

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Date 1 April 2026**

Officer: Helen Ball (Town Clerk)

FOOD RESILIENCE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (2026–2029)

1. Purpose of the Report

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 Shropshire Good Food Partnership has requested Town Council support to develop a Food Resilience Strategy and Action Plan for Shrewsbury, which would also contribute to a wider Shropshire-level approach.

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

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.

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. Financial Implications

8.1 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

8.2 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.

9. 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.

9.1. 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

9.2. 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

9.3. 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.

9.4. 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.

9.5. 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.

9.6. 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

9.7. 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.

10. Key Conditions for Support

In determining any funding there would need to be clear outcomes achieved and conditions met, including:

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

11. Conclusion

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

- 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.

RECOMMENDED:

That:

- 1. Approve in principle be given to support the development of a Shrewsbury Food Resilience Strategy and Action Plan**
- 2. The Town Clerk work with the Shropshire Good Food Partnership to develop detailed proposals for the development of a Food Resilience Plan for Shrewsbury**
- 3. The Town Clerk present those proposals to the Policy & Resources Committee**