

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
FULL COUNCIL
Date 28 SEPTEMBER 2026

Officer: Helen Ball (Town Clerk)

FOOD RESILIENCE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (2026–2029)

1. Purpose of the Report

- (i) To note that this subject has been considered by the Communities & Environment Committee which resulted in bids to the Cost of Living Fund and Community Grants Fund
- (ii) To note that this report is an updated report reflecting this summer's extreme events that are likely to place an even greater urgency to addressing food resilience
- (iii) To consider whether Shrewsbury Town Council should support (financially and strategically) the development of a Food Resilience Strategy and Action Plan for Shrewsbury, led in partnership with the Shropshire Good Food Partnership, and to determine the scope, outcomes, and resource implications of a proposed three-year programme.

2. Background

The Town Council has continued to have conversations with The Shropshire Good Food Partnership regarding the need to develop a Food Resilience Strategy and Action Plan for Shrewsbury, which could contribute to a wider Shropshire-level approach. With past lessons from the COVID pandemic, the subsequent panic buying, global instability from places like Ukraine & Iran which have seen fuel prices rise exponentially to this summer that has seen one of the hottest, driest summers on records resulting in lost food production, the need to understand who feeds Shrewsbury is becoming more of a necessity.

Food resilience planning is now widely adopted across the UK, with local authorities increasingly expected to play a role in strengthening local food systems, supply chains, and community resilience in light of increasing challenges to the Food Chain including Weather and Geopolitical Issues internationally.

3. Strategic Context

3.1 Shrewsbury Town Council priorities

This proposal aligns with the Town Council's role in:

- Community leadership

- Supporting local economic activity
- Promoting health and wellbeing
- Responding to climate and environmental challenges

3.2 The Big Town Plan

The Big Town Plan identifies priorities including Supporting local enterprise, Improving health and wellbeing, Strengthening community resilience.

A Food Resilience Strategy provides a mechanism to deliver these priorities, particularly through strengthening the local food economy, improving access to affordable, healthy food and supporting community-led initiatives.

3.3 Shropshire Council strategies

The proposal aligns with Shropshire Council priorities, including:

- Public health and inequalities
- Climate and environmental strategies
- Economic growth and rural economy

A Shrewsbury-based plan could:

- Act as a pilot or demonstrator
- Inform a wider county food resilience framework

3.4 National policy context

National policy increasingly highlights the importance of food system resilience, the vulnerability of global supply chains and the need for local and regional responses.

Government policy recognises that local food systems play a key role in:

- Economic stability
- Public health
- Environmental sustainability

3.5 Leadership and Advocacy Role of the Town Council

In addition to its role as a funder and partner, Shrewsbury Town Council is well placed to act as a local leader and advocate for strengthening food resilience across Shropshire.

This includes:

- Encouraging other Town and Parish Councils to engage with the food resilience agenda, participate in partnership activity and develop complementary local initiatives.

- Working collaboratively with Shropshire Council officers across Public health, Highways and transport (including access to food and distribution), Economic growth and Community services.
- Supporting a joined-up, cross-sector approach to food resilience
- Engaging with Julia Buckley to raise awareness with Government of local impacts, Advocate for national funding and policy support and ensure local challenges are reflected in national decision-making.

4. Rationale – Why this matters now

4.1 Global instability and food system risk

Recent geopolitical instability, including the conflict involving Iran, highlights the fragility of global food supply chains.

Key risks include:

- Disruption to international shipping routes
- Rising fuel and energy costs
- Increased fertiliser and production costs
- Food price inflation

These pressures are already affecting household food affordability, business costs and supply chain stability

4.2 Local implications for Shrewsbury

These global pressures translate locally into:

- Increased cost of living
- Greater demand for food support services
- Financial pressures on local businesses
- Increased risks for local producers

This reinforces the need for Stronger local resilience within a global food system.

4.3 Lessons from recent shocks

Events such as COVID-19 and recent geopolitical tensions demonstrate:

- The vulnerability of “just-in-time” supply chains

- The importance of local coordination and capacity
- The value of strong local partnerships

4.4 Summer 2026

England & Wales - England and Wales have seen their driest July since records began 190 years ago, according to the Met Office, and a drought has been declared across large parts of the country.

The Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) thinktank has said the UK's cereals and oilseed harvest could be 2.5 million tonnes less than earlier forecasts. The harvest of barley, oats and rapeseed, which are used in beer, breakfast cereals and vegetable oil, is estimated to drop to just 19.5 million tonnes, the worst since records began in 1984.

That is compared with a previous low of 19.8 million tonnes in 2020, and would cost farmers £390m in lost revenue, the ECIU estimated.

The crops are also used for feeding livestock, making them crucial across most of the food chain.

Europe - The severe heatwaves, droughts, and megafires in France and Spain are shrinking European crop harvests, damaging regional logistics networks, and threatening food security. England relies heavily on European imports for fresh produce, cereals, and staple goods; these climate disasters will inevitably drive up supermarket import costs and add further upward pressure on consumer grocery inflation later in the year.

5. What is a Food Resilience Strategy and Action Plan?

A Food Resilience Strategy is a whole-system assessment of food supply, access and risk. This allows for a shared vision and priorities for the town across all stakeholders and partners with the development of a delivery-focused action plan, including short-term actions, medium-term projects as well as plans for long-term system change. The emphasis is very much on practical delivery, not just strategy.

6. Examples from Elsewhere

6.1 Bishops Castle Community Food Resilience Strategy (Shropshire)

Close to home Bishops Castle has established a partnership-led approach to delivering a Strategy and Action Plan with strong Town Council involvement, focusing on local supply chains and community resilience.

Outcomes have included:

- Strengthened local networks
- Increased focus on local production and supply
- Integration with climate and community priorities

6.2 Oxfordshire Food Strategy

In Oxfordshire a county-wide approach has supported local action plans through a multi-agency partnership model, integrating health, economy and environment.

Outcomes:

- Improved coordination
- Stronger funding bids
- Policy integration

6.3 National best practice

Across the UK, food strategies are increasingly partnership-led, action-focused and used to secure funding and deliver projects.

The Shropshire Good Food Partnership have been pivotal in the development of ***Civil Food Resilience in practice Capacity-building for resilience across the Sustainable Food Places network*** shaping a framework to deliver Food Resilience Strategies.

https://www.sustainablefoodplaces.org/resources/Civil_Food_Resilience_in_practice.pdf

This document has ignited interest from other Town Councils further afield recognising the importance of food resilience.

6.4 Key learning

- Partnership ownership is essential
- Action plans must be prioritised and deliverable
- The greatest value comes from implementation, not documentation

7. Expected Outcomes

7.1 For the Town

- Improved resilience to supply shocks
- Better coordination of food provision
- Support for vulnerable residents
- Stronger local food economy

7.2 For the Town Council

- Delivery of Big Town Plan priorities
- Ability to influence without full delivery burden
- Increased external funding opportunities

- Stronger partnerships

7.3 Strategic and Advocacy Outcomes

- Enhanced leadership role within Shropshire
- Greater collaboration across Town and Parish Councils
- Improved alignment with county and national policy
- Increased influence with decision-makers

8. Action Plan for Development

See the appendix to this document

9. Financial Implications

9.1 Indicative 3-year budget

Phase Activity	Estimated Cost
Year 1 Strategy & Action Plan	£10,000 – £20,000
Year 2 Capacity & early delivery	£10,000 – £20,000
Year 3 Project development support	£10,000 – £20,000
Total	£30,000 – £60,000

9.2 Funding approach

By the Town Council providing seed funding, this could open up opportunities for additional funding from Shropshire Council, External grants, and other partner contributions.

10. Risks of Doing Nothing

In addition to the risks associated with delivering the project, there are also significant risks associated with not progressing a Food Resilience Strategy and Action Plan.

10.1. Increased vulnerability to external shocks

Without a coordinated local approach, Shrewsbury remains highly exposed to:

- Global supply chain disruption
- Food price inflation
- Fuel and production cost increases

This is particularly relevant in light of ongoing geopolitical instability, including conflict in the Middle East, which may:

- Disrupt supply routes
- Increase input costs across the food system
- Lead to further volatility in food availability and pricing

10.2. Growing pressure on local communities and services

Failure to act may result in:

- Increased demand for food banks and emergency provision
- Reduced ability to coordinate support for vulnerable residents
- Greater strain on voluntary and community sector organisations

10.3. Missed opportunities for external funding

Without a clear strategy and action plan, Shrewsbury may be less able to:

- Compete for national and regional funding
- Demonstrate readiness and partnership capacity
- Develop a pipeline of investable projects

This could result in lost investment into the town.

10.4. Fragmented and uncoordinated local activity

Existing activity across Community groups, Businesses and the Public sector organisations may remain disconnected, duplicated and less effective. That lack of coordination reduces overall impact and efficiency.

10.5. Weaker local economy

Without intervention local producers and suppliers may struggle to compete, opportunities to strengthen local supply chains may be missed and the economic benefits of local food systems may not be realised.

10.6. Reduced influence in county and national policy

If Shrewsbury does not take a proactive role:

- It may have limited influence over any emerging Shropshire-wide strategies
- Opportunities to shape policy and investment priorities may be lost
- The town's needs may be underrepresented at a wider level

10.7. Failure to deliver existing strategic priorities

Without a structured approach, delivery of Big Town Plan objectives, the Town Council Corporate Priorities around health and wellbeing outcomes and Climate and sustainability goals may be slower, less coordinated and less impactful.

11. Officer Capacity

The development of a Food Resilience Strategy relies on specialist skills which the Town Council does not have but we are fortunate are within Shropshire. There will be a minimal level of intervention by the Senior Management Team more around advocacy and achieving outcomes than practicality.

Outcomes will likely include:

- A delivery-focused action plan
- Identification of lead partners
- Evidence of match funding
- Clear governance arrangements
- Annual reporting to the Town Council

12. Conclusion

The case for developing a Food Resilience Strategy is strengthened by:

- Huge shifts in seasonal activity
- Increasing global instability
- Rising cost-of-living pressures
- National policy direction

This proposal provides an opportunity to:

- Strengthen Shrewsbury's resilience
- Support local communities and businesses
- Influence wider county strategy

In addition, the Town Council has an important role as a civic leader and advocate, helping to:

- Promote coordinated action across Shropshire
- Influence policy and funding
- Represent local needs at a national level

The success of this approach will depend on ensuring the strategy leads to funded, deliverable actions—not simply a standalone document.

RESOLVED**That:**

- 1. The Council works with the Shrewsbury Good Food Partnership to develop a Shrewsbury Food Resilience Strategy and Action Plan**
- 2. That £20,000 be allocated as a budget to meet the delivery of an action plan**
- 3. That Officers discuss this process with senior officers of other Town Councils and Shropshire Council to see how this might add into a wider resilience plan.**