

Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Review Group

MS Teams Meeting

19 August 2025

4.30 pm – 5.35pm

In attendance:

Councillors: Cleeve, Coles, Petrovic and Smith

Officers: Town Clerk

Apologies: Councillors Alcock and Rolfe

1. Appointment of Chair

It was proposed and duly seconded that

Councillor Smith be appointed Chair of the Group

It was proposed and duly seconded that

Councillor Petrovic be appointed Deputy Chair of the Group

2. Terms of Reference

The Town Clerk (TC) introduced a set of Terms of Reference for the Working Group, which would outline the remit: to consider implications of the Government's devolution and local government reorganisation agenda, assess potential impacts on Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council, and prepare recommendations for Council.

Agreed: The Terms of Reference were agreed.

3. Update on Current Position

The Town Clerk provided a summary of the national and local context:

Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) were preparing full proposals for submission by 28 November 2025.

Both authorities are undertaking consultations, with responses due by 26 August (WCC) and 14 September 2025 (SDC). All Town Councillors

had been encouraged to submit individual responses as both dates fell outside Town Council meetings.

The TC was engaged in county-level officer working groups and had attended district briefings.

The Clerk confirmed requests have been made to both District and County Councils for full asset registers to clarify responsibilities and ownership.

3. Discussion on Potential Implications

Members noted that central government has provided little clear guidance for Town/Parish Councils. Concerns were raised that town and parish councils may face additional responsibilities without sufficient resources.

Councillors emphasised the need to protect community assets (e.g. parks, recreation grounds, markets) and ensure that any transfer of responsibilities comes with the necessary income streams or funds.

It was considered important that the Council have a clear 'wish list' of priorities, identifying those responsibilities which could potentially be assumed by the Town Council.

The risk of fragmented service ownership was highlighted, citing examples of bus shelters and bins where responsibilities were currently unclear.

Members agreed a full audit of Town Council assets was required.

4. Assets and Services for Consideration

The Group discussed potential areas where the Town Council might seek greater responsibility:

Parks and Playgrounds – Members agreed these are of high public interest, but any transfer must include adequate commuted sums or revenue sources.

Markets and Car Parks – Considered valuable as potential income streams to support transferred assets.

Street Furniture (bins, bus shelters, benches) – Members recognised inconsistencies in asset registers and the need for clarity before accepting additional liabilities.

It was agreed the Council's default position should be cautious, ensuring decisions are backed by financial viability and clear legal responsibility.

5. Organisational Readiness

The TC reported that, following recommendations from the Internal Auditor, an organisational review was being planned. This would assess staffing structures and capacity to manage any future devolution of services. Members supported undertaking this review at the earliest opportunity.

6. Next Steps

Members to review District and County Council asset lists and submit their individual "wish lists" of desired or non-desired assets.

The Clerk to draft an updated list of major Town Council assets for circulation.

Initial outline to be developed, with a more detailed report to Council in November 2025, ahead of the Government's submission deadline.

Councillor Coles to seek further information from District officers regarding costings for maintenance of play areas.

7. Date of Next Meeting

29 September 2025 at 6.00pm.

Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation

Working Group

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

The Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation Working Group (“the Working Group”) is established by Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council to consider the implications and opportunities of potential devolution arrangements within the local government structure. This includes the possible transfer of powers, responsibilities, assets or functions from principal authorities to the Town Council.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Working Group is to:

- Investigate and monitor developments in local government devolution proposals affecting the Stratford-upon-Avon area.
- Identify services, assets, or responsibilities that may be devolved to the Town Council from the District or County Council.
- Assess the capacity, resources, and governance requirements for the Town Council to take on additional functions.
- Provide considered recommendations to Full Council based on evidence and analysis.

3. Objectives

The Working Group shall:

- a) Gather and evaluate information and guidance relating to local government devolution.
- b) Engage with relevant authorities and organisations (including, but not limited to, District and County Councils, WALC and NALC) to understand the scope and detail of any proposed devolution arrangements.
- c) Identify opportunities and risks arising from devolution that may affect the Town Council.

- d) Assess the financial, staffing, legal and operational implications of any potential transfers of service or responsibility.
- e) Formulate draft proposals, position statements or responses for consideration and approval by the Town Council.
- f) Ensure all work undertaken by the Working Group is aligned with the Council's Strategic Plan, statutory obligations, and established policies.
- g) Give due regard to the environmental impact of any proposals or recommendations brought forward, ensuring that sustainability considerations are embedded within all deliberations and advice to Council.
- h) Ensure that all activities, discussions, and recommendations reflect the Council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and take into account the Council's adopted Equal Opportunities Policy.

4. Membership

- The Working Group shall consist of Members of the Town Council, appointed by resolution of Full Council.
- The Town Clerk or delegated officer will provide administrative support to the Working Group.
- Other individuals, including representatives from principal authorities or external advisers, may be invited to attend meetings in an advisory capacity, but shall not have voting rights.

5. Chairmanship

- The Working Group shall elect its own Chair at its first meeting.
- The Chair shall be responsible for ensuring the orderly conduct of meetings and reporting back to Council.

6. Meetings

- The Working Group shall meet as required, with meetings convened by the Chair or Town Clerk. These can be in person or virtual.
- The Group is not a decision-making body and will report its findings and recommendations to Full Council.
- Notes of meetings shall be recorded and circulated to all Members and appropriate officers.

7. Quorum

- A minimum of three Councillors shall be required for a meeting to be quorate.

8. Reporting and Accountability

- The Working Group will report its findings and recommendations to Full Council, as appropriate.
- Progress reports may be requested at any time by Full Council or the Mayor.

9. Duration

- The Working Group will remain in place until such time as Full Council resolves to disband it or its objectives have been fulfilled.
- The Terms of Reference shall be reviewed annually or earlier if required.