

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
CITY OF SANCTUARY WORKING GROUP
VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

FRIDAY 26 JULY 2024

PRESENT

Councillors Phil Gillam (Chair) and Kevin Pardy

Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk)

Robert Douglas and Amanda Jayne Jones – Shropshire Supports Refugees

01/24 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Julian Dean and Helen Ball (Town Clerk).

02/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

03/24 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed that the minutes of the last meeting held on 8 May 2024 previously circulated were an accurate account of proceedings.

04/24 MATTERS ARISING

Amanda S reported that all matters arising were included in the agenda.

05/24 CITY OF SANCTUARY TOWN APPLICATION

Amanda S reported that all previously requested changes to the application had now been made. There were still a number of outstanding requests for information and she would follow these up.

Robert reported that the accreditation process for town councils differed to that for schools and that Maggie Filipova-Rivers would need to be involved. Amanda S said that she would contact Maggie to discuss the process and get some sort of idea of timelines.

Amanda S explained that the application was now in pretty good shape but that work was still needed on the future plans section of the application. She would draft this and send it as a separate document to all committee members. It was suggested that in terms of future plans, the following actions be considered:

- Running a Visioning Exercise feedback session for international residents of the town
- Involving the international community in the Annual Town meeting

AGREED:

That the Working Group would endeavour to submit the application for City of Sanctuary status by the end of August 2024 to allow the accreditation process to take place.

06/24 SHROPSHIRE SUPPORTS REFUGEES HUB

Given the strong link between the Town Council and Shropshire Supports Refugees, Amanda J gave a report on the current funding status for the SSR Hub. She explained that Shropshire Council had initially funded the SSR Hub for two years at a point at which 800 refugees were due to come to the town. Currently the numbers that the SSR Hub was supporting were considerably less than that as residents had been moved into hotels or temporary accommodation. She said however that the SSR Hub was a beautiful resource for the town and created a safe space for people seeking support with a number of issues including domestic abuse, employment and mental health. She added that having a venue at which face to face support could be offered was a blessing.

The SSR Hub has nine office spaces and two educational spaces. It is located on two floors that cost £40k a year to run. There is also a top floor that costs an additional £20k per year which could be let out a separate organisation. Amanda J reported that the current lease expires in July 2025 and with the Shropshire Council funding expiring in March 2025, decisions would need to be made about what to do with the space.

She added that although the number of refugees seeking support is less than it was with the current international landscape it was likely that this would increase considerably in the future and was likely to include people from both Estonia and Palestine. If the current SSR Hub were to close it would be very difficult to set up a replica service quickly at the point that it was needed.

Robert added that a business plan was currently being crafted about how having the SSR Hub saved Shropshire Council money in other services. In addition, Keele University were currently undertaking a report on the service.

Amanda J asked the group if they could think of any way that the Town Council could support their request for continued core funding. All avenues were currently being explored.

Phil said that although the Town Council were unable to help with core funding they would be happy to write a letter of support for SSR. Amanda S said that she would also contact the manager of the Roy Fletcher Centre so that Amanda J could meet them and understand how they make the centre work.

Amanda J added that SSR had been really grateful for a recent grant application from the Town Council.

07/24 FUTURE MEETING DATES

It was agreed that a face to face meeting would be convened once a timeline was established for the City of Sanctuary application process.