

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES

1 April 2025

Meeting commenced: 6.30pm Meeting ended: 8.15pm

Present: The Mayor (Councillor Fojtik) in the chair

Councillors:

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

111 Apologies for Absence

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

112 Declarations of Interest

Minute 123 Councillor Alcock, Coles, J Fradgley, I Fradgley and Petrovic disclosed an interest as member of Stratford-on-Avon District Council. Councillor Rolfe disclosed an interest as a member of Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwickshire County Council.

113 To receive written requests for dispensation

There were no requests.

114 Public Participation

There was none at this point.

115 Presentation

Rachel North, Interim CEO of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, gave a brief presentation outlining the Trust's vision, recent projects, and upcoming activities. She highlighted several initiatives designed to benefit local residents, including free entry to SBT properties for residents, planned conservation tours at Hall's Croft, and community days at Mary Arden's Farm.

Following a Q & A session, the Mayor thanked Rachel for her attendance.

116 Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor announced the retirement of Dave Lawley who had been Open Spaces Operative since 2020. The Council thanked him for his work undertaken and wished him well for his retirement.

117 To approve the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 7 January 2025

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 7 January 2025 be adopted.

118 To adopt the draft Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee Meetings held on 28 January and 4 March 2025

RESOLVED: That the draft Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee Meetings held on 28 January and 4 March 2025 be adopted.

119 To adopt the draft Minutes of the Planning Consultative Committee Meeting held on 4 February 2025

RESOLVED: That the draft Minutes of the Planning Consultative Committee Meeting held on 4 February 2025 be approved.

120 To adopt the draft Minutes of the Community Services and Environment Committee meeting held on 18 February 2025

RESOLVED: That the draft Minutes of the Community Services and Environment Committee held on 18 February 2025 be approved.

121 To adopt the draft Minutes of the Civic, Heritage and Events Committee Meetings held on 21 January and 11 March 2025

RESOLVED: That the draft Minutes of the Civic, Heritage and Events Committee Meetings held on 21 January and 11 March 2025 be approved.

122 To adopt the draft Minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on 11 February 2025

RESOLVED: That the draft Minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on 11 February 2025 be approved.

123 Devolution and its Impact on Town and Parish Councils

Members received an update on the Government's Devolution White Paper published on 16 December 2024, and the subsequent invitation to Warwickshire's principal councils to submit proposals for local government reorganisation.

It was acknowledged that any new structure must establish a single tier of local government, with unitary authorities expected to have a population of at least 500,000 and deliver efficient, high-quality public services. Proposals should also demonstrate strong local engagement and support enhanced neighbourhood empowerment.

Members discussed the potential impact on town and parish councils, noting that they are likely to assume a more significant role within a new unitary framework.

This may include the transfer of assets, services, and responsibilities from the District Council level, with implications for funding, governance, and capacity.

Given the scale and importance of these potential changes, Members agreed that it is vital for the Town Council to proactively monitor and

engage with the process.

Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED: That a Working Group be established to monitor developments and assess the implications of devolution for the Town Council.

(Councillors Alcock, Cleeve, Coles, Macdonald, Petrovic, Rolfe and Smith indicated their willingness to serve on the Group)

124 Highways Community Action Fund

Members received information on the launch of Warwickshire County Council's new £1 million Highways Community Action Fund (HCAF), designed to support local, community-led improvements to roads and streets. The fund aimed to empower town and parish councils, as well as recognised community groups, to identify and deliver highway-related projects that address local needs.

Eligible capital projects include:

- Local highway maintenance (e.g. resurfacing roads and footpaths, improving cycle routes)
- Road safety measures (e.g. speed reduction, signage, school zones, safe routes to school)
- Environmental enhancements (e.g. public realm improvements, gateway signs, way-marking)
- Climate change adaptation (e.g. drainage improvements to address surface water flooding)

It was noted that successful applications must demonstrate community support and include a financial contribution from the applicant. Proposals must deliver a clear benefit to the community, be located within the highway boundary, and align with technical and safety requirements. Warwickshire County Council's highways and road safety engineers would provide support to develop feasible project ideas.

All Town Councillors had been notified in advance and asked to promote this opportunity within their communities to maximise awareness and participation. Councillors requested the Town Clerk to investigate school road safety measures (pavement buddy signs) designed to encourage drivers to reduce their speed and drive carefully near school zones and could be managed on a rotational loan basis, allowing them to be shared among local schools as needed. Councillors indicated that they would be supportive of match funding through the Community Infrastructure Levy.

RESOLVED: That the Council notes the opportunity presented by the Highways Community Action Fund and will consider identifying potential projects and community partners to support any applications.

125 Purchase of land - additional allotment space

Members considered a proposal submitted by Councillor J Fradgley, Chair of the Climate Change Group, on behalf of Net Zero Stratford, requesting that the Council consider the purchase of a parcel of land for potential use as additional allotment space. The proposed purchase price was in the region of £95,000.

It was noted that, should the Council be minded to pursue the acquisition, further exploration would be required, including funding options, site suitability, and long-term management considerations. The Town Clerk had sought initial input from Local Council Consultancy (LCC), who indicated their willingness to carry out a comprehensive feasibility study covering key areas such as funding sources, site use potential, environmental sustainability, and long-term viability.

Members were also informed that there are additional considerations detailed in Exempt Appendix which could impact the viability of the proposal.

Following due consideration, as the Council recognised the value of additional allotment space, it was

RESOLVED: That the Council does not proceed with the proposed land purchase at this time. However, the Council would continue to explore alternative opportunities as they arise and will actively monitor the development of the *Right to Grow* scheme, with a view to identifying future initiatives to expand access to local growing spaces.

126 Town Website

At the invitation of the Mayor, Aaron Corsi (BID Manager) and Judith Layhe-Cook (Contemporary Arts Festival) address the meeting.

Members considered the potential development of a consolidated 'go-to' website for Stratford, aimed at improving access to local event and visitor information. While the need for such a platform was recognised, Members noted the importance of avoiding duplication of existing or planned initiatives and potential funding implications if the Town Council were to undertake it.

It was acknowledged that Stratford BID was progressing plans for a rebranded online platform, and Shakespeare's England has recently confirmed it can now facilitate free event listings, which offers added value to the current digital landscape.

Members expressed concern that launching a separate, Town Council-led website at this time could lead to fragmentation and dilute overall visitor engagement.

RESOLVED: That the Council fully supports the development of a consolidated and effective Stratford website and will work collaboratively with key stakeholders.

127 To receive update reports on Outside Bodies from Councillors

Stratford Town Trust – Sarah Summers
Stratfords of the World – Councillor Cleeve
Two Shires Greenway – Councillor Albon
*Fred Winter Centre – Councillor Rashwan
*Community Builder– Councillor Petrovic
*tabled at the meeting

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

There we no updates.

Councillor Rolfe gave an update on a project which was subsequently withdrawn after the meeting.

129 Date and time of next Meeting

Annual Town Council - Friday 16 May 2025, 12noon

Mayor: