

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES

7 January 2025

Meeting commenced: 6.30pm Meeting ended: 7.55pm

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Fojtik) in the chair

Councillors:

Albon	Lee
Alcock	MacDonald
Cleeve	McNaught Barrow
Coles	Petrovic
I Fradgley	Rashwan
J Fradgley	Rolfe
Harding	Vos
Hunter	

91 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Duck and Smith and accepted for the reasons given.

92 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this point.

93 To receive written requests for dispensation

There were no requests.

94 Public Participation

There was none.

95 Presentation

The planned presentation from Shakespeare Birthplace Trust had been postponed.

96 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor acknowledged the sad passing of Doug Armstrong, noting his contributions through Street Arts to the community. Councillor Rolfe also reflected on Doug's impactful work within the community and expressed how deeply he will be missed.

A moment of silence was observed in his memory.

The Mayor then recognised the residents of the Town who were honoured in the King's New Year's Honours List, extending the Town Council's heartfelt congratulations to them.

97 To approve the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 26 November 2024

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 26 November 2024 be adopted.

98 To adopt the draft Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee Meetings held on 19 November and 3 December 2024

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: That the draft Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee Meetings held on 19 November and 3 December 2024 be adopted.

99 Budget and Precept 2025/26

Councillor J Fradgley now declared a personal interest in relation to Stratford in Bloom grant

Councillors Fojtik and Smith now declared a personal interest in relation to Christmas Lights grant

Councillor Smith as Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee gave an account of the budget review undertaken at the Finance & Audit Committee meeting earlier in the budget setting process, which resulted in the recommendations contained in the Responsible Financial Officer's Report.

Following this, the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) presented her report to the meeting which outlined the budget and took into account the Town Council reserves, the desire of Members to support local initiatives and also to deliver a balanced budget. In addition, the 2025/26 budget had to factor in new operational requirements, including an increase in employers' National Insurance contributions. Employer's rates were increasing from 13.8% to 15% and the threshold lowered from £9,100 to £5,000 per year. This has made it more difficult to forecast the financial implications for the upcoming year.

A balanced budget, with any surplus would reduce the draw on the General Reserve which had seen a fall from £458,644 at the 2015/16 financial year end to £150,836 at the end of 2023/4, which was below the level required by the previous and current policy. Following recent advice from WALC and the external auditor, the general reserve policy was reviewed and revised in December 2024. The general reserve was currently over £84,000 below the *minimum* required level. It was noted that if the 2024/25 actual expenditure aligns with the budgeted expenditure, the General Reserve would fall by a further £30,672 (£30,000 of the £60,672 deficit was planned Community Infrastructure Levy expenditure, which comes from a separate restricted reserve as it cannot be spent for any other purpose).

At the forefront of every member's mind was the desire to keep the Town Council's precept as low as possible but members acknowledged that the rising costs and the desire to support initiatives for the benefit of the Community could not be ignored. There was recognition that the very small increases over previous years in precept had not satisfied the Council's Financial Reserve Policy.

Following consideration:

A £6.97 increase in a Band D precept was proposed and seconded.

Accordingly, it was

- RESOLVED:
- (1) That the 2025/26 budget be adopted.
(Appended A to the Minutes)
 - (2) That a Precept request of £777,979.32 be submitted to the District Council, which is based on the rate charge per Band D household, which was an increase of £6.97 to £53.46.

100 Cemetery Extension Working Group

A meeting of the Group was held on 17 December 2024, to consider the design scheme for the cemetery extension. Following a comprehensive review, the Group had unanimously recommended approval of the design scheme.

Councillor Macdonald expressed concern about the insufficient tree planting in the proposal, which the Town Clerk and Group noted.

Accordingly, it was

- RESOLVED:
- (1) The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2024 be adopted.
 - (2) That the Design Scheme for the extension of the cemetery be approved, with discussions on landscaping re-visited.

101 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for Finance and Audit Committee were submitted for review.

Accordingly, it was

- RESOLVED:
- That the Terms of Reference for Finance and Audit Committee be approved.

102 Council Policies

Health and Safety Policy

Following consideration of the amended policy, it was

RESOLVED: That the Health and Safety Policy be adopted.

103 Town Clerk's Open Report

South Warwickshire Local Plan Consultation

On 12th December 2024, the Joint Cabinet Committee of Stratford and Warwick District Councils had approved the SWLP Preferred Options consultation, which was scheduled for 10th January to 7th March 2025. The draft document was to be published on 10th January alongside the Sustainability Appraisal and appendices.

The consultation would present draft policies and policy directions, outlining approaches to key topics. It would also identify 24 Strategic Growth Locations and 12 potential New Settlement locations, though not all will be allocated in the final plan. Smaller-scale growth locations had not been specified at this stage.

Site assessments from the 2021 and 2023 Call for Sites had also been published.

During the consultation, feedback could be submitted on all aspects of the plan via the online portal. A targeted Call for Sites would also run for specific purposes:

- New Settlement Locations
- Gypsy and Traveller/Travelling Showpeople sites
- Renewable energy sites

Further consultation events would be shared later in January and Councillors were asked how they would like to respond to the Consultation.

Following discussion on the best way to consider the consultation, it was

RESOLVED: That arrangements be made for a drop-in session for Councillors to attend in collaboration with the Town Council's Planning Advisor and its Planning Committee.

104 Public Consultation on Proposed Public Space Protection Order

Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) was seeking public feedback on a proposed Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to address dog fouling. Dog fouling regulations had been in place since 2009 and had been reviewed regularly, with the last review in 2020. The PSPO allowed the SDC to tackle issues negatively affecting public quality of life by restricting certain behaviours in public spaces, which include all areas accessible to the public, such as highways. Minimal changes have been made to the proposed PSPO compared to the 2020 version.

Councillors reported that the subject of the consultation was a popular engagement with residents. They were also critical of the perceived shortcomings in the current arrangements, noting that many residents had expressed dissatisfaction and concerns about how these issues were being managed. Councillors emphasised that SDC needed to address these perceptions and ensure that any future measures reflected the priorities and expectations of the community.

Councillors raised concerns about the quality of the consultation form, considering it to be inadequate. They also emphasised that to effectively support the PSPO, clear evidence of enforcement measures was essential, which was notably lacking in the consultation.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk raise the above concerns as part of the consultation response.

105 Calendar of Meetings

Following a change to the date for the Finance and Audit Committee to 18 December 2025, it was

RESOLVED: That the Calendar of Meetings for 2025/2026 be approved and adopted.

106 Community Infrastructure Levy Funding

In accordance with the Terms of Reference for Council, to receive notification of payments received. It was

RESOLVED: That the payment of £56,789.81 be noted.

107 Mayor and Deputy Mayor Elect 2025/26

It was Proposed by Councillor Cleeve, Seconded by Councillor Harding and unanimously

RESOLVED: That Councillor Hunter be appointed Mayor elect for 2025/26.

The Senior Councillor J Fradgley, confirmed that in accordance with tradition, she had contacted members of the Council to see whether they wished to be nominated for the position of Deputy Mayor Elect.

It was Proposed by Councillor Rolfe, Seconded by Councillor Alcock and unanimously

RESOLVED: That Councillor McNaught Barrow be appointed as the Deputy Mayor elect for the municipal year 2025/26.

108 To receive update reports on Outside Bodies from Councillors

Stratford Town Trust – Lewis McNaught
Fred Winter Centre – Councillor Rashwan
Stratford in Bloom – Councillor J Fradgley (verbal)

109 Verbal Ward Reports to receive notification of important issues, for information purposes only, on issues affecting the town

There was none.

110 Town Clerk's Verbal Report - CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund and the CCLA Local Authorities Property Fund

It was necessary to confirm the following personnel, as a formal Minute CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund and the CCLA Local Authorities Property Fund.

RESOLVED: That Caroline Nash (Town Clerk), Georgina Kerrigan (Responsible Financial Officer), Odette Ghent (Responsible Financial Officer – Maternity cover) be approved as the Town Council's authorising trustees/executive directors for the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund and the CCLA Local Authorities Property Fund.

Date and time of next Meeting

Annual Town Meeting - Thursday 6 March 2025 at 7:30pm
Town Council - Tuesday 1 April 2025 at 6:30pm

Mayor :