



# **SHIFNAL TOWN COUNCIL**

## **The Annual Town Meeting for Shifnal held on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2022 at Shifnal Village Hall**

### **SUMMARY**

**1. Fire Safety Announcement**

**2. Welcome**

Mayor of Shifnal, Councillor Paul Williamson welcomed all attendees and presenters

**3. West Mercia Police**

Presentation by Police and Crime Commissioner, John Campion

- In post since 2016
- Responsible for governance for West Mercia Police and appointing Chief Constable
- £260m budget
- Increased officers by 400+ since 2016
- Further 125 planned 2022
- Striving towards growing investigative arm of the force allowing greater community visibility for existing officers
- Noted Shropshire low crime figures in comparison to other counties
- However, there is focus on county lines drug activity within Shropshire and road traffic incidents
- Survey to be launched in the Summer to allow individuals to have a say on decisions of the PCC
- Pleased that the Town Council had been so tenacious in bringing the Police base back to Shifnal allowing officers to be based in the community

- Acknowledged that there had been some failings identified by the Governance Inspector and West Mercia Police are redoubling efforts to prevent future issues
- Increased criminal activity acknowledged as a result of COVID impact. In addition to the response from West Mercia Police there were also voluntary and other services coming together to address these matters
- Mayor, Councillor Paul Williamson thanked the PCC for agreeing to bring back the police base to Shifnal
- John Campion thanked Shifnal Town Council for support and collaboration

#### **4. Millennium Sensory Garden**

Presentation by Ann Hughes

- Opened on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2002
- Located off Innage Road
- Charitable status
- Exists through utilising grants and donations and volunteers
- Wheelchair friendly and wildlife friendly
- Everything planted for the senses with a programme of seasonal planting
- The area was popular and well utilised during the COVID pandemic
- Have held Zumba classes to art classes and visits from school children
- No fund raising during COVID and difficulties with council funding policies
- Shifnal Town Council limitations due to regulations regarding revenue funding. Council invited discussions with the Internal Audit Advisory Committee to see how we could help in anyway
- Discussions about funding opportunities
- The Sensory Garden will be holding a plant sale at the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Funday event in Wheatfield Park on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2022
- Councillors thanked the work of the Millennium Sensory Garden and all the volunteers for the fabulous work and result of the garden itself

#### **5. Bright Star Boxing**

Presentation by Joe Lockley

- Founded by Joe Lockley initially as a support for young people, mental health and alternatives to structured counselling services
- 415 people per week that attend different sessions
- 6 members of staff, 36 volunteers
- Outreach service across Shropshire
- Work with doctors and schools for referrals
- 82% of their users had an improvement in mental health over a 12 week period
- Help to empower people who have been through trauma
- Bring about change in challenging behaviour in young people
- They have members from age of 6 up to 60+

- Over 100 members from Shifnal alone
- Anyone is welcome
- Working with Idsall and Shifnal Primary schools closely
- In initial talks with Hillcrest School

## **6. Shifnal Food Bank**

Presentation by Catherine Rogers, Secretary and Trustee

- Came about during COVID as emergency bridge for families in Shifnal
- Food parcels mainly containing long life food and toiletries
- Recently developed a system to shop on demand for fresh food parcels
- Utilise storage area within St Andrew's Church with purpose built racking and screening
- Funded through volunteering, donations and grant aid support
- In 2021 engaged with 400+ people and provided 8.5k meals with support parcels to support families for 7 days
- Provided Christmas hampers for families with additional items for the festive period
- 2022 so far 182 people providing 4k meals
- Cumulative demand is similar to 2021 but did see spike in February due to the cost of living increase
- Dedicated telephone lines and Facebook page
- Work closely with housing associations, doctors, schools and social prescribers
- Thanked local community for their support through collection points at local stores
- Thanked Reverend C. Thorpe for support at St Andrew's Church
- Thanked Shifnal Town Council for assistance with signposting capital grants
- Now working closely with Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance and Telford Crisis Support
- New projects such as let's cook messy style which is a course for struggling families to learn cookery skills and share family meals together
- Sadly the Foodbank continues to be needed and looking to secure additional signposting to further raise profile
- Thanked the whole community of Shifnal for their ongoing support

## **7. Shifnal History Group**

Presentation by Marilyn Higson

- 16 volunteers that support the group
- Open to the Public every Friday 2pm – 4pm and Saturday 10am – 12 noon
- Volunteers answer questions, assist research, indexing the collection and accepting donations. Approximately 800 hours per annum

- Closure of the Old Fire Station during lockdown has enabled them to re-do all the displays
- Displays range from bronze age through to 2000's
- Thousands of photographs and documents and subject requests happy to be supported
- Visitors come from Shifnal, local surrounding areas as well as country-wide
- Especially popular with new residents in the town wanting to research local history and heritage
- Locally run course for over 200 children from Shifnal's primary schools and Sherriffhales may be following in due course
- Noted that the website needs further development but the displays are portable and the team go across Shropshire talking to other organisations
- Raise funds from sales of the annual Shifnal Calendar and other voluntary donations
- Coffee morning held on 7<sup>th</sup> May to launch the latest display showcasing celebrations through the town including Jubilee etc.
- Thanked Shifnal Town Council for continued use of the Old Fire Station free of charge

## **8. Wrekin U3A**

Presentation by Mary Rogers, Chair & Roger Phillips, Vice Chair

- University of the Third Age, now rebranded to U3A
- National organisation going for approximately 30 years
- 430k members nationwide
- National organization split into areas
- Wrekin branch services Shifnal, Telford and Wellington
- Meet fourth Tuesday of every month at Shifnal Village Hall
- Next meeting 24<sup>th</sup> May at 2pm
- Meetings usually include a speaker, socialising, learning and staying active
- They also have 40 different groups for various activities. Various venues dependent on the type of activity
- Art, photography, latin, lunch, singing, wine tasting etc.
- Each member on average engages with 2-3 of the groups
- Worked really well during COVID with telephone and on-line type meetings
- Positive effect on mental health during COVID particular for older individuals living on their own
- Groups facilitate networks across the area and social cohesion
- Wrekin U3A website and National website
- National magazine 'Third Age Matters' and 'Monthly Wrekin Review'

## 9. Mayor's Report

Presentation by Mayor, Councillor Paul Williamson

- No increase in precept for Shifnal Town Council in 2022/2023
- No increase in fees for council services for 2022/2023
- Community Grants totalling £10.5k paid in the last financial year
- Neighbourhood Fund (CIL) £16.4k (Cricket Pitch)
- Construction of the Multi Use Games Area, Wheatfield Drive Park
- New Police Base for Shifnal allowing a greater police presence
- Introduction of the Shifnal Shuttle service in partnership with Friendly Bus
- The Council working with the volunteers of the Xmas Lights Committee have commissioned a new design and given in excess of £50k to purchase new lights
- The Council expressed it's thanks to all the Christmas Lights volunteers
- The Council have severe reservations regarding the Shropshire Council Local Plan, in particular effect of further development in the Town. The Council are working with Shifnal Matters 21 and Tong Parish Council to oppose the plan and have engaged planning consultants to represent the Council at the planning inspectorate hearing in July
- CCTV – 43 cameras covering key areas of the Town
- Additional 12 litter bins to be installed following online consultation with residents
- New Shifnal Town Council website to be launched imminently
- Social media engagement increased by 62%.
- Shifnal Town Centre Improvement Scheme due for completion in late Autumn 2022
- Future Projects 2022/2023
  - Refurbishment of public toilet block in Market Place
  - Street lighting upgrade to LED
- Noted Queen's Platinum Jubilee events across the Town during the Bank Holiday
- Public question concerning Shropshire Library cuts. The Town Clerk confirmed that Shifnal Library is fully funded by Shifnal Town Council so any cuts in Shropshire Library services funding should have minimum impact on Shifnal Library.
- Public question concerning Swimming Pool. Mayor shared slides detailing the financial reality – attached
- Public question relating to empty homes in Shifnal. It was noted that Shifnal Town Council were actively engaging with the Planning Authority, Shropshire Council, to try and bring about rectification works

- Public question concerning negative image of Shifnal Town Council on social media. The Mayor acknowledged that self promotion of Shifnal Town Council was not the best, however, a small team were actively focusing on improving communications with the development of a new website and widening social media reach. Already this team has seen social media engagement increase by 62% as per earlier bullet point and will continue to grow this area
- Councillors encouraged public engagement at the meetings but noted that Shifnal Town Council need to look at other channels of communication

The meeting closed with the Mayor thanking the presenters for their contribution and expressed thanks to the residents of Shifnal for attending and participating in the evening's discussions.



#### **Swimming Pool Financial Reality**

Conservative estimated construction cost of 25m pool between £3.5 and £4 million.

##### **Finances available to Shifnal Town Council**

- £100,000 was ring fenced for project
- Believed circa £30,000 held by Shifnal Community Pool Fund (not aligned to Shifnal Town Council)
- Believed circa £3,000 held by Shifnal Carnival Committee (not aligned to Shifnal Town Council)
- Developers of Houghton Road development agreed to put land aside plus £750,000 contribution for community pool to be built
- Potential total £883,000- **Project shortfall of circa £3.1 million**

- Loan required for Public Works Loan Board at average interest rate of 3.11% following business case over 25 years total repayment **£4,482,612**
- Increase in precept to Shifnal residents based on 2021 household figures **£74 per year for Band D home**
- Taking in to account running costs Inc. Staff, Energy Bill, Insurance, Maintenance estimated shortfall based on 6% of residents regularly using the pool would be approximately **£80,000 per year**
- Based on 2021 figures the anticipated expenditure for the swimming pool would be an estimated **49%** of the current income figures.



#### **Swimming Pool Financial Reality**

Highly unlikely to obtain grants from Shropshire Council or Sports England as Shropshire has 29 swimming pools and this equates to supply exceeding demand

(Sports England Report 2019)

Although there is a desire to have a swimming pool in Shifnal the business case may fail based on the number of pools within what would be seen as a reasonable driving distance and where public transport is available:-

- Oakengates Leisure Centre
- Abraham Darby Leisure Centre
- Newport Pool
- Wellington Pool
- Bridgnorth Pool
- Houghton Hall Leisure Club (Leisure Club)
- Nuffield (Leisure Club)

Sports England States

*"It is recognised that historically the vast majority of community swimming pools have required an operational subsidy in other words, the costs of operating facilities are greater than the income derived"*