

THE SEVERN LOOP LOCAL FORUM

NOTE OF DECISIONS AND ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 20TH OCTOBER 2014 AT THE GUILDHALL, FRANKWELL, SHREWSBURY

Responsible Officer: Tom Brettell, tom.brettell@shropshire.gov.uk Tel 01743 252482

Committee Members Present:

Shropshire Council:

Andrew Bannerman

Anne Chebsey

Mansel Williams

Shrewsbury Town Council:

Alan Townsend

In attendance:

Sgt Richard Coles, West Mercia Police

George Candler, Director of Commissioning, Shropshire Council

Tom Brettell, Senior Community Enablement Officer, Shropshire Council

There were approximately 30 members of the public present at the meeting.

ACTION:

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were given

3. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Members were reminded that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

No interests were declared.

4. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING & MATTERS ARISING

Agreed - Notes of the meeting held on 26th June 2014 be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

All matters arising were covered on the agenda.

5. SWIMMING PROVISION IN SHREWSBURY

George Candler, the Officer leading work on options for Swimming Provision in Shrewsbury gave a detailed verbal update to the meeting:

Background to the Quarry Swimming and Fitness Centre:

- The Quarry Pool originally dates back over a 100 years and has been through a series of refurbishment/ investment projects with the latest being in the mid 1990's, and £300,000 being spent in 2007.
- It is the busiest pool in the county with over 300,000 visits last year.
- Swimming provision has increased in the last 12 months.
- Has very diverse users including over 30 schools and a wide number of clubs as well as casual users
- The fitness facility is a recent addition and is akin to most swimming pools that have a supporting facility to help with the high running costs of pools.
- Widespread recognition that the facility is in need of investment

What is Shropshire Council (SC) currently working on?

- Agreement was made by SC Cabinet in July for an officer team to look in detail at options for improved swimming provision in Shrewsbury. This officer team is being given expert assistance from Sport England (SE) and from the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA).
- Reassurance was given that SC are looking very seriously at all options and the retention of swimming provision on the existing site is very much one of these
- There are 4 Options:
 1. Refurbishment of existing facility
 2. New build on existing site
 3. New build on a stand-alone site in ownership of SC
 4. New build adjacent to an existing leisure offer in SC ownership
- A full condition survey of the existing facility is underway by a specialist company. This is looking in detail at all aspects of the building and will give us a much better understanding of what investment is required.
- For each of the other locations being considered a detailed business case will be developed looking at a range of factors including accessibility, sustainability, economic impact, capital costs and running costs.
- Detailed analysis is ongoing of a range of data that is helping us to understand what a new pool could look like and offer to the community. This data currently informs us that there is more water than current and future demand in Shrewsbury and that the most appropriate pool provision in Shrewsbury would be a 25 metre 8 lane pool with a moveable floor, a 10m by 17m learner pool with variable floor accompanied by appropriate "dryside" fitness equipment.

What happens next?

- A formal 3 month public consultation on the options will commence in January. This will be undertaken in a range of ways including

conversations with key groups and users including the Quarry Forum, a range of consultation events, displays at key venues, an online survey, social media etc.

- Further engagement with the Severn Loop Forum will form part of the consultation process
- The results of the consultation will then be analysed and reported back to SC cabinet in April/ May 2015 with a recommendation of next steps.

A range of questions were then raised by the audience and where possible answers given. If an answer could not be given a commitment to report back through the minutes was made:

Q: Can we have some reassurance that the consultation will be wide ranging and not solely dependent on a web based survey?

A: A lot of planning is going into the consultation process to ensure we make it as thorough as possible. We are learning from other area's good practise and lessons learnt. A commitment was given to undertake a very wide ranging and thorough consultation including ongoing dialogue with the Quarry Forum, dialogue with users and clubs, face to face sessions at the pool, social media, survey work and the internet.

Q: Why doesn't the proposal for the community to purchase and run the Quarry appear as an option?

A: The Localism Act provides the right for communities to bid for buildings/ sites of significant community value. The Quarry Forum has registered the facility as a building of community value. Through this process, should the building be put up for sale, it provides the community a six month period to raise funds against a full valuation of the building. We will make reference to the Forum's registration in our consultation and cabinet reports, however this wouldn't necessarily have a bearing on the final decision made.

Q: Concern over the data currently showing the need for only 2 pools when the current facility with its 4 pools struggles to meet demand.

A: We continue to scrutinise this data and we are looking very carefully at programming as part of the consultation work.

Q: The existing facility has an important role in supporting the economy of the Town Centre and we need to ensure this is taken into account.

A: We are looking at economic impact of all the options and this will be clearly explained as part of the consultation process.

Q: There have been reports in the press that Serco are thinking of giving up their leisure interest? Could the Council look to work with the community like in the case of Central baths in Wolverhampton.

A: Not aware of any intention by Serco to change its role in running the facilities it operates on SC behalf. Shropshire Council has a contract for 10 years with Shropshire Community Leisure Trust to manage the facility, any

potential break in the contract would have to have a very strong business case behind it but the offer of community help is very welcome and is taken on board.

Q: What is the likely funding package for these options?

A: Funding will vary on the locations but based on work with Sport England and the ASA an indicative budget is between £7 and £8 million. Currently there is nothing allocated in the SC Capital budget and any Council investment would be subject to Cabinet approval. It is likely that external funding will be available but this will be subject to a detailed application process.

Q: What are the other sites under consideration?

A: we are looking at pieces of suitable land in Shropshire Council ownership in various parts of the town.

Q: The Sixth Form and the University- will depend on a central location. Is this being fully considered as part of the work?

A: Very aware of both current and future student users as well as proposed housing developments in various parts of the town. We are factoring all of these elements into our considerations

Q: Have the Council made contact with other authorities to learn from best practise, for example in St Albans?

A: We have spoken to a number of authorities. There is no- one location that replicates what we have here but we are learning lessons from what's gone well and what hasn't, particularly on the consultation and engagement work.

Cllr Williams reminded the audience that the decision will ultimately be made at SC Cabinet and that the Cabinet Member is Cllr Gwilym Butler.

Cllr Bannerman thanked George for his very useful update and reminded the audience of the consultation timetable and to ensure that all people's views are submitted.

It was agreed that a meeting of the Forum would take place during the three month consultation period.

6. Our Place and Police Update

Tom Brettell gave a brief verbal update on the Our Place Programme (a full presentation was given at the previous meeting):

- Shrewsbury is part of a national programme focussing on place and on new and innovative ways of working
- It focusses on developing a "Team Shrewsbury" philosophy of all

agencies and organisations working more effectively together to manage the town

- 4 key areas of work:- Begging, Inappropriate/ anti-social driving and cycling, drug misuse in public places and drug and alcohol misuse as part of the night time economy.
- Currently developing a full delivery plan for the programme which will define the full scope of work and will involve consultation
- A further update will be given at the next meeting

Sgt Richard Coles updated the group on Local Policing:

- Lots of very positive changes are coming about as part of the Our Place Programme including a weekly operational meeting between key agencies and organisations to share intelligence on key issues.
- Progress is being made on the begging and rough sleeping issues where lots of effort is being put into supporting key individuals but a stronger enforcement angle being implemented.
- The Front Counter service at the Riverside Police station has now closed.
- The Severn Loop area has maintained the same levels of policing and there is currently no threat of this changing.

A number of questions were then raised:

Q: Has the recent policy of the street lights being switched off had any impact on crime?

A: Currently no evidence to suggest that it has had an impact but this will be monitored carefully

Q: at the last meeting queries were made about a community engagement bus- has progress been made on this?

A: Yes, we are looking at ways to develop the role of the mobile police station

Cllr Townsend raised concern over the Belle Vue ward. Although on the periphery of the town centre it is often affected by the same pressures. There also appears to have been a loss of visual presence of the Police. The area has the biggest primary school in Shropshire with all sorts of traffic issues that the PCSOs were key to managing.

A: It is a big challenge to efficiently police but to continue to reassure the public. PCSO's should be as visible as they were as there has been no depletion of numbers. Sgt Coles will take this concern back.

Q: Is there scope to further improve communications between the police and the community with simple measures such as simple notices in corner shops or greater publicity of the Mobile Police Station?

A: Any opportunity is very welcome and it is a challenge to WMP to publicise more.

Cllr Bannerman reminded people that the Police like to be contacted and given intelligence using the 101 number. The example of recent issues in Old St Chad's Churchyard was given where intelligence from the community is vital.

Cllr Williams emphasised that the feeling is that PCSO presence has declined and where very strong relationships had been built up there was a fear of them being lost. Continually concerned over the drip, drip loss of front line services and this message does need to be fed back.

Draft

6. UNIVERSITY CENTRE SHREWSBURY UPDATE

George Candler explained that he is not the lead officer for the University but he was able to provide a brief verbal update to the meeting and answer some questions. Any questions he could not answer would be recorded and answered through the minutes.

- University Centre Shrewsbury is a partnership with the University of Chester.
- There have been high level discussions with the University for a while.
- The University is leading on the development of the academic side of the project and Shropshire Council is leading on the infrastructure.
- A post graduate course in public health has already commenced.
- From October 2015 there will be a range of undergraduate courses available with 2-400 undergraduates
- It is vital that the University provides a unique offer but one that matches demand in Shropshire and that develops a skills base and helps to grow the economy.
- The Guildhall is to be converted into the main academic centre and will begin to be converted from January 2015 in a phased approach.
- The University will make use of the reference library and already have a staff presence at Rowley's House.
- Marketing of the University is up and running at detail can be found at www.ucshrewsbury.co.uk

Cllr Bannerman explained that the majority of people he has spoken to are in favour of the University but have concern over how students will be accommodated in the town.

Debate ensued around student accommodation where it was generally felt that this needed to focus on the use of existing buildings rather than new build. It was confirmed that discussions were taking place with the private sector but that detail was commercially sensitive.

Discussion took place about future growth and the possibility of using key buildings such as Shirehall and the Flaxmill was raised. It was confirmed that growth is desired but that this was likely to be managed and sympathetic to the town and would not be an explosion in numbers. Currently the only site earmarked is the Guildhall but these ideas would be fed back.

A question was raised as to why the Radbrook College Site had not been considered and the complexities over multiple land ownership and the out of town location were given as reasons.

The audience were reassured that the impact of increased student numbers on infrastructure and welfare facilities was carefully being considered and that planning was being undertaken with key partners such as the business community and the health sector.

7. HAVE YOUR SAY

Cllr Bannerman opened up the meeting to the audience to ask any questions or to raise issues:

Traffic: A member of the audience raised a recent press article that reported that Shropshire Council had formed a working group of officers to look at traffic flow and questioned whether this group is now up and running.

Cllr Bannerman explained that a lot of work had been undertaken in the town in key locations such as at the bottom of Wyle Cop and St Julians' Friars. He added that it is obvious that we need to make walking and shopping much easier to increase visitor spend and the example of the Museum was given where access must be made more attractive and welcoming. Work has been undertaken with the Portfolio Holder for Highways, Cllr Claire Wilde.

A resident reflected on her experience of living in Cambridge that had gradually been transformed into an extremely pedestrian friendly city.

A representative of Shrewsbury Friends of the Earth explained that they were currently undertaking some work on a proposal to reduce traffic. This was welcomed and a presentation to a future meeting of this Forum was suggested.

Cllr Chebsey reflected on the Shrewsbury 3 point access plan that was developed some years ago. This may not have achieved great physical change but did greatly improve people's understanding of each other's needs and issues. There is a case for this type of forum being rekindled.

Cllr Chebsey urged caution around doing odd projects without there being a bigger strategic plan and welcomed the formation of a Forum to bring all these parties together.

Although Shropshire Council is the Highways authority, the Town Council can put forward proposals. The STC Planning Committee regularly discusses Highways issues and it was suggested that Friends of the Earth ask to address this committee.

The Town Council does have a Planning Committee where highways issues are regularly discussed. This is a good meeting for the Friends of the Earth to come to and raise fresh ideas.

Concern was raised over the current levels of traffic at Sundorne sports village on a Sunday due to the success of the Sunday League games and in particular how a new pool being sited there could further impact on this.

Discussion took place around funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) that has funding to support traffic work in Shrewsbury. Cameras and traffic counters are currently measuring flow and numbers in the town and some funding is specific to particular locations e.g. inner roundabouts to ease movement around the town.

Concern was raised over the lack of effective wayfinding in the town, particularly for elderly coach visitors. It was confirmed that a project is being developed around wayfinding.

Affordable Housing: a member of the audience raised concern over the lack of availability of affordable housing and in particular that the two urban extensions are under supplying and that the developers must be challenged.

Cllr Bannerman felt that all of these items made good agenda items for discussion at a future meetings.

Cllr Bannerman thanked everyone for their attendance, particularly George Candler and Sgt Coles.

The meeting closed at 9:10pm.

Councillor Andrew Bannerman.

Signed:

.....
Chairman

Date:

.....