

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council Meeting

Report from Outside Bodies – Stratford Town Trust

Standing Items

- The chair of the Finance, Investment & Property Committee reported the Q1 management accounts are in line with 2025 budget.
- The Board were advised the 2025 STT Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 10 September at 7pm and will be held at the United Reformed Church, Rother Street. Minor amendments to the Trust's M&A will be included as Special Business at the AGM.
- Progress continues with preparation of the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, whose completion remains on target for sign off by the STT Board on 10 December 2025.

New Business

(A) Unplanned Trustee Vacancy – Next Steps

The Board received the news of Gill Cleeve's decision to resign in May 2025 with great dismay, recognising her outstanding qualities as a very valued trustee. They would like to thank her sincerely for her time and commitment over the past few years and wish her well in her new venture.

The recruitment process to fill the 'Unplanned Vacancy' was discussed at the meeting and was approved. The Town Trust has taken legal advice on its obligation to fill the vacancy with a Town Council nominated individual and has been advised that following the Unplanned Vacancy clause in the governing document is the right course of action.

The Town Council have been informed of the Trust's decision to recruit as per the Unplanned Vacancy clause and have asked that Town Councillors are given the opportunity to apply – a request welcomed by the STT Board and already actioned.

Trustees agreed to recruit someone who can bring a similar set of community focussed skills that Gill brought to the Board. In addition, STT would welcome applications from young candidates who bring greater diversity of thinking, candidates who provide a voice from under-represented groups, and/or candidates with a strong interest in environmental issues.

Advertising in print media, social media and the Trust's website will commence from 14 July. The closing date for applications is Sunday 10 August.

(B) Stratford Play House – New Operator

The Board approved the appointment of a new operator for the Stratford Community Venue, formerly known as the Play House, which followed an open and competitive tender process.

The search for a new operator was launched in Feb 2025, with the opportunity advertised and promoted both locally and nationally. The process attracted an exceptional 19 initial expressions of interest and 11 tender submissions. A panel made up of three trustees, the CEO and Head of Finance, plus one independent person with significant experience in live entertainment and venue management, assessed each submission against a single set of clear criteria, including experience, financial sustainability, and – crucially – a commitment to prioritising community access and programming.

The final appointment was made by the full board after reviewing the process and outcome in detail.

It was agreed to appoint a new charity, **Rother Street Arts House**, formed by Catherine Prout, Laura Ashfield, Hattie Human and John-Robert Partridge, to take over and run the venue from September 2025. The team will have a clear remit to deliver a lively and inclusive programme that balances community use with high-quality commercial events.

The appointed team behind Rother Street Arts House brings a proven track record in programming an award-winning live performance venue in Stratford upon Avon. They bring a strong network of commercial contacts and, as part of their commitment, they will support community-run events. They will ensure space and opportunity is available for local voices and groups to be heard and celebrated.

Performance against these commitments will be monitored regularly.