

MINUTES

At a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held in The Council Chamber at The Civic, Trowbridge, on Tuesday 2nd November 2021 at 19.00hrs.

Present: Councillors: Bates, Bridges, Bryant, Cavill, Cooper (substitute for Cllr Hill), Hoar, Edward Kirk (substitute for Cllr Cave), Palmen (Chair), Piazza & Trigg.

Officers: Mr L Allan (Town Clerk/RFO), Mrs A Quick (Minutes).

Other Councillors in attendance: Wiltshire Cllr Horace Prickett (Southwick Div)

Public: Mr Mitchell and Mr Brice (on TEAMS), Mr Lomas.

Press: N/A

3275 **APOLOGIES**

RESOLVED to approve apologies from Cllr Hill (Substituted by Cllr Cooper) and from Cllr Cave (Substituted by Cllr Edward Kirk).

3276 **MINUTES**

a. **RESOLVED to approve** as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 7th September 2021.

b. **There were no questions.**

3277 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Bates declared an interest in Agenda Item 15 (The Older People's Sunday Balance), Grants (Item 14) and the Guild of Community services.

Cllrs Palmen & Trigg declared an interest in Grants (Item 14).

Cllr Cooper declared an interest in the Twinning Association.

Cllr Piazza declared an interest in the Guild of community services

3278 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chair highlighted the work going on in the background from the Town Clerk for the Strategy. Appreciation was also give for work done by Cllr Vigar in terms of his coherent expression of English for the Strategy Policy.

3279 **OPEN FORUM**

There were no questions from the public to be considered.

Mr Lomas, resident of Jasmine Way, Trowbridge (Park Ward) presented the following statement;
"I attend tonight to hopefully hear more about the exciting proposals for the future of Trowbridge outlined in the draft TC Strategy Paper for 2021 to 2025. I do fear however that I am not going to hear very much about how the very serious issues of increasing crime and ASB in Trowbridge are going to be tackled. This problem, I would suggest, is going to be a serious obstacle to many of those plans if not tackled as a priority. I am sadly going to hear in the Town Clerk's report that the ASB working Group, set up over a year ago, has still not met and this, coupled with the unexplainable failure of WC and Wiltshire Police to enact a simple public order, doesn't really convey to me a recognition or seriousness of what is going on in this town. This surely has to be tackled as a priority.

I put before you some facts and figures that I have extracted from reports you all have already received: 2020 Crime rate figures for Trowbridge show that it statistically suffers from 75 crimes per 1000 residents. This makes Trowbridge the second most dangerous place to live in Wiltshire, 2nd only to Salisbury, and it has a crime rate 31% higher than the average for the rest of the County. Putting it another way, it is 48% safer to live in Chippenham than it is in Trowbridge. What is worse in my view, it is more dangerous to live

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in Trowbridge than it is in the town of Swindon. Indeed Trowbridge falls in the top 100 most dangerous medium size towns to live in England, Wales and Northern Island. That surely cannot equate very well when you consider Trowbridge, as being a comparatively semi-rural community and also the County Town of Wiltshire; the County Town of statistically the safest county to live in the country.

Yes, these figures are from 2020 data as it is too early for overall figures for 2021, but the figures seen on the Wiltshire Police website, only today, show that the crime rate for Trowbridge is still rising. 702 crimes were reported in Trowbridge for September 2021 alone. That equals not far off one serious crime an hour over the full 30 days, and that, I add, is only the reported crimes.

Trowbridge police repeatedly point out, at every discussion I have heard, that crimes are not being reported enough, so what the true number is for this town must be really frightening. I would suggest that statistics like this are not encouraging new investors or indeed visitors to this town and will surely put your strategy in danger of failure. I may hear you argue that figures can mean anything you want them to mean but you only need to see in reality what is actually going on in our public spaces, especially over the last few years.

To highlight a few examples we all know about:

Repeated long term costly vandalism has dramatically increased;

Intimidation and violence between gangs and to members of the public has increased;

Rising incidents involving the use of offensive weapons;

It is getting very scary and increasingly unsafe to be out in certain areas of Trowbridge.

I have lobbied my ward councillors about my concerns and have had some long and hopefully useful discussions with the two out of three that have replied. It is obvious I am not alone in noticing the severe increase in Trowbridge's problem, indeed one of the councillors, with his association with the police, has confirmed it is even far more serious than I believe it is.

I will add here that we didn't only talk about the issues we discussed, also possible ways forward and more than just CCTV I might add. I hope these ideas will be taken forward. I do urge you as Council Officers and Councillors to afford some priority to this serious problem. If this situation is not dealt with, all the good and exciting intentions I see in other parts of your reports and strategy paper will be sadly to no avail. Ask yourself, would you as a person or businesses owner wish to move to, or invest in, a town that is seen as unsafe, crime ridden and rapidly degrading?"

3280 QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions from Councillors to be considered.

3281 TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

Cllr Palmen ran through the P&R Report and in particular;

1.1 Trowbridge Town Council Strategy 2021-2025

A discussion was held on the new draft strategy.

Cllr piazza suggested that 'devolution to improve cleanliness' being in the strategy makes it sound like it's a long term strategy. Town Clerk advised we are responding to a situation that we are already experiencing. Cllr Hoar highlighted that Trowbridge has some of the worst poverty and high crime numbers so we need to do what we can to improve the town. Cllr Bryant stated we need to highlight to the public what we are responsible for. Cllr Kirk would like to see something about reimbursing those of Castle Mead for money spent on play areas etc.

1.2.1 CCTV working group – Cllr Cooper asked when do we expect the Working Group to convene? Cllr Palmen responded that this is being planned in the next few weeks. It might be a joint meeting with the other groups (Public Toilets & Anti-social behaviour). Cllr Cooper highlighted that the idea of a drop in facility at the Civic was previously discussed. Has this been referred to the WG? Town Clerk has discussed this with Sergeant Chilton but not managed to secure a date to meet yet. Cllr Piazza stated that the Police Crime Commissioner has had over 1000 responses to his survey. Maybe we could circulate this with the next newsletter. He is looking for suggestions & ideas so please fill in the survey. Cllr Kirk highlighted that the crime statistics in Melksham are similar to Mr Lomas' statement. The way the police resources are targeted is very important as it is a small team covering a large area. When the police are inducted this occurs in Devizes resulting in a high number of police in the town. Could this be done in

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Trowbridge? It was highlighted that patrols finish at 10pm. Cllr Trigg asked whether the PCC is coming to the next Area Board? Can we submit some pre-questions asking for specific action? We could invite Mr Lomas to attend too.

Action – Inform Mr Lomas of the Area Board date.

1.3 Eco Working Group – Shortly to be named Trowbridge Environment Alliance.

1.4 Public Toilets Working Group – Are the signs in the park still pointing to the old toilets? Cllr Palmen will check this. The Castle Place disabled toilet has a door which isn't wide enough. Town Clerk will discuss with the Manager of Castle Place whether this could be reconfigured.

2.1.4 Reserves – Any increase of Council Tax will be decided at the meeting in January 2022. Cllr Kirk queried that we managed on low reserves during Covid but now we are saying we need to increase reserves. Cllr Hoar stated the intention was to increase reserves 2 years ago but then the pandemic hit. Therefore, this is the time when reserves would be used so now we intend to continue to increase them. Town Clerk stated that the council has to have a strategy that over a reasonable time we intend to reach this goal. We have a 3-year plan to achieve this and the auditors have never raised this as an issue. The figure is calculated without loan repayments but has not achieved the 25% goal. Cllr Palmen highlighted that WC have stated that we would be expected to spend all reserves before any financial assistance during the pandemic was offered. Cllr Kirk asked if the Furlough scheme hadn't occurred could we have gone bankrupt? Town Clerk responded that we can't go bankrupt but potentially would have been forced to increase precept to pay it back the following year.

2.1.6 Election Costs – Cllr Kirk asked whether other parishes are being charged? Town Clerk replied that this has not yet been decided by Wiltshire Council. If implemented would apply to all.

2.1.10 Inflation – 3.1% is correct CPI September figure (not 2.9% as stated in the report).

3.2.2 Civic Centre – Town Clerk clarified that some events have been cancelled due to low ticket sales. We have received another resignation this week and not sure we will fill this before Christmas. Cllr Trigg asked if we can we approach recruitment differently? Town Clerk confirmed that we do have temporary staff on the books which could cover in the short term and yes we may need to rethink recruitment process.

4.1.2 Doric Park – Town Clerk confirmed a defibrillator is in the plans.

5.2 Civic Dinner – Town Clerk stated we are in close discussions with 2 potential sponsors. There are some dates in the calendar for public events for Cllrs towards the end of January. Wiltshire Councillors have been invited to a virtual event on 19th November.

6.1 FHSF – Cllr Kirk suggested the public will be under the impression this will change the town. Should we express to residents the investment in Trowbridge Town Hall?

6.2 Employment/Mixed-use/Brownfield Housing sites – Town Clerk believed that people are already living in the Pavilions at White Horse Business Park. Elizabeth Way have an item going to Strategic Planning tomorrow. Cllr Kirk will be representing TTC view.

There's a technical revised plan for WHSAP 2.4 Church Lane and a revised application for h 2.6 Southwick Court site mainly relating to the design of the proposed bridge over the Lambrok.

Cllr Kirk asked if TTC have a view on the Wiltshire Local Plan? Town Clerk confirmed strong objections were made on the original proposal which will be difficult to overcome. Cllr Kirk stated that potentially Trowbridge will be burdened with all the services for all the new houses.

Neighbourhood Plans for Southwick & West Ashton have been 'made'. All three parishes to the south of the town have their Neighbourhood Plans in place.

Cllr Trigg left meeting at 19.55, returned at 19.58.

7.12 Armed Forces Covenant – Cllr Piazza has had conversations during poppy selling and has had very positive feedback.

8.3 Health Services – A discussion was held regarding the difficulty accessing GPs and it was agreed that there is a national problem which needs to be addressed.

RESOLVED that the Town Clerk writes to the Clinical Commissioning Group

ACTION – Write a letter to CCG to raise the issue.

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Head of Chamber of Commerce is looking out for areas of work we can get involved in.
Congratulations to Town Clerk for becoming Vice Chair of SLCC.

Afghan Refugees

A brief discussion was held. Cllr Cooper stated it was disappointing not to receive a positive response. There are not refugees being housed in Trowbridge but we need to offer mentoring or drop in advice centre. Cllr Trigg advised we have had a negative response regarding MOD houses. In Trowbridge maybe it is about raising awareness of Refugees in the country. Cllr Cooper initiated this with the anticipation that we would have direct contact with Afghan Refugees. Cllr Piazza suggests we should refer to refugees in general to prevent specific issues going out of the public eye. Cllr Trigg advised there are local organisations in the area which anyone can get involved in. We can encourage our residents to get involved with such organisations. Also, more multicultural events in the area could be welcomed.

Cllr Piazza left meetings at 20.16, returned at 20.19

3282 BANDSTAND ALTERATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS (REPORT ITEM 3.1.3.2)

The Committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was;

RESOLVED: That PKA Architects' quote of £3,225 for undertaking architectural services to provide the council detailed designs for the proposed alterations and improvements as listed below to the existing bandstand is approved. This will improve the accessibility, usability and appearance of the building as follows;

- 1) New steps and front of bandstand and external platform lift at the rear.**
- 2) Raise level of stage to same level as the internal accommodation.**
- 3) Refurbishment of internal areas of the bandstand (excluding the basement). It is noted that WC's and kitchenette facilities have recently been installed as these will all be retained.**
- 4) Consider options for the refurbishment/enhancement of the exterior of the building in order to improve its appearance.**

Cllr Bridges requested that mosaics are removed. Cllr Bryant raised the prospect of getting the Bandstand listed. Could a small ramp be installed? There's some crumbling masonry and issues with the trap doors. If we can change the access at the back, we wouldn't need to change the front significantly. Could we use temporary steps to allow access to the audience when required? Cllr Trigg requested clarity that the bandstand is safe for use as it has been suggested this is not the case.

ACTION – Karl Buckingham to clarify safety of bandstand in writing.

Cllr Kirk and Cllr Piazza – Abstained.

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3283 PLAY AREA VIREMENT (Report Item 3.1.3.1)

The committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was;

RESOLVED: That the committee seeks a virement from General Reserves to cover the cost of £13,378 for the replacement of all safety surfacing at Worsted Close which includes the provision of training staff to undertake such works in the future on other sites.

Cllr Bryant asked if Section 106 money will be spent on play areas? Town Clerk confirmed that in future there will be section 106 money from developers if they do not provide play areas.

Cllr Cooper left the meeting 20.31, returned at 20.34.

3284 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS (REPORT ITEM 1.5)

The committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was:

RESOLVED: To consider how the town council should respond to the offer of grants to provide Electric Vehicle Charge Points for residents in car-parks and on-street.

Cllr Trigg highlighted that accessibility to electric charging points is vital. The type installed and where they are positioned must be considered by TTC as it is a significant issue.

3285 RAIL SERVICES (REPORT ITEM 8.2.2)

The committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Council writes a letter to MPs and the Transport Minister requesting the continuation of through services from Bradford On Avon, Trowbridge and Warminster to London.

Cllr Horace Prickett made a statement regarding the rail service to Waterloo. No Parish Council has been asked about this change. During a meeting with GWR and SWR they agreed that no consultation was conducted. They made the decision to save some money. Figures presented were all from the last 18 months during the pandemic. They are refusing to change this decision as they have published the new timetables. What are TTC going to do about it, Cllr Prickett urged TTC to protest in the strongest possible manner. A letter will be given to TTC to argue this point.

Cllr Kirk asked how much control the Government have over the timetables? Cllr Prickett responded that the Government have significant control. Cllr Trigg advised that there is a petition so we need to keep up the pressure. It is a busy and well used service and we are trying to encourage people to use public transport.

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3286 RISK AND AUDIT (REPORT ITEM 2.1.2)

The committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was:

RESOLVED: That the outstanding CCTV Gateway invoices are written off during 2021/2022 resulting in an impact on General Reserves of £31,529.08.

Town Clerk confirmed the actual figure is £31,529.08. There's virtually no opportunity to recoup these costs. One landlord has asked for CCTV to be removed asap and no reply has been received from the other landlord.

Cllr Piazza abstained. Cllr Kirk against.

Horace Prickett left the meeting at 20.53.

3287 BUDGET (REPORT ITEM 2.1.7)

The committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was:

RESOLVED: That the Draft 2022/2023 Policy & Resources committee budget is approved for consideration alongside the draft budget requirements of the other committees at the January meeting for approval and recommendation to full Council.

Democratic shows slight reduction by £2,500. Cllr Trigg asked what is built in as expectation? Town Clerk advised we are still using the 2020 salary rates. Unions have rejected 1.75% (2.75% on grade 1) increase offered. Next year we have included another 5% (6% on grade 1) above the 2020 level to allow for a risk factor.

Grants – a little extra was added in due to the 2nd round of grant applications this year being oversubscribed.

Resources – General Reserves £100,00 twice over is for the council to make a decision at the end (draft at this stage).

Cllr Piazza asked if we needed 2 members of staff to act as Town Clerk and RFO? Town Clerk advised this could be possible but we wouldn't be likely to recruit an RFO if the role was split.

Cllr Kirk & Cllr Piazza abstained.

3288 GRANTS (REPORT ITEM 2.1.8)

The committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was:

RESOLVED: To approve the Grants Policy for 2022/23.

Cllrs Kirk & Piazza abstained.

3289 OLDER PEOPLE'S SUNDAY BALANCE (REPORT ITEM 2.1.9)

The committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was:

RESOLVED: That the balance from Older People's Sunday of £510.29 is donated to the Mayor's Charity.

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3290 FREE PARKING ALLOCATION 2022 (REPORT ITEM 3.3.4)

The Committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was;

RESOLVED: That the free parking places available in Trowbridge from Wiltshire Council for 2022 are consulted on with the Chamber for 9th July and 10th September 2022.

Trowbridge Car Parks

Draft allocation 2022

		Sat 9 th July	Sat 10 th September	Total
Bradford Road	23	23	23	
Broad Street	33	33	33	
Broad Street Cres	13	13	13	
Church Street	33	33	33	
Court Street	77	77	77	
Lovemead	160	160	160	
St Stephen's Place	0	0	0	
Total	339	339	339	
Total x 2	678			678

It was asked whether other car parks would join in on these days to make all the car parks free on the same days? Town Clerk stated The Gateway might not be included but others are likely to do so.

3291 COOPERATING WITH NEIGHBOURING PARISHES ON STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS (REPORT ITEM 6.6)

The Committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was;

RESOLVED: That the Council arranges further meetings with neighbouring parishes to identify potential common ground in formulating a response to the Wiltshire Local Plan Review and to consider if there may be potential for a joint neighbourhood plan in the future.

Cllr Palmen highlighted the first meeting was successful. Cllr Hoar asked whether parishes & councils could come together to make decisions on various items. Cllr Trigg agreed this could be a good idea as a separate proposal from Area Board. Cllr Kirk advised that Area Board has a direct route to cabinet. Town Clerk suggests that we would need to arrange this with all surrounding parishes, even those not involved in Area Board.

Cllr Cavill left at 21.09, returned at 21.13

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3292 CATG (REPORT ITEM 8.1.1)

CATG Match Funding BUDGET	£10,000.00	
Silver Street Lane 20mph and crossing points	£833.00	Approved 22-06-21
St Thomas Road 20mph	£833.00	Approved 22-06-21
Broadmead Estate 20mph	£833.00	Approved 22-06-21
Dropped Kerbs Longfield Estate	£668.89	Approved 22-06-21
Newtown Pedestrian Crossing design	£3,000.00	Approved 22-06-21
Speed limit Cock Hill	£625.00	Approved 22-06-21
Pedestrian Crossing West Ashton Road, Blackball Bridge	£150.00	Approved 22-06-21
Broadmead estate dropped kerbs	£1485.00	Request Approval
Langford Road dropped kerbs	£495.00	Request Approval
The Halve junction changes	£800.00	Provisional Allocation
The Croft/Carlton Row verge bollards	£277.11	Provisional Allocation
TOTAL	£10,000.00	
LEAVING	£0.00	
Manor Road verge protection	£500.00	2022
Hilperton Road pedestrian refuge island		See cycle scheme

The Committee considered the RECOMMENDATION and it was;

RESOLVED: That the committee approves the allocation of £1,980 contribution to CATG for dropped kerbs at Broadmead and Langford Road as shown above.

3293 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS 2020-2021 (REPORT ITEM 2.1.1)

The committee considered the Q2 2021/22 summary (as at 30th September 2021).

Town Clerk presented graphs to demonstrate the figures.

3294 POLICIES

None.

3295 MOTIONS

None.

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3296 PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The committee considered for approval payments and receipts made since the last meeting of the Council recorded on the Cash Receipts and Payments Records by the Finance Officer and to confirm the action of Councillors Bates and Bridges in signing the Cash Payments and Receipts Records.

	<u>Payments</u>	<u>Receipts</u>
July	248,862.75	141,890.42
August	172,587.92	100,135.55
September	368,525.00	1,066,151.76

RESOLVED: That the committee approves the payments and receipts for July, August and September.

All voted in favour.

3297 MEDIA RELEASES

Rail Services.

3298 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 11th January 2022.

Meeting closed at 21.46 hrs.

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