

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Friday, 2 October 2020

11:00am

Held remotely on Zoom

NOTES

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Present:

Accessible Stratford represented by Elizabeth Dixon;
BID represented by Joe Baconnet;
Royal Shakespeare Company represented by Geraldine Collinge;
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust represented by Tim Aucott;
Shakespeare's England represented by Helen Peters;
Stratford on Avon District Council represented by Julie Lewis and Cllr J Fradgley;
Stratford Society represented by John Scampion;
Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council represented by Cllr Richard Vos and the Town Clerk, Sarah Summers
Stratford Town Trust represented by Sara Aspley;
Town Transport Group represented by Colin Stewart;
Warwickshire County Council represented by Cllr Kate Rolfe, Rachel Baconnet and David Ayton-Hill.

Observers: The Mayor, Cllr Tony Jackson

Clerk: Mrs J Mayes

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Darren Pemberton from SDC.

Mr Scampion, as interim Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1 Minutes from the last meeting

Noted.

2. Election of Chair and Deputy Chair.

It was proposed seconded and

AGREED that Geraldine Collinge, RSC, be elected as Chair of the Strategic Partnership.

It was proposed seconded and

AGREED that John Scampion, Stratford Society be elected as Deputy Chair of the Strategic Partnership.

3. Identifying the vision for Stratford-upon-Avon Town Centre.

The Chair proposed that the group, as a starting point to identifying the vision, consider what the barriers to change are and focus on understanding the problems the town faces.

There followed an interesting debate during which the following points were made:

The biggest problem is parking and traffic in the town. Steven Rumble at WCC is working on a 6-9 month project to investigate parking issues.

The town has traditionally relied on the theatre and needs to consider other ways to encourage people to come to the town.

How the vision can satisfy the balance between needs of business, hospitality, leisure, local residents and visitors in the town. It was suggested that the vision should be split into different elements.

Visitors give economic strength to the town but there is a problem with a lack of acceptance that they have a place in Stratford. Should the vision communicate the strength of the visitor economy?

Stratford has many opportunities; the problem is how to channel all of them for benefit of everyone.

The lack of vision for the town at the moment makes it difficult to balance the different needs within the town. The problems with parking and traffic are an effect of what the town is.

There are still factions within town that view visitors or tourists as a problem when they have a massive economic benefit. There may be too much emphasis on Shakespeare as the hero brand with others reluctant to put much effort in themselves. The birthday celebrations are an example of this.

What is Stratford? Some residents feel left behind and that the Maybird shopping centre rather than the town is their centre for shopping. There is a need to question whether retail can survive on the scale it has done so. The current economic situation means that there will be a reshaping of the town centre and without a vision it will be difficult to sell the town to the type of investors that want to appeal to.

Inclusion is important to the vision. Disability, including mental health issues account for 22% of population and the town needs to be accessible for this group; making changes to the toilet at the leisure centre, improving the park and ride drop off points, ensuring bedrooms in accommodation meet disability requirements are some examples. The town should enable everyone, regardless of disability and income, to access it.

There should be awareness of the hidden poverty in the town and recognition that in 20 years' time 30% of residents will be over the age of 65. At present accommodation is being built on the outskirts of the town, which is encouraging the use of cars.

Incorporating residential properties into the town centre would encourage a community to establish and make the town more vibrant.

Reference should be made to The High Street 20/20 report which has been undertaken by Manchester Metropolitan University and looks at the factors that affect high streets. Over 200 different factors have been considered in the report but there are 25 key factors. Accessibility is vital and key to boosting the local

economy. Other points to consider are what are town centres made up of and how do you want to shape them for the future? How much is residential and have we got the balance right?

There is a need to be mindful of the local government changes that may happen and the changes to national planning policy.

The work undertaken by the Partnership needs to be incorporated into the core strategy being considered by SDC.

Concern was expressed that the discussion may be considering issues outside the remit of the Partnership and that the focus should be to look at the town centre. How do you provide incentives to the owners of empty spaces to ensure they do not remain empty to the detriment of the town?

A vibrant town centre has residential properties within it.

It is worthwhile to have a list of national issues that may impact the town, for example the changes to the class order. From 1 September 2020 retail classed as A1, Office and Business classed as B1 and Cafes classed as A3 are all included in E class. Stratford will face a problem if it is not on the top tier of businesses list.

The number of hotel bedrooms has increased. What has the economic rationale been for this increase? Developers and occupiers tend to be London based and may not be as familiar with the area. Hotels such as Premier Inn and Travel Lodge have taken over from B and Bs. There was a discussion about the reasons for this and the impact of Air BnB on the sector.

There is a danger that the vision may try to encompass everything and fail to deliver.

The town needs to face a new retail future, where every business will need to change to survive.

The debate concluded with a brief snapshot from everyone on their vision summarised in the table below:

Leisure and Entertainment destination, making more of the Shakespeare brand and vibrant for everyone.	Address the rent, town centre living and community	Social vision that is open and inclusive, welcoming and safe.	Make sure the town centre flourishes and is vibrant.
Responsive to key stakeholders.	Access, design and quality of heritage.	Everybody is welcome and a better balance of shops.	Make the town the most welcoming place to live, visit and work.
A destination town.	A place that people want to come to and return to.	Something for everyone of all ages that is accessible and affordable.	How to build on the strengths of the town to make it become a centre for arts and culture that is dynamic and interesting for people.
Experiential, homely and creative.	Inclusive, classy and economically balanced.	Create a connected, vibrant community to restore the energy to the town centre.	Flourish, vibrant and welcoming town for everyone.

4. Agree agenda items for next meeting.

The Chair suggested that the next meeting should be a facilitated session. She confirmed that she would circulate some information for members to read before the meeting in preparation for debate. Concern was expressed that another meeting will be spent discussing the vision rather than identifying action to work on. It was felt that the Partnership needs a greater understanding of the economic background to support the town and should have a

strong joint position before it can launch ideas on what needs to change.

4. Date of next meeting.

Dates will be circulated for a meeting in the first week of December 2020.

The meeting closed at 12.30pm.