**Minutes of an Annual Town Meeting**

**held on Wednesday 8 May 2024 at 7.00pm at The Festival Drayton Centre, Frogmore Road, Market Drayton.**

**Present:** Councillors: R. Aldcroft (Mayor), B. Chapman, M. Erwin, P Glover, G Groves, W. Love, T. Manton, I. Nellins and A. Sanderson

**Clerk:** Town Clerk and Assistant Clerk.

There were also 37 members of the public in attendance.

1. **Welcome by the Town Mayor**

Councillor Aldcroft introduced himself and welcomed everyone to the Annual Town meeting.

1. **To receive presentations**

The Mayor introduced and welcomed Mark Hooper from Visit Shropshire.

Mr Hooper, the project lead for Visit Shropshire gave a presentation on the destination website for Shropshire and the benefits of being a member.

He shared information regarding spend in Shropshire compared to other counties and data around footfall in the town.

The data showed:

* a growth of around 25% in tourism since 2019.
* only 15% of visitors stay overnight, which is probably due to the lack of accommodation in the town centre.
* visitors, on average spend 50 minutes in the town, the aim is to increase this to generate a higher level of spend.

Mr Hooper provided details of publicity in national newspapers and articles on the Visit Shropshire website; a recent post about the Market Drayton Canal received 104 views.

Councillor Aldcroft introduced Kate Gittins from Shropshire Council who is currently running the weekly market and the artisan market. She said there are 4 new stalls in the indoor market and 6 new traders on the outside market; she is currently receiving regular enquiries and is hoping for more new stalls.

A PR and social medial consultant are currently working to increase social media coverage and raise the profile of the markets. On 22 May, as part of Love your Market Week, Radio Shropshire will be at the market from 6am until 10am.

Councillor Aldcroft thanked Mr Hooper and Mrs Gittins for attending.

Q. How are you going to promote the town when things are closing, how will you get people into town?

 Mr Hooper responded that other towns have the same issues. Promotion of the town and sharing data on the footfall may encourage new shops. The regeneration of the market along with the development of the Joules Brewery can all be catalysts to promote the town.

Q. Is there an issue with business rates?

 Mr Hooper responded that this is the same for many towns; in some towns large stores have been split into separate units to reduce business rates. This is a national problem; landlords need to work together to find solutions.

Q. The Data regarding spend is interesting. Can this be broken down to show spend in Market Drayton.

 Mr Hooper said that it is possible but there would be a charge of around £3,000 per town to show spend in an individual town.

Q Do you communicate with coach tour companies, could we get Market Drayton included in some of the day trip interties?

 Mr Hooper said his parents run a coach tour company. To be on the itinerary you need the fundamentals, coach parking, food and drink premises and toilets. Market Drayton is in a good location for coach trips; there are only four hotels in Shropshire that welcome coaches.

Q A residents said he was recently looking to purchase a new carpet, the company in the centre of the town has moved out of town as supply chain traffic is better. Is there a strategy in Market Drayton to back fill the empty buildings.

 Mr Hooper said town centres are evolving, if I were looking for a carpet I would not go to a Town Centre. Food, drink and experiences encourage new shops. The properties are all privately owned so it is hard to influence how they are rented out.

Q. Increasing footfall is good, the issue is public transport, the public bus is restricted to get to other towns and there is no train station. Will Visit Shropshire work with Shropshire Council/Arriva to increase the buses at reasonable stimes?

Mr Hooper said this is a chicken and egg situation, operators will not put on the services unless they are profitable. There needs to be a demand for it. Helen Morgan is keen to increase transport.

The Mayor thanks Mr Hooper for answering the questions.

1. **To confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 23 April 2023.**

The minutes were made available for residents to see.

Councillor Aldcroft proposed, Mr S Connor seconded, and it was **RESOLVED:**

**To confirm the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 23 April 2023.**

1. **Questions from the electors**

The Mayor opened the floor for any questions residents may want to ask.

1. Why hasn’t Market Drayton received any Levelling Up fund? Wem has received £10 million and Whitchurch has received 13 million.

Councillor Nellins said Shrewsbury is the only area that has received levelling up money towards the Shrewsbury Shopping Centre. There are capital funding projects in place and CIL funding is available for Market Drayton and the surrounding parishes. He said he keeps reminding Shropshire Council that Market Drayton is the 3rd largest town in Shropshire.

Q. Since May 1973 planning applications have been received to develop the land on Walkmill Way, which is in a conservation area. Can Council explain why?

Councillor Aldcroft said that the Town Council will be considering the latest application at their next planning meeting. To comment could be seen as predetermination of the application.

Councillor Nellins said that as the County Councillor for that area he has ‘called in’ the planning application and asked for it to be considered by the Planning Committee.

Q. Why has the Caravan on the development on the by-pass been allowed to be put up. Can it not be taken down?

 Councillor Aldcroft said the caravan can remain as it is not causing any environmental damage or risk to life; other development companies put up large signs announcing their building developments.

Councillor Chapman said development may not have started as the application has very stringent conditions which will be extremely expensive to meet.

Q. There are a number of new houses being built, what about CIL money? The lane by the sports club is in a terrible condition, why is there no planning requirement for the road to be improved?

Councillor Aldcroft responded that the road is privately owned and therefore does not come under the remit of the Shropshire Council. He said that he cannot answer the question regarding the planning requirement and asked the lady to leave her contact details with the Clerk who will endeavour to get an answer for her.

Q. Are there any plans for the barber’s shop on Shropshire Street, which has building problems?

Councillor Chapman said the building has recently been sold at auction but the sale is not complete. Shropshire Council can use enforcement powers against property owners when buildings are in dangerous conditions.

Q. The boarded-up land on St Marys Street is another example and looks terrible, can something be done about it?

 Councillor Aldcroft replied this is another property which needs action taken by Shropshire Council. Town Councillors do inspect town centre properties on a 6 monthly basis and contract owners requesting any necessary repair work is carried out.

Q. A request was made for Shropshire Council to compulsory purchase the barber’s shop on Shropshire Street.

 Councillor Aldcroft said this was an issue for Shropshire Council to consider.

Q. With a growing population there is insufficient doctors at the medical practice; most doctors are part time.

 Councillor Aldcroft said The Integrated Care Board work with Shropshire Council to plan for health care provision as a result new housing developments, they currently plan up to 2038.

A member of the Patients Group said there is currently a shortage of doctors to recruit into practices. There are 6 doctors and 3 registrars plus locums at the surgery. There are also a number of higher-level nurses who can administer medicine. The surgery has implemented a new telephone system which will help residents receive a better service.

Q. With another Care Home being built on Milton Drive there will be even more pressure on the health service?

 Councillor Aldcroft said there is only one care home that has been given outline planning permission.

Q. Are the Town Planning Documents representative of the Community needs, do they contain the strategic things that the town needs to grow?

There has been consultation on the Local Plan and the Future Connectivity Plan. The Town Council has commissioned a company to produce a town centre strategy and action plan.

Q. A member of the Community Street Volunteers encouraged residents to join the scheme. He said residents only need to volunteer for 2 hours per month. He left leaflets at the front of the room for residents to read.

 Councillor Manton encouraged resident to get involved with community schemes. He said the Community Speed Watch group has recently disbanded due to a lack of volunteers.

Q. Footfall in the Town would increase if there were no parking charges. The outdoor swimming pool was popular and encouraged visitors to the town.

Councillor Nellins said the car parks in the town are owned and managed by Shropshire Council. The income from parking is used to maintain the car parks.

Q. A representative from Joules Brewery introduced herself. She said that a planning application has been submitted for the Stags Head; the brewery is investing in the town and they hope that others will follow suit.

There were no more questions asked.

**6. The Town Mayor’s closing remarks.**

The Town Mayor thanked residents for attending and for all their questions.

The meeting concluded at 8.45p.m.

Signed: ………………………………………….

 Date: …………………………………………...