

# SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 20 January 2021  
2.00 pm - 5.00 pm**

**Responsible Officer:** amanda.holyoak  
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### **Present**

Councillor Claire Wild (Chair)  
Councillors Joyce Barrow, Karen Calder, Roger Evans, Alan Mosley, Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock, Dave Tremellen, Leslie Winwood and David Vasmer

### **117 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies were received from Councillor Hannah Fraser. Councillor David Vasmer substituted for her.

### **118 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None were declared.

### **119 Minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2020**

It was reported that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2021 would be presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

### **120 Public Question Time**

The Committee received a petition from Mr Nick Saxby in relation to Whitchurch Swimming Pool. The petition asked that Shropshire Council be asked to commit to making Whitchurch Swimming useable, to work with contractors and partners to develop solutions for adapting the centre for social distancing, to engage with the community on the obstacles to opening the pool.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer read out Mr Saxby's submission in support of the petition. The Chair of the Committee read out a statement on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture, Waste and Circulation which explained why the pool had not been reopened.

A number of members familiar with the pool including, including a local member for Whitchurch North Electoral Division, discussed the petition and agreed that the nature of the building, especially the reception area, changing areas and corridors meant that social distancing was impossible. Another member asked if measures such as a marquee and a traffic light system had been considered, about the cost of keeping the pool closed and the source of the leak.

The Director of Place reported that Council's Health and Safety and Public Health Team had examined the building and it was not safe to open it. There was a commitment to get the pool open as soon as it was safe to do so and options for fixing the leak were under

consideration. He endeavoured to supply an update on timings and costings to committee members after the meeting.

Other members referred to the unique set of circumstances which meant that safe social distancing was important and the safety of staff especially lifeguards should be taken into account.

The Committee then went on to receive a petition requesting Shropshire Council to commission an in depth review of the traffic, cycling and pedestrian problems in The Meole area and to publish and implement comprehensive and practical solutions. Mr Bentick's written submission in support of his petition was read out by the Scrutiny Officer and the Chair read out the response provided by the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport.

The Committee discussed road safety and traffic issues and measures taken and planned. The Chair invited the Local Member for Meole Brace to speak who read out a statement from the Meole Village Residents Association and said that she was confident that issues would be resolved. The Head of Environment and Transport Services confirmed that he would continue to work with the local member, residents' associations and schools to address the issues in the area.

## **121 Member Question Time**

Councillor David Vasmer asked a question about cancellation of the Place Overview Committee scheduled for January which had been due to examine the Annual reports of Kier and WSP. He also asked a further question about the operation of Kier and WSP contracts, performance of highways and the gritting of key roads.

Responses to the questions were provided by the Chair of the Place Overview Committee.

Councillor Roger Evans asked a question about the Key Performance Indicators used to establish performance of the highways contractor and the response provided by the Head of Highways was read out by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

The questions and responses provided to them are attached to the web page for the meeting.

By way of a supplementary question Councillor Evans asked if the KPIs were now in place. The Director of Place said the efficiency of highways service involved not just Keir, but others including gangs employed by Shropshire Council. A written response would be provided with more detail.

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer confirmed that time would be allowed for scrutiny of the Annual reports of Kia and WSP and a meeting added to conduct a review of the performance indicators.

## 122 Shropshire's Economic Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Framework

The Executive Director of Place introduced the paper before members referring to the accelerated changes brought about by the pandemic and the considerable strength of Shropshire's property market. It also referred to the disproportionate impact on Shropshire's economy due to the nature of its industry and a high increase in claimants. An Economic and a Social Impact Task Force had been set up to address these issues.

The Director thanked the Economic Growth Team which had now administered grants in excess of £100m. He also referred to the big infrastructure projects, Shrewsbury Big Town Plan, Mile End, North West Relief Road, Business Parks, and work undertaken to support Market Town Centres through the pandemic.

During discussion of the report, members raised issues, asked questions and made comments in relation to:

- Digital infrastructure and large areas of poor connectivity in the county, the need for focus on this both to meet current needs and the expectations of those moving into the county
- How many businesses had applied for and received discretionary payments
- The level of priority given to the green agenda
- Grant payments made to public houses
- The work of officers in distributing grant payments and in delivering big infrastructure projects whilst having to work in a new way
- The status of the Brexit Task and Finish Group

In response, the Director confirmed that a 'green and digital recovery' was absolutely at the heart of the approach and Shropshire was already the fifth biggest generator of renewable energy in the UK. He also confirmed that a report providing a snapshot on all grants would be circulated to all members at the end of the week.

The Deputy Leader also confirmed that tackling climate change was a golden thread through all council activity. He reported that a press release was to be released imminently encouraging wet-led pubs to make contact and apply for grant funding. He also reported that the Economic Task Force covered issues related to Brexit as well as Covid. He paid tribute to council officers who had worked extremely hard to deliver grant funding. Covid had been a huge challenge, but large infrastructure schemes were still on track and he was hopeful that the new strategy would set out a route map for recovery and the future direction of the council.

The Committee agreed and supported the principles of setting out an economic recovery, transformation and resilience framework to be developed by the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Assets, Economic Growth and Regeneration, to inform a new economic growth plan and strategy refresh which would be brought to the PMSC for consideration in 2021.

## 123 Civic Centre Options Appraisals Update

The Assistant Director Commercial Services explained that the purpose of the report was to provide an update on work to date and the option appraisal undertaken which had identified the Pride Hill Centre as the preferred site.

He went on to outline the estimated costs involved and talk about the size of the space available, within which other public sector partners could also be accommodated. He also outlined the disposal strategy for the Shirehall, referring to the potential development plan site, and highlighting the place making responsibility of the Council.

In discussing the report, members raised the following issue and questions:

*What would happen if the river flooded limiting access to the town centre?*

Drop-in space was available at other venues that could be used if needed and the council had an agreement with the Kingsland Bridge to allow access to staff if needed.

*How confident was the Council that it would be able to rent out space to others?*

The ideal scenario was pre-let agreements with tenants and there were five partners who were interested.

*Were staff views being taken into account and had the trade unions been involved?*

There had been ongoing discussions with staff including use of surveys which had helped to ascertain the experience of working from home. It was intended to make use of drop-in places in market towns to use as local hubs which would help cut down commuter journeys into Shrewsbury. Discussions were ongoing with the trade unions on the wider change programme and new operating model for the Council and the Director said that he could provide an update on this if required.

*Would the space allocated as the 'democratic allowance' be adequate?*

A dialogue would be initiated with members on proposals for this space which would be used for large and small council meetings that the public could have access to. Proposals for this space could be easily scaled up or down as needed, potentially using the Riverside site.

*How will staff work, would there be enough desks for those who wanted one? Some staff were finding it difficult working from home, was the space allocation reflective of that?*

The assumption was for a much smaller desk requirement than at Shirehall as the Council had shown over the course of the pandemic how well it was able to operate remotely. A balance would be maintained to ensure that people could come together safely as needed. Drop-in places in local hubs would mean staff did not have to drive as far.

*Could the committee see how the 10 criteria had been weighted?. It was felt this information should have been included as part of the report.*

Yes the weightings would be made available to members.

*Would the Council have a visible external presence in the town if located on the lower floors of the Pride Hill Centre?*

The Director confirmed that the fenestration of the building would be improved with the addition of windows

*Where would members of the public or staff park who were driving into work, as using the park and ride would extend a long day*

It was confirmed that a travel, transport and parking plan was being developed. The Mi Permit scheme was currently being rolled out to staff which would allow parking in close proximity. Parking for those with disabilities would be available.

*Why had the option to rebuild on the current Shirehall site not been considered as an option?*

The costs of removing the Shirehall would be far in excess of the amount of expenditure needed for the Pride Hill site. The running costs of Shirehall were currently in excess of £1m a year and there were substantial long-term maintenance costs.

*Where would the emergency centre be located if Shirehall was disposed of and could the fire report be made available to the committee.*

The emergency centre was no longer located at Shirehall, but at the Fire Station.

*Why was the old tennis court on the Shirehall site included in the boundary for redevelopment?*

The inclusion of the tennis court in the development area was just a proposal at this stage and this would be discussed with the local member.

*Why had the Guildhall been included as an option?*

This had been included as it was an asset owned by the Council but his option had been closed down. The Council had met with the new Vice Chancellor of the University who had an excellent strategy for continued development of University Centre Shrewsbury. This would be outlined in a report to the next Full Council meeting.

*Was the Court Service fully sighted and happy with proposals to date?*

The Crown Court had vacated the Shirehall building and were using the Magistrates Court building although there had been a request for temporary use of the Shirehall building to manage overspill.

*There was a need to see proposals holistically within the context of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan.*

The Deputy Leader said he felt the proposed way forward provided a golden opportunity to inject footfall and spend into Shrewsbury town centre utilising a facility owned by the Council. He accepted that there was detail that still needed to be worked through and plans would be amended and adapted as they progressed. The democratic allowance was vitally important and the Strategic Development Framework for the wider Riverside site offered many opportunities.

The Committee's discussion, comments and questions would be taken into account in producing the report on the Civic Centre to be considered by Full Council on 25 February 2021.

#### **124 Complaints, Comments and Compliments Annual Report**

Sarah Dodds, Feedback and Insight Team Leader introduced the report which provided a general overview of all formal customer feedback. She drew attention to common areas of complaints and reported on ombudsman cases.

Members commented that the report had taken a long time to get to the Scrutiny Committee and it was agreed to review timings when considering the future work programme of the committee. Members observed that a common complaint was lack of communication, and that there had been some improvement in the usual largest areas for complaints which were highways and waste and recycling. In response to a query about claims for damage to vehicles, members noted that the insurance team would be able to provide the information with regard to the proportion of successful claims.

The Overview and Scrutiny officer reported on work concerning highways to be undertaken by the Place Overview Committee.

#### **125 Financial Strategy and Budget Monitoring Task and Finish Group**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer outlined the proposed terms of reference for a rolling task and finish group which would take a longer-term view in the scrutiny of the council's financial strategy and budget setting. He explained that the Group would complement the Committee's regular scrutiny of the council's in-year performance against budget and would start its work after the election. The proposals set out in the report were agreed.

#### **126 Future Work Programme**

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer suggested that the work that was previously undertaken by the Brexit Task and Finish Group should be subsumed into the work of the committee. This was agreed by the committee. It was also suggested that an update on Brexit be provided by the Portfolio Holder at the next meeting.

Signed ..... (Chairman)  
Date .....