

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Recreation & Leisure Committee Held in Council Chamber, Shirehall At 6.00pm on Wednesday 9 November 2022

PRESENT

Councillors K Pardy (Chair), R Dartnall, J Dean, P Gillam, C Lemon, E Roberts & D Vasmer.

IN ATTENDANCE

Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Head of Operations), Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager), Ruth Jones (Office Manager) & Michelle Farmer (Committee Officer).

36/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

RESOLVED:

**That apologies be accepted from Councillors Bentick, Wagner and Wall.
Apologies were also received from Stuart Farmer – Projects Manager.**

37/22 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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38/22 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 7 September 2022 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 7 September 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

39/22 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

32/22 – Church Road Recreation Ground – The Head of Operations updated the Committee stating that he was currently working on a report showing a number of options and he hoped to bring the costings to the next Recreation & Leisure Committee on 18 January 2023.

32/22 – Splash Park – The Head of Operations confirmed that money had been allocated for the resurfacing works and an order had been issued. Work on the resurfacing would start in Spring 2023.

40/22 BUDGET – 2023/24

- (i) To consider the Fees & Charges for 2023/24;
- (ii) To consider any items to be recommended to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for consideration of the 2023/24 budget

The Deputy Town Clerk reported to the Committee that this time of the year was the budget preparation period at. This Committee was involved in two areas.

The Head of Resources had prepared his recommendations for Fees and Charges confirming that the majority had been increased by approximately 2% and rounded to the nearest whole figure. The annual fees of exclusive facilities like bowling and croquet had increased in line with maintenance inflation costs for maintaining these facilities.

A new fee had been created for concerts and events in the Quarry to better reflect the usage.

The Head of Resources had written to all Councillors asking for further suggestions to add to the account's preparation. It was asked if the Committee would consider any further recommendations.

Members commented that they were happy with the 2% increase stating it was very reasonable and not increase costs unnecessarily.

RESOLVED:

Councillors agreed to email the Town Clerk or Head of Resources with any further suggestions regarding the budget.

41/22 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Deputy Town Clerk reported the following:

- Town Centre accommodation work was on track for completion by mid-March and a meeting of the Working Group would be arranged shortly.
- The upgrades for Kynaston Road Recreation Ground were due out for tender.
- The Wheeled track tender for Moston Road Recreation Ground were due in shortly.
- Ditherington Community Centre – discussions had been had with Marches Academy to turn this into a community hub. This idea was still in the early stages but worth pursuing.
- Beaver Project – The licence had been approved by Natural England & Defra. The Town Clerk had signed the partnership agreement alongside the CEO of the Wildlife Trust and the Projects Manager would shortly commence the tender for cost revisions. It was hoped that beavers would be introduced in 2023.

RESOLVED:

That the Capital Programme report be noted.

42/22 FOOTFALL

The Footfall report had been circulated prior to the meeting. In the absence of the Project Manager, the Deputy Town Clerk reported that visitor numbers had started to drop off over the past two months and in comparison to September and October 2021. Part of the reason for this was the fact that some of the Quarry events were moved to September and October 2021 following the easing of restrictions.

The total Quarry visitors for January to October 2022 was 1.2 million, showing that total visits for the year were likely to be over 1.4 million for the whole of 2022. Whilst total visitor numbers had dropped off in recent months, the percentage of new and repeat visitors had remained relatively stable throughout the 12-month period.

RESOLVED:

That the footfall report be noted.

Councillor Vasmer joined the meeting.

43/22 FISHERIES

The Fisheries report had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager provided an update.

Mousecroft Pool - The fisheries would be receiving a grant from the Environment Agency for £3000. This would finance the installation of the last three platforms which would be installed over the winter months. The bailiffs would also be carrying out regular maintenance at the pool until the spring.

Monkmoor / Belvidere Fishery - Some additional boundary signage was to be installed on the boundary at Belvidere.

Oxon Pool - This was still closed due to low water levels as it had not recovered from the heatwave this summer. They were hoping to have it open again from December. The Fisheries Manager did have concerns that the large-scale house building in the area may have an impact on the natural water supply due to increased drainage. He was also concerned that one of the footpaths was directed towards the pool and there were concerns about children from the new properties getting into the pool area, which could be dangerous and also increase anti-social behaviour. The field adjoining the pool outer boundary of the woodland was owned by Shropshire Council and should be re-fenced as the old fence was damaged and non-functional.

Reabrook Fishery - Installation of the new signs was nearly complete.

Radbroke Pool - The fisheries manager would be contacting the Countryside Manager, as there was some tree work required next to some of the platforms, which could not be done by the fisheries team.

County Ground and Quarry - Grass cutting and maintenance had been completed around all the river platforms.

Emstrey Fishery - The fisheries team had been busy installing the new car park for the bottom section of the Emstrey fishery. The fencing and installation of a gate with a combination lock would be completed this week. New signs would be added in approximately 10 days' time.

Fish Fry and Sewerage - The Environment Agency carried out a fish fry survey on three locations for the fisheries on the River Severn. This provided an important indication of our future fish stocks in those locations and also their health. These were carried out in an identical operation at the West Midland Show ground, Pengwern Boat Club and Monkmoor. The Monkmoor and Showground fisheries produced a reasonable mix of species with a satisfactory number of juvenile fish. But the Pengwern Boat Club area, which represents the Quarry fishery area, was terrible with only three fry captured of two species. The fisheries manager could only put this down to high levels of sewerage continuously present in this location as it came from the Coton Hill area and affects the entire length through to the English Bridge. Complaints to Severn Trent were not responded to in a manner that gave a sense of hope in the future. Anyone associated with Angling finds this demoralising when they cannot do anything about the impact and the damage this was doing.

The popular three-day festival was not taking place this year due to the fishing being very poor over the past three years. The fisheries manager was embarrassed about our water when complaints come in that anglers were catching more sanitary products than fish. The fisheries manager would be attending a meeting in December with the Angling Trust, the Rivers Trust, Fish Legal and other organisations with respect to the Severn's poor water quality. The fisheries team continued to test the water on behalf of the Angling Trust, which would continue for the foreseeable future. Water was being regularly monitored at the County Ground, Quarry, Sydney Avenue and Emstrey. Similar to the fry survey, the Quarry was showing the worst results so far although the entire length was not ideal.

Enforcement - They have added an additional three bailiffs / water keepers to our fisheries group of volunteers. This gives a total of 18. Three of them had been approved by the voluntary bailiff service of the Angling Trust who had been carrying out patrols with the Environment Agency Enforcement Team and the Police to give us a stronger presence on our fisheries. In addition, 11 of our bailiff team were now trained and equipped to use throwlines. An extra three will be equipped by January subject to equipment availability. Further throwline training would be completed with the fire service in the coming weeks

RESOLVED:

That the fisheries report be noted.

44/22 TEAM SHREWSBURY

The Team Shrewsbury report had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Office Manager provided an update.

Numbers had increased, which were due to the additional reporting following Safer Streets Funding. September saw an increase in a number of areas including:

- Alcohol issues – this was mainly on Pride Hill and linked with rough sleepers.
- Fly tipping/Littering – mainly youths in the Quarry.

- Rough Sleepers – this was linked with the Alcohol issues.

Following the Safer Street 4 Funding, a category for Violence Against Women & Girls had been added to the data collection. The incidents in September were predominately individuals being intoxicated, mainly in the Quarry and the Town. There were a number of areas which had increased compared to 2021 and these were similar to the September increases.

The Security Team in the Quarry were proving to be a great asset to the Town. The Youth & Community Manager would be undertaking Safeguarding training with both Operational staff and Quarry Security including the Taxi Marshalls and Town Rangers.

We are With You advertised educational material on their Instagram page. Posters had been forwarded to depots. Councillors were asked if they would be happy to share data and educational material on their local newsletters.

The Office Manager reported to the Committee that West Midlands Ambulance Service were donating Bleed Control Kits into the Community. The units had been funded through a charity fund from NHS Charities Together. Team Shrewsbury had agreed on the locations of the Market Hall & Monkmoor Recreation Ground.

The kits generally last 4-5 years, however the chest seal would require changing every two years due to the adhesive seal. Units currently cost £96, although items within the kit could be purchased separately. Kits could be used in any form of catastrophic bleeding, whether from an assault, accident, road traffic accident etc. They contained a trauma dressing, tourniquet and a chito gauze (for packing a wound).

The Office Manager asked the Committee if they would consider installing additional bleed units at a current cost of £384 at the following locations:

- Upper Quarry Toilets
- Castlefields Community Centre
- Abbey Foregate Toilets
- Grange Community Centre

Councillor Vasmer commented that it would be beneficial to have a period where there are no changes within the Police. Officers keep changing and Councillors and residents are unable to develop a relationship due to the constant changes. Councillor Vasmer would like this fed back to the Police. The Office Manager confirmed that Sergeant Lansdale had advised they would be bringing in six probation officers which would cover the Town Centre and Monkmoor.

Councillor Pardy commented that we couldn't keep paying for security around the town and more pressure needed to be placed upon the Police.

RECOMMENDATION:

- (i) That the report be noted.**

- (ii) **That Councillors promote ‘We Are With You’ material within their local newsletters;**
- (iii) **That Councillors support the installation of additional bleed units at a cost of £384 and this would be taken to Full Council in January 2023.**

45/22 SAFER STREETS 4 FUNDING

The Safer Streets 4 Funding report had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Deputy Town Clerk provided an update.

Officers had previously reported on the success of the Safer Streets 4 Funding bid made to the Home Office by the West Mercia Police & Crime Commissioner on behalf of Team Shrewsbury. £548,178 was awarded of which the following sums were awarded to the Town Council to manage:

- Lighting of Life Saving Equipment along the River £43,700
- Expansion of the existing Quarry Security to include Taxi Marshal £168,480

Security provision in the park was increased in August from 30 hours a week to 60 hours a week with 12 hours a week Taxi Marshalling added to the contract to manage the night-time economy. Officers had also undertaken a tender process to install solar lights to all Throwline Boards and all high-profile Lifebuoy Stations along the river; this contract had been awarded and a start date for installation had not been confirmed.

All activity and incidents reported by the Quarry Security and Taxi Marshalls are fed into the Team Shrewsbury reporting channels and any key stakeholders were notified. Of particular note has been the number of VAWG issues (Violence Against Women & Girls) that had been raised by Security Staff; these had included potential grooming, indecency, trafficking and general vulnerability from alcohol and drug consumption. In these circumstances Police, Safeguarding & Social Services had been informed to progress action and, in some circumstances, there are live police investigations. Youth issues remained a cause for concern and matters had been escalated to the Director of Public Health particularly around the consumption of alcohol and prescription drugs. Quarry Security had been involved in a number of serious incidents in the park.

Overall, the feeling of safety in park had increased exponentially from local residents, users (old and young) and staff. Security staff were engaging well with all. Ongoing discussions were taking place to effectively monitor the project so that the true value of this project was known by all. This would also be discussed further when the Chief Constable and Police & Crime Commissioner visit in December to review the project. This would be an ideal opportunity to discuss policing issues and how we could work with them to address policing issues.

Councillor Roberts commented to the Committee that under her role as Mayor, she had spent some time with the Taxi Marshalls and fully supported this scheme after seeing the work they were doing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the report be noted**
- (ii) That Officers continue to report on progress to the Recreation & Leisure Committee**

46/22 POLICING CHARTER

The Policing Charter report had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Office Manager provided an update.

Members should have received updates from the Police for priorities raised between June – August 2022. The next submission for the Local Policing Charter is February 2023. Details requesting areas for concern would be forwarded in January for approval at the Recreation & Leisure Committee on 18 January 2023.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Report be noted;**
- (ii) The Committee approved the priorities for the September 2022 submission.**

47/22 RIVER SAFETY

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Town Clerk had been working with officers at Shropshire Council in reviewing river safety. The draft copy report had arrived, and officers had been developing an action plan which would be presented to Finance & General Purposes in December.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the update be noted;**
- (ii) To present an action plan to Finance & General Purposes on 5 December 2022.**

48/22 QUARRY EVENTS

48.1 The Quarry Events report had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager provided an update.

Currently there were a number of events due to be held in the Quarry between now and Christmas which would be subject to river conditions and do not involve driving on the grass. The UK Live event on the Saturday 16 July attracted visitors from all over the world. Figures based on ticket sales. Tickets from the Shrewsbury and Telford postcodes accounted for 46% of sales, Birmingham area and including Wales this accounted for 39% of sales, the rest of England and Scotland accounted for 14% of ticket sales. Sales from unusual places included Channel Islands, Isle of Bute in Scotland, Ireland, Holland, Spain, Armenia, Miami, Hong Kong and Australia.

The diary for 2023 was already full. Some events had asked to increase the number of days they could operate, but this had been refused to ensure they comply with Premises Licence and Council Policy.

Work would continue on Porthill Bridge on 14 November. There would be no disruption to the public during the evenings.

Crazy Races would not be returning to the Quarry next year. The organisers had enquired if the Town Council could contribute towards the event, but the decision was made not to as this might set a precedent for other events.

The Fake Festival would also not be returning next year. This was due to financial reasons, but they hoped to return in 2024.

Councillor Gillam suggested that the Town Council did not charge enough for big events. Mike confirmed that charges were addressed in the new scale of charges and they did have certain conditions in place for some of the larger events (i.e. letting the public leave the venue for food and drink). Due to this they did not charge as much as other venues might.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

48.2 To receive an update on the Ground Penetration Radar works to plot all underground utilities

The Head of Operations reported that as the Quarry was getting used more regularly there were regulations the Town Council had to comply with.

Up to date plans of the Quarry were last completed in 2003 so there was an urgent need to log and record all gas pipes, water pipes, CCTV etc moving forward. This would involve using a ground penetration radar to plot all utilities. This information would also form part of the events management programme.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

49/22 SHREWSBURY IN BLOOM

49.1 To accept the notes of the Shrewsbury in Bloom Group Meeting held on 27 September 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the Shrewsbury in Bloom Group meeting held on 27 September be accepted and approved.

49.2 To provide an update on the Shrewsbury in Bloom Judging results

The Head of Operations provided an update on the Shrewsbury In Bloom Judging results. He informed the Committee of the judges' comments which were:

"We made a welcome return to Shrewsbury, and it was evident to see how the town had rallied from the challenges of Covid. Not only had Shrewsbury had the virus to contend with, but unprecedented flooding from the February storms of 2020 and 2021. Partnerships remained strong and they have used the Covid time and experience wisely to plan for the town's future, using Covid to experiment on new ways of working, new developments and new ways of moving around the town. Horticultural excellence remained strong and Shrewsbury's approach to sustainability planning for the future tree stock was commendable. It was wonderful to revisit some of the places from two years ago and partnerships between business, community and local government remained strong. With a healthy ethos, energy and enthusiasm this Bloom group would continue to challenge and be worthy of success."

The judges also remarked on Abbey Gardens stating it was "a relaxing park with good quality and well-maintained benches and tables. The trees were maintained to a good standard with regular monitoring for health issues." This area had been heavily invested in and receiving a silver award was pleasing but they would like to get to gold standard next year.

The judges commented on Monkmoor Meadows stating that the hedge planting by local school children was a great idea giving them 'ownership'. The funding received for the all-weather footpath and disable access gate was great, along with the excavation of wetland scrapes to retain receding flood water to encourage diversity in the flora. A gold award was achieved for this location.

Councillor Pardy thanked all Shrewsbury Town Council staff for their efforts and hard work for making the Town look good for residents and visitors.

Councillor Dartnall joined the meeting

50/22 COMMUNITY ALLOTMENT

50.1 (i) To receive an update on the Community Allotment at the Grange Community Centre.

The Head of Operations provided update on the Community Allotment at the Grange Community Centre. This was an initiative to encourage community groups to grow produce in unused areas around the Town. It had been agreed that an area at the Grange Community Centre would be used as a community allotment as the area can be managed due to the Youth Centre being in this location. They would also look at the possibility of introducing food programmes, teaching people to cook. The Town Council are working alongside Councillor Dartnall on this. Officers would report on progress at the next Recreation & Leisure Committee.

Councillor Dean commented that this initiative needs to be promoted and get the word out to all Councillors explaining the scheme and where groups could be set up and if a leaflet could be produced.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

(iii) That the update be noted

- (iv) **That Officers continue to report on progress to the Recreation & Leisure Committee**

50.2 To identify any areas of land to be submitted to the Community Asset Transfer Team in relation to the following Shropshire Council motion:

This council resolves to facilitate community growing in Shropshire as follows;

- *This Council will expand the group that considers Community Asset Transfer requests to receive Expressions of Interest from town and parish councils on behalf of their residents and/or local community groups who have identified small parcels of land suitable for food cultivation.*
- *If identified land is deemed to be appropriate and is supported by local people within the parish/town council area for the purpose of food production, a license to operate on the land covering insurance, risk, ground investigation surveys, tree impact assessment etc will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the town or parish council.*
- *Councillors would be able to seek out land in their division available for community food gardens.*
- *Promote the initiative via the council's website.*

The Head of Operations reported to Committee that he would like Councillors to identify areas of land within their wards that could be used for community use. Any area of land that was identified would need to be checked to ensure the land was safe and suitable for the requirements. There could also be possible Bloom funding to assist with providing equipment. The key was to promote this scheme to all areas. The Head of Operations requested that any areas of land identified by the public should be reported to the Councillor for that area as the main focal point and then advise Shrewsbury Town Council accordingly.

Councillor Dartnall confirmed that she is keeping in touch with Shropshire Council for updates and would report back to Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Head of Operations draw up some guidance for councillors and the public on what type of site may or may not be suitable for a community allotment.

51/22 EVENTS

The Deputy Town Clerk provided Members with an update on key dates leading up to Christmas. All Members were welcome to attend the following:

- (i) Remembrance Sunday – Sunday 13 November
- (ii) Christmas Lights Switch On – Wednesday 23rd November
- (iii) Carols in the Square – Wednesday 14 December

The Head of Operations added that all events were a large Shrewsbury Town Council team effort, and a lot of work goes on behind the scenes at each event which he would like all staff recognised for.

Councillor Roberts also wished to send her thanks to Sally Nicholson, Mayoral Secretary for her work done organising the HMS Talent freedom parade which was a well organised event.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

52/22 RECREATION GROUND MATTERS

52.1 Poplar Island, County Ground - To consider a request from local Member to look at the feasibility of developing a disc golf course in the area.

Councillor Dean reported to the Committee that he would like to suggest the addition of a disc golf course at Poplar Island, which would add an additional activity to Shrewsbury. There is a demand for the activity, and he enquired if Poplar Island could be used for this. He stated it would cost around £4000 to install.

The Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager commented that he was aware of the request for an additional venue but there was a concern with using Poplar Island as a venue as it was countryside land and used for grazing. There would be areas of long grass and new trees had recently been planted there. The location was also heavily used by pedestrians and fisheries.

An alternative location was suggested at Shorncliffe Drive as this was a large site which had the opportunity for a course to be placed there. Officers would support and encourage a new facility in this location. They are open to other location suggestions from Councillors which would be considered to check their suitability.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (i) That the update be noted.**
- (ii) That Officers and Councillors look at other possible sites and bring a proposal to a future Recreation & Leisure Committee.**

53/22 COMMUTED SUMS

The Deputy Town Clerk and Head of Operations gave an update on negotiations with developers and transfer arrangements:

- (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)
- (ii) *Barratt Homes/Bovis Homes – Mytton Oak Road*** – Phase 1 adopted; Snagging Phase 2/3 commenced. Officers had met and identified a snagging list. No identified date for transfer

- (iii) **Shrewsbury South Urban**
1. Sutton Grange site – ongoing – no set date – possible transfer late 2023
 2. Bellway Homes site – discussion on land adoption and adoption of acoustic fencing – possibly before mid-2023.
 3. Galliers site – early discussions on land adoption
 4. Community Centre – location on the site
- (iv) **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;
- (v) **Harlescott Infants/Juniors site** – Offsite contributions to sport. Initial discussions have taken place with Sports Development at Shropshire Council on how the contribution might be spent. Further work is needed.
- (vi) **Radbrook College site** – Open space adoption – officers met with Floreat Homes on site – not yet transferred – possible mid 2023 at the earliest
- (vii) **Weir Hill** – Agreements to adopt the land at a future time have been signed. Officers had met on site. May be adopted in 2023 but no realistic timeframe.

54/22 CLOSING REMARKS

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