Agenda No

5(ii)

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
14 OCTOBER 2026

Officer: Helen Ball (Town Clerk)

UPDATE ON MILLION HOURS YOUTH PROJECT

Continuing and Extending the Benefit of the Project

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the Shrewsbury Town-Centre Million Hours Youth Project, consider the evidence emerging from the 2026 programme and recommend a proportionate approach to retaining the benefits of the project beyond the initial funded period.

The report also considers how the Town Council can use the investment and relationships developed through Million Hours to strengthen its wider approach to youth engagement, community safety and early intervention.

2. Recommendation

Council is recommended to:

1. Approve the continuation of the Town Ranger youth-engagement provision on a reduced basis of Monday to Thursday, 16.00–18.00, with two Rangers on duty, at a maximum annual cost of £17,716 plus VAT based on the current quoted rate of £21.50 per operational hour.
2. Agree that this continuation should be funded from existing Youth Services budget.
3. Retain detached youth engagement as a core feature of the Council's youth provision, recognising that many of the young people most in need of support will not necessarily access conventional building-based youth services.
4. Develop a more integrated approach bringing together the Council's Youth Service, Town Rangers and other existing community-safety and youth resources, using the relationships and intelligence developed through the Million Hours project.
5. Continue to use young people's views to determine the activities, locations and times that are most effective, with resources directed towards activities that generate repeat engagement.

6. Introduce a consistent monitoring framework covering reach, repeat engagement, safeguarding, referrals, activities, locations, outcomes and community-safety indicators.
7. Receive an interim report and final evaluation on the continuation programme, including expenditure, participation, outcomes, learning and value for money.

3. Background

Shrewsbury Town Council secured £96,260 from the National Lottery Million Hours Fund to develop a 26-week youth-engagement programme to address youth anti-social behaviour in the Quarry & Coton Hill Ward which had been identified by the Fund as a target area.

The programme was designed around young people aged principally 12–18 and focused on the town centre, Quarry and Coton Hill, particularly young people at risk of ASB or exploitation.

The programme brought together detached youth work, Town Ranger engagement, organised activities, targeted early intervention and referrals.

This approach has demonstrated the value of combining positive activities with visible, trusted adults who are already operating within the town environment.

4. What Has Been Achieved?

The evidence available to the Council demonstrates substantial activity and a number of emerging benefits.

Approximately 1,500 positive youth interactions have been reported in an average week. However, this should not be interpreted as 1,500 individual young people; a consistent methodology for measuring unique participants and repeat contacts is required.

There has been evidence of:

- strong participation in free activities;
- repeat attendance;
- young people developing relationships with Rangers and youth workers;
- improved opportunities for social connection;
- young people approaching trusted adults for advice;
- safeguarding concerns being identified at an earlier stage;
- referrals and partner intervention;
- better coordination between agencies;
- a visible town-centre youth presence;

- operationally reported reductions in ASB during delivery.

The project has therefore achieved more than simply providing activities. It has established a network of relationships and intelligence around young people in the town centre.

5. Why Continuation Matters

The Council should consider the Million Hours project as an investment in infrastructure as well as activity.

The most valuable element may not be any individual football, gaming, arts or wellbeing session. It is the relationship that develops when a young person repeatedly encounters the same trusted adults in places they already use.

Stopping the programme completely risks losing:

- established relationships;
- local knowledge;
- intelligence about emerging issues;
- links between young people and the Council;
- established partnership arrangements;
- confidence amongst young people and partners.

Re-establishing these relationships later would take time and may not achieve the same level of trust.

The proposed continuation therefore provides a relatively modest means of retaining this capacity while allowing the Council to determine how it can be integrated into its wider youth provision.

6. A Different Approach to Continuation

The Town Council should not seek simply to reproduce the original Million Hours programme at a smaller scale.

Instead, the continuation should provide a platform for a more integrated Town Council youth-engagement model.

The proposed two-hour Ranger provision should become one element of a wider approach involving:

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Town Rangers

Rangers provide an established presence in the town centre and countryside and already have relationships with young people.

Their role in this programme can provide the bridge between:

- detached engagement;
- community safety;
- positive activities;
- intelligence;
- safeguarding;
- referral.

Youth Service

The Town Council's Youth Service can provide the professional youth-work infrastructure around the Ranger engagement.

The Youth Service can help turn informal contacts into sustained engagement and progression, including linking young people to activities, advice, skills development and other services.

Young people

The Million Hours experience demonstrates the importance of asking young people what they want rather than designing provision solely around what adults believe they need.

Youth consultation should therefore become a continuing feature of the programme.

Existing venues and partners

The programme has already demonstrated that youth provision does not have to depend upon one building.

The Council should continue to make use of existing community venues and partnerships, including schools, community organisations and other facilities, using different locations according to need.

7. From a Project to a Youth Engagement Network

The opportunity now exists to move from a time-limited project to a more sustainable **t**own-wide youth engagement network.

This could operate on three levels:

Level 1 – Visibility

Rangers and youth workers are visible in the places where young people gather.

Level 2 – Engagement

Young people are offered positive activities, conversation, advice and opportunities to participate.

Level 3 – Progression

Where a young person needs more support, the relationship provides a route into the Youth Service, safeguarding, education, health, community organisations or other specialist provision.

This creates a continuum from informal contact through to targeted intervention.

8. Making Better Use of Existing Resources

The Council has a number of existing resources which, when considered collectively, provide significantly more capacity than the Million Hours project alone.

The continuation should therefore be designed around coordination rather than creating additional standalone provision.

This could include:

- coordinating Town Ranger and Youth Service deployment;
- using existing youth-service relationships;
- sharing intelligence appropriately between relevant staff and partners;
- aligning activities with existing Council events and facilities;
- using community venues already available to the Council and its partners;
- linking young people into existing sports, arts, cultural and recreational opportunities;
- using existing communications channels to promote activities;
- involving young people in deciding where resources should be concentrated;
- linking youth engagement with the Council's wider community-development ambitions.

- working within the remits of the Local Youth Partnerships set up as part of Shropshire Council's Youth Transformation Fund and their intentions to move to an earlier intervention model.
- working with other pilot projects including the Place Universal Offer

The objective should be to make every contact with a young person an opportunity to connect them to something positive.

9. The Importance of the 16.00–18.00 Period

The proposed continuation focuses resources between 16.00 and 18.00, Monday to Thursday.

This represents the period immediately after school and college when young people are likely to be present in the town centre.

It also provides a useful complement to the Rangers' existing 10.00–16.00 operational hours.

The proposal therefore adds four Ranger staff-hours per day and 16 staff-hours per week rather than requiring a new standalone service.

At the quoted rate, the net annual cost would be £17,716 plus VAT, based on 824 chargeable hours after excluding Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

10. Measuring What Matters

One of the lessons from the first phase is that activity numbers alone are not sufficient.

The continuation should therefore establish a simple but robust performance framework.

The Council should monitor:

Area	**Proposed measure**
Reach	Unique young people engaged
Engagement	Total interactions and repeat contacts
Participation	Attendance by activity
Geography	Locations and identified hotspots
Relationships	Evidence of repeat engagement and young people seeking support
Safeguarding	Concerns, referrals and interventions

Area	Proposed measure
Outcomes	Confidence, belonging, wellbeing and skills
Community safety	ASB trends and hotspot intelligence
Partnerships	Referrals and partner interventions
Value	Cost per hour, interaction, participant and evidenced outcome

The source material specifically identifies the need to improve the distinction between unique participants and repeat contacts and to introduce consistent participation recording.

11. Strengthening the Evidence Base

The Council should also be cautious about attributing reductions in ASB solely to the Million Hours project.

Operational reporting has recorded a measurable reduction in ASB, but the independent West Mercia Police comparison remains important in establishing the wider context.

The continuation period should therefore be used to establish a stronger baseline.

This should include:

- consistent weekly data;
- hotspot analysis;
- participant data;
- anonymised case studies;
- partner feedback;
- safeguarding and referral outcomes;
- West Mercia Police comparative information.

This will allow the Council to understand not simply how much activity took place, but what difference the activity made.

12. Extending the Benefit Beyond the Original Project

The Million Hours funding should be viewed as an opportunity to establish a sustainable model rather than simply a project that ends when the external funding ends.

There are several opportunities to extend its benefit.

12.1 Youth Rangers as a bridge into the Youth Service

Town Rangers can identify young people who would benefit from more sustained youth work and provide a warm handover to Youth Service colleagues.

12.2 Positive activities as a route to progression

Activities should increasingly provide progression opportunities rather than being isolated sessions.

For example, sport, arts, music, cooking and creative activities could lead to volunteering, qualifications, work experience or participation in wider community projects.

12.3 Young people as contributors

Young people involved in the project could be given opportunities to shape future provision and contribute to the development of the town.

This would move the model from providing activities for young people to developing opportunities with young people.

12.4 Stronger community partnerships

The existing network of partners should be retained and developed so that the Council is not expected to provide every activity itself.

The Town Council can increasingly act as a coordinator and connector, using its relationships, facilities and staff to bring together the resources that already exist within the town.

13. Financial Considerations

The proposed continuation represents a significantly reduced level of provision compared with the original Million Hours programme.

The current costing provides for:

824 annual chargeable Ranger hours × £21.50 = £17,716 plus VAT.

The proposed expenditure should be considered separately from the core Ranger service and should be funded from the Town Council's Youth Services budget.

The continuation should also be regarded as a defined programme with clear monitoring, rather than an open-ended commitment.

14. Governance and Review

The continuation should be approved initially as a defined delivery phase.

A review should be undertaken at an agreed midpoint, with a final evaluation at the end of the period.

The review should report to Council on:

- expenditure;
- activity delivered;
- young people reached;
- repeat engagement;
- safeguarding and referrals;
- partnership activity;
- community-safety intelligence;
- outcomes;
- lessons learned;
- value for money.

This will allow Council to decide how the approach should develop in the longer term.

15. Conclusion

The Million Hours project has demonstrated that there is a clear benefit in having trusted adults engaging with young people in the places where they naturally spend time.

The most important legacy of the project is therefore not simply the activities delivered during the funded period. It is the relationships, knowledge, partnerships and engagement infrastructure that has been created.

A reduced Town Ranger provision provides an opportunity to retain that infrastructure at a relatively modest cost while the Council develops a broader and more sustainable model.

The Council should therefore use the next phase to move from project delivery to an integrated youth-engagement approach, bringing together the Town Rangers, Youth Service, young people, community organisations and wider partners.

The intention should be to maximise the benefit of the resources the Council already has, rather than creating another standalone programme. The Million Hours project can consequently become a foundation for a longer-term approach in which the Town Council is not simply responding to youth ASB, but is actively creating opportunities, relationships and pathways that help young people to participate positively in the life of Shrewsbury.