

**Notes from the meeting with Cllr Peter Nutting, Cllr Steve Charmley, Deputy Leader and Clive Wright, Chief Executive of Shropshire Council held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July at 6pm**

Present: Councillors Mrs C Baines, J Buckley, H Howell, C Walden, C Whittle, Mrs J Onions, D Cooper, S Stevens, K Hurst-Knight, E Marshall and R. Whittle  
Barry Ince, Outdoors and Properties Manager  
Anne Wilson, Town Clerk  
Christian Lea, Shropshire Councillor  
Simon Harris, Shropshire Councillor for Broseley  
Elliot Lynch, Shropshire Councillor  
Clive Wright, Chief Executive of Shropshire Council  
Steve Charmley, Deputy Leader of Shropshire Council  
Peter Nutting, Leader of Shropshire Council

Apologies: Councillors R Fox & J Gittins

Councillors Mrs S Stephens, Mrs J. Onions and Mrs C. Whittle left part way through the meeting at 18.40.

**1. Peter's Vision for Shropshire Council going forward**

Peter Nutting opened by saying that his role as leader of Shropshire Council is full of opportunities and challenges. There was a £12million funded deficit in adult social care and children. He wanted to drive the economy further in Shropshire and invest the Council's money more wisely (currently getting 0.48% interest in the economy and business development in the town and through the county by becoming more adventurous). Opportunities for employment sites and growth in the county and he felt there were great opportunities in Bridgnorth where there is a vibrant workforce as well as a vibrant and beautiful town.

Peter Nutting did say he noticed the town only had one petrol station.

Clive said it was a fresh opportunity with a new Leader and a new Cabinet at Shropshire Council and a definite sense of direction through the will to invest and build their own path. He felt it was quite exciting times.

Peter said the MPs want to give more money but more subtly.

Councillor Marshall said there was no decent hotels, the main businesses on Stanmore are in the parish of Worfield, the town is very cramped and was in desperate need of a town governance review and what about the land potential that it outside the town.

Steve Charmley replied by saying the land on the other side of the Shrewsbury Road, Chartwell and Stanmore that at Chartwell there was 30 acres of business land where there was currently a builders merchant on it.

**2. Relationships between Shropshire Council, local Councillors and the town and parishes**

Peter admitted that perhaps in the past the relationships had not always been cordial and that he was on a mission to work with market towns and the many parishes to make them feel more inclusive and part of Shropshire. The relationship between the Town Council and Shropshire Council over time has caused more problems.

The Town Council does extremely well and does as much as they can to, through generosity and hard work, compared to Shrewsbury with a lot that is going on and the town is in good condition.

There are connective problems between car parking and the town and the town bus service which is currently reducing to 50% and the park and ride is run on a voluntary basis, but a town service and park and ride should be looked at by Shropshire Council. Several Councillors stated that there was an issue of a shortage of car parking. Councillor D Cooper suggested that Shropshire Council should look at the parking needs of the town and potential solutions.

Options were considered for where a multi-storey car park could be, perhaps on Listley Street or behind the library and other options that were spoken about were Innage Lane and underneath Listley Street where there is a train tunnel.

**3. Setting up regular meetings with the Leader, Chief Executive and our Shropshire Councillors**

Peter said that he was happy to meet on a six monthly basis, although the Town Clerk said she hoped to set up more regular meetings with Shropshire Councillors.

Peter Nutting said he was willing to set up regular meetings once a year but throughout the time in between that, that it could raise issues with himself.

**4. Shropshire Council Finances**

Peter explained that the Council were looking at options for the investment of the Council funds however this, due to the low interest rates, was not necessarily the best way forward. His aim was to become smarter and look at opportunities to invest in services where the rewards would be greater.

**5. The reform of local government finance was not spoken about in the Queen's speech – are Shropshire going to keep 100% of the business rates?**

Consideration was given about a need to know what Shropshire Council are doing all the time for economic development issues and understand businesses like Grainger and Worrall. The infrastructure and access into Bridgnorth is not so good but it was essential there was a skill base in the town. It was expressed that some of the business rates should be directed to the economic growth of market towns. Clive Wright said it should be looked at differently because there is a shift in local rates of 50% and in 2019/20, local government is going to keep the business rates but he didn't think the government was going to keep that commitment until 2021. It won't work if some authorities benefit more than businesses and 50% of the rest have responsibilities under public health but Shropshire Council will be keeping 100% of the business rates because of the cost of public health, it is too expensive to run. The government is looking at other methods of devolving centralised costs even larger and too complicated to explain at the meeting. The Town Council had already taken over the toilets and the other option was street lighting.

They are taking over the maintenance of parks and land and more responsibilities including small environmental maintenance grants.

The Town Council pointed out one anomaly is that the business rates from toilets from 2018, Shropshire Council has a discretionary option to stop business rates on toilets according to new government legislation. It was pointed out by Peter that this means they could be put under pressure by Shrewsbury and others too but he agree he would look at it.

Charities to get 100% rate relief will continue.

6. **Town Councils working with Shropshire Council on major consultations and where national and government policy affects town and parishes too**

Peter felt that this could be of benefit as he admitted that Shropshire Council did not always look beyond their own needs. He agreed to consider this proposal.

7. **How the Town Council is going to be involved and consulted with about the Shropshire Council Economic Strategy?**

Economic growth, community governance reviews and continuous green belt is outside the existing boundary of the town. Most of it is in Tasley and we need to have a full boundaries review in Shropshire in the next five years. He was looking to reduce the Councillors from 74 to about 60 at Shropshire Council.

8. **Bridgnorth, Ludlow and Oswestry Maternity Unit Closures (Town Council feels it should be a statutory consultee in this matter)**

There is not enough understanding of the whole hospital that think the Council's comments will make a difference. It would have been good if the Town Council had been consulted and Clive pointed out they could not demand they are consulted as a statutory consultee. Peter Nutting would write to town and parish councils and statutory consultees. It was stated by a Town Councillor that it would be great if the Town Council were a statutory consultee as there were numerous families that had settled here and it would affect their ability to have babies locally. There is a campaign group looking to set up a law suit. It was thought that Philip Dunne MP is on the side of the Council and Peter Nutting agreed to write a letter to the CCG stating that town and parish councils should be a statutory consultee. It was stated by a Town Councillor that this was the thin end of the wedge and fear they will get rid of the service and gradually, there be more and more got rid of including minor injuries. Clive said that you can influence a voice and a portfolio holder for town and parish councils could feed in and you could do this through Lee Chapman, the CCG and Director of Public Health. This sustainable, transportable plan cannot promise that the NHS will do what we want.

There was further concern about vulnerable families' mental health and resilient families on what Shropshire Council can commission holistically with a long term approach and a way to package things. The rural dispersment of services was important.

Clive said that they were working towards a more integrated approach with the NHS, CCG and primary care but had never been asked about how Shropshire Council can be a voice for town and parish councils but they cannot guarantee that they will listen. Clive was given the delegated authority to do so. It was pointed out that SaTH was putting together a plan to cut rural services in the budget and there was a great need to work together. Clive said that Shropshire Council would not necessarily agree the Future Fit contract was about money not being in the right place. Peter Nutting said that a health scrutiny panel needed to understand the local issues and the problem it is agreed that it is a danger that we could lose the hospital that affects more and there was a people's decision about this. It was a real worry for Bridgnorth, Ludlow and Oswestry.

9. **Where are we with the new Grounds Maintenance Contract due to commence in April 2018?**

This has gone out to tender and three companies shortlisted. Ringway is not in the mix following a due diligence process and it will be in place by April 2018. Shropshire Council was not really happy with the quality of the service offered by Ringway all the way through and it is understood they have brought in other contractors to meet certain areas of the business. It is essential therefore that the quality of any new contract was looked into through looking at the work of the tenderers of other authorities, rung other people they work with, communication quality and how they work with them. They think Ringway was considerably under-priced and it is expected the price will go up to get the quality required.

The environment at Shropshire Council has different priorities and policies on the environment so solar panels on Shirehall perhaps, the previous Chairman was against wind turbines, solar panels on schools, electric vehicle charging points. Peter Nutting confirmed that electrical charging points were in a survey and there is a way of capturing a certain amount of data about what that Shropshire Council do in terms of environmental policies through every service they deliver, such as car parking, statutory grounds maintenance, specific things such as turbines, conservation areas, reducing the carbon footprint in using sustainable strategies every day, doing Shropshire exchange work with this live and it is happening.

Christian Lea said that electric charging points, he understood the Co-op refurbishment was likely to have one and pointed out that Sainsbury's have one in their Green Strategy going forward.

10. **The question of a possible merger between Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin**

Daniel Kaczynski MP and Owen Patterson MP were pushing for Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin to go back as one authority. Peter Nutting said this was not likely, there were enough problems to deal with and it was not high on their agenda. He thought perhaps by 2030 it might happen but it was not imminent.

11. **In the past Shropshire Council have published a booklet on their Environmental policies. Are they planning to share what these policies are nowadays with local councils and with the general public?**

A Town Councillor spoke about the corporate plan for Shropshire Council. No-one can see it so it needs to be made more accessible. It is a general point about what Shropshire Council does in that it is often difficult to find policies or procedures or find out exactly what the role is. Peter Nutting did agree that you have to go looking for things on the Shropshire Council website and it is not always a given that they can be found.

It was pointed out that if Shropshire Council is going to invest money to make up the deficit, raising more money is fantastic, there is more and more development in Shrewsbury and Oswestry, what about the rest of the county? There needs to be at least 8% investment in a big scheme returned. Peter Nutting asked for any ideas. Some apply to housing schemes, Council housing schemes with a view to rent or on a commercial basis for a good return. Initially, he is going to look at green field sites being used; possibly not a good use. Peter asked that we write in consideration of you don't always get what you want.

12. **Now there are no Tourism Officers in place what plans does Shropshire Council have to invest in tourism in market towns and to promote the same?**

The Town Council would have to be more responsible for improving the visitor economy of the town to attract tourists and promoting their market town. Shropshire Council would be talking about Shropshire generically and not specifically market towns. It was acknowledged that the Quayside and Castle Walk were great assets.

13. **Any other item raised at the meeting**

The Mayor thanked Clive Wright, Peter Nutting and Steve Charmley for attending the meeting and looked forward to meeting them again. He said in the meantime, the Town Council would contact them about various matters.

The meeting closed at 7.15 p.m.