

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Friday, 4 September, 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 Kerry Radden;
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust represented by Tim Aucott;
Shakespeare's England represented by Helen Peters;
Stratford on Avon District Council represented by Cllr Darren Pemberton and Pat Matjaszek;
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 interim representation 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 Geraldine Collinge from the RSC and Julie Lewis from SDC. Cllr Jenny Fradgley, who will be attending meetings as an observer, had also sent apologies.

1) Welcome

The Town Clerk, welcomed members to the inaugural meeting of the Strategic Partnership and explained that the meetings will be facilitated by the Town Council and would be clerked by Joanne Mayes, Committee Clerk at the Town Council.

Members introduced themselves and the organisation they represent. Daren Pemberton asked if there was anyone representing District Councillors on the group. He was present to represent the District Council in his role as Deputy Leader but not as a District Councillor for the town. There was a brief discussion on this and it was suggested that Cllr Jenny Fradgley, who will be attending in the role of observer, could represent the views of the town district councillors in the town if this was deemed appropriate.

The Town Clerk informed the group that Geraldine Collinge, from the RSC had expressed an interest in becoming Chair of the Partnership. In Geraldine's absence, she suggested that an interim chair should be appointed for this meeting. Kate Rolfe proposed that John Scampion should take on the role of interim Chair.

It was proposed, seconded and unanimously AGREED

To appoint John Scampion to the role of interim Chair.

2) Background information from John Scampion, member of the NDP steering group who lead on the town centre and infrastructure sections of the plan

John gave an overview of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) and the vision it inspired that the town and its centre are an essential part of Stratford-upon-Avon that should be cherished, offering shopping, cultural, exploration of heritage and leisure opportunities for both residents and visitors.

He noted that in order to keep Stratford energised, there is a need to respond to change, paying attention to the aims of strengthening and revitalising shopping, consolidating the local

economy, improving the public realm and improving the pedestrian experience. In recent years these aims have been compromised by internet shopping and out of shopping parks, the loss of key traders and an atmosphere that could be seen as too cluttered and where the pedestrian experience could be improved. One recommendation from the NDP was to set up a Strategic Partnership to improve the perception of the town and offer advice on continuing strategies to address these aims.

The Chair noted that overall, the vision of the town should be continually under review and that it must respond to changes. These changes include accelerated closure of key stores, interest in increasing hotels and the impact, not yet measurable, of the COVID 19 pandemic.

He concluded that the challenges faced by the town may be different to when the NDP was first written and that the views of the whole community, represented across the Partnership, should be shared. The Strategic Partnership is not an executive body but an advisory body with the purpose of deliberating on proposals for the town.

3) Review of proposed Terms of Reference

The Partnership, reviewed the proposed Terms of Reference starting with the proposed vision and aim (point 1).

Daren noted that the vision relates specifically to the town centre and suggested that it should recognise the inter relationship with the surrounding district. For example, there may be residents in the district that may have a view on the town centre because they use it.

Richard Vos expressed concern that involving the wider district may result in more conversation rather than action. Whilst it was reasonable to consider the impact on the district, the Strategic Partnership should remain focused on the town centre, although issues that affect the district of Stratford as a whole should be taken into account as appropriate.

It was noted by Joe Baconnet that the town centre is 'not an island' and by implication the Partnership should consider what

is going on outside it, for example, the changes to the A46 and how this might impact the town.

Sara Aspley suggested that the vision should create a town centre that has relevance for residents and visitors. It was suggested that promoting an inclusive approach was already included in point 2.8 and there was a discussion about whether it should be more explicitly expressed in the vision, which may be the only part of the document that some people read.

In summary, the residents of the town use Stratford but residents in the district also use the town and it was suggested that the group should consider whether point 2.8 makes it sufficiently clear that they are included. The Chair concluded that the notes from the meeting would be a record of the debate and should draw attention to the Partnership's view of the importance of an inclusive approach. However, the Terms of Reference would be amended to reflect the views of the Partnership.

The Chair invited comments on representatives and the quorum of the group (point 3 and point 4). There was a debate about whether every organisation should have a voting right or every member. It was suggested that everyone on the group is valuable and therefore in terms of voting and contributing, everyone should be permitted a vote. However, concern was expressed about the quorum; if only five members are present the quorum would be met, but those five members may represent a smaller group of organisations, giving them a greater say and perhaps denying some organisations a vote because they are absent.

It was considered that the Town, District and County Councils, which have an officer and member vote, should only have one vote rather than two and should work out who holds the vote on a particular issue. Richard felt that all members were invited on the basis of seniority and experience and were present on an equal footing. In his view it was fair and reasonable to allow everyone a vote.

Joe noted that if a vote is required it suggests that the different organisations represented in the Partnership have different views and in this event, it was his view that each organisation

should have just one vote. Colin Stewart agreed and noted that there were 16 members on the Partnership, of which 8 were from the 3 local authorities. The Chair advised that one vote per organisation would avoid an awkward situation where the officer and the member may vote differently.

It was finally AGREED that each member organisation should have one vote.

The election for the Chair will take place at the next meeting and the Terms of Reference permit the re-election of the Chair, if they wish to continue in the role beyond one year.

There was a debate about timings of meetings and Daren suggested that quarterly rather than every two months would be more appropriate to allow sufficient time between meetings to progress action points. Richard argued if the Partnership was meeting to deliver a strategy for the Town Centre it was imperative to meet more frequently to achieve this. However, it was also noted that the focus of the group was strategic and that it would be facilitating other groups to co-ordinate actions, which may take longer. Kate suggested that the Partnership meet quarterly but allow for possible additional meetings if they are required.

Darren Pemberton and Tim Aucott left the meeting at 12:01pm.

Joe suggested that the Partnership should meet sooner rather than later to discuss the work that needs to be completed, in particular, the vision for the town centre. He noted that until the vision for the town is agreed it will continue to react to events. He also noted that the proposed White Paper on planning will have an impact on the town centre that needs to be discussed. He concluded that in his view the Partnership should understand what it is trying to achieve, whether it needs to facilitate someone else to achieve it and whether it wishes to strategically influence.

Richard suggested that the Partnership should hold two meetings before Christmas, the first in 3-4 weeks' time to maintain momentum.

It was agreed that the Partnership would hold two meetings before Christmas and then review the frequency of meetings.

4) Identify the Vision

There was a discussion about whether a smaller group should meet to prepare a paper on the proposed vision for discussion at the next meeting but it was AGREED that this discussion should take place with everyone.

The Town Clerk referred to an additional paper that had been circulated to the Partnership outlining a proposed application to SDC by the Town Council for CIL monies to undertake a concept design study on Bridge Street, with a view to this becoming a future project. The deadline for submission of the CIL application is 11 September, 2020.

5) Agenda items for the next meeting

The next meeting will have two agenda items; the election of the Chair and Vice Chair and identifying the vision for Stratford-upon-Avon town centre.

6) Set a meeting calendar

The Committee Clerk will circulate dates for the next meeting.

The Chair declared the virtual meeting closed at 12:15pm.