the assets, it may be unnecessary to form a separate working group solely for the Quarry area.

Councillor Pardy felt it would be useful as this was a specialist area and input from Councillors would help determine the future use. Members were happy to support the proposal to set up a working group to discuss the future of Quarry area that included the site of Victorian greenhouse.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the report be noted;**
- (ii) That Officers proceed with the commissioning of a Vision for the Quarry;**
- (iii) That a Quarry Working Group be formed to discuss the future of the Victorian greenhouse area of the Quarry and this Working Group consist of Councillors Green, Mosley, Pardy & Vasmer.**

**42.3 Proposals for the repair of the Shropshire War Memorial**

The Operations Manager reported on the proposed repairs to the Shropshire War Memorial located in the Quarry. Assistance had been sought from the Conservation Officer at Shropshire Council regarding what physical action was advised and Officers were starting to seek quotations from the contractors recommended and would come back to this committee with costings.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the report be noted;**
- (ii) That contractors as suggested by Shropshire Council Conservation Officers be invited to tender for the works and that depending on the costings working within the current budget allocations the work be commissioned.**

**42.4 Review of the tree - stock in the Quarry**

The Operations Officer reported on the value of the Lime Trees and the need to preserve the longevity of the tree stock. The last major arboricultural work on all the trees was completed in 2002 which was part of the Heritage Lottery Grant of £1.5 million to refurbish the park with the total spend of £2.3 million. A small percentage was spent on the tree stock.

Currently the Quarry tree stock is made up of 380 lime trees along the avenues and 74 mixed tree species in the Dingle.

Since 2009 the Town Council had implemented an annual programme in The Quarry identifying those trees requiring priority maintenance. They were annually inspected, and maintenance work completed by the Council's in-house team and specialist local contractors throughout the year.

Work was needed over and above the routine annual inspection to ensure the continued lifespan of these trees, many of which were over 75 years old.

Whilst the Council did have arborists on the payroll it was felt that specialist arborists were required for a number of reasons:

- The identified public risk of the area due to high footfall;
- The length of time the work will take given the size of the tree stock across the whole of the council estate
- The need for specialist kit which maybe over the capacity of staff

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the report be noted;**
- (ii) That the Council recognises the importance of maintaining a healthy tree stock across the town and supports the proactive management and maintenance of the Council extensive tree stock;**
- (iii) That all necessary permissions are sought for the felling and pruning of trees in the Quarry;**
- (iv) That a formal invitation to tender is advertised and the Finance & General Purpose Committee be notified of the outcome of tendering in due course;**
- (v) The committee will be updated with a progress report.**

## **43/21 SHREWSBURY IN BLOOM**

The Operations Manager reported that the Heart of England in Bloom campaign entry had been by way of a portfolio, detailing all the year's activities, working with Bloom Groups and other partners. The Town Clerk had received the pleasing news that Shrewsbury had achieved a Gold Standard Award. Some of the things which had impressed the judges had been the increase in wildflower planting, the roll out of sedum roofs on bus shelters, they had noted the proactive approach to Ash Die Back. They had also made reference to the BID and some of the public realm improvements that had been implemented over the Covid period in the town centre. They were keen on the Council's vision of creating its own tree nursery, the social media engagement particularly Facebook Live postings.

The Operations Manager congratulated the Bloom Committee for all their hard work and the team effort and involvement of those within the town and some of the urban areas. Given it had been a particularly challenging year, to receive the Gold Standard was good for the residents and for encouraging visitors back into the town.

Members echoed their delight and asked that thanks be passed on to the Bloom Committee for their work in enabling this achievement.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) **That the report be noted**
- (ii) **That this Committee record its thanks to the Bloom Committee in achieving the Gold Standard Award.**
- (iii) **That the minutes of the 7 September be presented at the next Recreation and Leisure Committee.**

#### **44/21 RECREATION GROUND MATTERS**

##### **44/1 Unauthorised Encampments**

The Operations Manager reported on the frequency of visitations from unauthorised encampments at the last meeting of the Committee. Since the last meeting Officers had to address an encampment at St Michael's Recreation Ground.

It had been identified that all locations were being assessed to consider whether any mitigations measures were needed. These include the installation of height restriction barriers, metal hooped barriers, use of natural features like bollards, tree planting and ditches. Eight locations had been identified for either installation of mitigation measures or enhancements to existing measures.

Whilst a number of mitigation measures could be funded through existing Council budgets some measures were beyond current budgets which included the installation of height barriers at around £4200 per barrier.

The Operations Manager asked for the Committee's support in Officers identifying a locations and costings to be taken to the F&GP Committee for approval.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the Recreation & Leisure Committee supports the installation of appropriate measures to reduce the risk of unauthorised encampments;
- (ii) That Officers assess the necessary risk of those vulnerable sites and identify and implement the most appropriate measures to meet those risks;
- (iii) That the Finance & General Purposes Committee be appraised of incurred costs.

#### **44/2 Performance Quality Standards**

The Operations Manager updated Committee on the Performance Quality Standards carried out on Shrewsbury Town Council's Grass Sports and Amenity Surfaces. These helped Officers to really understand the conditions of every sporting facility, define standards, help to shape and prioritise Capital Works and maintenance regimes. It helps to influence Play Pitch Strategy & Place Plan and discussions with developers. It was important that this was done initially as an independent survey, but the Council do have the capability to do this inhouse.

It was intended to carry out this appraisal annually and report back to this committee on the standards of the facilities but also with having the expertise in house it would enable the Council to offer this assessment service to other Parish or Town Councils and provide technical support to them in actually doing that work. The purchase of the sand banding machine and the spike had meant that staff now had the equipment to improve these facilities to a higher standard and the Team Leaders would be implementing this plan of action. Using this machinery, officers were also looking at the possibility of putting in a drainage system to alleviate any water running down to the arena area of the Quarry and this would be planned to be done during the Autumn period.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the report be noted;**
- (ii) That an improvement programme is actioned by the Recreation & Formal Space Manager subject to climatic conditions;**
- (iii) That future PQS reports are completed in-house with our experienced staff;**
- (iv) This service is offered to Local Councils and external sports clubs which would provide additional income generation;**
- (v) That the committee receives an annual report on the condition of both grass sports surfaces and amenity space (The Quarry) as part of the council's review of the amenity assets.**

#### **45/21 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT ON GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

Prior to the meeting members had received a report prepared by the Team Leaders which highlighted the impacts of climate change seen locally in the management of the Council's estate.

The Operations Manager reported that in 2009 at the time of local Government reorganisation staff were working with quite defined Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter seasons with various jobs assigned to those specific seasons. In the 10-year period since, the make-up of the seasons had changed from a horticultural maintenance point of view, with unexpected periods of excessively hot or cold together with prolonged periods of drought or rain having a significant impact on plant growth, flowering and tree seasons. At times this

had placed significant strain on being able to maintain the estate in terms of impact on staff, changes to planting conditions, excessive use of machinery.

Both the Recreation & Leisure Committee and the Climate Emergency Committee needed to continue to have sight on how climate change was impacting on the Council's operations.

Areas may include:

- Looking at changing grass cutting regimes in places
- Increased tree inspections and major tree works in prime locations
- Maintaining the best equipment to meet the needs of the service
- Changing plant choices and even in very traditional areas
- Changing hours of operation so that staff work outside high temperatures
- Encourage greater community resilience to support work locally

Councillor Wilson thanked the Operations Manager for his update and suggested the information contained within the report would be useful for the public to help them understand the pressures the Council were encountering, particularly if it were made available through social media. The Operations Manager agreed that he would speak to the Town Clerk and they would precis the report for the Council's social media platforms.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the report be noted.**

## **46/21 CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

### **46/1 Capital Programme**

Ahead of the meeting the Capital Programme had been circulated to members. The Operations Manager reported that staff were continuing to develop the capital projects and asked that the Committee be mindful that this was being carried out alongside continuing with their normal work.

The Ward Wishlist's had been circulated prior to the meeting. This was designed to capture all wishes within a Ward a bit like a mini-place plan by ward, but it was about how that work would be prioritised. Group Leaders had been involved and members were asked to support the wish list and feedback any ideas or thoughts to enable it to be finalised.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the Reports be noted;**
- (ii) That members feedback any issues they have on the Ward wish lists to Group Leaders.**

## **47/21 STREETLIGHTS**

Over recent years Shrewsbury Town Council had been undertaking a programme of replacing old SOX and SON streetlamps with new LED lamps. This project had been completed and had given a substantial saving in energy costs and repair costs. A considerable amount of work went into the original tender to ensure the correct light sources were found.

Following discussions with Shropshire Council Street Lighting Team regarding some issues with conflicting inventories, 18 lamps had been identified as being the responsibility of Shrewsbury Town Council and required upgrading to LED.

As part of the original tender, column structure tests were carried out on all lighting columns in the inventory, the results of these tests gave a recommended retest date with time scales varying from 1 – 7 years depending on the construction and condition. Most columns were given a 5-year retest cycle, but a number were recommended as 2 years. These 2-year columns had been inspected by the contractor and 3 had been identified as needing replacement due to heavy rust at the bases of them.

A cost for these replacements had been provided of £4421.00 by our electrical contractor. This will be the final cost for supply and installation. Shrewsbury Town Council own the power supply that feeds these columns meaning our contractor is able to isolate them himself and there will be no requirement to involve Western Power Distribution or any of their costs.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the Recreation & Leisure Committee supports the upgrade to LED all new columns identified as Shrewsbury Town Council Footway Lights;**
- (ii) That the Recreation & Leisure Committee notes the structural test results and approves the replacement of 4 lamp columns in need of replacement;**
- (iii) That the Finance & General Purposes Committee identifies a budget of £11721**
- (iv) That the Climate Emergency Committee assist in the funding of LED lamps**

## **48/21 EVENTS**

The Council organises a number of events a year, namely Battle of Britain Service, Remembrance, Christmas Lights Switch on and Carols in the Square. Government had published its COVID Response Autumn & Winter Plan detailing a Plan A & Plan B Scenario for measures in the event there was a need to protect the NHS  
[COVID-19 Response: Autumn and Winter Plan 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-autumn-and-winter-plan-2021)

Initial discussions with the Resilience Team at Shropshire Council had outlined a need for a cautious approach in organising events ensuring that arrangements could be amended to meet the current needs. Plans were underway for all events, but arrangements would stay fluid to accommodate any changes to COVID restrictions.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) **That the report be noted;**
- (ii) **That Officers continue with preparations and finalise arrangements depending on the COVID regulations at the time**

**49/21 ALLOTMENTS MEETING**

The Operations Manager reported on the recent Allotments Liaison Group meeting. In the past there had been regular meetings but more recently there had been other priorities which had prevented these. Representatives from the Council's allotment sites had found the meeting useful and were keen for these to continue so another date had been set in six months' time.

Key messages that came from the meeting were that Covid had proved to be a challenge although all were coping there had been some strained issues over plot maintenance. General occupancy was good and although there were waiting lists, these were manageable enough not to warrant the need for more land. The Operations Manager confirmed that there had been some capital spend which continued to improve the infrastructure and all allotment income was spent on the allotments.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the report be noted.**

**50/21 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) - the site is up to 35% Occupancy and Officers have got triggers to contact us once the 50% and 75% occupancy triggers are met. The process on tender specification to spend these funds had begun.
- (b) **Barratt Homes/Bovis Homes – Mytton Oak Road** – Phase 1 adopted; Snagging Phase 2/3 commenced – staff continue to liaise with Barratts and Bovis on final phase transfers.
- (c) **Shrewsbury South Urban**
  - i. Sutton Grange site – ongoing – likely transfer in 2021 – *Taylor Wimpey want to look to transferring part of the Sutton Grange site in readiness for the 2022 growing season*

- 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

No further progress to report

- (d) **Sweetlake** – Development of play area and future adoption of open space – Play complete. Phase 1c,1b,1c, adopted; Phase 2a, 2b snagging complete, awaiting formal transfer – documents for Phase 2a & 2b transfer were signed earlier in the week so transfer expected to be imminent – *all adopted now and maintenance contributions received.*
- (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; - Councillor Mrs Mosley continues to liaise with Cornovii on the Crowmoor House Development and the projects are progressing ahead of funds transfer - *the Deputy Town Clerk & Councillor Mrs Moseley attend the Crowmoor House Development Group regularly.*
- (f) **Harlescott Infants/Juniors site** – Offsite contributions to sport – Staff have started initial discussions with SC on what the Offsite Contribution can be spent on. Initial thoughts are around sports pitch improvements and drainage at Kynaston Road Recreation Ground – *staff have met with Sports Development to see how offsite contributions from the Harlescott Junior School Development could be used.*

**RESOLVED:**

**That the update be noted.**

**51/21 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](http://www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk) and the minutes would appear in draft on the website within the next month.