

# **STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL**

**14 July 2026**

## **Town Clerk's Open Report**

### **Agenda item 12**

#### **1. Restoration of the historic Hopwood & Tilley and Shand Mason fire engines / Bicentennial of the Stratford Moreton Railway**

- **To consider a proposal for the restoration and preservation of two historic fire engines owned by the Town Council and to determine the level of support the Council wishes to provide to the project.**
- **To consider funding for a souvenir booklet on the Bicentennial of the Stratford Moreton Tramway.**

#### **Background**

The Council owns two historic horse-drawn, hand-pumped fire engines which form an important part of Stratford-upon-Avon's heritage:

- Hopwood & Tilley Fire Engine
- Shand Mason Fire Engine

The Town Council received a presentation from Mr David Austin in January 2026 who outlined his plans to look to restore these engines in conjunction with the commemorative activities surrounding the publication of the Stratford Society's StratFire Project Report in 2027.

Mr Austin brings significant relevant engineering experience, having worked for 17 years as an aircraft engineer in the Royal Navy and civil aviation, followed by 25 years as a senior project manager with IBM and other companies.

He has reported he has been actively involved in a range of local heritage projects, which include restoring the Harry Cowan model of the 1840 Stratford Canal Basin, promoting the Stratford History Museum, writing a commemorative book marking the bicentenary of the Stratford–Moreton Tramway, supporting the work of the Stratford Society and the Stratford Heritage Exhibition.

#### **Project Objectives**

He has prepared a project plan (circulated to members of the Council only) to be delivered by four local residents:

- Restore both fire engines to an appropriate conservation standard.
- Return the Shand Mason appliance to operational condition for demonstrations and educational activities.
- Create opportunities for community engagement, volunteering and educational activities.
- Provide heritage assets for future display within a proposed Stratford Heritage Museum.

### **Proposed Restoration Programme**

The restoration programme is proposed in five stages:

Stage 1 – Cosmetic Restoration and Static Display Preparation

Stage 2 – Conservation and Preservation

Stage 3 – Operational Restoration of Shand Mason Engine

Stage 4 – Restoration of Hopwood & Tilley Engine

Stage 5 – Long-Term Care and Public Engagement

### **Financial Implications**

The project has been developed in two stages of estimated expenditure. Initial restoration works are estimated to cost £4,350, comprising £1,900 for the Hopwood & Tilley fire engine and £2,450 for the Shand Mason fire engine. In addition, further operational restoration costs are estimated to be between £3,000 and £5,000, subject to detailed assessment as the project progresses. Mr Austin has prepared a comprehensive project budget, identifying an overall estimated project cost of £25,954. This includes £12,754 for restoration works (inclusive of a 15% contingency) together with £13,200 for a two-year maintenance and education programme.

The intention is that the project will be funded through a combination of external grant funding, volunteer match funding, public donations and sponsorship opportunities. A number of potential grant providers have been identified.

The Council is not being asked at this stage to commit funding towards the full project cost but may wish to consider.

Currently, the only requirements for the Council are:

1. to make the applications for funding from external sources.
2. to receive public donations and manage the project account.
3. to receive and settle invoices from specialist suppliers and service providers.
4. to handle and manage publicity and promotion of the project.

In the event that the proposed applications to external funders are not successful, or full funding is not available to complete the restoration project, then the Shand Mason will be cleaned and reassembled.

At the completion of the restoration, the Shand Mason fire engine will either be returned to Hatton Rock or placed on temporary or permanent public display, subject to the Council's decision and any appropriate arrangements.

### **Community Benefits**

The proposed project would deliver a range of community benefits by preserving two significant historic assets owned by the Town Council and ensuring they remain available for future generations. It would encourage volunteering and wider community participation, and provide opportunities for a local school to engage.

### **Considerations**

Councillor Harding and the Town Clerk recently met with Mr Austin to view the fire engines and discuss the proposed restoration project. The visit provided an opportunity to assess the condition of the vehicles and to better understand the scope of the work involved. The Town Council's insurers have confirmed that volunteers undertaking work on behalf of the Town Council would be covered under the Council's insurance policy, subject to the Council's normal arrangements for the management and supervision of volunteers.

Members should note, however, that external funding for the project has not yet been fully secured and will need to be identified.

Officer time will need to be allocated to the project.

Consideration will also need to be given to the long-term maintenance of the restored fire engines to ensure they remain in good condition.

In addition, should the fire engines be used operationally or displayed at public events in the future, appropriate risk assessments, insurance arrangements and management procedures will need to be in place.

### **Conclusion**

Councillors are invited to consider whether they wish to support, in principle, the proposed restoration of the historic fire engines.

Members are also asked to consider whether they would be willing to make a financial contribution towards the project, subject to the successful securing of external grant funding, sponsorship and other sources of financial support, and if so at what level.

That officer time be allocated to the project.

## **Stratford Moreton Tramway**

Mr Austin is also writing a souvenir book on the Bicentennial of the Stratford Moreton Tramway and is asking for availability of funding for the project

The Stratford and Moreton Tramway was a 16-mile (25-km) long horse-drawn wagonway which ran from the canal basin at Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire to Moreton-in-Marsh in Gloucestershire, with a branch to Shipston-on-Stour. The main line opened in 1826.

Shipston Museum is running a commemorative event and the Town Clerk has offered the use of the Committee Room on the afternoon of Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2026, if Mr Austin was to hold an event.

## **2. Stratford-upon-Avon Strategic Partnership – New operating structure**

- **To consider the revised Strategic Partnership operating structure, as set out in the report and appendix, which will provide a clear governance framework that will support effective partnership working and strengthen accountability.**
- **That the Council agrees, in principle, to the recruitment of a fixed-term Strategic Partnership Monitoring Officer/Project Support Manager, as previously identified, to be funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocation, and delegates authority to the Town Clerk, in consultation with Councillor Vos as the Council's representative on the Strategic Partnership to develop the role specification, agree the appropriate recruitment process, and progress the recruitment of a suitable candidate, with any further funding approvals or financial commitments being brought back to the Council for consideration where required.**

### **Background**

The Stratford-upon-Avon Strategic Partnership was established following the adoption of the Stratford-upon-Avon Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).

One of the key recommendations of the NDP was the creation of a Town Centre Strategic Partnership to bring together representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors to help shape the future of the town centre.

The Partnership is facilitated by the Town Council, which provides administrative support, including the organisation of meetings and the preparation of minutes.

Since the adoption of the NDP, the town centre has faced a number of significant challenges, including the continued growth of online retailing, increased competition from out-of-town shopping, the loss of key retailers and the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whilst the Partnership does not directly deliver projects, it provides strategic leadership and acts as a forum through which partner organisations can work collaboratively to influence, support and promote initiatives that contribute to a thriving and sustainable town centre. As Stratford-upon-Avon's challenges continue to evolve, it remains important that the views and expertise of the Partnership's member organisations are brought together to help shape future priorities.

### **Looking Ahead**

Following the resignation of the Partnership Chair, who had led the Strategic Partnership for the past three years, an opportunity existed to review the Partnership's purpose, governance and future priorities.

The review provided an appropriate point at which to reflect on the Partnership's achievements to date, consider the changing challenges facing the town centre and agree a clear programme of work to support Stratford-upon-Avon's future prosperity.

A Working Group was set up to review and to consider the future structure and working of the Partnership and met on a number of occasions. Councillor Vos, as the Town Council representative on the Partnership and the Town Clerk were Working Group Members. Their final report is available as an Appendix. This report and the proposed governance structure have now been formally considered and ratified by the Strategic Partnership, with support from all partner organisations involved, including the County Council and District Council. This provides a clear framework for future partnership working, ensuring that all key stakeholders are aligned with the proposed approach, roles and responsibilities, and the strategic priorities identified for the town.

### **Proposed Objectives**

The proposal is for a revised hybrid model, supported by updated Terms of Reference and more structured working and delivery groups.

It is proposed that the Partnership adopts five strategic objectives for the next five years, based on the recently adopted Town Vision themes, with the addition of Funding, Promotion and Investment. These objectives will guide delivery of the [A Vision for Stratford-upon-Avon](#) alongside relevant initiatives identified through the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The proposed objectives are:

1. Town Centre Evolution & Local Planning
2. Creativity & Arts
3. Great Vibe, Fun & Place
4. Transport
5. Funding, Promotion and Investment

To support delivery, a revised Partnership structure is proposed. This builds on existing collaborative arrangements by introducing dedicated delivery groups reporting to a strengthened Strategic Partnership with senior decision-makers.

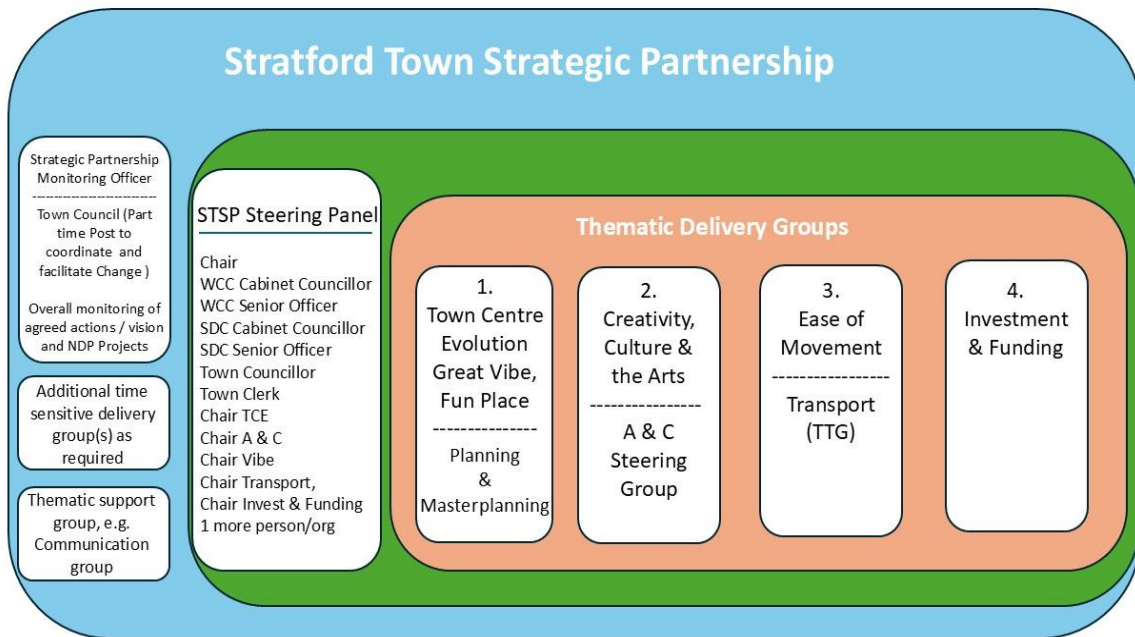
The new structure is intended to:

- strengthen leadership and accountability;
- engage a broader range of community stakeholders;
- support delivery of agreed priorities;
- maximise funding and investment opportunities; and
- ensure representation reflects government guidance by including local authorities, businesses, voluntary organisations, education, health and community representatives.

Note - to simplify the governance arrangements and avoid duplication, the previous themes of Town Centre Evolution and Great Vibe, Fun & Place have been combined into a single objective.

### **Proposed Governance Structure**

The proposed governance structure provides a coordinated approach to delivering the Town Vision and associated projects through strategic leadership, thematic working groups and effective performance monitoring:



- **Strategic Partnership** – A broad partnership bringing together representatives from local government, the MP, business, cultural organisations, community groups, education, health and young people to provide strategic direction for the town's future prosperity and vitality.
- **Steering Panel** – A small leadership group responsible for driving delivery of the Vision and Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), coordinating partnership activity, overseeing projects and funding, removing barriers to progress, and reporting to partner organisations.
- **Thematic Groups** – Specialist groups responsible for developing, promoting and monitoring projects within key priority areas:
  - **Town Centre Evolution and Great Vibe, Fun Place** – Supporting regeneration, placemaking, accessibility, heritage, sustainability and a vibrant, inclusive town centre.
  - **Creativity, Culture and Arts** – Leading delivery of the town's Arts, Creativity and Culture Strategy.
  - **Transportation** – Supporting implementation of the Integrated Transport Strategy and providing technical advice on transport proposals.
  - **Investment and Funding** – Identifying and securing funding opportunities to support partnership priorities and town-wide initiatives.

### **Strategic Partnership Monitoring Officer**

Members are reminded that, by Minute 100 (2025/26), the Council supported the exploration of using Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to appoint a fixed-term Project Support Manager to assist with the delivery and coordination of the Strategic Partnership's activities.

The revised governance structure now identifies the need for a Strategic Partnership Monitoring Officer. This dedicated officer would be responsible for

monitoring progress against the Town Vision and Action Plan, coordinating performance reporting, tracking the delivery of projects, identifying risks, supporting external funding applications, and providing evidence to inform decision-making and demonstrate the impact of the partnership.

In order to progress this proposal, Members are requested to re-confirm their support for the recruitment of a fixed-term officer payable from Community Infrastructure funds.

## **Conclusion**

The Town Council plays a key coordinating and facilitating role in supporting the Stratford-upon-Avon Town Centre Strategic Partnership, providing the governance and administrative framework that enables the Partnership to operate effectively. By acting as the lead coordinating authority, the Council ensures that partners are able to work collaboratively towards the shared objectives of the Town Vision and Neighbourhood Development Plan, while maintaining effective governance, accountability and continuity.

### **3. Community Infrastructure Levy – receipt of funds**

- **To note the recent receipt of funds.**

To note the payment of Community Infrastructure levy from the District Council in June 2026 of £12,357.85.

### **4. Community Infrastructure Levy – Community Builder project**

- **To consider the continued funding of the project of £5,000 per annum for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29 and that the use of Community Infrastructure Levy funds remains consistent with the Council's adopted CIL objectives.**

## **Background**

The Town Council, together with the Lead Partner, District Council (£27,000 grant), Stratford Town Trust (£23,000 grant) has supported the Community Builder initiative in Bishopton through a partnership funding arrangement.

The Community Builder project was established through the Social Inclusion Partnership to strengthen community resilience and wellbeing in Bishopton and Clopton. The Community Builder provides dedicated support to bring people together, develop local capacity and help community-led ideas, facility improvement, health and wellbeing, family support, volunteering, environmental action and community events.

By Minute 120 (2023/24) the Council approved funding for the initiative during the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Policy Budget.

The District Council has now approached the Town Council to seek confirmation of continued funding, subject to its own approval of an extension to the Community Builder contract for a further period of up to three years (3 x 12 month extensions).

### **Year Three: 2026/27**

The proposed funding for 2026/27 will support the continued delivery of the Community Builder project, focusing on consolidating the progress made to date while strengthening community resilience and long-term sustainability. The funding will enable continued support for residents and local organisations during ongoing economic and social challenges, enhance partnership working, improve environmental quality and community safety, increase volunteering and community participation, strengthen communications and engagement, and help transition activities towards greater resident and community ownership. It will also support robust monitoring and governance to ensure the project continues to deliver measurable community benefits.

### **Options**

Councillors are therefore asked to consider whether they wish to continue supporting the initiative for the proposed three-year extension or not.

- Note – A 3 year funding option is suggested which would be subject to Town Council's representative and the Town Clerk being satisfied with the proposed partnership arrangements and contractual terms before any final commitment is made for 2027/28 and 2028/29.

## **5. Community Infrastructure Levy – Hostile Vehicle Mitigation /Civic Events**

- **To consider the Recommendation of the Community, Wellbeing and Place Committee held on 30 June**

### **Minute 13 – Civic Event and Remembrance Sunday**

The Committee noted that planning for the annual Remembrance Sunday commemorations would shortly commence.

The Town Clerk reminded Councillors that last year, following police advice, the cost of Hostile Vehicle Mitigation had increased and that the Council had previously resolved that these costs should be met from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), as the expenditure supported the permitted use of CIL for the operation and maintenance of infrastructure, and accorded with Government guidance that infrastructure should be interpreted broadly to include essential safety and security measures supporting the effective functioning of the town centre.

Accordingly, it was

**RECOMMENDED**

**That Council approves the continued use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for the provision of Hostile Vehicle Mitigation at all Town Council events where it is required, recognising that it provides essential infrastructure to ensure the safe and effective operation of the town centre during major events.**

Accordingly, Town Council is asked to consider whether the costs of providing Hostile Vehicle Mitigation for civic events is met from the Community Infrastructure funds as HVM measures form part of the wider public realm infrastructure required to support the safe and effective use of the town centre spaces. Ensuring that public areas remain accessible, welcoming and resilient is essential, particularly as visitor numbers and activity increase.

Councillors are requested to consider the Civic Events to be supported through this provision, namely the Remembrance Parade, the Shakespeare Birthday Parade and the Christmas Lights Switch-On event (market element). It is anticipated that the Town Council will receive a request for additional funding in relation to the Christmas Lights Switch-On event in November 2026, due to the proposed expansion of the event footprint and the resulting increase in infrastructure.

The options open to Council, are to support the request, to not support or suggest an alternative.

**6. Market Forum – Appointment of Councillor**

- **To appoint Councillor Rolfe as one of the Town Council's representatives on the Market Forum.**

Following the Annual Council meeting, Councillor Rolfe expressed an interest in being appointed as the Town Council's representative on the Forum. The Mayor has now resigned from the Market Forum, creating a vacancy.