



Committee	Full Council / Agenda No 13
Month	October 2025
Report Title	Town Clerk's Report
Report Author	Town Clerk
Attachments	None

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1. Context

This report provides Council with an overview and summary of Council projects and initiatives since July 2025; this report does not seek to cover all services but is an overview and update on key areas.

This report does not cover subjects or projects already covered elsewhere on the October Full Council agenda or details of all matters covered at Committee meetings; this is a summary report of activities.

Since the July update, Council is aware there continues to be a temporary staffing deficit and until full staffing complement is re-established some activities and projects continue to be postponed or delayed in their delivery.

2. Working Groups

(a) Strategic POS (Skate Park)

The WG has met three times, conducted a user survey (receiving 245 responses) and will be forming a recommendation to the October Assets and Services Committee regarding progression of works.

(b) Climate Change and Environment

At the June Council meeting, it was resolved quarterly updates will be presented to the WG's 'parent committee', Assets and Services. An update was presented in September alongside presentation from St Thomas Moore pupils regarding their climate change initiatives. The next climate change WG meeting will be scheduled for October 2025.

3. Sub-Committees

(a) Budget 26-27

The Sub-Committee has formed a recommended budget for consideration at this Council meeting.

4. Staffing Levels

(a) General

As noted within the July report, some key members of staff have been absent from work due to illnesses, operations or accidents this year.

Absences due to illness continues to impact on office resourcing levels; this is partly mitigated against with an increase in admin hours from other part time staff and redistribution and reprioritisation of tasks and activities. There remains a deficit of 18 hours pw in the office/admin function, negatively impacting across the board on productivity and delivery of projects.

On a shorter-term basis, work has been covered but this is unsustainable, and delays are experienced across administrative /management functions as remaining staff collectively cover the absent employee, to the detriment of their own work. In protecting employee confidentiality, further information is not disclosed within this report.

(b) Casual staff contracts

This is an outstanding piece of work, requiring reissuing of casual contracts to any casual staff. On recommendation from WN, contracts need updating and this work will commence once office staffing levels are restored

5. HR / H&S Work

In January 2025, SWTC entered a new contract with a HR / H&S provider, Worknest (WN), providing an online platform for both HR and H&S management.

A temporary part time HR administrator has been appointed to establish the HR data base, utilising monies in the existing staffing budget and/or staffing EMR (set aside to cover long-term sickness absenteeism). The employee commenced in post September 2025 and is making good progress in establishing the parameters of the database before inputting data.

WN conducted their first onsite H&S visit in April 2025, providing a subsequent report with recommendations for improvement / changes. This work is largely fed into the A&S Committee which received reports in September on matters relating to asbestos and fire risk assessments; further details will be presented to future A&S Committee meetings along with costings for any proposed works.

6. Planning Matters

(a) A S106 summary was presented to the July Full Council meeting and a further update regarding Highway S106 obligations was presented at the September Full Council meeting.

(b) **UTT/25/1568/DFO** | Details following outline application
UTT/21/2509/OP - details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for 233 dwellings with associated works | Land South Of (East Of Griffin Place) Radwinter Road Swards End And Saffron Walden Essex

This application is due for determination by Uttlesford District Council; the determination timeframe has been extended because discussions are ongoing between UDC / the applicant regarding the scheme.

The P&T Committee raised several concerns with the application, including the feasibility of the Church Street lights.

- (c) **S62A/2025/0107** Former Friends School Field, Mount Pleasant Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 3EB Erection of 75no. dwellings with associated infrastructure and landscaping. Provision of playing fields and associated clubhouse.

Permission granted by the Planning Inspectorate. Consideration of adoption of any land will be considered at a future Assets and Services committee meeting.

7. Councillor / Staff Relationships

At the July 2025 Full Council meeting, Council adopted the Councillor and Officer relationships report including the proposed schedule of SWTC tours, acting as an opportunity for councillors to meet staff in their area of work. The tours began in September and took place across three weeks and have now concluded.

Attendance was limited and it would be useful to receive feedback on this initiative to determine any repeat tours and/or consideration of timings of events.

Relationships and working practices between staff and Councillors had been challenging at the start of the calendar year, but under the leadership and guidance of Cllrs Freeman (Leader) and Hawke-Smith (Deputy Leader), outstanding queries and issues have been reconciled, and relationships are on a positive footing leading to greater efficiency, respect and productivity. This work is supported by Cllrs Ahmed (Mayor) and Curtis (Deputy Mayor), who participate in the fortnightly meetings with the Town Clerk and other senior officers as required.

8. Tourism, Cultural and Heritage Workshops

SWTC hosts the partnership meetings where organisations gather to consider tourism, cultural and heritage matters in SW. It serves two primary opportunities, being:

- Development of collaborative opportunities for partners / stakeholders to work collectively on events and activities on a broader scale;
- Opportunity to consider the importance and impact of tourism, culture and heritage in the context of wider economic benefits.

At the next workshop (27.11.25) there will be a focus on how Saffron Walden can be prepared for and represented during and after the Local Government Reorganisation. The workshop will cover the impact of the LGR and how all bodies can be prepared for the anticipated changes.

9. Events and Activities

(a) Remembrance Sunday and Civic Arrangements

Are being progressed in the usual format, timings will be circulated to councillors via email.

(b) Christmas

A copy of the promotional 'Save the Date' is shown below and the full promotional materials will be circulated in due course.



10. Jubilee Hub

- (a) The kitchen launch was a success and the partnership now delivers affordable lunches twice weekly. Attendance has been encouraging with a wide range of demographics attending lunch clubs.
- (b) Delivery of the lunch project has proven time-consuming but it is anticipated that partners will pick up a large part of the resourcing requirements in due course.
- (c) A report will be presented to the October A&S Committee regarding the potential for refurbishment and reletting of the house

11. Market Square Fountain

Works are underway and due to be completed by the end of October.

12. Website

In September, the F&E Committee was presented with a report summarising Council's obligations to comply with the new mandatory requirements of Assertion 10 in the 2025/26 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). This included the need to update the SWTC and TIC websites. Work is progressing well in meeting new mandatory requirements and no issues are anticipated in meeting the new legislative standards.

13. Tourist Information Centre

At the September Full Council meeting it was agreed to establish the TIC hours at 74 per week and to delegate responsibility to officers to appropriately distribute these hours and the shop operating hours – this is being investigated and is a work in progress. Permanent contracted hours are currently 30 hours per week, therefore vacancies will be advertised shortly to fill the staffing deficit.

14. By-Election

Uttlesford District Council has confirmed By-Elections will take place on Thursday 6 November to fill the Shire Ward vacancy. At time of issuing this agenda, candidate details are unknown.

15. Recommendation

To receive and note this report.