

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

24 MARCH 2026

TOWN CLERK'S OPEN REPORT

1) To receive the quarterly management accounts for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 December 2025

- **To note the report**

Appendix 'A' shows the management accounts for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 January 2025 (Q1-Q3). Areas of concern will be discussed in the meeting.

Members are requested to note the report.

2) Update on current reserves position

- **To note the report**

Appendix 'B' shows the balances of reserves at the end of Q3. There has been little or no movement in most reserves apart from Community Infrastructure Levy which received a second tranche payment in December 2025 of £62,326.07 and £44,126 of expenditure across the projects detailed in the appendix.

Members are requested to note the report.

3) Update on Internal Audit and review of required actions

- **To undertake the review of actions**

In February 2026 the Mulberry LAS undertook an internal audit ahead of the Annual Governance Accountability Return (AGAR). Overall, the auditor was pleased with their findings with a few areas requiring action before 31st March in order to pass the internal audit: -

- 3.1) The Asset Register has a number of historic issues that require attention and amendment. Items of historical value that were gifted to the Town Council or are too old to have a specific value should be entered at a peppercorn valuation. In addition, valuation figures within the database do not align with the accounting system nor figures provided on previous AGAR submissions. This will need resolution by 31st March 2026. The Asset Register Review Group may be required to assist.
- 3.2) The Town Council needs a formal Investment Strategy document. The RFO has since created a strategy document for consideration by the Finance & Audit Committee (**Appendix 'C'**), ready for recommendation to Town Council. Please see the further agenda item.
- 3.3) Bank Reconciliation records for 2025/26 do not appear to be available in hard copy with an approval signature. The Town Clerk is awaiting an update from the RFO maternity cover. While records were reviewed for the 2024/25 submission and were signed by the Town Clerk, the requirement now is of periodic review, at least quarterly, by a member who is not chair or a bank signatory who must also sign the paperwork. The RFO has emailed councillors and has secured several who are able to fulfil this once paperwork is ready. Again, this must be completed by 31st March 2026. It should be noted that the Finance & Facilities Officer undertakes monthly reconciliations on the Finance software, but there is not a facility for a printable record of this.
- 3.4) The Excise of Public Rights duration was incorrect for 2024/25, as previously reported. Extra care should be given for the 2025/26 submission to ensure correct dates and time periods.

4) To review and appoint the Internal Auditor for 2026-27 and beyond

Both the Town Clerk and RFO recommend that Mulberry LAS are re-appointed as internal auditors for a 3-year period. **Appendix 'D'** provides the annual cost, which is fixed for the duration of the term (up to 3 years).

Members are requested to agree the appointment of the Internal Auditor for 2026-27 for up to 3 years.

5) Annual Review of Risk Register for recommendation to Town Council

- **To undertake the annual review and make recommendations to Council.**

The Risk Register is attached at **Appendix 'E'**. Members are requested to review this and recommend any necessary changes.

The RFO has recently come across a historic Risk Management Policy which has not been reviewed since 2022. This will need review in September as part of the annual review of Town Council policy documents.

6) Annual Review of Suppliers and update on the procurement process

A working group was previously set up to take on this task however progress has not been forthcoming during 2025/26. The Town Council briefly employed a Business Support Officer in 2025/26 who began work on the procurement process in line with the new tender requirements. The RFO has returned from maternity leave and is picking this up, along with the working group who need to schedule their next meeting.

In the interim, Members are asked to review the list of suppliers used over the last 12m (**Appendix 'F'**) and make any necessary recommendations.

7) Review & recommendation of Investment Strategy Document

As reported above, a requirement of the internal audit is for the Town Council to adopt a formal Investment Strategy Document – please see **Appendix 'C'**.

Members are asked to consider the document and make a recommendation to Town Council.

8) Financial Terms of Reference and Financial Regulations – clarity on expenditure sign off procedures

The Council's Financial Terms of Reference and Financial Regulations will be reviewed in full in September as part of the annual process. In the interim, a question has been raised whether large expenditure items such as the invoice for the Town Council's insurance renewal requires additional sign off once received, or whether this expenditure approval is covered under the budget sign off process, as long as it is within budget. The same is asked of items not within budget but are essential for reasons such as H&S, Security, continuity of operation etc.

Members are asked to confirm the requirements.

9) Expenditure Approvals

Subject to the outcome of point 8 above, the following large expenditure items require consideration and approval:-

- 9.1) The Council's insurance renewal premium has been quoted at £18,410.48 for 2026/27, which is within the budgeted amount. This is an increase of £736.59 compared to 2025-26, however previous increases have been as much as £1,800 in the past.
- 9.2) The Council's share of the 2025-26 Christmas Market costs has fallen by £3,718.93 to £21,620.45 compared to the previous year and is also less than 2024.
- 9.3) Tree works in the Town Council's Open Spaces have been necessary to undertake due to H&S concerns, however there are insufficient funds in the specific 2025-26 budget lines at this point in the financial year due to other expenditure in order to cover the full amount. There are two invoices totalling £9,320 net. It is possible to make up the balance from unspent funds from other Open Spaces budget lines at financial year end via a virement, with any last remaining overspend to come from general reserves. Exact numbers will be provided at the next Finance and Audit Committee where the year end processes will be undertaken.

Members are asked to approve the expenditure.

Responsible Financial Officer
18 March 2026