

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL
Community, Wellbeing and Place Committee

30 June 2026

Town Clerk's Open Report

1. Civic Events – Update

Review of Civic Events 2026

- To note the report

Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an overview of the civic events delivered by the Town Council during 2026 to date.

Shakespeare's Birthday Celebrations - Saturday 25 April 2026

The Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations once again represented one of the most significant events in the Town Council's civic calendar.

The Town Council took the lead role in organising and delivering the Birthday Parade, with joint financial support from Stratford-on-Avon District Council. Members should note that this represents the penultimate year of the District Council's agreed funding contribution.

The event benefited from excellent weather and attracted significant visitor numbers to the town centre, contributing to a vibrant and celebratory atmosphere throughout the day. Slate Events was, once again, employed to deliver on the entertainment aspect.

Community Grant Programme

As a result of the launch of Stratford-upon-Avon's Arts and Culture Strategy, developed through the Town Strategic Partnership, additional funding was secured from Warwickshire County Council and Stratford Town Trust for additional community entertainment.

The programme was designed to support local groups, artists, performers and organisations in contributing to the celebrations through performances, workshops, creative activities and participation in the Birthday Procession, that perhaps they would have been unable to do so without funding.

A total of 18 funded projects were delivered, including:

- Live music performances; Theatre performances and Shakespearean monologues; Choir performances; Dance performances; Creative workshops and participation activities; arts and crafts projects; Youth theatre contributions; Parade and procession participation; Activities supporting accessibility and inclusion.

Events were delivered across multiple venues including the Town Hall and locations along the Birthday Procession route.

Feedback from participants and audiences was overwhelmingly positive.

This did create additional work for office staff to facilitate and in addition to the work alongside Slate Events.

Operational Review

The event passed without any serious incidents. However, there were a few lessons identified for future years.

This was the first year that the enhanced Hostile Vehicle Mitigation measures were implemented. The introduction of these arrangements, together with the requirement for road closures from 5.00am, significantly increased the cost and complexity of the event set-up.

Whilst the arrangements operated successfully, it has been identified that future events will require additional support from suitably qualified personnel to assist with implementation and management of these measures.

A schedule of 2026 event costs - £55,900 which includes storage and erection of Flag poles, Health and Safety, Entertainment, Hostile Vehicle Mitigation- £13,300 (reduced cost), Road Closures and Security.

A stakeholder Working Group was established to oversee the wider celebratory elements of the event. This has also met to undertake a post-event debrief and review.

Separately, Town Council officers have conducted an operational debrief to consider the practical delivery of the event, including traffic management, security arrangements, logistics and stewarding.

A key outcome from both reviews was the recommendation that planning for future celebrations should commence at an earlier stage, particularly in relation to issuing invitations, engaging stakeholders and recruiting participants, to maximise involvement and allow sufficient time for coordination and event preparation.

It was recognised that the 2026 event provided a strong foundation on which to build, helping to raise the town's profile and enhance its reputation and recognition on a wider scale. Officers will be looking to attract funding wherever possible to support the sustainability of the event.

Shakespeare Service - Sunday 26 April 2026

The annual Shakespeare Service was held at Holy Trinity Church.

For the second consecutive year, the traditional procession from the Town Hall to Holy Trinity Church was not undertaken.

This arrangement avoided the need for additional road closures and associated traffic management costs, generating a saving of approximately £3,500 whilst still maintaining the significance of the occasion.

Mayor Making and Civic Service - 15 and 17 May 2026

Mayor Making was held on 15 May 2026.

The meeting was extremely well attended and saw Councillor Sam McNaught-Barrow elected as the 481st Mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon.

The following Sunday, the annual Civic Service took place at Holy Trinity Church, followed by a short drinks reception at the Town Hall.

Both events were well supported by civic guests, community representatives and residents.

Armed Forces Day - Saturday 27 June 2026

At the last meeting of the Civic Heritage & Events Committee, Members considered a request from the Royal British Legion regarding the future delivery of Armed Forces Day.

Following a representation made by the Royal British Legion, it was agreed that the Town Council would not seek to pursue a joint event with the District Council and Veterans Contact Point and that the Town Council with the Royal British Legion, acting as host, for an event in the Town Council owned Remembrance Garden.

A verbal update on the event will be provided at the meeting.

Mayor's Bowl Match

9 July 2026

The event continues to provide an opportunity for civic engagement and community participation and remains a valued part of the Town Council's civic programme.

Heritage Open Day – 12 September 2026

The Committee is invited to consider whether it wishes to participate in Heritage Open Day once again this year. The event has been well supported in previous years and provides an opportunity to showcase the Town Hall to residents and visitors.

Subject to the Committee's agreement, arrangements would be similar to previous years, with a rota of Councillors being established to provide guided tours of the Town Hall throughout the day.

Remembrance Sunday - 8 November 2026

Following completion of the Armed Forces Day arrangements, officer attention will turn to planning and delivering the annual Remembrance Sunday commemorations.

Given the significance of the event and the continuing requirements surrounding public safety, detailed planning will commence in the coming months in liaison with key partners.

2. Free Use of Town Hall

- **To consider continued free use of the Town Hall**

a) Citizens Advice

Background

Following a request made through a Town Councillor, Citizens Advice sought a centrally located venue from which to provide outreach advice services to residents.

The organisation advised that funding had been secured through Stratford Town Trust to deliver services across the town, but that no budget was available for room hire costs.

The Town Hall was considered an appropriate location due to its central position and accessibility, and a six-week trial period was agreed for use of the Committee Room on Tuesday mornings. *Note - The Town Clerk has the delegation to agree free use of the Town Hall for adhoc events, such as coffee mornings and meetings – generally Monday to Thursday during office hours that incur no additional expense.*

The trial period is now coming to an end and Citizens Advice has requested that the arrangement continue. The sessions have had minimal impact on Town Hall operations, generally utilising a single room for a few hours each week, with relatively low attendance levels. Officers have identified no significant operational issues arising from the use.

Options

Members are therefore asked to consider whether they wish to continue supporting the provision of this community advice service through the ongoing use of Town Hall accommodation, or not or come to an alternative arrangement.

b) Mayors use of Town Hall

To consider free use of the Town Hall for Mayor's community events

Community Soup lunch

The Mayor has identified the promotion of healthy eating and access to nutritious food as one of her key priorities during her term of office. To support this objective, the Mayor is proposing to hold a monthly community soup lunch at the Town Hall.

The Town Clerk has approved the use of the Town Hall for this purpose in principle, recognising the community benefit of the initiative and its alignment with the Mayor's objectives. The Mayor will undertake all preparation, delivery and clearing away associated with the event. As the lunch will take place during normal opening hours, the only potential cost to the Town Council will be the support of the Town Hall Custodian, should assistance be required whilst the building is open to the public, and his hours of work can be adjusted for this purpose.

Christmas Reading

In addition, the Mayor has approached the Town Clerk regarding the possibility of hosting a Christmas reading event for children at the Town Hall during December. It is proposed that this event would take place during the early evening and therefore outside normal office hours. As a result, the event would require staffing support from both a Town Hall Custodian and an Events Supervisor, creating an associated cost to the Council.

History

Currently, the Mayor is entitled to two free uses of the Town Hall each year for Mayoral events that are separate from the Council's civic programme. These events are traditionally organised as fundraising activities in support of the Mayor's chosen charities. However, the proposed soup lunch initiative and children's Christmas reading event are not intended to generate funds for charitable purposes.

Options

Members may wish to support the event as a community initiative, in which case the associated staffing costs could be met by the Town Council. Alternatively, Members may wish that the costs should be funded from the Mayor's budget or be recovered through advance ticket sales.

3. Climate Change Small Awards Grant Scheme

- **To approve the Application form for grants of £25 up to £500 for town-based activities that address climate change and biodiversity.**

Background

Earlier in the year, the Climate Change Working Group recommended the introduction of a new Small Awards Grant Scheme to support climate change initiatives. This recommendation was subsequently referred to the Community Services Committee for consideration.

The Committee requested that further work be undertaken on the application form to ensure it reflected current good practice. A revised version was later presented to a subsequent meeting. However, Members expressed concerns that the application process was becoming overly complex for the level of grant funding proposed. Councillors therefore requested sight of the more streamlined application form recently used for the Shakespeare Birthday Community Grant Scheme. No further comments have since been received.

The Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer have since reviewed the application form and consider it suitable for implementation, subject to the inclusion of the following additional grant conditions:

- Any grant funding not utilised for the approved purpose must be returned to the Town Council.
- The Town Council reserves the right to request copies of receipts or other evidence of expenditure to demonstrate that the grant has been used in accordance with the approved application.

Options

To approve or recommend further changes to the Application form (Appendix).

4. Climate Change Small Awards Grant Scheme – Stratford Climate Action – Screening of People’s Emergency Briefing

- **To consider a grant application for the above scheme.**

Background

Notwithstanding that the application form has not been launched yet, the Council has been approached for a grant of £500 for a public viewing of The People’s Emergency Briefing film at Rother Street.

Copies of the application form are made available to members of the Committee.

Options

To approve the grant, suggest an alternative amount or not support.

5. Review of Procedure for the Installation of Dual Purpose and Grit Bins

- **To consider whether the procedure would provide a more efficient and responsive process for dealing with any future requests.**

Background

The Town Council currently considers requests for new dual purpose litter/dog waste bins and grit bins through a formal committee process.

Upon receipt of a request, officers liaise with the relevant Ward Member to assess the need and suitability of the proposed location. The request is then referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

Whilst this process ensures Member oversight, it can result in significant delays. In the most recent case, the period between the initial request and a decision being made was approximately six months. Such delays can create a perception of inefficiency for residents who have submitted requests and are awaiting a response

New Procedure

The Council has previously earmarked Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for the provision and replacement of bins, and sufficient budget is available to meet anticipated demand. Given the relatively low-value and operational nature of these requests, a revised approach to streamline the decision-making process is proposed.

The proposal seeks to delegate authority for the approval of new or replacement dual purpose bins and grit bins to officers, following consultation with the relevant Ward Member and subject to budget availability and any necessary permissions from landowners or other authorities.

This would enable requests to be dealt with more promptly, improve customer service, and reduce unnecessary delays, whilst ensuring expenditure remains within budgets previously approved by the Council.

Options

To approve, not approve or make suggestions to the procedure (Appendix)

Town Clerk