



SHREWSBURY BIG TOWN PLAN

Strategy & Action Plan 2026–2028

Shrewsbury Big Town Plan Partnership Board

21st May 2026

Introduction

In March 2026 the Big Town Plan Board agreed a clear strategic direction for 2026–28: to raise the profile and reputation of the Big Town Plan through more visible and consistent communications, to respond confidently to the challenging political, financial and funding context, and to treat the partnership’s collective budget as a structured delivery programme.

Alongside the four original delivery Big Town Plan themes — Vitality, Life and Mix; Nurturing Natural Shrewsbury; Rethinking Movement; Creating a Place for Enterprise; a new theme was added - Safer, Cleaner Shrewsbury.

This document takes forward the agreed strategic direction into a new programme, expanding the five themes into 6 Priority Areas to reflect the joined up activity which is planned, assigning project leads, setting timescales, and confirming Big Town Plan Partnership budgets.

The context the partnership is working in remains challenging:

- Local authority finances are under acute pressure, with non-statutory services at risk and reduced delivery capacity across partners
- National growth funding routes, including UKSPF, remain unavailable to non-mayoral areas, removing a significant source of external support
- Public confidence in town centre planning has been affected by the fallout from the Council-led Gyratory project, and the Big Town Plan continues to be misrepresented in some political messaging
- Phase 1 of the Shrewsbury Movement Strategy is not expected to begin delivery until 2028

Against this backdrop, it is more important than ever to be clear about what the Big Town Plan is: a town-wide, delivery-focused, non-political partnership that exists to align organisations around practical action that improves the town centre’s vitality, accessibility, environment and reputation.

The programme set out in this document is designed to demonstrate that clarity through action — delivering visible improvements, building public trust, and positioning Shrewsbury as a town with genuine momentum.

The total confirmed BTP budget for 2026/27 is £195,000 with a further £51,000 currently allocated across 2027–29. Partner staff time will be leveraged as additional match funding, and the partnership will actively pursue further external grant and contribution funding throughout the period.

It is also important to recognise that not every project in this programme requires direct BTP investment. A significant proportion of the activity set out in the following themes will be taken forward by individual partner organisations through their own budgets and staff capacity. Including these projects in the programme reflects the joined-up nature of the partnership: the Big Town Plan provides the shared strategic framework and coordination, while delivery is shared across whichever partner is best placed to lead. This approach significantly extends the reach of the partnership beyond what the BTP budget alone could achieve.

The plan runs alongside several important milestones in the town’s governance calendar:

Big Town Plan Partnership Agreement renewal	March 2028
BID Ballot	June 2028
STC & SC Elections / General Election	May 2029

Timescales across the programme are aligned to three horizons:

- Quick Wins — deliverable within 3 months
- Short Term — by 31 March 2027
- Medium Term — by 31 March 2028

1. Town Centre Vitality & Economic Growth

Lead Organisation: Shrewsbury BID | Lead Officer: Seb Slater

A thriving town centre is the foundation of everything else the Big Town Plan seeks to achieve. This theme focuses on the health and resilience of Shrewsbury's economy — the businesses that line its streets, the entrepreneurs who want to put down roots here, and the visitors and residents whose spending sustains them.

Shrewsbury's independent offer is one of its greatest differentiators, but it cannot be taken for granted. Vacancy rates, footfall pressures and the continuing shift in consumer behaviour all demand active, coordinated responses. Through this theme, the BID will lead a programme that promotes the town centre as a destination, supports new enterprise, improves the visual quality of the high street environment, and brings partners together around a coherent events calendar.

The WISH Enterprise Festival and linked Startup Programme represent a significant investment in Shrewsbury's economic future — growing local talent, attracting new businesses, and embedding the town in regional enterprise networks. The Shopfront Design Code will provide a practical tool for improving the street scene in a way that respects Shrewsbury's heritage while encouraging high-quality design.

Alongside protecting the independent retail and hospitality offer that defines Shrewsbury today, this theme is also about broadening the town centre economy into new and higher-value sectors. Professional services, digital and creative industries, green economy businesses and knowledge-based enterprise all have the potential to put down roots in Shrewsbury — bringing with them higher-skilled, better-paid jobs, increased daytime footfall, and a more resilient mix of occupiers across the town centre. The WISH Festival and Startup/Retention Programme are deliberately designed to surface and support these sectors, helping retain graduates and skilled workers who might otherwise leave the county, and positioning Shrewsbury as a credible location for ambitious businesses to start, scale and stay.

Project	Outputs	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale	BTP Budget 26/27	BTP Budget 27-29
Shop Local Campaign	Physical and digital shop local campaign	Measurable increase in spend at participating independents; improved consumer awareness of local offer	Seb / BID	Quick win	£4,000	—
Smithfield Riverside meanwhile use	Plan & viability assessment	Vacant site activated with temporary uses; new footfall to an underused part of the town centre	Claire / SC	Short term	—	—
The Square Management Plan	Plan, event programme	The Square functions as a managed, programme-led destination; increased dwell time and return visits	Helen / TC	Short term	—	—
Events Forum	Promotion, collaboration, baton, mentoring, sustainable events	Event organisers collaborate rather than compete; more joined-up town centre calendar	Seb / BID	Short term	£1,000	—
WISH Enterprise Festival	October 2026 Work in Shrewsbury Festival including headline event at Flaxmill and 12	Increased awareness of Shrewsbury as a place to start or grow a business; new connections between	Seb / BID	Short term	£25,000	—

Project	Outputs	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale	BTP Budget 26/27	BTP Budget 27-29
	events throughout the week	entrepreneurs and local support				
WISH Startup/Retention Programme	Toolkit launched at WISH Festival	New businesses launched in Shrewsbury	Seb / BID	Short term	£10,000	—
Shopfront Design Code	Guidance availability & adoption as material consideration	Higher quality shopfront design; guidance adopted in planning decisions	Claire / SC	Short term	£7,000	£3,000

2. Public Realm & Town Centre Experience

Lead Organisation: Shrewsbury Town Council | Lead Officer: Helen Ball

How a town looks and feels has a direct impact on how people behave within it — how long they stay, how often they return, and how much they spend. This theme addresses the physical experience of being in Shrewsbury's town centre.

From seasonal planting to accessibility improvements, from tackling graffiti to installing public art, this theme covers both the quick wins that show the town is cared for and the longer-term structural changes that will make Shrewsbury more welcoming and navigable. Key to effective delivery will be a new Public Realm Forum led by the Town Council, which will bring partners together to align on priorities and avoid duplication.

The New Spaces & Places Guide will provide a framework for how underused and transitional spaces can be brought to life. The Abbey Foregate green space project, with a target of 1,082m² of improved space and a 20% footfall increase from a baseline of 281,000, is the headline capital project for this theme.

Project	Outputs	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale	BTP Budget 26/27	BTP Budget 27-29
New Public Realm Forum	Input into New Spaces & Places	Partners aligned on priorities for public space; community voice embedded in design decisions	Helen / TC	Short term	—	—
New Spaces & Places Guide	Guidance & framework for reusing spaces	Underused spaces brought into active use with consistent framework; clearer accountability for maintenance	Claire / SC	Medium term	—	£5,000
Town Walkabouts	Coordinated walkarounds with partners	Issues identified and escalated faster	Helen / TC	Quick win	—	—
Wayfinding	Cost, maintenance &	Visitors navigate more confidently; increased footfall to secondary streets and attractions	Seb / BID	Short term	—	—

Project	Outputs	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale	BTP Budget 26/27	BTP Budget 27-29
	extension strategy					
Improving Accessibility	Forum, input into MPSS & regeneration schemes	Reduced barriers for disabled visitors and families; consistent accessibility improvements	Claire / SC	Medium term	—	£15,000
Improving Gateways	Programmes aligned to MPSS	First impressions of the town centre improved; stronger sense of arrival at key entry points	Claire / SC	Medium term	—	—
Seasonal Planting	Planting schemes across town centre	Town centre feels more attractive and cared-for; positive media coverage of the environment	Helen / TC	Quick win	—	—
Graffiti / Litter response	Alignment with STC core activity	Faster response times to environmental issues; sustained improvement in cleanliness perception	Helen / TC	Quick win	—	—
Abbey Foregate	Parklets, trialling reallocation of space for public realm and businesses	New green space actively used by residents and visitors; measurable footfall increase achieved	Seb / BID	Quick win	£38,000 (UKSPF)	—

3. Youth, Skills & Inclusion

Lead Organisation: Shrewsbury Town Council | Lead Officer: Clare Turner

Shrewsbury's long-term vitality depends on its ability to retain and inspire the next generation. This theme places young people at the heart of the Big Town Plan — not as a future concern, but as an active, present constituency whose voice and energy can shape the town right now.

Building on existing work around youth strategy development, this theme creates structured pathways for young people to influence town centre decisions, access enterprise and employment opportunities, and feel genuine ownership of Shrewsbury as a place. The Youth Advisory Panel will provide a formal link between young people and the Big Town Plan Board.

This theme connects with the broader skills agenda through links to the WISH Festival, the Hive and the Million Hours programme, and addresses community safety concerns directly through the Knife Angel installation.

Project	Outputs	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale	BTP Budget 26/27	BTP Budget 27-29
Youth Advisory Panel	Panel established, linked to BTP	Young people's views shape decisions; improved trust between young people and civic institutions	Clare Turner / TC	Short term	—	—
Town Centre Youth Led Projects & Events	Youth-led activity programme	Young people feel ownership of the town centre; increased positive youth presence in public spaces	Clare Turner / TC	Short term	—	—
Skills for the Future	Project linked to Million Hours and WISH Festival	Young people better connected to local employment and enterprise pathways; reduced outward talent migration	Seb / BID	Short term	£5,000	£5,000
Knife Angel	Installation and community engagement	Increased community conversation around violence and safety; young people engaged in a meaningful civic moment	Clare Turner / TC	Quick win	—	—

4. Connectivity, Transport & Movement

Lead Organisation: Shropshire Council | Lead Officer: Claire Evans

How people get to and move around Shrewsbury has a fundamental impact on the health of the town centre. The partnership has a particular role to play here as an advocate and coordinator — influencing decisions taken by the highways authority, amplifying the Shrewsbury Moves brand, and making it easier for people to choose sustainable and active travel options.

With Phase 1 of the Shrewsbury Movement Strategy not expected to begin delivery until 2028, the focus of this theme in the near term is on demonstrating what's possible through smaller, practical projects — e-bikes, e-cargo, cycle pods and active travel promotion — while building the evidence base and public support for more substantial investment to follow.

Project	Outputs	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale	BTP Budget 26/27	BTP Budget 27-29
Public Transport Messaging & Branding	Moves brand on vehicles, CityMapper co-brand	Residents and visitors better informed about sustainable options; increased bus and rail use	Seb / BID	Short term	—	—
Moves Leadership Group	TOR participation, critical friend role	BTP acts as effective advocate with highways authority; transport decisions better reflect town centre needs	Claire / SC	Short term	—	—
Shrewsbury Moves E-bikes, E-cargo, Cycle Pods	Continuation and growth of Flagship Big Town Plan Active Travel projects	Increased uptake of bike scheme (target 500 bikes), E-cargo and Cycle Pods	Seb / BID	Short term	£25,000	—
Shrewsbury Moves and Active Travel Campaigns	Campaign collateral and activity	Behaviour change around travel choices; stronger Shrewsbury Moves brand recognition	Seb / BID	Short term	£5,000	—
Telraam & Google Map Monitors	Community Telraam scheme	Reliable data on movement patterns; strengthened evidence base for transport investment	Seb / BID	Short term	£5,000	—
Expanding High Street Vehicle Closures	TRO, event programming	More people-friendly streets during key periods; increased dwell time and spend in pedestrianised areas	Claire / SC	Short term	—	—

5. Culture, Heritage & Tourism

Lead Organisation: Shrewsbury BID | Lead Officer: Seb Slater

Shrewsbury's heritage is among its greatest assets — and among its most underexploited. This theme seeks to build a more coherent, confident cultural identity for the town: one that connects heritage assets, supports the visitor economy, and positions Shrewsbury more effectively in regional and national conversations about culture and place.

Shrewsbury's entry into Britain's Town of Culture competition is a significant opportunity. An activation, trails and animation programme will draw visitors through the town, while the Events Organisers Forum builds the collaborative relationships that make for a stronger year-round cultural calendar. The Town of Culture expression of interest, led by the Town Council, has already brought cultural organisations together in a way the town has not seen for some time — and if Shrewsbury progresses to the next round, the benefits to profile, partnerships and funding will be substantial. Even if the bid does not progress, the momentum generated provides a strong foundation on which to build our own Cultural Strategy.

The longer-term development of a Cultural Strategy for Shrewsbury represents the most substantial ambition of this theme — work that could unlock significant external funding and permanently raise the town's profile. A potential part-time post to support culture and heritage delivery would provide the capacity the partnership currently lacks.

Project	Outputs	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale	BTP Budget 26/27	BTP Budget 27-29
Activations, Trails & Animation	Events, marketing collateral	Visitors stay longer and spend more; heritage assets better promoted and connected into a coherent visitor experience	Seb / BID	Short term	£20,000	—
Murals and Public Art	Installations across town centre	Town centre more distinctive and shareable; local artists supported and cultural identity strengthened	Seb / BID	Short term	£10,000	—
Shrewsbury Town of Culture / Cultural Strategy	Report and strategy development	Shrewsbury has an agreed cultural vision with cross-partner buy-in; stronger pipeline for funding and regional profile	TBC	Medium term	—	£25,000

6. Community Safety & Wellbeing

Lead Organisation: Shrewsbury Town Council / Team Shrewsbury | Lead Officer: Ruth Jones

A safe, welcoming town centre is not just a quality-of-life issue — it is a precondition for economic growth. Businesses cannot thrive, and visitors will not return, if the town feels unsafe or unwelcoming. This theme addresses both the reality and the perception of safety in Shrewsbury's public spaces.

Shrewsbury Town Council's decision to double its budget and take on expanded delivery of street cleaning is a significant step forward for this theme. The BTP's role is to support, complement and amplify that investment — coordinating the partnership response to antisocial behaviour, supporting a high-quality evening economy, and helping businesses navigate the requirements of Martyn's Law.

Project	Outputs	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale	BTP Budget 26/27	BTP Budget 27-29
Strengthen Partnership Working on ASB and within Team Shrewsbury	Coordinated response protocols	Improved partnership working, faster coordinated response to antisocial behaviour; improved perceptions of safety from public	Ruth / TC	Short term	—	—
Improve lighting	Installations across town centre	Improved perceptions of safety, particularly for women and evening visitors; reduced crime in targeted areas	Helen / TC	Medium term	—	—
Support safe evening economy	Purple Flag programme	Purple Flag status maintained or achieved; night-time economy grows sustainably with fewer incidents	Cath / BID	Short term	—	—
Martyn's Law	Standalone report & input into New Spaces & Places	Venues and event organisers compliant and better prepared; reduced liability and increased public confidence	Ruth / TC	Short term	—	—

Partnership Communications & Governance

The effectiveness of this plan depends entirely on the quality of the partnership that delivers it. Strong governance, clear accountability, good communication and a shared sense of purpose are not optional extras — they are the infrastructure on which everything else rests.

The communications and branding programme is particularly important in the current context. The board paper agreed earlier this year was clear that the Big Town Plan must raise its profile and clearly distinguish itself from unrelated schemes. A dedicated comms resource, shared comms strategy, consistent brand usage, and a proactive awards and recognition programme will all contribute to building public trust and confidence in the partnership and our work.

As a core principle of this approach, all activity funded by the Big Town Plan Partnership will be promoted as such, with the partnership clearly credited in communications and marketing materials. Any associated press releases and media coverage will carry quotes from BTP partners, ensuring the collective nature of the partnership is visible in how its work is reported.

Project	Outputs	Outcomes	Lead	Timescale	BTP Budget 26/27	BTP Budget 27-29
Shared comms strategy	Cross-partner communications plan	Partners speak with a more consistent voice; public awareness of the BTP and its achievements increased	All	Short term	—	—
BTP brand usage	Brand guidelines document	Consistent use of BTP brand across all partners; stronger collective identity and recognition	Seb / BID	Short term	—	—
Dashboard and performance report	Quarterly reporting to board	Board has clear visibility of progress; accountability improved and external credibility strengthened	Seb / BID	Short term	£5,000	—
Funding opportunities	Identification & applications made	External funding secured to supplement BTP budget; projects de-risked from reliance on core levy income	Claire / SC	Short term	—	—
Awards & Recognition	Identification & applications made	Shrewsbury and BTP partners recognised nationally; profile raised with funders and policymakers	Seb / BID	Short term	—	—
Renewing partnership agreement	New partnership agreement 2028/29	Renewed agreement provides stability and shared direction; BID ballot supported by strong partner relationships	Claire / SC	Medium term	—	£3,000
Bi-monthly board meetings	Regular board convening	Partners maintain momentum and accountability; decisions made collaboratively with good information	Dave / Chair	Ongoing	—	—
BTP Communications Programme	Communications activity and content with dedicated 2 days a week resource.	Residents and businesses feel connected to the BTP; increased civic pride and participation	Seb / BID	Ongoing	£20,000	—
IT & Website	Website and digital infrastructure	BTP digital presence is current, accessible and supports delivery communications	Seb / BID	Ongoing	£5,000	£5,000
Risk Register	Available for review at BTP board meetings	Risks to delivery identified early and actively managed; board meetings more focused and less reactive	Helen / STC	Ongoing	—	—

Budget Summary

The total confirmed Big Town Plan budget for 2026/27 is £195,000, with a further £74,000 allocated for 2027–29. The table below summarises allocated BTP budget by theme.

Theme	BTP Budget 26/27	BTP Budget 27-29
Town Centre Vitality & Economic Growth	£47,000	£3,000
Public Realm & Town Centre Experience	£38,000	£20,000
Youth, Skills & Inclusion	£5,000	£5,000
Connectivity, Transport & Movement	£35,000	£15,000
Culture, Heritage & Tourism	£30,000	£25,000
Community Safety & Wellbeing	—	—
Big Town Plan Communications & Governance	£30,000	£8,000
Contingency	£10,000	
Total	£195,000	£76,000
<i>Remaining</i>		<i>£74,000</i>