SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15





Champion of Champions 2014







SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL CONTACTS

THE GUILDHALL, FRANKWELL QUAY, SHREWSBURY, SY3 8HR T:01743 281010 F: 01743 281051 <u>www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk</u>

www.	facebook.com/shrewsb	@ShrewsburyTC			
Name	Job Title	Contact No	Email		
Helen Ball	Town Clerk	01743 257650	helen.ball-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Overall responsibility for the Town Council and its workforce.					
Gary Farmer	Operations Manager	01743 257651	gary.farmer-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Overall responsibility for grounds maintenance and public conveniences.					
Andy Watkin	Responsible Finance Officer	01743 257657	andy.watkin-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Responsible for all things of a financial nature.					
Mike Cox	Outdoor Recreation and Asset Manager	01743 257659	mike.cox-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: All recreation grounds and fisheries under the control of the Town Council. Administers bookings for, and manages the Quarry and Shrewsbury Market Hall.					
Mike Pugh	Technical Officer (Grounds & Arboriculture)	01743 257661	mike.pugh-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Manages all external contract work. Manages the tree management programme including the Big Tree Plant Fund, organising tree planting sessions and tree deliveries throughout Shrewsbury. Land identification and issues regarding the Town Council's assets.					
Debbie Entwistle	Technical Officer (Grounds & Arboriculture)	01743 257660	<u>debbie.entwistle-</u> stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: The maintenance and refurbishment of Town Council play areas, carries out inspections, handles complaints and manages vandalism. Also involved in planting & landscaping schemes.					
Mark Harris	Asset Maintenance Officer	01743 257658	mark.harris-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Maintenance work on all council buildings including depots, sports pavilions and toilet facilities; repair and maintenance of street lights and bus shelters. All things Health & Safety.					
Rob Plimmer	Head of Operational Logistics	01743 730020	rob.plimmer-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Day to day management of external operations and teams.					

Name	Job Title	Contact No	Email		
Dawn Morris	Transport Administrator	01743 257662	dawn.morris-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Providing a full administration service for all transport and equipment.					
Stuart Farmer	Technical Officer	01743 257648	stuart.farmer@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Providing technical support to the Operational Management Team; co- ordinating installation of floral infrastructure and providing cover for Operational Supervisors.					
Rebecca Oliver	Committee Clerk	01743 281010	rebecca.oliver@shropshire.gov.uk (*currently on maternity leave)		
Responsibility: Services Council and Committee Meetings, preparing agendas, minutes and actions. Manages the Council's Planning Register and liaises with the Planning Authority on planning issues. Undertakes general admin support, including website maintenance and ad-hoc project work.					
Suzi Wilkinson	Marketing and Promotions Officer	01743 257654	suzi.wilkinson-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Communications and media relations, press enquiries, events, marketing, promotions, social media admin and website maintenance.					
Carol Pullen	Town Clerk's & Mayor's Secretary	01743 257655	carol.pullen-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Providing full secretarial service for both the Mayor and the Town Clerk, organises civic events. Acting Committee Clerk.					
Coral Kelly	Finance Administrator	01743 257652	coral.kelly-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Raising of orders and processing of all invoices for payment. Provides financial administration for the Town Council.					
Maggie Spicer	Secretary	01743 257653	maggie.spicer-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: General secretarial duties for officers of the Town Council. Responds to enquiries from members of the public.					
Hilary Humphries	Administration Assistant	01743 257649	hilary.humphries-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Shrewsbury in Bloom co-ordinator. Manages memorial benches and trees on Council land. Provides admin support within the office. Acting Committee Clerk.					
Ruth Jones	Projects Officer	01743 257656	ruth.jones-stc@shropshire.gov.uk		
Responsibility: Works on ad-hoc projects. Key officer for Team Shrewsbury matters. Acting Committee Clerk.					

The Town Councillors are listed on the back page.



SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL OVERVIEW 2014/15



Shrewsbury Town Council serves the whole of the town centre, as well as the neighbouring residential areas, and with a population of circa 70,000 it is one of the largest and most influential town councils in the country.

With its motto of "Putting Shrewsbury First" the Council prides itself in being the voice of Shrewsbury, supporting local communities and initiatives, providing good quality play and recreation areas for all, and in general promoting Shrewsbury as a great place to live, work and visit.

Leader Cllr Alan Mosley

It has been both a rewarding and challenging year for the Town Council, we have celebrated manv successes including being crowned Britain in Bloom Champion of Champions and the Most Courteous Town in the UK by the National Campaign for Courtesy. On the flip side, we continue to battle increasing budgetary pressures as a result of Shropshire Council withdrawing our Council Tax Support Grant, whilst also imposing significant cuts on the value of contracted work the Town Council carries out on its behalf. In our efforts to do the best for the residents of Shrewsbury, we are continuously looking at how we can do more for less by taking on more responsibilities which we hope to provide more efficiently and effectively.



We have remained resolute in our pledge to continue the freeze on Council Tax. The rate for 2014/15 remains at an annual cost of £39.89 for a Band D property, one of the lowest in the country. Thanks to our excellent staff we have also identified significant efficiency savings of over £400,000, without impacting services. In fact, residents are now receiving more value for money than ever before, especially with three new Neighbourhood Warden posts which we have been able to create. The wardens are now in place in North, West/Town Centre and East/ South areas of the town dealing with local 'street scene' and environmental issues throughout their communities.

We are also facing accommodation issues in the wake of the new University taking over our current home at the Guildhall, which is set to welcome the first raft of students in September. We are actively seeking a more permanent home which will be a cost effective HQ for the Council and an asset for residents for years to come.



Over the past year the Council has been actively involved in the development of the University. I am a member of the University Advisory Board and the University is a regular feature at Council and Team Shrewsbury meetings. Whilst the Council is very supportive of the venture, we are also acutely aware of the need to balance students' needs versus potential 'studentification' of the town. We are committed to ensuring our residents remain well informed, and regularly consulted, about University Centre, Shrewsbury. A key focus over the past year has been #Team Shrewsbury, a partnership launched in 2014 as part of the Government's Our Place programme to tackle a range of issues faced by people living and working locally. The multi -functional team promotes a collaborative approach to addressing issues, as well as promoting the great assets of Shrewsbury. Each agency brings to the table a range of expertise and experiences that can assist in resolving issues more effectively than any go-it-alone approach.



The partnership includes: Shrewsbury Town Council, Shropshire Council, West Mercia Police, Shropshire Fire & Rescue Service, Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID), Shrewsbury Shopping Centres, Safer Shrewsbury, Shrewsbury Street Pastors, The Big Busk and The Ark.

All these and more are now working collaboratively in making Shrewsbury a better and safer place to live, work and visit. In fact Team Shrewsbury is being held as a shining example of best practice and the idea has been rolled out across other areas of the country, including Worcester. This project has also been promoted as best practice by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Tourism promotion remains high on the agenda and we continue to work with Shrewsbury BID to look at ways to encourage visitors and shoppers to Shrewsbury. The Town Council this year has contributed to the new tourism website www.originalshrewsbury.co.uk designed to promote everything for the visitor to the town. In the first year alone it has had considerable traffic. We must be doing something right as the RHS awarded Shrewsbury its Tourism Award for 2014.



The coach visitor market is very important to the town and this year the Town Council has paid for Shrewsbury to be promoted at two of the national tourism trade shows with key players in the town, including the Town Crier, shouting about what we have to offer. This summer we should start to see the fruits of our labour as an increased number of coach firms have committed to bringing coach parties to the town.

What our visitors think about Shrewsbury is very important to help us further improve the town and, following the commissioning of visitor research over both the summer and Christmas periods, we were delighted that the number one attraction cited for Shrewsbury was the Quarry with visitors enjoying events, but also loving the quiet ambience of our grade II listed park.



This year we've also refreshed our own website, inkeeping with the town's branding, and in response to feedback from residents. The new look site, developed by local firm The Web Orchard, has been built using modern technology so that it can be accessed from any digital device – PC, laptop, tablet or smart TV and is simpler to use, and more responsive, ensuring visitors will be able to find what they are looking for within a few clicks. Our website address remains the same at www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk

In the coming year we have plans to renovate the Quarry play area, and others around the town, and we are developing plans for an innovative scheme to add great attractions to the paddling pool area. Our recent decision to seek to take over the provision of youth services in the town was indicative of our wish to provide high quality facilities for all ages and interests.

As an elected member of the Council I am proud of what we have achieved in difficult times. However, none of the progress would have been possible without our dedicated Town Clerk and staff who are always keen to make that extra effort to bring excellent public services to all in the Shrewsbury area. To them go our congratulations and many thanks for their hard work.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

THE QUARRY & DINGLE—The Quarry & Dingle are managed and maintained by the Town Council and continue to be used for a wide range of events, from the annual Flower Show, to bandstand performances and the increasingly popular Shrewsbury Food Festival. In addition to being a site for planned events, the Quarry is a recreational hub for residents and visitors alike, many of whom visit to see the spectacular landscaped gardens in the centre of the Quarry, known as the Dingle.



PUBLIC FIELDS & OPEN SPACES—The Town Council is responsible for the maintenance of the majority of playing fields, recreation grounds and open spaces in Shrewsbury. In addition we keep over 120 miles of highway verges and hedges trimmed and look after in excess of 30,000 trees throughout the town. We are also nearing the end of a four-year Big Tree Plant Project, aimed at planting native species back into the town.

PLAY AREAS, MULTI-USE GAMES AREAS, BMX TRACKS & SKATEPARKS—We maintain more than 50 play facilities in the town centre. Specially trained staff are employed to carry out weekly inspections and maintenance checks to ensure public safety. All play areas are regularly inspected by ROSPA and every year an extensive refurbishment programme is carried out to keep them in tip-top condition. Projects in the past 12 months have included; resurfacing work at the Quarry Play Area, refurbished swings and safety surfacing at Ashfield Recreation Ground and replacement fencing and gates at Whitehart Play Area.

SHREWSBURY IN BLOOM-Shrewsbury is famous for its horticulture and the majority of



the floral displays are the responsibility of the Town Council and its dedicated Grounds Maintenance Team. More than 300,000 blooms are grown at our own depot each year, with 30,000 plants alone apportioned for the town's centrepiece in the Dingle. Last summer Shrewsbury proved once and for all that it really is **THE** Town of Flowers when it was crowned the RHS Champion of Champions—the best of the best in the UK. To mark the accolade, we even had a visit from the BBC's Carol Kirkwood who presented the weather, live from Bowbrook Allotments! **SPORTS FACILITIES**—The Town Council owns a number of Recreation Grounds with sports pavilions, football pitches and cricket wickets, bowling greens, tennis courts and croquet lawns. These facilities are used by many local teams in the Shrewsbury area.



COMMUNITY FACILITIES—We own Community Centres in both

Ditherington & Castlefields which are run by local residents in the area. We have also installed noticeboards throughout the town, and in each of the wards, to help residents keep up-to-date with what we do.



PUBLIC CONVENIENCES—The Town Council maintains seven public conveniences within the town. These are located at: Abbey Foregate, Sydney Avenue, Hills Lane, Upper Quarry, Lower Quarry, Butcher Row and the Bus Station. Full information regarding these facilities can be found on our website where damage and faults may also be reported using the relevant form.

STREET FURNITURE—We are responsible for over 450 Footway Lights (on the many footpaths and pedestrian areas across the town) and also more than 200 bus shelters.

COUNTRYSIDE IN THE TOWN CENTRE—The Town Council looks after more than 250 acres of Countryside Land within the town boundary. Many of these sites are Special Sites of Scientific Interest, Local Nature Reserves and Community Woodlands and they are managed with both people and wildlife in mind. Local people are encouraged to visit the sites, enjoy the various walks and information boards and even volunteer, learning some of those traditional management techniques like hedge laying, hay making and coppicing.





CHRISTMAS LIGHTS & CAROLS IN THE SQUARE—The Town Council looks after the Christmas lighting displays across the town spends over £45,000 each and vear maintaining and improving the displays. 2014 saw a completely new set of lights across the town centre and, in response to residents' feedback, a return to a more traditional colour palette. Christmas lights are not just a December job, work starts late summer to test and check displays, to install fixings around the town and to carry out health & safety checks. The Town Council continues to support Christmas events including the

Christmas Lights Switch-on and Late Night Shopping. Last year we also took on the management of the highly popular Carols in the Square Event, broadcast LIVE by BBC Radio Shropshire. We are already busy planning for both events in 2015.

THE MAYOR OF SHREWSBURY



The office of Mayor in Shrewsbury dates back as far as 1638 and is therefore steeped in history and tradition.

The unpaid role is an extremely demanding one. The Mayor and his/her consort are the official ambassadors for the town and represent Shrewsbury at functions and events across the county and beyond. He/she also presides over meetings of the Council and ensures business is carried out efficiently with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interest of the community.

The Mayor of Shrewsbury continues to be one of the busiest in the county and he/she regularly supports the work of the town's

voluntary and community groups, raising the profile, and much needed cash, for local charities. The Mayor is involved in major events such as Battle of Britain Sunday and the Remembrance Day Parade, both large, logistical events organised by Shrewsbury Town Council. The Mayor also oversees the installation of Freemen of Shrewsbury and ceremonies are usually held twice a year, either at the Guildhall or at Shrewsbury Castle.

This year's Mayor is **Councillor Beverley Baker** who took office in May 2014.

Councillor Baker was born in Shrewsbury and, although she has travelled around the world, it is Shrewsbury she now calls home. Councillor Baker works part time with a local upholstery firm and also runs her own business as a costume/accessory designer and wardrobe mistress for theatre and events. She was Shropshire Councillor for Bagley, Shrewsbury from 2009 to 2013, and joined Shrewsbury Town Council in May 2013. The Mayor's husband, Tim, has joined her as consort wherever possible throughout her mayoral year.

It has been an eventful year for Councillor Baker who has witnessed the town receive both the RHS Champions of Champions and Britain's Most Courteous Town Awards. In December, Shrewsbury also welcomed the troops from The Queen's Dragoon Guards for a freedom parade through the town and, in April, the Mayor even appeared on BBC Radio 1's 'Mayor of Where' Quiz show!

Councillor Baker has tirelessly championed the work of the Shrewsbury Ark & The Hive, her two nominated charities for the year, and has held a number of fundraising initiatives including a barn dance, Eric the Dwarf mini series and a garden party. In April she organised the first Shrewsbury SleepOut to raise awareness of homelessness in the town. The Mayor was joined by around 50 people who signed up to 'sleep out' for a night at the West Mids Showground, raising more than £1,000 for charity.

The Mayor also has a chance to recognise those who have made a significant impact to the town of Shrewsbury through the annual Mayor's Awards which are held every April prior to the end of each year in office. This year Councillor Baker presented almost 50 awards in a variety of categories including; business, heritage, community, youth, environment, tourism, courtesy and Market Hall Trader of the Year. In addition to her Mayor's Awards, this year Councillor Baker also had cause to present three special commendations to Town Council staff, Andy Hill, James Williams and Mickey Bramall, after they saved a baby girl from drowning in the River Severn.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S REPORTS

The Town Council carries out much of its business through three Standing Committees (Finance & General Purposes, Planning and Recreation & Leisure) and every Councillor is involved in at least one Committee. This allows issues to be debated in more detail, Councillors to have a more in-depth understanding and appreciation of local matters and areas of concern and more importantly things be acted upon in a quick and efficient manner.

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE (Councillor Alan Mosley—Chairman) is responsible for the overall running of the Council, reviewing the Council's budget, setting policy and looking after the Council's assets.

2014 has seen a number of good projects come to fruition, not least the development of a new website <u>www.shrewsburytowncouncil.gov.uk</u>. This website, designed by a local web designer working alongside Town Council staff provides a more comprehensive portal for everything about the Town Council, from current planning applications being considered to how to book the Mayor for an event. The website is also linked to the Town Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts and is proving a great communication tool.

Following withdrawal of funding by Shropshire Council, the Town Council stood in to manage the Carols in the Square Christmas event, broadcast live on BBC Radio Shropshire and featuring, for the first time, the Shrewsbury Brass Band and the Shrewsbury Male Voice Choir.

Funding cuts elsewhere have been the focus of the Finance & General Purposes Committee and setting a budget to meet the everyday needs of running one of the largest Town Councils in the country. Despite significant cuts in our Service Level Agreement with Shropshire Council and their decision to retain central government funded Council Tax Support Grant from the Town Council, the Committee managed to retain an average Council Tax of £39.89. This has been done through a radical restructuring of all of the Town Council's operations, buying more efficient machinery and working more in partnership with other organisations and stakeholders. This has meant that the public has not been greatly affected by cuts in the budget.

This year saw the Town Council leading on a bid for Our Place funding and the development of a highly effective partnership, creating a platform for collaborative working on a whole raft of issues from managing the public realm and anti-social behaviour to ensuring the smooth running of parades and military marches. Team Shrewsbury, as the partnership is affectionately known, has seen the Town Council leading on bringing the two councils, Police, Fire, Business, community and local residents together with one key aim—to make Shrewsbury a better place to work, rest and invest. This way of working has attracted the attention of the Police & Crime Commissioner who wishes to see this model rolled out elsewhere within the West Mercia Police Force. It has also attracted government attention and Team Shrewsbury was featured as one of 20 Best Practice Commissioning Case Studies for 2015.

Our focus now is turned to where our future home will be in the medium to long term. We have enjoyed six years at the Guildhall and as the University Centre Shrewsbury is set to welcome undergraduate students for the first time in September, we look to new accommodation opportunities elsewhere with the potential of creating a community hub and co-location with other partners. Councillors remain committed to retaining a town centre location to ensure that all residents can easily access the Town Council.

PLANNING COMMITTEE (Councillor Alan Townsend—Chairman) continues to be the busiest of the Town Council's standing committees, meeting every three weeks to consider planning applications. It's not uncommon to consider upwards of 1,000 planning applications a year (about a quarter of the county's total). The Committee also looks at trees and their management, highways issues and licensing.

Both members and officers have been involved in many discussions with developers in the throws of building large, sustainable residential sites with community infrastructure such as community centres, play areas and open space. These sites will inevitably shape the town for the next 15-20 years. The key priorities of this Committee has been to ensure that the infrastructure to support these new developments is planned for so it does not compromise existing space and residents and visitors can retain a good quality experience in the town.

This year the Planning Committee has taken an active interest in licensing activities within the town centre and is keen to make sure that a good balance of retail, residential, licensed premises and entertainment venues is retained to ensure the town centre remains vibrant. This will be ever more important as locally we welcome students to the town and nationally the country moves out of recession.

The Planning Committee has championed the concerns of local residents around road safety and has submitted a number of areas of road safety concern to Shropshire Council the result of which is that a number of these sites are being put forward to the capital works programme.

RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE (Councillor Jon Tandy—Chairman) oversees the day to day management of our recreational and amenity spaces ensuring that parks and play areas are maintained to a high standard, that the Quarry has a good mix of events and activities taking place throughout the year and that the Town Council's estate overall contributes to Shrewsbury being a great place to live, work and play.

The Committee has been keen to support the work of Shrewsbury in Bloom, making sure that the Town Council's involvement was critical in the town winning the hallowed prize of RHS Britain in Bloom Champion of Champions for 2014. This award is testimony to the hard work and dedication of all who have made sure that Shrewsbury continues to be **THE** Town of Flowers.

This year has seen upgrades to various play areas across the town as well as improving accessibility to many others by installing footpaths.

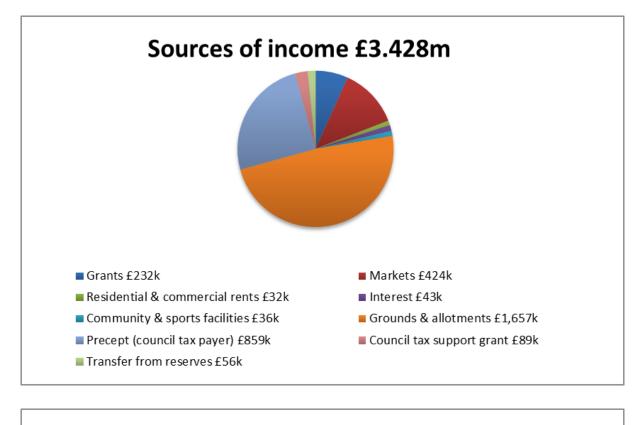
Our Countryside Unit continues to maintain some 250 acres of green space right in the heart of the town and local residents have benefitted from the hard work of not only the team, but also a large group of volunteers who have helped lay hedges, litter pick and create footpaths and walkways. We were delighted that the Mayor chose to acknowledge the work of three of our volunteers from the Abbots Green Daycare Centre at the Mayor's Awards.

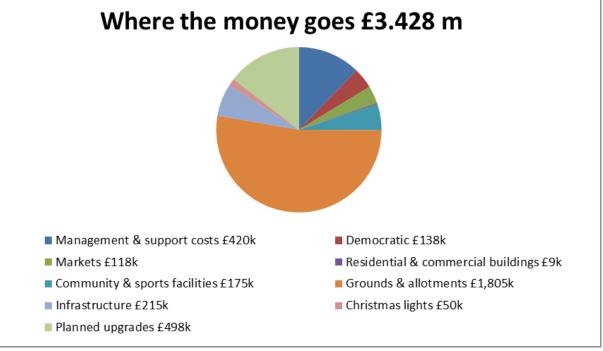
2014 also saw the introduction of the Neighbourhood Wardens, a team of three well-trained groundsmen who are tasked with keeping areas of the town in excellent order. This team has worked well with local members, residents and other community partners to combat some of those grot spots that we all do not like to see, encouraging local people to take a greater pride in their local areas and being great ambassadors for the town.

We have recently completed a four-year tree planting project funded by the Big Tree Plant. This £35,000 project resulted in many hundreds of school children planting many thousands of trees in school grounds, community woodlands and recreational open space and it was great to see young people working hard investing in the town's future.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2014/15

Summary of the Shrewsbury Town Council Budget 2014/15 and where the money is spent.





The notice of appointment of auditors and the exercise of electors rights will be publicised in June for a period to inspect accounts commencing **1 July —28 July 2015**.

The accounts will be published on the website from 1 July 2015.



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