

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
NEURODIVERSITY WORKING GROUP
LIVESEY HOUSE
17 JUNE 2024**

Present – Councillors Elisabeth Addams, Julian Dean (Chair) and Chris Lemon.

In attendance – Steven Gray (Keystone Academy) and Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk)

01/24 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Kevin Pardy.

02/24 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Those twin-hatted Councillors declared an interest as Shropshire Council in the event matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with the unitary council were discussed.

03/24 WELCOME TO EXTERNAL MEMBERS

That Chair welcomed Steven Gray, a teacher and SENCO from Keystone Academy. He explained that having external representatives with specialist knowledge and experience of those with neurodiversity was essential for the group.

AS reminded everyone that at the last meeting it had also been proposed that the following representatives be invited to join the group and that those initialled had agreed to contact them:

- To contact Rachel Robinson at Public Health – HB
- To contact Men's Shed – HB
- To contact We Are Veterans – BW

RESOLVED: Those listed above be contacted.

04/24 MATTERS ARISING

AS explained that at the previous meeting the following actions had been agreed. The status of each of these actions is listed below:

1. External representatives for the Working Group to be put forward – All. **COMPLETE – As above.**
2. On behalf of the Chair, to write to all suggested external representatives asking them to join the group – AS. **COMPLETE – As above.**
3. Investigate the use of NERDY Café as a venue for future meetings – JD. **OUTSTANDING.**
4. Speak to other town councils about what work they might be doing – HB. **COMPLETE.** AS had contacted other town councils and reported that there was little work currently underway in the sector in this area. She had however spoken to the BID Manager from Bury St Edmonds who were also looking to see what they could do to support the neurodiverse community locally and had put on some training for BID members and other interested parties in the town. AS had the details of this training and would look into it further. They had also

discussed the lack of a 'neurodiverse-friendly town' scheme such as the one established in Ireland and AS had suggested that this might be something they would want to partner up on in the future.

The group agreed that future collaboration with another town would be helpful.

5. Investigate what resources might be available from the Local Government Association – AS. **COMPLETE.** AS had looked into this and reported that there was some general guidance and case studies available at [Think autism | Local Government Association](#) but that there did not appear to be any town or parish councils who were trying to do what they wanted to achieve.
6. Investigate the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network and how it might support the Town Council's agenda – HB. **OUTSTANDING.**
7. To draw up the Terms of Reference – AS. **COMPLETE.**
8. To investigate the use of a quiet room at the Darwin Shopping Centre – AS. **COMPLETE.** AS reported that she had discussed this with the centre manager and that there were no plans to open such a facility at the present time. The group agreed that although this would be a great asset for the town, they understood the commercial pressures on such places and that they should prioritise actions in other areas for the time being.
9. To investigate the use of Safe Spaces in any plans – AS. **COMPLETE.** AS had investigated the use of this scheme for the neurodiverse community and it was agreed that this was not appropriate for what was needed.

RESOLVED: That all outstanding actions be completed for the next meeting.

05/24 FUTURE ACTIONS

The group then discussed what their future actions should be and agreed that, in the first instance, they should concentrate on investigating what the neurodiverse community across the town needed. It was therefore agreed that a series of questions for the following groups be created in order to undertake this research:

- Parents and teachers
- BID members
- Shropshire Autism Hub
- Parental Education Growth Support (PEGS)

RESOLVED: AS would devise a series of questions for each of the groups and circulate them amongst the working group members for input and comment.

The group also discussed the possibility of offering some training for interested parties and SG said that it would be helpful if this could be delivered this side of Christmas. AS said that she would investigate further the training offered by Bury St Edmonds and see if this was a model they could use. The group agreed that any training offered should not be too time intensive to ensure that people were able to participate.

RESOLVED: AS to investigate training provision.

The group also agreed that they would like to create a 'neurodiverse friendly' sticker scheme in the future but that research and training should be carried out first. AS pointed out that a sticker scheme would rely on volunteers to ensure its success.

06/24 NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting be scheduled for September 2024.