



Stratford Town Trust

creating a vibrant and
connected community



Annual Review

20 24



Tim Bailey
Chair of Trustees



Sara Aspley
Chief Executive

Welcome from our Chair

For a second year it has been my honour and privilege to chair our Board of Trustees and witness the many ways our charity supports communities right across Stratford.

As Trustees, we regularly review our strategic direction, monitor progress and act as a critical friend to the Executive team. We are fortunate to have a great but small team of employees that punch above their weight and a fantastic cohort of over 100 volunteers caring for our green spaces, guiding visitors at The Guild Chapel, assisting at our Community Hub and finally partnering with Net Zero Stratford at The Repair Cafe.

Stratford Town Trust is a charity focused on people, and we strive to be at the heart of the community. It seems to me that volunteering is the perfect example of this and I am so proud of the ways in which our volunteers help support our work. In a town where there are many opportunities to get involved and volunteer time, I appreciate that they have a choice and so, I am truly grateful that they choose to give their time and expertise to the Trust.

As a town we must be the envy of many similar sized market towns across the country, benefitting from an endowed fund that provides significant financial assistance to a large number of organisations through our grant giving each and every year. We support a broad range of groups helping a cross section of our town's community and this report highlights some of the excellent support delivered in 2024. As a resident, I count myself lucky to live in such a wonderful place.

In closing, I was delighted to welcome our two Town Council nominated Trustees during 2024; Lewis McNaught and Sarah Summers – they will serve for a four-year period.

Finally, looking ahead, in May 2026, I will stand down as Trustee after eight years and elections will take place for the five 'Elected Member' Trustee positions. If you would like to know more about what it entails to be a Trustee, then please feel welcome to contact me via our office. We welcome nominations. It's a very rewarding thing to do – I recommend it.

Welcome from our CEO

I am delighted that 2024 has been a year of consolidated growth for the Trust with efforts focused towards our vision of creating a vibrant and connected community in Stratford-upon-Avon.

For the year, we awarded discretionary grants of £1.2 million to 147 local individuals, groups and charities. However, the work that we support goes far beyond the numbers and I hope that this Annual Review gives you a real flavour of what I believe has been a year of significant achievement. At the Trust we see our role as an enabler either as a grant funder or by working in partnership with organisations who share our vision and values. This means that our work is varied and far reaching as we try to impact as many people as possible.

I am determined that as a funder we will continue to support voluntary groups and charities with core funding, without which many services simply wouldn't be able to function. As an example, this year core funding enabled Stratford Youth Collective, Escape Arts and The Shakespeare Hospice to continue to offer their vital services.

As a funder and community connector, we respond to changing need. This year saw a focus in supporting local families and you can read more about this in our case studies on pages 9-11 with Entrust Care, Stratford Family Club and Sonrisa Arts. Our funding has supported projects that encourage people to get outside and become active. Move Against Cancer are a national organisation who have partnered with the very popular Stratford Parkrun, offering their brilliant *5k Your Way* programme, and our simple 2k nature trail for Stratford-upon-Avon Local Nature Reserve has helped hundreds of people enjoy this tranquil space right on the edge of our town at their own pace.

We know how much our community value Rowley Fields and in the autumn, we started work on a test site to create a 12-acre wildflower meadow by sowing yellow rattle seed after the late summer hay cut. As winter turned to spring we kept a close eye on the two acres and have recently been rewarded with an abundance of yellow flowers. You can read more about this long-term project on page 4.

Finally, thank you to our members who provide frank and valuable feedback and to our board of Trustees who generously volunteer their time and experience. I do hope that you enjoy reading about some of our achievements over the course of the year and to find out more about our work, please drop me an email or visit us at: www.stratfordtowntrust.co.uk.

Who we are

Our vision: To create a vibrant and connected community in Stratford-upon-Avon

Our charity and our assets exist to build a vibrant and connected community across our town, and we aim to listen, support and connect as many people as we can. We do this through our grantmaking and by bringing people together with a programme of community activities. We couldn't do this without our team of 11 wonderful Trustees, all of whom are members. They comprise five Trustees elected by the membership, three Trustees nominated by Stratford Town Council and three Trustees co-opted by the board to provide additional skills.

Special thanks go to Tony Jackson who retired from his nominated Trustee role after over eight years. During his term, he served as Chair to the Board from 2021-2023. Looking back, Tony said: "Stratford Town Trust is a wonderful and unique charity and being a Trustee has been very positive. During my term, the Trust has delivered so much benefit to the Town through discretionary grants totalling over £8 million to local community groups, charities and good causes."



Tony Jackson

We also say goodbye and thank you to Liz Coles, who also retired from the Board last year after serving a four-year term as a nominated Trustee.

Liz said: "I was proud to be nominated as one of the Town Councillor Trustees in 2020 and I have been able to see the real value of the Trust to people in the town in the grant giving and their participation in wider groups."



Liz Coles

We welcomed two new Town Council nominated Trustees, Lewis McNaught and Sarah Summers to our Board. Our next member elections for Trustees will take place in the spring of 2026. Trustees usually serve a four-year term from appointment, with the opportunity to stand for a further term. If you'd like to find out more, visit: www.stratfordtowntrust.co.uk.

Join us!

If you're not already a member, we'd love you to join us! If you're over 18 and live in Stratford town, please support us to make a difference. It's free and only takes a minute to sign up online: www.stratfordtowntrust.co.uk.

We are grateful for the support in 2024 of:



Funded by
UK Government



Coventry & Warwickshire
Local Enterprise Partnership



CROWNE PLAZA
HOTELS & RESORTS



Warwickshire
County Council



Warwickshire
Wildlife Trust



Stratford's home for community climate action



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Our green spaces

We understand the importance of green spaces for health and wellbeing and are committed to increasing biodiversity and improving access to nature for all.

As well as being custodians of part of The Lench Meadows which now forms the Stratford-upon-Avon Local Nature Reserve, we care for 116 allotment plots, manage Rowley Fields, home to a community orchard, and in 2024, we were proud to introduce two new initiatives:

Nature Trail

As part of our aim to bring people closer to nature, in the summer of 2024 we launched an accessible nature trail at Stratford-upon-Avon Nature Reserve in partnership with Forest of Hearts. The trail map features illustrations from Stratford born artist Jane Tomlinson and can be found at various points along the site. Take the opportunity to get outdoors with the family and have fun spotting wildlife and completing the trail. To find out more, visit: www.stratfordtowntrust.co.uk.

A new wildflower meadow at Rowley Fields

We're pleased to be working with a local wildflower meadow specialist to create a wildflower meadow at Rowley Fields to contribute to the recovery of nature. This will encourage new habitats for wildlife, especially important as since World War II, the country has lost 97% of its traditional wildflower grasslands. In 2024, phase one of the project got underway, with harrowing and seeding of two acres. It will take approximately three years for the full benefits to be seen, and we will be seeding the additional areas of the fields during this time so that at the end of three years, all the ground preparation and seeding will be completed. This is an investment in natural capital that will benefit both wildlife and everyone who enjoys Rowley Fields, now and for generations to come.



Making a difference through volunteering

A total of 105 volunteers supported our work during 2024, at The Guild Chapel, the Repair Cafe run in partnership with Net Zero Stratford, at our Community Hub and in the green spaces we care for! Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers for the difference they make in our community.

Repair Cafe

We had an average of 26 volunteers for every Repair Cafe – covering tool sharpening, sewing, PAT testing, electrical repair, bike repair, general repair, reception desk, runners, refreshments, and front of house. In 2024, the Repair Cafe successfully repaired 80% of items brought in, creating carbon savings (kg CO₂e) of 17.3 tonnes, equivalent to 32,609 car miles!

We have such a brilliant, enthusiastic group of volunteers who regularly attend every month, giving back to the community and helping to reduce our environmental impact. A special thank you to Jon Knight and Mary Clarke who have volunteered at every single Repair Cafe since we launched in September 2022.

Warm Welcome

A small team of wonderful volunteers attend our Warm Welcome at the Community Hub each week, offering visitors a friendly face to talk to, refreshments and free activities.

Conservation

56 volunteers helped us with our conservation activities, including removing encroaching brambles from the Community Orchard, ragwort removal at the Stratford-upon-Avon Local Nature Reserve, and activities with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust which have included coppicing and small tree felling. In addition, we partnered with Forest of Hearts and Eco Workshop who bring along a group of volunteers for visitor counting every quarter, so from next year we will be able to start making year on year comparisons to our data.

Guild Chapel

Volunteers at the Guild Chapel have been very busy sharing this iconic building's vast history with visitors from near and far and have covered 394 shifts between them! Events included Shakespeare Schools' Week, a partnership with Shakespeare Birthplace Trust as part of Heritage Week to reveal the rarely seen Letter of Indulgence, and the most exciting and impressive event of the year, the Dance of Death. This was a lively evening of dance and music, with lots of grisly humour, directed by Pamela Devine with support from Janet Hall, Janet Palmer and Margo Galvin which delighted audiences.



Supporting the Arts

Paint Stratford

Supported and funded by Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Warwickshire County Council, Stratford Town Trust and local community partners, Paint Stratford created a vibrant public art trail featuring world-class street artists, with the aim of transforming the town with stunning murals, led by local artist and producer Ali Glover and creative producer Kate Cox.

The Paint Stratford Mural Trail aims to transform our town's public spaces into a dynamic, open-air art gallery, delivering public art that resonates with diverse audiences. The murals have been created on various places around Stratford town, including Arden Street, the new community garden in partnership with Bishopton Community Centre and the Visitor Information Centre.

"It's like we're painting smiles onto the walls of Stratford!"

In addition to the main mural trail, the project has a strong community focus. Workshops, involving local residents of all ages were held at the Fred Winter Centre to explore the world of street art and create collaborative pieces.

Paint Stratford also completed a graffiti project in Meon Vale, engaging young people in the creative process.

Ali Glover, artist with Paint Stratford said: "What really makes it all worthwhile for me is seeing people's faces light up at workshops and when they encounter our murals. It's the buzz of conversation and the genuine joy they spark. There's something magical about watching a space transform from ordinary to extraordinary, and hearing the positive feedback grow with each new project. People tell us how much they appreciate seeing their town brightened up, and that's the ultimate reward. It's like we're painting smiles onto the walls of Stratford!"



In2Theatre

In2theatre, a Stratford-upon-Avon based theatre company of adults with learning disabilities, amaze audiences with their enthusiastic and skilful productions!

Tony Peters, Artistic Director, runs weekly workshops in theatre and dance training, culminating in regular public performances. The primary aim is to provide a learning and social outlet for a group of disadvantaged individuals... and to have fun! The theatre company is open to everyone but is primarily designed for adults with learning disabilities.

Stratford Town Trust provided funding for the group to create a short comic film featuring the antics of a group of Vikings who turn up in twenty-first century Stratford-upon-Avon, and also contributed towards their annual show, an immersive production which gives all participants their chance to shine.

Peter Oatley, In2Theatre's fundraiser, explained why they applied to Stratford Town Trust for funding and how they found the process: "As we continue to challenge the theatre company and increase their learning and experiences, we seek to explore new mediums. Part of the Trust's funding enabled us to purchase equipment and source locations to undertake a filming project, resulting in a 'world premiere' of Vikings Vortex held at the Everyman Cinema in December 2024. The film was also shown at the series of performances of *Legends of the Vikings* at the Bear Pit Theatre in Stratford, also part funded by the Trust grant.



Awarded: £2,000

"I just love being here."
Jenny, In2Theatre participant

The funding application process for small grants was very quick and easy. It was particularly helpful to talk through the proposed application with the Town Trust grants team before submission."

Planning is already underway for the group's next production in 2026!

Live and Local: Big Picture Film Festival

Live & Local, a not-for-profit arts organisation, staged the Big Picture Film Festival in Stratford-upon-Avon between 29th August – 1st September 2024. The film festival is in its fifth year and included an exciting line-up of British and international feature films, talks, live scores and a film competition.

The festival was held at The Bear Pit Theatre with additional screenings taking place at Holy Trinity Parish Centre and Snitterfield Village Hall. They worked in partnership with local organisations including Stratford Youth Collective, Net Zero Stratford and also Welcome Here, a charity which helps refugees to rebuild their lives and achieve their full potential in safety and dignity. Welcome Here presented a special screening of director Ken Loach's *The Old Oak*, which follows a pub

landlord who strikes up a friendship with a Syrian refugee and sees his struggling community take a turn for the better. This poignant film encapsulates the very essence of Welcome Here's mission, weaving a narrative of hope, friendship and community in the face of adversity.

Chris Davis, Engagement Manager, Live & Local, explained the impact of receiving funding from Stratford Town Trust: "We couldn't have operated the festival without it. The funding allowed us to keep our 'Pay What You Feel' ticket pricing structure to ensure there was no barrier to people engaging with the films and gave us the budget for licences to show the films, pay for our festival technicians, bring in special guests, run our short film competition (which had over 500 entries) and so much more. It also meant we could work with the great range of partner organisations to help them with their missions as well as our own."

The festival is planning to be back for the last weekend of August in 2025 for another brilliant weekend of film activity.



Awarded: £8,350

© Jo Lewis

Keeping active for wellbeing

5k Your Way

The purpose of 5k Your Way, Move Against Cancer is to encourage and support people affected by cancer to exercise, promoting physical and psychological well-being through a community-based initiative linked to Parkrun. It welcomes anyone impacted by cancer, including people living with or beyond cancer, family and friends, healthcare professionals, and those who have lost someone to cancer.

The Stratford-upon-Avon group was launched in 2024 after Sue Mothershaw regularly attended a group in Leamington during and after cancer treatment and wished to launch this service in Stratford with the help of Simon Teale (Ambassador/Parkrun Event director).

On average, around ten people regularly participate, with new walkers and runners joining each month. Sue said: "Stratford Town Trust funding enabled us to purchase our meeting flag, hoodies, t-shirts and promotional materials which was everything we needed. We are truly grateful for this."

The feedback from participants has been heartwarming and overwhelmingly positive:

"I enjoyed my walk and seeing everyone – it did me good!"

"Back at hospital again tomorrow. I would say that parkrun/walk has helped me through many of life's ups and downs."



Awarded: £1,000

Stratford Sharks

Stratford Sharks, a competitive swimming club based at Stratford Leisure Centre, have 210 swimming members ranging in age from seven up to 60 years, supported by a team of volunteers and paid coaches. The Sharks' motto is 'Competitive for Life' as they strive for swimmers to have a lifelong love of the sport and to use this to benefit others.

Our funding helped the club with hardship and training support. Andrew Partington, Stratford Sharks Treasurer said: "As a result of our grant from Stratford Town Trust we were able to help families facing financial difficulties with swim fees, enrich training opportunities by enabling swimmers to train in the 50m pool at the Alan Higgs Centre in Coventry and provide bursaries to support our swimmers to gain valuable qualifications and put something back into the sport."

They were also able to purchase additional starting equipment, a strobe light, which can be placed next to the blocks and is particularly helpful for those swimmers with neurodivergence as it removes any disadvantages they would otherwise experience.

Awarded: £6,250



Supporting our community



Stratford Family Club

Stratford Family Club began running toddler groups in September 2024, after its creator, Naomi Cavanagh, recognised a significant need for affordable and, most importantly, nurturing family groups in Stratford-upon-Avon.

The aims of Stratford Family Club are to support families through the ups and downs of parenthood by providing accessible toddler groups in and around Stratford. The club offers a safe space for parents to connect with volunteers and make new friends, fostering a supportive community. Additionally, Stratford Family Club seeks to network with other local support groups to create clear pathways to local services, ensuring families can easily access the help and resources they need.

Naomi said: "We applied for funding from the Town Trust after an informative meeting with them about starting our not-for-profit organisation. Their funding has helped us with start-up costs like public liability insurance, DBS checks and equipment and rent to enable us to run groups all around Stratford. We are already seeing the impact of Stratford Family Club on the community."



Awarded: £2,000

"It's the highlight of our week."

Participants have said:

"It's the highlight of our week. My son has Special Educational Needs and from the first day we attended SFC, he was welcomed and included in every way."

"SFC has quite literally been a lifeline for me, during a very bleak time. I have suffered hugely with postnatal depression and social anxiety. Naomi is so warm and kind and I feel included. I can't recommend it enough!"



Supporting local families

Sonrisa Arts CIC: Families Get Moving – creative dance for early years

Sonrisa Arts, founded by Kath Kimber-McTiffen, create a magical playful world for the young and the young at heart, using exciting contemporary dance, original live music and physical theatre. They applied to Stratford Town Trust for funding as partners with Stratford Children's Centre on the Families Get Moving pilot project. The project was aimed at families with early years children living in the Bishopton area of Stratford-upon-Avon, using creative dance as a tool to enhance the health and wellbeing of local families and provide an opportunity to access the arts locally.

Working in partnership with Nichola Gillmore, Barnado's Children's Services Manager, Stratford District, Sonrisa Arts delivered weekly creative dance sessions at Stratford Children and Family Centre over the summer months. This included a session for babies under two and their parent/carer and a session for pre-school children over two with their parent/carer.

Sessions used a variety of creative themes and appropriate engaging music, giving participants the opportunity to move, dance, play together and be physical with their child whilst meeting other parents/children. Participants worked together on shared creative physical activities encouraging new friendships between families, improving both their physical and mental health.

Parents reported increased confidence in their children and improved wellbeing for themselves. They enjoyed attending the sessions, but also how it made them feel afterwards:

"We always have a great day after our session, thank you!"

"Love the energy in the room, uplifting for adults and babies."



"I just feel if we achieve nothing else today at least my boys had an opportunity to move and smile."



Awarded: £2,000

Entrust Care Partnership

Entrust Care Partnership aims to meet the needs of disabled children, young people, adults and their families and carers through the provision of short break activities, care, support, training, advice and brokering tailored services which are bespoke to the individual.

Stratford Town Trust funding enabled Entrust Care Partnership to employ a Family Support Worker, Helen Britton, to support families with disabled children/SEN within the Stratford District, working to increase individual family's resilience, stability, and wellbeing. The role provided one-to-one practical support to enable children to be included in society; signposting, advocating and co-ordinating help for the whole family.

Each family supported had their own unique and significant difficulties, ranging from school concerns, financial insecurity, equipment requirements, social isolation and mental health needs. By engaging with social care, educational professionals and external organisations, the Family Support Worker helped many families reduce their anxieties, increase their resilience and feel positive about the future.

Lynne Barton, Director of Entrust Care Partnership said: "There are so few provisions for children with additional needs, and for those who live below the poverty line, getting support can be extremely difficult. Our Family Support Worker helped to bridge the gap in provision for Stratford's disadvantaged and disabled children and helps to set them up for a bright future."

A family member who benefited from the service said: ***"Helen was so supportive, has a wealth of knowledge in local services and has been a fantastic advocate for our family in supporting me in meetings with the local authority, school and other services."***

"I can honestly say I don't know what I would have done if we, as a family, hadn't had this support."



Awarded: £5,000



Awarded: £500

"Our team members are on call 24/7, 365 days a year to help in that time of need."

Warwickshire Search and Rescue

Warwickshire Search and Rescue is a volunteer-run charity who support the community by searching for high risk missing people on behalf of the emergency services. This is predominantly people living with dementia who have moved outside their normal safety net, those with severe mental health issues and people with suicidal intentions.

They search on foot, in water, such as rivers and canals, from the air with a drone and via scent using search dogs. All members of the team are unpaid volunteers from all life stages and backgrounds, but share a desire to help their community, work as a team and get outdoors.

Nick Cole, Trustee and Fundraising Officer said: "Those we search for, and their friends and families are often experiencing one of the worst times of their lives, and our team members are on call 24/7, 365 days a year to help them in that time of need. The funding from Stratford Town Trust was a great support to our search dog team, allowing us to buy equipment to support our very regular search dog training sessions. The funding helped us towards a very important goal – having our first fully qualified search dog signed off by Lowland Rescue, our national governing body. She is now deployed on many of our searches and provides great assistance by following the scent of the missing person – even though I've seen her do it many times, it's still an amazing super-power to behold!"

Supporting those impacted by sexual abuse

Safeline

Safeline is a leading, specialist independent charity that helps prevent sexual abuse and rape, and supports anyone already affected. It is inclusive and supports everyone age 3+. In 2024, they supported 7,500 people across Warwickshire that had experienced or were at risk of sexual abuse. Neil Henderson, Safeline's Chief Executive, explains the impact of their vital service and how funding from Stratford Town Trust has been beneficial.

"Our receptionist took a call, it was from a male client in Stratford-upon-Avon who had been sexually abused as a child, let's call him Alex. Alex said he was threatening to kill himself. The call was forwarded to one of our clinical leads. Whilst she spoke to him, our receptionist called the police, fire brigade and ambulance service, explained the situation and gave them Alex's address. Our clinical lead spoke calmly and reassuringly to Alex for twenty minutes until the emergency services arrived to take care of him. The following week, Alex resumed his counselling. He received specialist trauma informed counselling until he told us he had fully recovered.

"It is quite possible I wouldn't be alive without Safeline. My suicidal ideation has subsided, and I have learned how to resolve it in a healthy way when it happens. I felt broken and counselling has helped me connect with myself again. I'm feeling positive about the future, ready to move forward and live life on my terms, rather than in fear because of the things that have happened."


A narrative persists that **'Females are victims of sexual abuse, and males perpetrate it'**. The reality is that anyone can be sexually abused. It is estimated that 1 in 5 men in the UK (6m Men) have been sexually abused or raped as children.

Specialist support services for male survivors in this country are grossly under-funded, so it's no surprise that in 2023, 75% of all suicides in England and Wales were male. Males sexually abused as children are six times more likely to kill themselves as adults. They also have poor indices of substance and alcohol misuse, risk taking-related injury, conduct problems, violence and aggression. The impact is devastating and long lasting.

The decision taken by Stratford Town Trust to fund activities that support the mental health and wellbeing of men and boys was insightful and demonstrated strong moral leadership that many others could learn from. Every victim of sexual abuse deserves support and by enabling Safeline to provide it, it has saved lives; it saved Alex's life."

Emma MacLellan, Head of Development at Safeline explained why they approached us for funding: "Stratford Town Trust have always understood the devastating and debilitating impact sexual abuse has on the local community and supported people impacted by it. When they announced a funding scheme to support the mental health of men and boys, we wanted to access funds to support more male victims in Stratford. The grant we received from the Trust:

- Helped support 238 boys in Stratford schools that had either been sexually abused or were at severe risk of its occurrence.
- Provided specialist support to 20 young boys displaying Harmful Sexual Behaviours towards others.
- Provided counselling and independent advocacy support to 303 clients, including 20 male advocacy clients and 41 male counselling clients.



"It is quite possible I wouldn't be alive without Safeline."

Awarded: £60,000

Bringing our community together

Our Community Hub has been a hive of activity over the last twelve months, welcoming first time and regular visitors. The Community Hub aims to:

- Provide hireable space to enable others to deliver work which is beneficial to the community.
- Provide a safe, warm, welcoming space people can access through the work we directly deliver with help from our volunteers, such as with our weekly 'Warm Welcome'.
- Assist grant applicants by offering a weekly drop-in session on Wednesday afternoons with the grants team to discuss ideas at an early stage in a friendly and supportive space.

This has been our first full year as a community hub in our new location on the ground floor of Venture House. The Community Hub has three rooms available to hire for a variety of activities ranging from one-to-one counselling sessions, meetings, yoga, Rock Church and more, and over 90% of our hirers would recommend the Hub as a

space to use to others. We also have hot-desking available for a small donation which is growing in popularity. Most of the groups who use the space are charities, CICs or not-for-profit organisations.

A Warm Welcome

The hub is key to our community engagement work and continues to offer a weekly 'Warm Welcome' session, with the focus on reducing loneliness and isolation; signposting to support and providing activities which benefit both physical and mental health. 92% said attending had made a positive difference to their wellbeing.

The Warm Welcome sessions are supported by our wonderful volunteers and we were grateful for funding from Warwickshire Rural Community Council towards activities and equipment. We have also arranged several trips during our Warm Welcome session, which have been open to anyone. These trips included visits to the RSC, Guild Chapel, Stratford-upon-Avon Local Nature Reserve and Everyone Active Leisure Centre.

Comments from participants included:

"I love coming here, everybody is so friendly, the staff are helpful."

"It helps to calm me and make friends. I feel accepted."

"Feel uplifted, part of community."

"Helped to socialise and get out of the house, meet new people and build confidence."

"Brings happiness and self-confidence."

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Fun Palace

We celebrated the 10th anniversary of National Fun Palace on Saturday 5th October. Once again, we were delighted to work with Stratford-upon-Avon Library, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and Crowne Plaza Hotel to make this programme of events a great success. Working in partnership meant we were able to offer the public a trail for the Fun Palace weekend, to showcase activities across the town. Stratford Town Trust provided a range of free, fun sessions including Bollywood dancing, drumming, singing and graffiti art.

There were also exciting events happening throughout the day alongside stalls with crafts, activities and information, all run by local groups. We are grateful to the Crowne Plaza for hosting and supporting our Fun Palace at the hotel, which welcomed over 270 people on the day. We had a brilliant time and can't wait to do it again!



Centres Together

In 2024, we worked with Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (WCAVA) to develop 'Centres Together' with the purpose of sharing support, knowledge and expertise in running a centre and making a bigger impact in the community. WCAVA have a wealth of expertise in supporting groups and volunteers with accessing funding, governance, volunteering and more. As Stratford Town Trust cares for a range of community assets, including the Community Hub, it made perfect sense to deliver this piece of work together.

Our first meeting took place with twenty invited groups. Lots of interesting conversations took place around shared challenges and ways to overcome them with support from the group. We look forward to seeing how this initiative develops and the ways each setting can gain support through this network.

School holiday workshops

Free family activities at the Hub have made a real difference to many families over the school holidays. In 2024, we delivered 25 free to access family workshops during school holidays which welcomed over 400 adults and children across the year. Workshops have included crafts, nature walks, music, stories and drama, and have been very well received. When we asked families what they like about the workshops, this is what they said:

"Brings community together, it's free, children and parents benefit. Look forward to every one."

"Children being able to be creative, feeling of being very welcome"

"Really interactive and loads of fun."

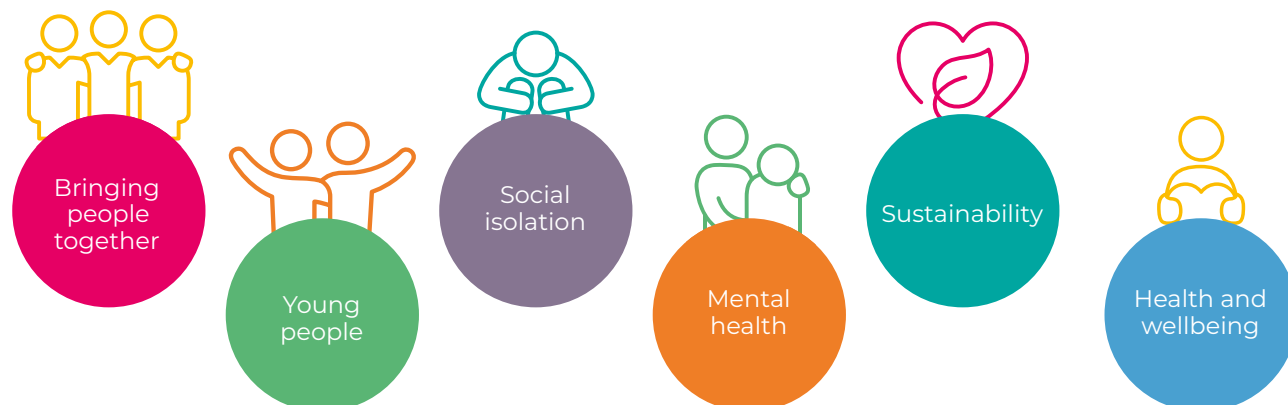
"So helpful to have something fun to do for both kids in half term."

The Big Lunch

In June, we joined in with the National Big Lunch, the UK's annual get-together for neighbours and communities, with millions of people coming together for a few hours of friendship, food and fun across the country. Also taking part were The Fred Winter Centre, the RSC, Bishopton Community Centre and the Ken Kennett Centre. All participants enjoyed a shared lunch, then created their own origami birds which were all brought together and displayed at the RSC's Welcome Space.

A year of grantmaking

In 2024, we awarded grants of over £1.2 million to charities, community groups, schools and colleges in Stratford-upon-Avon. The primary focus of our funding was core costs but grants were also awarded to organisations working in the following areas:



We are proud to have supported the following groups and organisations in 2024:

1st Bishopton Brownies
1st Bridgetown Brownies
1st Bridgetown Guides
1st Shottery Scout Group
2nd Stratford Brownies
Bishopton Community Centre
Brain Tumour Support
Citizens' Advice South Warwickshire
Clopton Community Action Group
Copernicana CIC
Cycle Infinity CIC
Entrust Care Partnership
Forest of Hearts
Hathaway Quilters
Home-Start South Warwickshire
In2theatre
Lifespace Trust
Live & Local
Move Against Cancer
Net Zero Stratford
New Hope Counselling
New Meaning Training Ltd
Orchestra of the Swan
Paint Stratford
Polish Club Warwickshire
Polish Saturday School in Stratford
Royal Shakespeare Company
Safeline
Stratford District Council
Second Thoughts Drama Group
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

Sonrisa Arts CIC
Sorooptimist International of Stratford
Upon Avon & District
Spring Housing Association
St Andrew's Church Shottery
Stratford Family Club CIC
Stratford In Bloom
Stratford-upon-Avon Music Festival
Stratford Playhouse
Stratford Schools Shakespeare
Lecture
Stratford Sea Cadets
Stratford Sharks ASC Swimming Club
Stratford Town Girls Football Club
Stratford-upon-Avon Bowling Club
Stratford-upon-Avon & District Table
Tennis Association
Stratford-upon-Avon Christmas Lights
Company Ltd
Stratford-upon-Avon Kayaks
Stratford-upon-Avon Little Bird
Baby Bank
Stratford-upon-Avon Sports Club
Stratford-upon-Avon Table
Tennis Club
Stratford-on-Avon Catenian Circle
Stratford-upon-Avon Chamber
Music Society
Stratford-upon-Avon Society
Stratford-upon-Avon BID
Stroke Association Stratford-upon-Avon
Support Group
Stratford Youth Collective

Stratford Youth Theatre CIC
The Myton Hospices
The Parenting Project
The Shakespeare Hospice
Time4Hope
VASA
Warwickshire Industrial Archaeology
Society (WIAS)
Warwickshire Search and Rescue
(WarkSAR)
Young Minds Matter

Education

Alcester Grammar School
Alveston C of E Primary School
Bishopton Primary School
Bridgetown Primary School
Holy Trinity C of E Primary School
New Meaning Training Ltd
Shottery St Andrew's C of E
Primary School
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School
Stratford-upon-Avon College
Stratford-upon-Avon Grammar
School for Girls
Stratford-upon-Avon Primary School
Stratford-upon-Avon School
St Benedict's Catholic High School
Thomas Jolyffe Primary School
Welcombe Hills School
Wilmcote Primary School

Financials

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust

Unaudited consolidated group statement of financial activities, incorporating an income and expenditure account for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Permanent endowment funds	Total funds	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Permanent endowment funds	Total funds
	2024	2024	2024	2024	2023	2023	2023	2023
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income from:								
Donations	10,636	–	–	10,636	11,052	273	–	11,325
Investment income	3,789,453	–	–	3,789,453	3,649,333	–	–	3,649,333
Charitable activities	6,751	167,937	–	174,688	2,859	–	–	2,859
Other income	<u>36,395</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>36,395</u>	<u>49,691</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>49,691</u>
Total income	<u>3,843,235</u>	<u>167,937</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>4,011,172</u>	<u>3,712,935</u>	<u>273</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>3,713,208</u>
Expenditure on:								
Raising funds	1,048,944	167,937	–	1,216,881	883,756	–	–	883,756
Charitable activities	<u>2,715,283</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>2,715,283</u>	<u>2,395,298</u>	<u>273</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>2,395,571</u>
Total expenditure	<u>3,764,227</u>	<u>167,937</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>3,932,164</u>	<u>3,279,054</u>	<u>273</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>3,279,327</u>
Net gains on investments	<u>187,311</u>	<u>24,738</u>	<u>1,441,747</u>	<u>1,653,796</u>	<u>40,264</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>473,541</u>	<u>513,805</u>
Net income and expenditure	<u>266,319</u>	<u>24,738</u>	<u>1,441,747</u>	<u>1,732,804</u>	<u>474,145</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>473,541</u>	<u>947,686</u>
Transfer between funds	<u>(500,000)</u>	<u>500,000</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>–</u>
Net movement in funds	<u>(233,681)</u>	<u>524,738</u>	<u>1,441,747</u>	<u>1,732,804</u>	<u>474,145</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>473,541</u>	<u>947,686</u>
Reconciliation of funds								
Total funds brought forward	<u>5,094,553</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>53,421,390</u>	<u>58,515,943</u>	<u>4,620,408</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>52,947,849</u>	<u>57,568,257</u>
Total funds carried forward	<u>4,860,872</u>	<u>524,738</u>	<u>54,863,137</u>	<u>60,248,747</u>	<u>5,094,553</u>	<u>–</u>	<u>53,421,390</u>	<u>58,515,943</u>

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.
All incoming resources and resources expended derive from continuing activities.

Financials

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust

Unaudited balance sheet as at 31 December 2024

	Group	
	2024	2023
	£	£
Fixed assets		
Tangible fixed assets	1,495,203	1,533,987
Investments	<u>60,745,334</u>	<u>57,879,856</u>
	<u>62,240,537</u>	<u>59,413,843</u>
Current assets		
Debtors: due after one year	29,516	34,458
Debtors: due within one year	345,008	942,517
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>1,214,343</u>	<u>1,727,159</u>
	<u>1,588,867</u>	<u>2,704,134</u>
Current liabilities		
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	<u>(1,917,854)</u>	<u>(1,696,045)</u>
Net current (liabilities)/assets	<u>(328,987)</u>	<u>1,008,089</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due after one year	(1,098,587)	(1,114,365)
Provisions for liabilities	<u>(564,216)</u>	<u>(791,624)</u>
Total Net assets	<u><u>60,248,747</u></u>	<u><u>58,515,943</u></u>
Funds		
Capital funds		
Endowment Funds	54,863,137	53,421,390
Income funds		
Restricted funds	524,738	–
Unrestricted funds		
General fund	2,781,067	2,953,372
Designated funds	1,644,156	1,681,444
Other charitable funds (College & Guild)	<u>435,649</u>	<u>459,737</u>
Total funds	<u><u>60,248,747</u></u>	<u><u>58,515,943</u></u>

The consolidated group statement of financial activities and balance sheet have been extracted from the audited Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust annual report and accounts for the year ending 31 December 2024. A copy of these accounts can be downloaded from www.stratfordtowntrust.co.uk or a hard copy can be requested from 14 Rother Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6LU. Tel: 01789 207111. Email: hello@stratfordtowntrust.co.uk.

Financials

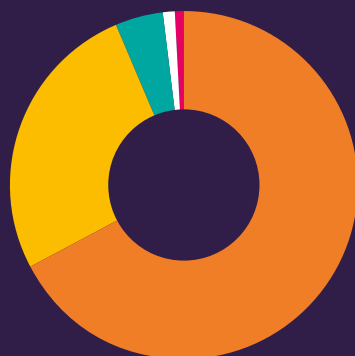
Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust

	Total funds 2024 £
Income from:	
Donations	10,636
Investment income	3,789,453
Charitable activities	174,688
Other income	36,395
Total income	4,011,172

	Total funds 2024 £
Investment income	
Property income	2,704,348
Dividends receivable	1,057,578
Interest receivable	27,527
	3,789,453

Income 2024

Property	£2,704,348
Dividends	£1,057,578
Charitable activities	£174,688
Donations and other	£47,031
Interest	£27,527



Total costs/allocation 2024

Grantmaking	£2,224,705
Community assets	£490,578



	Total funds 2024 £
Expenditure on charitable activities	
Grant making	
Discretionary grants	1,170,509
Non-discretionary grants	
King Edward VI School	776,555
Almshouses maintenance	59,034
Vicar of Holy Trinity Church	7,000
Support costs	211,607
	2,224,705

Community assets	
Community Hub	120,863
Play House – venue costs	96,750
Guild Chapel	84,269
Bandstand	3,021
800th Anniversary Fountain	6,587
Support costs	179,088
	490,578

Total expenditure on charitable activities	2,715,283
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Looking forward

Strategic Plan 2026-2030

Thank you to everyone who completed our recent survey and took part in our group consultation sessions, the results of which will guide our work over the next plan period 2026 – 2030. You told us that the Trust should focus its work towards tackling loneliness and social isolation, young people and improving access to outdoor spaces. In addition, you wanted us to consider our approach to the environment and the climate crisis and how our funding and activities can support people with neurodivergence.

We recognise all of these as areas of concern for society at large and for Stratford specifically. The town, like many across the UK, is inequitable, with many living close to or below the poverty line or without access to opportunities through education, financial stability and routes to long-term employment. These factors contribute to driving a wedge further between sections of our community. Whilst these are undeniably large-scale problems that the Trust cannot solve alone, we know that we can play our part in addressing some of them. Using our funding and working with others to rebalance equality of opportunity means that everyone has a fair chance to succeed, regardless of their background, characteristics, or circumstances.

The team, supported by the Trustees, are now hard at work writing and refining the plan and we look forward to sharing this with you in January 2026.

Guild Chapel

As part of our ongoing responsibility for the Guild Chapel, we have recently completed some vital conservation of the exterior stonework working with historic building architect, Stephen Oliver and expert stonemasons. The Chancel retains much medieval masonry, in a cream coloured locally sourced white lias limestone. Originally the Chancel would have had a limewash finish, now mostly worn away, but clearly visible close to sheltered areas. The limewash would have been used to protect the relatively soft stonework from the elements and so small areas that have degraded over time have been gently cleaned and sealed. Earlier this year, with generous support from the Friends of the Guild Chapel and local group STRADFAS, the clock face on the bell tower was restored to its former gilded glory.

We will now turn our attention to ensuring the timbers in and around the bell tower are safe and undertake some careful restoration of the stonework that surrounds the porch and the wooden door, which dates back to the 1500s.

Rother Street Arts House

We're delighted that after an open and competitive tender process, we've appointed a new charity, Rother Street Arts House, to run the much-loved community arts venue on Rother Street. The new team will take over from September 2025, with a clear remit to deliver a lively and inclusive programme that balances community use with high-quality commercial events. We know they'll look forward to welcoming you!

Rowley Fields Wildflower Meadow

Last year, we outlined our plans for a long-term project to establish a 12-acre wildflower meadow at Rowley Fields, thanks to biodiversity net gain funding and with support from the ecology team at Warwickshire County Council. Work began in September when two acres (one in each field) were harrowed and sown with yellow rattle from a local donor site in Wootton Wawen. After an unusually warm, dry winter and spring, there were concerns that germination hadn't taken place, however, after a few heavy downpours we were delighted to see the yellow rattle coming through. This is now self-seeding and will start to deplete the nutrients in the soil making ideal conditions for a variety of native grasses and wildflowers to flourish.

In September this year, the next four acres (two in each field) will be harrowed and sown with yellow rattle with a re-sowing of the original two acres. By year five, and assuming that the weather conditions go our way, we should see a variety of grasses and flowers growing naturally in the fields. We know how important the fields are to so many and by maintaining the desire line pathways as part of the project, they will always remain available for recreation and dog walking.



**Stratford
Town Trust**

creating a vibrant and
connected community

We find ways to bring people
TOGETHER



Find out how we help to create a
vibrant and connected community at:
www.stratfordtowntrust.co.uk