

**SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL
RECREATION & LEISURE COMMITTEE
15 JANUARY 2025**

Officer: Helen Ball (Town Clerk)

HOSTILE VEHICLE MITIGATION

Purpose of Report

To consider Implementing Hostile Vehicle Mitigation Measures at all future events

Introduction

This report presents the rationale for Shrewsbury Town Council to invest in Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM) measures to enhance public safety. Recent tragic events, including the attacks on Bourbon Street in New Orleans on New Year's Eve 2024 and at the Magdeburg Christmas Market in December 2024, underscore the vulnerabilities of public spaces to vehicle-based attacks. Implementing HVM measures is essential to protect residents and visitors in Shrewsbury.

Background

1. Bourbon Street Attack (New Orleans)

On January 1, 2025, a truck driven by Shamsud-Din Jabbar, a 42-year-old U.S. Army veteran, was deliberately driven into a crowd celebrating New Year's on Bourbon Street in New Orleans. The attack resulted in at least 15 fatalities and numerous injuries. Jabbar, who was found with an Islamic State flag in his truck, was shot dead by police after opening fire on responding officers. The FBI has deemed this incident an act of terrorism.

2. Magdeburg Christmas Market Attack (Germany)

On December 20, 2024, an SUV was driven into a crowd at the Christmas market in Magdeburg, Germany, killing six people and injuring at least 299 others. The driver, allegedly 50-year-old anti-Islam activist Taleb Al-Abdulmohsen, was arrested at the scene. German authorities have described the suspect as an Islamophobe. Investigators continue to search for a motive, which remains unknown.

These incidents highlight the potential for vehicles to be weaponised in crowded public spaces, emphasising the need for effective HVM measures.

Current Risk Assessment for Shrewsbury

Shrewsbury hosts numerous events that attract large crowds, such as festivals, markets, and parades. While the town currently enjoys a reputation for safety, it is essential to consider:

- **High Footfall Events:** Events like the Christmas Lights Switch On and Remembrance attract significant pedestrian traffic.

- **Proximity of Roads to Crowds:** Many events are held near roadways, increasing vulnerability to vehicle-based attacks.
- **Global Trends:** Recent attacks demonstrate that both terrorist and non-terrorist actors can perpetrate vehicle-based attacks, necessitating proactive measures.
- **National Terror Threat:** The country remains under a ***SUBSTANTIAL*** terror threat which means an attack is likely. The continuing enhancements to security at major events as a result of past experiences of terror threats means that small venues and places become more vulnerable.

Benefits of Hostile Vehicle Mitigation (HVM)

Investing in HVM measures will:

1. **Enhance Public Safety:** Physical barriers can prevent unauthorised vehicles from accessing pedestrian zones, reducing the risk of attacks.
2. **Staff Safety:** All of our major events usually require traffic management schemes which are manned by our own staff, who are required to operate in an active carriageway. Traffic Management will not stop hostile vehicles, therefore staff are at risk.
3. **Reassure the Public:** Visible security measures increase public confidence in attending local events.
4. **Compliance with National Guidance:** Aligning with national security recommendations enhances overall preparedness.
5. **Aesthetic Integration:** Modern HVM solutions can be designed to complement Shrewsbury's heritage character while providing robust protection.
6. **Support Activity not covered by Martyn's Law legislation:** Whilst the legislation will support requirements to consider measures to protect the public, our biggest risk is event in publicly accessible locations. HVMs will address much of the risk.

HVM Solutions

1. **Temporary Measures:** Deployable barriers for events, such as portable bollards or concrete blocks. These allow flexibility.
2. **Permanent Measures:** Fixed bollards, planters, or reinforced street furniture in high-risk locations. These will be matters considered under the Movement Strategy but are more long-term.
3. **Integrated Technology:** Smart bollards or gates that allow authorised vehicle access while blocking unauthorised entries. These will be matters considered under the Movement Strategy but are more long-term.

Financial Considerations

Hiring of HVMs is an option but they are expensive, therefore Council should consider whether purchasing our own infrastructure given the number of required occasions for usage would prove more cost effective. While the initial cost of HVM measures can be significant, they are a long-term investment in public safety. The investment also offers the potential to hire such infrastructure out to other Councils for similar events.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In light of the recent attacks in New Orleans and Magdeburg, it is evident that proactive measures are essential to safeguard Shrewsbury's residents and visitors. Investing in Hostile Vehicle Mitigation is a prudent step to mitigate risks and demonstrate the Council's commitment to public safety.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the report is noted
2. That Officers initiate the necessary formal risk assessments of vulnerable publicly accessible locations.
3. That Council allocates the necessary budget for implementing required HVM measures and commences the tender process.