Droitwich Spa Town Council

Report of the Chairman of the Resources and Sustainability Committee 2025/2026

As Chairman of the Resources and Sustainability Committee, I am pleased to present this report summarising our key activities and achievements over the past year. (Please note that the title of this committee now includes “Sustainability” to reflect our ongoing commitment to seeking the best total outcomes for our town.)

A full report of all Finance is produced as part of the Budget setting, Estimates and Precept, every January and the report is published on the Town Council website. Income and expenditure to plan is reviewed regularly through the Year and formally recorded at the six months stage of the Municipal Period. Droitwich Spa Town Council maintains a two tier system of auditing with interim and year end Internal professional reviews and a Year End accounting submission to External Auditors.

Finance

I am pleased to advise that through careful management our Reserve position has been maintained to the sector recommended threshold. The Heritage Centre redevelopment project which took place through 2025 to 2026 with completion this Spring, has utilised part of the accumulated Restricted Capital Reserve element. This has put the capital to good use through investment and future proofing of a key Town Council and Local Community asset. The capital expended has maximised the potential for lasting value because the Project also included a Community Legacy Grant secured from Wychavon District of £130,000. This matched funding effectively increased the scope, deliverability and impact of that investment.

The supplementary income for the Town Council remains strong. Valuable revenue is generated through various channels and the Community Hall Reservations contribution is consistently positive. This benefits many Community Groups with the facilities for their organised activities on a regular basis.

The Town Council has maintained fees and commissions charged at the same rates since 2022. There have been no increases. This provides competitive pricing with affordable and good value but also generates sufficient income to cover operating overheads.

The proposed collaboration with Wychavon District Council and the Placeboard for the strategic project to convert the largely unused second floor of St Richards House to provide additional office space will add more supplementary income potential. This will also help future proof our resources as we move towards the Local Government Reorganisation being implemented by central government. it is anticipated this project will proceed through 2026 with potential for up to six useable offices with improved facilities and access.

A small rise to the precept has been resolved in January for the future provision towards the Unitary Council in 2028. This managed outlook is conducive towards affording the Town Council sufficient scope and means to maintain deliverables as well as allowing us to benefit from the opportunities that will arise from the proposed Local Government Reorganisation. Essentially this will allow the Town Council to influence and create more opportunities to be a local Community voice for our residents. The precept increase

represents as rise of £3.47 per annum on last year for a Band D property. (Proportionately the Sector Band D for Droitwich Spa currently stands at £50.68 measured against the National Average equivalent of £92.22) Keeping the increase to an absolute minimum is only made possible due to the ongoing careful financial management by our Officers.

The proactive sourcing and use of Grant Funding opportunities will continue. Recent successful examples include Locality delivering the professional fees element of the Town's Neighbourhood Development Plan in their entirety, CLG providing funding for the Heritage Centre scheme, and the Museums Sector providing funding to supplement the Heritage Volunteers team training and skills investment. I understand that having our own Neighbourhood Development Plan in place (as we will) benefits Droitwich Spa as we move towards a Unitary council.

Governance and Risk - Summary

1. Good Standards maintained for 2025/2026 covering Internal and External Auditors Controls.
2. All Contracts management maintained through full procurement processes.
3. Robust due diligence which has directly identified and safeguarded against examples of fraud and financial impropriety.
4. The latest versions of the NALC Recommended Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were adopted as at December 2025.
5. Museum accreditation Standard is being maintained and updated to reflect this key investment in our Heritage.
6. Strong collaboration and guidance has been maintained through CALC. This is especially important in the lead up to the Local Government Reorganisation.
7. Local Government Reorganisation – formal expressions of interest have been lodged with Wychavon District Council and Worcestershire County Council during 2025 asking for us to take advantage of the opportunities that may arise within local asset transfer / acquisitions and service provisions in the run up to towards 2028.
8. We have an ongoing programme of inspections, maintenance regimes and risk management for all assets (land, parks and premises). For example there is a rolling programme of Arboreal Surveys & Works to ensure that all our trees are safe.

Sustainability - Summary

1. Utility prices have been fixed wherever possible to maintain managed and best value. We make a regular review of Gas and Electricity accounts to ensure costs are below the budgets set.
2. We have a programme of continued improvement for property and land holdings assets. (“A stitch in time saves nine!”)
3. In association with the Community and Amenities Committee we support initiatives for Bio-Diversity and Environmental awareness. Recent examples include the Natural Networks Project and a proposed collaboration with Wychavon District Council and the Placeboard, for Gurneys Lane in 2026.
4. We follow an active recycling policy for Town Council operations . Examples include the repurposing of demolition material from the Heritage Centre project.
5. A full feasibility study looking at Solar PV options for St Richards House was carried out in June 2025. We are presently waiting for Conservation and Planning professional opinion of the identified options.

6. Locality , Business and Commerce – Droitwich Spa Town Council has been leading on high profile Community enhancements in 2025/2026 – for example the launch, campaign implementation and the delivery of the Community Banking Hub within a 10 month's timescale which opened in the precinct on 9th January 2026. This will provide lasting assurance of Financial sector access for the Community and surrounding Rural areas.
7. Economy – Droitwich Spa Town Council provides a proactive contribution to the local economy. Examples include leading on the Friday Weekly Charter and monthly markets, Key Stakeholder engagements with Shopping Centre Management and PlaceBoard. We have built strong working links with Wychavon District Council, Worcestershire County Council, Peer local Councils, Place Board, Voluntary and Charity Sectors, Emergency Services, Business and Education and the Sports Sector throughout the Community.
8. Charitable Enterprise – there have been Dementia Friendly and awareness initiatives. We also maintain continuing financial support for Charitable organisations and Groups mainly through Community and Amenities Committee, and Resources Committee Grants.

I would like to conclude by recognising the work carried out by our very small officer team in making all these things possible. They have ensured we are in a strong position to continue providing much for our residents, and hopefully increase our contribution as we move towards our new role in the coming Unitary Council.

As always, we remain committed to the careful stewardship of the Council's finances and to supporting our town's needs.

Councillor G R Brookes
Chairman of the Sustainability and Resources Committee