



Shrewsbury

Town Council

CHRISTMAS 2020

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CHRISTMAS LETTER FROM COUNCILLOR GWEN BURGESS, THE MAYOR OF SHREWSBURY



As Christmas is virtually with us and 2020 draws to a close, it is a time to reflect on the year we have had. Certainly 2020 is one we would love to forget in a hurry but is one we are unlikely to forget.

Torrential rain this year brought floods like we have not seen for decades. It brought with it a level of community spirit that we have also not seen for a long time and I have been humbled as a Councillor and Deputy Mayor at the time to have witnessed such willingness to help each other out.

No sooner were we over the floods, we were hit by COVID and the lockdown. It saw us all get out and about more and explore what is on our doorstep with parks and open spaces being so much more important to us.

Whilst many people in Shrewsbury were furloughed or had to work from home,

there were many who continued in quite testing circumstances keeping valuable services going.

Our NHS staff were in our daily thoughts and the weekly clapping for the NHS lifted everyone's spirits; essential shop workers worked to keep shelves full; teachers adapted to on-line teaching and keeping the spirits of our young people going and both Town Council staff and Shropshire Council staff have kept local council services running.

All of this local effort has really advocated the need to support local businesses and it has been amazing how these local businesses have bounced back after not just one but two lockdowns. I for one have always tried to shop local.

On behalf of Councillors and Staff at Shrewsbury Town Council, I would like to send my very best wishes for the

festive period. I know that next year isn't going to be the same, even with the measures in place for extended household bubbles, but I want to echo the advice of our local Director of Public Health in exercising caution when gathering together and make sure you continue to protect any relatives who continue to be vulnerable. Whilst we have a 5-day holiday from restrictions, Coronavirus is still around.

I look forward to 2021 with a sense of positivity. With levels of the virus falling locally and the start of rollout of the vaccine, I very much hope to see Shrewsbury life getting back to normal with those things we hold so dear returning. But in the meantime have a merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

SHREWSBURY'S NEW MAYOR TAKES OFFICE

The new Mayor of Shrewsbury has been elected for the remainder of the Civic year until May 2021.

In a change from the usual Civic format, Councillor Gwen Burgess was officially sworn in as Mayor at the Full Council meeting of Shrewsbury Town Council last month.

With Coronavirus restrictions imposed in March, the annual Mayor Making ceremony had to be postponed in May, with the incumbent Mayor agreeing to continue for a further six months.

The meeting, held virtually on Teams, made history when the usual Civic event was replaced with a less formal handover of the Mayoralty and saw Councillor Burgess take over the role as civic leader from outgoing Mayor, Councillor Phil Gillam.

Councillor Julian Dean was appointed as Deputy Mayor.

Councillor Burgess said her main aim as Mayor is to promote the wonderful and varied businesses and charities in Shrewsbury.

She said: "I am honoured to accept this distinguished office and am going to do my utmost to honour the privilege of being the first citizen of Shrewsbury. I am looking forward to the next eighteen months and will do everything I can to fly the flag for Shrewsbury."

She will be accompanied by her partner, Mark, who will perform the role of Mayor Consort. She also took the opportunity to thank former Mayor, Phil Gillam and the Mayoress Carol, for the work they had done for the town

over the last eighteen months.

"Whilst the circumstances have been difficult over the course of the last eighteen months, Phil and Carol have done a tremendous job of representing Shrewsbury during his term of office. It is now my responsibility to carry on the tradition of highlighting the fabulous town we have here both within our community and beyond."

The incoming Mayor also outlined her fundraising plans for the year.

"During my Mayoral year, I will be supporting Lingen Davies, a charity which has been funding projects to improve cancer services in Shropshire, Telford and Mid Wales for nearly 40 years.

"The charity has contributed around £18million to improve cancer services in the local

area and more than 75,000 people have had their cancer and care improved through the impact of the Lingen Davies Cancer Fund.

"Whilst the main focus has been to provide equipment to support cancer treatment, the charity is now also working to help people prevent cancer, encourage them to seek treatment earlier, and support people to live their lives well, during and after treatment.

She added: "There will be a range of interesting fundraising events over the course of the next eighteen months, which I hope the people of Shrewsbury will help to support."

Councillor Burgess is expected to continue in post for the remainder of the 2021/22 Civic year for a full Mayoral term.



5 Minutes with....

Councillor Gwen Burgess, Mayor of Shrewsbury



In less than a year you have transitioned from a resident to become the new Mayor. Tell me about your journey?

It's been a whirlwind, so much to learn. But because of Covid, I've had an extra 6 months to become accustomed to the idea of becoming Mayor. My term started in November, instead of May, as is usual. I've had so much support from my fellow councillors, and the staff at the Town Council.

As a business owner yourself, what do you think is special about the business community in Shropshire?

Being a fairly small town, our networks are strong, and we have mutual self-interest. We do seem to pull together, and are on the same side, even if we're competitors. Look how groups like the Wyle Cop traders have got together to promote their area. Similar in Coleham, after the floods earlier this year.

How important do you feel supporting and promoting local business will be over these next few months?

It's hugely important, and we must be careful not to put barriers in the way of trade. We need, as a town, to enhance the experience of running a business here, and especially giving support to fledgling businesses starting up. It's not just in retail that customers should think buy local, but also in awarding contracts for building and maintenance projects, technology and the service sector. We have great shops, printers, trades and tech firms here, we need to use them.

What charity have you chosen to support as Mayor, and why?

I chose Lingen Davies Cancer Fund for a variety of reasons. I'm very lucky that no-one close to me has suffered from cancer, but we've heard so much during this pandemic about patients who have had their treatment delayed or deferred. Lingen Davies was founded in 1979 by a previous Mayor of Shrewsbury and over the years has supported over 75,000 local people through their treatment. Lingen Davies are based at the RSH, and have a great team of staff and volunteers. I'm looking forward to some amazing fundraising events over my term, hopefully including abseiling down a

well-known local landmark, and a very special Ball. If you can help Lingen Davies in any way, or would like to see more about what they do, please visit their web page www.lingendavies.co.uk

What do you hope to achieve over the next 18 months as Mayor?

I want to attend as many events as possible, although initially they'll be outside, and socially distanced. I hope I get the opportunity to represent Shrewsbury both at home and further afield. Recently, I was interviewed on Plymouth Radio, and we chatted about so many reasons to visit Shrewsbury. It's great to be an ambassador for our beautiful town.

If you could go back and give your younger self some advice, what would it be?

May 15, 1997. Mortgage the house and invest it all in Amazon.

Tell us something about you most people wouldn't know

If I told you, I'd have to kill you.

If you could form a bubble of 6 people dead or alive, who would you choose?

Elizabeth I, Margaret Thatcher, Emmeline Pankhurst, Marie Stopes, Joyce Grenfell. (Plus me). I don't think I need to explain why.....but Joyce Grenfell is the joker in the pack. She came to my school and performed in Assembly, and she remains the most memorable entertainer I have ever seen.

When the pandemic is over, and all the restrictions are lifted, how will you celebrate?

I've a wedding to look forward to – and it's going to be an amazing chance to have all our family and friends together, as I really hope that restrictions on numbers will be lifted by then.

UPDATE FROM COUNCILLOR ALAN MOSLEY, LEADER OF SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL



CLIMATE EMERGENCY

For obvious and understandable reasons the Covid-19 crisis has dominated the front pages of our news, and so perhaps, the climate change emergency is taking up a lower priority in people's minds and actions at present.

This is despite the fact that the global warming crisis is a far greater long-term threat to the health and wellbeing of us all and for future generations.

So I am delighted that Shrewsbury Town Council is making good progress in our commitment to become carbon neutral while seeking to become an exemplar for similar authorities and businesses.

We recently reported our work to the newly created Climate Emergency Advisory Group who applauded our efforts this year which have included:

- Identifying a ring-fenced budget of £250,000 for climate change mitigation;
- Planting over 2,000 trees to capture carbon;
- Converting all our footpath lights to LEDs; 375 new lamps and 65% reduced energy consumption, with new solar lighting in the Quarry;
- 'Greening' our horticulture operations – peat-free, more composting, recycling, local propagation, etc.;
- Providing electric vehicle charging points at our Depot;
- Trialling Electric Pool Cars for essential use by staff;



- Purchasing electric power tools and planning for electric mowers, vans and tractors when available;
- Working to help facilitate an Hydro Electric facility at the Weir;
- Demanding that our contractors have carbon reduction policies in place;
- Significantly investing in improvements to footpaths and cycleways to encourage active travel; and
- Supporting planning policies which seek improved sustainable design to high environmental standards.



The Town Council has also been a key partner in the development of the Big Town Plan with the aim of making the Town a cleaner, greener, more vibrant and attractive place for residents, visitors and businesses alike.

This will involve improved access and movement through active travel routes and public transport with less need for car use and more priority for pedestrians.

I really hope that residents will recognise that we are on a vital and necessary journey that requires commitment and innovation and I'm proud that Shrewsbury Town Council is doing its very best to be at the forefront. We would love to hear from you if you have ideas, particularly around improvements to footpaths, creation of grass verges, locations to plant trees and any general ways which we can improve our carbon footprint.

HELEN BALL, TOWN CLERK OF SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL



Welcome to this, our first electronic newsletter. Our new website which will roll out in the new year will give you an opportunity to keep in touch with regular newsletters on every thing from what we are doing to improve assets to how we are addressing COVID restrictions.

2020 has been a trying time for all of us.

We thought we had had our share of bad luck in February with two weeks of flooding. The size and ferocity of the flood water damaged power supplies, lifted play surfacing, ripped the surface of the cricket wickets at the County Ground at Frankwell and meant that we couldn't get on many sports grounds for weeks because sites were so waterlogged.

Then COVID arrived.

Lockdown in March saw many things closed, but much of what we are responsible for remained open. Our parks and open spaces were busier than ever with people wanting to use them for exercise and recreation. We continued to maintain assets as best we could with a reduced workforce. We have had staff who have suffered the ravages of COVID, with some

having to self-isolate as loved ones have been affected; we have also had staff who have been shielding. We have had to continue to maintain play areas and sports facilities so that when lockdowns were lifted we could get these facilities up and running quickly.

In some ways COVID has been good for us as we have taken advantage of some sites being less used



by doing work on creating new and improved footpaths, doing work to improve drainage or levelling sports pitches. We have finished replacing all of our footway lights with more efficient LED lighting, we also installed new solar lights and since the start of lockdown we have kitted out four new play areas.

Both flooding and COVID has brought such a huge level of community spirit and resilience and this was

evident during our Mayoral Awards in September and November when we recognised many of those heroes. At the time the Mayor said how proud and humbled he was by the way communities had worked so hard to help one another.

It seems a good time to pay tribute to Councillor Phil Gillam who has recently completed an 18-month term as Mayor.



Phil's time as mayor was far from expected

He has gone about his role with exceptional professionalism and an astounding sense of empathy, supporting people in crisis, rallying our communities to help one another and giving our businesses the lift that they needed to encourage people to shop locally.

A couple of weeks ago Councillor Gwen Burgess took over the chains of office and with it she vowed to support the local

business community. Her first event was our Christmas Lights Switch-on. Usually in front of 5,000 people packed into the Square, there was just the Mayor and I with the lighting engineers and a handful of passers-by.



November 2019



November 2020

This year we Facebook-lived the event which was watched by 46,000 people; it just shows how important some of those traditional things that we have done for years are so important.

We finish this year with a sense of optimism that things will return to normal in 2021, but in the meantime, have as wonderful Christmas as you can and a happy and healthy New Year.

Lighting up the Quarry

Victoria Avenue got a whole lot lighter following the installation of 21 solar lights along the 1km stretch of river from Kingsland Bridge to Greyfriars Bridge.

The footpath and cycle way running through the Quarry has previously been unlit and a cause for local concern given the numbers using it and its proximity to the river.

Working with Zeta Specialist Lighting, Shrewsbury Town Council set a design brief to create a promenading atmosphere along the stretch with lighting that was respectful of the local area. There was also a need to provide a heritage look as well as providing the necessary wattage to ensure the lights would work both in the summer and the winter.

Stuart Farmer, projects manager for the Town Council, spoke of the extent of the task in hand: "Our Councillors were clear that they wanted solar lights but wanted them to be in keeping with the heritage feel of the park, so finding a solution where we didn't have a large solar dish on the top of the light was always going to be a hard task.

"We worked with the specialist lighting company, who we recently worked with to convert all of our lights to LED, and they

came up with this perfect solution. Shrewsbury is the first place to have these type of lights in the world so it is good to see us leading the way.

"It has been a great job from everyone involved in the project, including R A Allmark & Sons Limited of Shrewsbury who have helped with the resurfacing of the areas around the new lights".

Kirk Taylor, from Shrewsbury firm Potters Electrical Limited who has been working on the project, said: "I have looked after the Town Council's footway lights for many years and it has been wonderful to work on such a fantastic project. The feedback from passers-by has been really encouraging. Not only is this a good safe scheme so near to the river, but the public are genuinely so excited about this energy efficient lighting scheme".

Leader of the Town Council, Councillor Alan Mosley, expressed his delight for the scheme: "Safety near to the river is very important and I was instrumental in getting the Town Council to enhance the lighting along the towpath.

"This latest scheme is an extension of that project and to see these beautiful solar proposals come to fruition is testament to



the commitment the Town Council has made to becoming carbon neutral by 2030 while greatly enhancing local amenities. The hard work of our staff in coming with up with a wonderful solution for this area must also be commended. We would like to explore this technology in other parts of the town."

NEW PLAY AREA IS UNVEILED

Children on a new housing development in Shrewsbury now have a new place to play after a £60,000 project to install a children's play area has been completed.

The Sweetlake Meadow play area, in Meole Brace, will be officially opened by Councillor Gwen Burgess.

Developers SJ Roberts Homes agreed to provide funding for the project when the company was granted planning permission for the Sweetlake Meadow housing development. Following a tender process, the play area has been installed by Proludic Limited, based in Nottingham.

The play area is being inspected and maintained by Shrewsbury Town Council.

Councillor Gwen Burgess, Ward Member for Meole Brace, said: 'I am very pleased that the playground is now completed and it is already popular with local children.

"We've also seen improvements to the Meole BMX track this year, and the playground on Mary Webb Road is also earmarked for an exciting new look next spring. It's so important that children have safe and attractive play areas in close proximity to where they live, and this playground on Sweetlake is a fantastic new amenity.'

The new play area has been equipped with state-of-the-art equipment suitable for children up to the age of 10, including; a single bay swing

with flat and cradle seat, a Diablo multi play unit complete with two slides, platforms, bridges, steps and climbing net, 'inclusive' roundabout with wheelchair access, play panels, spring rocker, talk tube and seating for parents.

Debbie Entwistle, Technical Officer for Horticulture and Play Areas at Shrewsbury Town Council, said she hoped the new play area would provide much-needed play facilities for the new housing development.

"It's always exciting to unveil a new play area in the town and we've been delighted to work with Proludic Limited who have delivered the project on time despite the additional challenges presented by the Covid-19



pandemic. The new facilities have been well received in the local area."

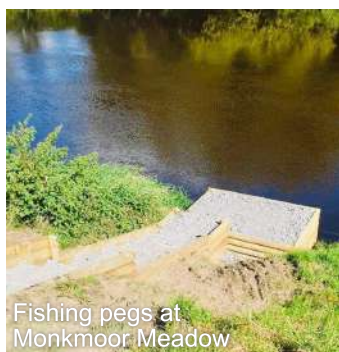
Councillor Kevin Pardy, chairman of the recreation and leisure committee, said he was looking forward to seeing people make use of the new play area.

He said: "It is great to see this project completed, the equipment for children with disabilities is particularly impressive and I hope many families enjoy hours of fun at the new play area."

WORKS AT MONKMOOR MEADOWS

Work on a major project is nearing completion at Monkmoor Meadows to improve access and habitat to this popular riverside area alongside the River Severn to the east of Shrewsbury.

Shrewsbury Town Council has teamed up with Shropshire Wildlife Trust, and with funding from the European Regional Development Fund, this project will see the construction of several access features, including paths, a bridge and a picnic area in addition to three bankside structures for the public to use.



Fishing pegs at Monkmoor Meadow

Councillor Kevin Pardy, Chairman of the Town Council's recreation and leisure committee said: "This is a large project which has taken a while to come to fruition. The work will take place on land alongside the river and improve the path and access from Coseley Avenue and Monkmoor Lane, allowing wheelchair users to have access to Abbots Wood Day Centre, amongst others."

Matt Wilcoxon, countryside and greenspace manager for the Town Council, added: "As part of this Freshwater First Programme, we will be installing new fishing pegs and a new canoe ramp, as well as creating wildlife habitats through the excavation of wetland scrapes on the site.

"We will also be planting more hedgerow plants, trees and we will include enhancements to create new seasonal wetland



areas, which will be a great benefit for our local wildlife."

The area remained open to the public during the works, but some areas were fenced off where the work was taking place.

The work was undertaken by Lowther Forestry Limited.

Councillor Mrs Pam Moseley, Ward Member for Monkmoor, added: "I am

delighted that this work is underway, and when completed, this riverside area will have much improved facilities for local residents, including disabled access, seating, paths, new planting and better access to the river for anglers and canoeists. The works to this beautiful area will benefit the local community for many years to come."



Criminal Exploitation and County Lines

Criminal exploitation has become increasingly prevalent in recent years with children as young as 10 being forced to store or move drugs, weapons and money for criminal gangs.

We're hearing more about the term 'county lines', where a gang or organised group look to move their drug dealing operations outside their normal area – which evolved as a result of market saturation, where gangs from London, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool began to work out of regional markets in smaller towns across the country.

They do this to make it harder for Police to find out what they're doing, find new customers to make more money or avoid competition from rival gangs.

The term 'county lines' was coined in 2015 and comes from the mobile phone the young person will use to carry this out. If someone is being exploited, they may be given a county line phone in order for the young person to 'work' for the gang.

The structure of county lines is built on exploitation of both vulnerable adults and children. Properties are taken over, or 'cuckooed', and the young people are

used to 'run' the drugs, travelling between urban and county locations to replenish stock.

Recruitment usually takes place using free or extremely cheap cannabis, to entice children into the gang. The grooming starts at about 13 and many of the children are previously unknown to services and before they know it, they are ensnared by debt bondage and are trapped in the gang as 'modern day slaves'.

Some of these children are 'vulnerable' – young people with complex mental health needs, with 'looked after' status, excluded from school, or experiencing poverty and family breakdown. But equally, it can happen to anyone's child.

With a multi-agency approach, young people can get the help they need to turn their lives around without judgement, in a system that needs to view them as victims of crimes as part of child exploitation by ruthless criminal gangs.

If you feel that a child is in imminent danger, call the Police on 999. To report concerns over a child, call 101, Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or Shropshire Council on 0345 678 9021. For concerns about drugs and alcohol, call 01743 294700

REPORTING EXPLOITATION



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Another option in speaking to police aside from 999, 101 or using Fearless is speaking to the Protecting Vulnerable People unit at West Mercia Police on 0300 333 3000

You can contact Shropshire child protection services on 03456789021 or 0345678040 outside of office hours

You can report abuse to the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000 or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk

SUPPORT FOR DOMESTIC OR SEXUAL ABUSE

**BRANCH PROJECT - branch@wmrsasc.org.uk 0808 196 2340
wmrsasc.org.uk - support for rape & sexual abuse in Shropshire**

AXIS counselling & ISVA service - for sexual abuse survivors in Shropshire - 01743357777 info@axiscounselling.org.uk

Rape Crisis - rapecrisis.org.uk 08088029999

**Shropshire Domestic Abuse Helpline (24 hours) – 0800 7831 359
sdas@shropsdas.org.uk**

**National Domestic Violence Helpline (Refuge & Women's Aid) - nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk
helpline@womensaid.org.uk 0808 2000 247**

**Men's Advice Line – 0808 801 0327 mensadviceline.org.uk
(webchat available) info@mensadviceline.org.uk**

Galop – 0800 999 5428 - national helpline for lesbian, gay, bisexual & trans people experiencing domestic abuse

Forced Marriage Unit – 0207 008 015

#ExploitationWeek



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The census is taking place in March 2021.

It's a survey that happens every 10 years and gives us a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales. It helps plan and fund public services, like transport, education and healthcare.



By taking part and encouraging others to do the same, you'll help make sure you and your community get the services you need.

Nearer the time, you'll receive more information. There'll be plenty of help to take part for people who need it.

Find out more at **www.census.gov.uk**

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To all of the children of Shrewsbury

I know you will be worried about the virus and whether I will be able to deliver your presents. I have been chatting to the Mayor and she is happy for me to visit you all on Christmas Eve. My travel with Rudolph and my reindeers is essential and I will make sure I have my face-mask on and I will use hand sanitiser. It is very important that you need to be fast asleep when I arrive because social distancing measures still apply. Stay safe and continue to be good for your Mummys and Daddys.

Lots of Love Santa

