

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Thursday 28 January 2021

10.30am

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 (Chair);
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust represented by Rachael O'Connor Boyd;
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, Aaron Corsi and David Ayton-Hill.
Bell Court represented by John Stacey (co-opted)

Observers: The Mayor, Cllr Tony Jackson, Cllr David Curtis

Clerk: Mrs J Mayes

Apologies:

Unfortunately a SDC Strategic Stakeholder Engagement Meeting had been scheduled for the same time as the meeting so Cllr Pemberton was unlikely to be able to attend.

Apologies for absence were received from Tim Aucott, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and Helen Peters, Shakespeare's England who were attending the SDC event. Rachael O'Connor Boyd was representing Shakespeare Birthplace Trust instead.

1. Welcome and Introduction to Aaron Corsi, Sustainable Communities Commissioning Officer, WCC

The Chair welcomed Aaron Corsi, who had replaced Rachel Baconnet as a WCC representative and John Stacey, appointed as a co-opted member at the last meeting. Cllr Curtis confirmed he was in attendance as an observer.

2. Minutes from previous meeting held on 4 December 2020.

Noted.

3. Reports from Working Groups on specific areas:

3.1 Town Centre Strategy including Plan for Bridge Street (Town Centre Project 5) – Stratford Town Council Town Centre Task and Finish Group

Cllr Vos, Chair of the STC Town Centre Task and Finish Group gave a brief outline on progress with Town Centre Project 5. Information on the tender application, enclosed with the papers as Appendix one, had been sent to five companies interested in the project. The deadline for submitting a bid application is Friday 5th February. The bids will then be assessed by two separate groups within the Town Council who will consider the technical and commercial aspects independently and then meet to agree whether any applicant should be awarded the bid. This decision will be taken on Friday 12 February 2021. Information on the successful bid will be reported back to the Strategic Partnership meeting. Cllr Vos confirmed that the project is being funded by CIL money.

John Scampion asked for more information on the bidders, whether the CIL money needed to be applied for and whether input from WCC should be required at early stage, as they would be the most likely organisation to take the project forward.

Although information has been sent to five organisations they have not indicated if they will definitely be submitting a bid so information on bidders will not be available until 5 February. The Town Council have a budget for the proposed project, based on CIL money already available, if bids are higher than this amount further consideration of how to move forward will be needed. Stephen Rumble from WCC who attended the last meeting of the Strategic Partnership had been in email communication with the committee clerk about some early input to help consider potential design parameters and constraints to support the development of design concepts and proposals and this will be taken forward when bids have been received.

It was noted that the project will hopefully result in a proposal that will be ready to be submitted should funding opportunities become available. It was suggested that the tender application information should include a review of previous data to avoid duplication of work already undertaken.

The Chair noted that a discussion on future consultation of the outcomes of the project should be held at a future meeting of the Strategic Partnership.

3.2 The Vision set out in the NDP Group.

The Chair gave an overview of the work of the Vision group; comprising of herself, Colin Stewart, Cllr Fradgley, John Scampion and Helen Peters. They had talked through the context of the vision and how the vision should be used to develop the strategy. The aim of the vision is to articulate where the Partnership want the town to be in 2031. The proposed vision statements outlined in Appendix 3 were developed from the vision in the NDP, with the aim of condensing this into shorter statements, supported by a series of objectives.

Elizabeth Dixon noted that the statement “reference to access for all communities” should be “access to all communities, whatever their need”.

The three suggested vision statements are as follows;

1. Stratford-upon-Avon is a thriving, prosperous, riverside town that attracts people to live, work, visit and spend time within its unique Shakespearean setting.
2. Taking advantage of the economic benefits of tourism, its Shakespearean heritage and riverside location whilst meeting the local needs for housing and jobs creating a sustainable town for the future.
3. Shakespeare’s Birthplace to Britain’s GREAT place to live, work, invest and visit.

The group discussed the different versions. Joe Baconnet noted that the statements did not make much reference towards business. Previous attempts at a vision have sought to capitalise on the visitor economy to benefit locals but visitors should be seen as an additional benefit, with the local economy being the baseline. He expressed concern that a vision that depends on visitors may reinforce the fragility of the local economy.

John Stacey noted that his company had chosen to invest in Stratford upon Avon because of its cultural draw and that there is a market for both tourism and local needs within a vision for the town.

Cllr Vos suggested that the vision required an emotional context to draw people into supporting it. Rachael O’Connor Boyd agreed and suggested that the vision should pull together the different aspects of the appeal of Stratford without appearing negative in suggesting it is not just about Shakespeare. There were further discussions about the uniqueness of Stratford and its connection with Shakespeare, which should not be ignored.

Sara Aspley joined the meeting at 11.13am

John Stacey noted that investment in Stratford may not have taken place without the Shakespeare element and that it would be interesting to see what locals would like to see in the scheme and where the Partnership perceive local needs to be.

Sara Aspley noted that tourism is a driver for the town and should benefit the locals. Tourism and local needs should be able to complement each other. The problems on the high street are a national issue. The Town Trust as a landlord would like to see shops busy, occupied and a curated Town Centre.

The Chair asked for preferences on the three vision statements, with a majority in support of number one. The Chair will do some further work on the first version, consult with the vision team and report back to the next meeting.

There was a further discussion on how to get a vibrant, independent offer in the town, the need to express the vision succinctly and how individual business losses in recent years have had a bigger impact on the town than previously thought. The trends in the high street will result in structural changes and this issue will need to be considered.

John Scampion highlighted the need to consider the objectives underpinning the vision statements, most notably the term “walkable” which he suggested should be more specific and if selling the town the need to introduce the phrase “revitalised shopping” within the objectives.

11.31 David Ayton Hill left the meeting.

3.3 Future Strategy Group

Colin Stewart gave a presentation on a potential model for developing a strategy, based on a business model strategy diamond. He suggested that this model could be used to structure thoughts on strategy by considering;

Differentiators; what makes Stratford upon Avon different?

Arenas, what sort of town do we want Stratford upon Avon to be? This could be structured around planning for people.

Vehicles, how will we get there?

Staging, this would consider what steps and timescales need to be taken to get there.

Economics, where will the finance come from?

It was noted that developing the strategy will enable commercial investors to understand the direction the town is going in. Although some of the questions about what sort of town want Stratford upon Avon to be were considered as part of the NDP process the presentation distils into clear points the main aims of the NDP. Whilst there was agreement that the Partnership should not

repeat the work of the NDP it was noted that some new work on demographics in the town was needed to insure that everyone is heard and represented. It was suggested that the Partnership should consider other tourist towns such as York, Lyme Regis and Bath for ideas on how they have tackled maintaining a balance between the needs of tourists and locals. John Scampion noted that an outcome of the Strategic Partnership would be to produce a marketing strategy and the presentation provided a useful template to achieve this. The Chair concluded that further work will be undertaken on developing the strategy taking on board the discussions. Joe Baconnet, John Stacey, Elizabeth Dixon and Cllr Rolfe will join the strategy group.

4. Identifying constraints and Interdependencies in projects – update from Joe Baconnet

Joe Baconnet confirmed that this work was ongoing and would be circulated to the group in advance of the next meeting.

5. Providing input to the Transport Strategy Review being undertaken by Stephen Rumble, WCC

Stephen Rumble had indicated in his email to the Committee Clerk that he would be happy to attend future meetings of the Partnership for items with a transport focus. In his email he highlighted two pieces of work; Stratford upon Avon Parking Strategy which is considering how future demand for parking in Stratford-upon-Avon can be met whilst also contributing to the achievement of wider objectives and ambitions of the town and the Warwickshire Local Transport Plan Refresh. An initial consultation seeking input to help determine the priorities which the plan should address is now live and will run until 18 March.

6. Next steps for Partnership to include consideration of Future Communication Strategy for Partnership

The Chair noted that this will be deferred to a future meeting.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The Clerk confirmed that a provisional date of 18 March 2021 had been set and she would confirm this once she had checked that there was no clash with other strategic meetings at SDC.

The meeting closed at 12.00pm.