

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
19th October 2021**

LJ/2021

7th October 2021

REPORT TO TOWN COUNCILLORS

AGENDA ITEM 13 – SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL BRIEFING – MON 20 SEP 21

AIM

1. To consider any actions that might be required and note considerations for the Town Council following a briefing by officers of Shropshire Council at Castle Hall on Monday 20th September 2021

BACKGROUND

2. On 20th September Shropshire Council provided a briefing to Town Councillors on a proposed public engagement exercise regarding a number of potential large scale/ connected infrastructure related projects. In addition, the possibility of supporting or promoting the idea of Bridgnorth becoming a Business Improvement District.
3. Shropshire Council are beginning a series of similar discussions with the County's larger market towns and Bridgnorth was the first Market Town that they were engaging with.
4. All Town Councillors were invited. The following councillors and officers attended: Cllrs Barlow, Sawbridge, Neal, Rochelle, Aked, Wellings, Buckley, D Cooper, N Cooper and Buffey, the Town Clerk Mr Jakeman, The Deputy Town Clerk Mrs Williams and the Finance Administrator Mrs Follette. The briefing was led by Mr Mark Barrow, Director of Place at Shropshire Council. In attendance were the 4 Unitary Authority Councillors for the Bridgnorth Area; Cllrs Hurst-Knight, Lea, Winwood and Buckley (Cllr Buckley being dual hatted).

DISCUSSION/ COMMENT

5. The brief related to several headline topics under a loose agenda:
 - a. A Business Improvement District for Bridgnorth?
 - b. Economic Growth and Support for Bridgnorth
 - c. Local Area Assessments - Support
 - d. Bus services - what is changing
 - e. Public realm and carparking project

- f. Town Council initial thoughts and priorities
 - g. How to move forward?
 - h. Members thoughts and conclusions
6. Town Councillors contributed to debate and sought to gain further understanding. Of particular note was the intention of Shropshire Council to engage with the public on a number of aspirational projects including changes to the road network, green space, car parking provision, active travel and public transport. None of the suggested projects were necessarily funded and part of the reason for the dialogue was to draw up reasonable plans or schemes that might be delivered should funding become available. Councillors present who voiced an opinion were generally supportive of Shropshire Council presenting their ideas through a formal public engagement exercise over the coming months. While all those present did not necessarily support wholeheartedly all the outline projects, there was general agreement that there was at least some merit in all of them and having the wider discussion was a good starting point. While it was not necessarily required it was felt that by all present that it would be beneficial to brand any engagement process as 'Shropshire Council in Partnership with/ supported by Bridgnorth Town Council'
7. An element of the briefing focussed around Bridgnorth becoming a Business Improvement District (BID). The following link provides an overview of a BID, who it might be formed and what it might look to achieve:
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/business-improvement-districts>
8. Town Councillors present who expressed a view were interested to understand more and were keen that the Town Council accept the offer of support from Shropshire Council's Economic Growth and Strategy department to explore and discuss the potential for a BID for Bridgnorth. The Shropshire Towns of Oswestry & Shrewsbury are designated BIDs and might be willing to provide an introduction on the topic.
9. A brief update on the Welcome Back Fund was given. The Town Council was waiting for its suggested public realm works to be approved as grant compliant.
10. Reference was made to the importance of the Place Plan in identifying funding and priorities for Bridgnorth. It is intended that the work will begin soon to update it and that the Bridgnorth area Place Plan officer will likely be in touch soon.

FINANCIALS

11. No direct financial impact on the Town Council presently.

SUMMARY

12. Ten Town Councillors and 3 staff attended a briefing and open discussion surrounding Economic Development, Public Realm, Transport Plans and Business Improvement Districts from several Shropshire Council officers.
13. Shropshire Council are looking to undertake some public engagement shortly around potential projects and would welcome Town Council support (for the process). Councillors present were for such support, but the briefing was not a formal meeting of the Council where that corporate view might be agreed.
14. The prospect of a Business Improvement District was inviting and those present felt that it was something that the Town Council should be more informed about. They were keen for the Town Council to begin discussions with Shropshire Council's Economic Growth and strategy department about the perceived benefits and the process.

RECOMMENDATION(s)

15. It is recommended that the Town Council RESOLVES:
 - a. To agree to brand a forthcoming public engagement on a number of potential projects (discussed on Monday 20th September with Shropshire Council) as 'Shropshire Council in partnership with and/or with the support of Bridgnorth Town Council'.
 - b. That the Town Council (initially through the Clerk) begin discussions with Shropshire Council's Economic Growth and Strategy department about the perceived benefits of a BID and the process.



Lee Jakeman
Town Clerk