



STRATFORD-UPON-AVON TOWN COUNCIL

CIVIC, HERITAGE AND EVENTS

8 July 2025

Town Clerk's Open Report

Agenda Item 10

1) A review of events so far

- **Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations 2025**

The Volunteers' Reception, the Shakespeare Birthday Parade and associated entertainment, as well as the revised format for the Civic Parade on the Sunday, all took place smoothly and were well-received by participants and the wider public.

As Members may recall, there had been concern last year regarding the future funding of the event in its current form, following notification from the District Council that, due to budget constraints, they would no longer be able to provide financial support. However, following a formal request and a review of the existing partnership arrangements, the District Council reconsidered its position and has now agreed to provide funding for a further two years. It is anticipated that this funding will support the continuation of the event through to 2027.

This Committee had previously approved a proposal to offer enhanced entertainment for the Parade, which was arranged by Slate Events at a cost of £3,500. This was funded in full by the Town Council only.

The entertainment provided included:

- STAMP Youth Choir – Main Stage area
- Irish Dancers from the Mary Felton Dance School – Main Stage area
- Music Anon – Shakespearean singers performing acapella in various locations

- Two Shakespearean actors performing scenes from two plays – roaming format

Councillors may wish to consider continuing this and this can form part of the budget setting process later in the year.

In response to the financial pressures, it was also agreed that the format of the Shakespeare Sunday would be revised. Town Councillors assembled at the Parish Centre immediately before the service and then paraded to Holy Trinity Church. Following the service, Members and guests returned to the Town Hall via the Theatre Gardens and Bancroft Gardens for a civic reception, which included a guest speaker. There were some issues with seating which would be addressed for the next year.

By removing the requirement for full road closures, security personnel, and Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) measures, the Council achieved a cost saving of approximately £4,000.

Members will also recall that the District Council's Safety Advisory Group had raised concerns regarding the use of the Town Council's HVM equipment. While only minor adjustments were possible this year, including increased deployment in specific areas, the Town Council will be reviewing its approach to HVM provision for future events in light of the issues raised. The preferred HVM costs are higher and need to be factored in for future.

- **Commemorating VE Day 80th anniversary**

The 80th anniversary of VE Day on Thursday 8 May was a successful event ran jointly with the Town Trust. 2025 was also the thirty-year anniversary of the Peace Memorial Bandstand on the Recreation Ground and installed by the Royal Engineers and opened in 1995 to mark 50 years of Victory in Europe Day. In honour of this the Town Trust has refurbished the bandstand.

The evening commenced with Bells ringing from Holy Trinity Church, followed by the official re-opening of the bandstand with a performance from the City of Coventry Brass Band.

A short service of commemoration then took place in the Remembrance Garden at 9.00pm, followed by the lighting of the beacon at 9.30pm.

Together, these events provided a fitting and respectful tribute to all those who made the ultimate sacrifice, and to those who served and contributed to securing the freedoms we enjoy today.

- **Mayor Making, Civic Dinner and Civic Sunday**

Both the Mayor Making and the Civic Dinner proceeded smoothly and as planned.

In light of ongoing budget constraints, the format of the Sunday Civic Parade was revised in a similar manner to the Birthday Sunday Service.

This decision was influenced by the limited number of public spectators in recent years and concerns regarding the associated costs of road closures, which had also been highlighted by The Herald.

On this occasion, Councillors assembled at the Town Hall to robe and proceeded on foot via the gardens to Holy Trinity Church, where guests were already seated and past Mayors assembled at the Church Gates to accompany the Mayor into Church.

Following the service, an informal parade took the same route back to the Town Hall. This approach significantly reduced costs associated with planning, road closures, and hostile vehicle mitigation (HVM).

While the revised format received positive feedback from several Town Councillors, it was criticised by two former Mayors — one of whom has since written to the Town Trust suggesting they fund the event in future. No response has been received at the time of writing. Again, there was some issues with seating which would be addressed.

- **Armed Forces Day – 28 June 2025**

This event took place on a Sunny Saturday morning. The event appeared well received there was some criticism of the road not being closed to passing traffic. Grateful thanks are extended to Lisa Campion for stepping in to fulfil the duties of the Civic Officer during his absence due to illness.

To consider remaining events

- **Mayors Bowls Match – 10 July 2025**

Preparations are underway for this year's match. Grateful thanks are again extended to Lisa Campion for stepping in to fulfil the duties of the Civic Officer during his absence due to illness.

- **VJ Day 80th anniversary - 15 August 2025**

Similar arrangement to those which marked the VE Day commemorations in May in the Remembrance Garden have been put in place for this event. Further details to follow.

- **Heritage Weekend – 13 September 2025**

In line with previous years, Councillors are asked to confirm whether they wish to participate in the 2025 event, which is expected to follow a similar format. Councillors are reminded that the success of the day depends on their support, and they are kindly requested to volunteer two hours of their time to help welcome and assist visitors to the Town Hall. All Councillors would be contacted over this in advance.

- **The Mop 11 and 12 October 2025**

The official mop opening will be on Sunday 12 October. Further details to follow.

- **Remembrance Sunday - 9 November 2025**

Arrangements are commencing on this over the summer, and a review of the HVM in place for this event will be under review.

- **2025 Christmas Lights Switch-On Event**

The Town Council has committed a sum of £5,000 in the 2025/26 budget towards the annual Christmas Lights Switch-On event, which is a well-attended and high-profile event in the town's festive calendar. This event is organised by Stratford-upon-Avon BID, who remain the primary financial contributor and lead partner in its delivery.

Update on Event Planning

BID have advised that the footprint of this year's event will differ from the layout used in the past two years. This change is intended to improve traffic flow and enhance the visitor experience, and full details of the revised layout will be shared once finalised.

As joint contract holders with the District Council, the Town Council has a contractual obligation to host a market in Bridge Street as part of the celebrations. In light of this, BID have proposed that the Town Council's £5,000 contribution this year be used to cover the specific logistical costs associated with the market element: Road closures, HVM, Security provision.

Financial Considerations

An estimated cost for these services is currently being prepared and will be reported to the meeting when available. Officers will need to assess whether the £5,000 allocation will fully cover these requirements or whether further funding may be needed.

In previous years, the Town Council's contribution has been pooled alongside other funding sources and recognised as sponsorship of the overall Lights Switch-On event. This year's proposed use of the contribution would specifically support the infrastructure required for the market, fulfilling the Town Council's contractual responsibilities while continuing to support the broader event.

Recommendation

That the Committee note the proposed use of the £5,000 contribution and await the final cost estimate to determine whether it meets contractual and operational requirements for the Town Council's involvement.

- **Mayoral Visit to Ireland**

To consider a request for support for the Mayor's proposed visit to Shannon, County Clare, Ireland, in response to an invitation for a Civic Reception.

Background:

The Town Council has been approached by a former classmate of the Mayor, Councillor Hunter, with a proposal to organise a Civic Reception in Shannon, in recognition of Councillor Hunter's appointment as the first female Irish-born Mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Mayor was born and raised in Shannon before relocating to the UK, and the invitation carries personal and cultural significance.

Proposal:

The Mayor is keen to accept the invitation and undertake the visit on a personal and civic basis. In accordance with protocol, the Mayor has advised that:

- She is willing to personally fund her travel and accommodation costs for the trip.
- A small contribution from the Mayor's Allowance may be used for incidental civic hospitality, such as gifts or refreshments during the reception.
- The visit would be scheduled at a time that avoids disruption to any key civic duties or engagements in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to formally support the Mayor's intention to attend the Civic Reception in Shannon, Co. Clare, on the basis outlined.

Town Clerk