

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

THURSDAY 25 November 2021 at 2pm

Held remotely on Zoom

MINUTES Pages 1-8

Present:

Accessible Stratford represented by Elizabeth Dixon

Royal Shakespeare Company represented by Geraldine Collinge (Chair)

Stratford-on-Avon District Council represented by Cllrs J Fradgley, Matt Jennings, Ian Shenton, and Paul Harris

Stratford Society represented by John Scampion

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council represented by Cllr Richard Vos and the Town Clerk, Sarah Summers

Town Transport Group – represented by Colin Stewart

Warwickshire County Council represented by David Ayton-Hill, Stephen Rumble, Aaron Corsi and Cllrs Kate Rolfe and Tim Sinclair.

Advent Communications represented by Adam Dent and Sam Jackson

Jacobs represented by Mark Fleming

Clerk: Margo Galvin

Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from John Careford (Stratford District Council); Tim Aucott (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust), Helen Peters (Shakespeare's England); John Stacey (Bell Court) and the Mayor, Cllr Kevin Taylor (Stratford BID).

The Chair advised that Cllr Jackson, as the new Chairman of the Town Trust, will deputise for Sara Aspley at Strategic Partnership meetings when she cannot attend.

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed Ian Shenton and Paul Harris from the District Council and Mark Fleming from Jacobs.

2. Minutes from previous meeting held on 21 October 2021

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

3. Update on actions from the meeting held on 21 October 2021

Action 1: 21.10.21 - Aaron Corsi to identify where the discussion document matches with existing strategy and to identify priorities, with the aim of having an action plan for December/January. Aaron Corsi and Geraldine Collinge to discuss further outside the

meeting. The Chair advised that she and Aaron Corsi had been communicating but have not yet met. **ACTION TO BE CARRIED FORWARD.**

Action 2: 21.10.21 - John Careford to find out if there is an existing agents' network that the Partnership can tap into. As John was not present at the meeting, this **ACTION TO BE CARRIED FORWARD.**

Action 3: 21.10.21 – the Chair has not yet contacted Jonathan Smith at Talk Business. **ACTION TO BE CARRIED FORWARD.**

Action 4: 21.10.21 - Adam Dent to meet with Geraldine Collinge and Margo Galvin to discuss communications planning next steps. Adam Dent has met with the Chair and the Committee Clerk to discuss communications planning next steps – *see item 9 below.*

Action 5: 21.10.21 – Geraldine Collinge and Colin Stewart to contact the Ward Councillor to initiate a conversation with the Arden St/Greenhill St developer regarding 106 and CIL money. This is part of a longer discussion about how the Partnership can take a more proactive approach to town centre properties and use the Neighbourhood Plan and its own priorities document to help make change. **ACTION TO BE CARRIED FORWARD AND ADDED TO JANUARY AGENDA.**

Action 6: 21.10.21 - Geraldine Collinge to follow up with Partnership members on how a successful online meeting might be held in December if Winter Plan B is enforced. **ACTION TO BE CARRIED FORWARD DEPENDING ON GOVERNMENT ADVICE.**

Action 7: 21.10.21 - Partnership members to send their ideas for the public meeting format to Geraldine Collinge and Sarah Summers ASAP. **COMPLETE.**

4. Levelling Up Fund bid update and next steps

Stephen Rumble advised that, following the unsuccessful bid for Levelling Up Funding, there will be an opportunity to re-submit in Spring 2022. The bid team has accepted an offer to receive feedback from the funding team on the submitted bid. This will help them understand why it was unsuccessful and how to address any weaknesses for future submissions.

The next step is to progress the public consultation on the preferred Bridge Street/High Street option. In support of this the bid team continues to meet with stakeholders and prepare consultation materials. The consultation was due to take place in November, driven by the tight deadline for spending the awarded money. It will now be re-scheduled for early 2022 to allow feedback from the funding team to be factored into the consultation exercise.

The Chair asked if any other funding sources were being pursued. Stephen Rumble advised he is not aware of any other funding sources for the level of funding required for this project. The Levelling Up Fund is seen as the best option available, although the bid team will keep looking.

Cllr Vos noted that the team had submitted a very good bid. He asked if the real reason for not being awarded funding was due to Stratford-upon-Avon being a

Tier 2 funding priority, and if the town might now move into Tier 1. Stephen Rumble advised that this question needs to be raised with the funding body at the feedback meeting. Cllr Jennings confirmed that it will be necessary to re-apply when the next round of funding is announced.

Cllr Sinclair commented that communications around the public consultation should manage people's expectations. Stephen Rumble added that it would strengthen a future bid if the Partnership could demonstrate it had consulted with the public, particularly when government funding only seems to be available for very short periods of time.

John Scampion commented that the Partnership should consider how aspects of this project could be implemented without funding. David Ayton-Hill agreed that other options should be considered. Cllr Fradgley advised that the Town Council's Climate Change Group had a small budget and intends to use some of it to plant trees in tubs around the town. She suggested these could be used to highlight the areas of focus in the Bridge Street/High Street scheme and to demonstrate that this is an active project.

The Chair noted that the Partnership had developed the bid very quickly and that the scheme is ready to go once funding is available. The public consultation should demonstrate that the town is unified in supporting the bid. A pro-active approach is needed, both individually and collectively, to indicate how the bid will bring long-term benefits.

It was agreed that Advent Communications should produce a press release confirming that the Partnership will support a re-bid in the spring following the meeting with the representative from the Dept for Levelling Up.

ACTION 1 25.11.2021: Advent Communications to draft press release regarding the Partnership's support of a funding re-bid in Spring 2022.
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5. Clopton Bridge traffic signalisation

Cllr Rolfe advised that this scheme falls within her Ward. She clarified that her comment about crossing Tiddington Road to Swan's Nest Lane made at the Town Transport Group related to the fact that the new scheme would make this easier.

Colin Stewart noted that the Bridge signalisation scheme had been discussed at the Town Transport Group and that he had been asked to circulate a paper outlining the scheme's scope and potential impact to the Partnership for discussion at this meeting. He noted that the signalisation plan dates from 2015-17, since when transport priorities in Stratford have changed greatly. The Partnership needs to consider if the plan is too backward looking when the focus should be on designing/implementing something for the future.

The signalisation scheme relates to traffic signals at both ends of Clopton Bridge bridge and updates to the signals outside the Information centre on Bridgefoot.

Work is due to start in February 2022. The bridge is the weak link in Stratford's traffic circulation and many disruptive events have been recorded in the immediate vicinity. Colin Stewart noted that, while the signalisation scheme will slow down traffic onto the bridge, it will move the current queues to other areas in the town. While the scheme does offer improvements for pedestrians, it does not help cyclists wishing to turn right out of Tiddington Road. This is a £2m developer-led scheme and the question is does Stratford want to proceed with it or might the money be better spent on solving other issues that may offer greater long-term benefits? What can the Strategic Partnership do as a group?

Questions and comments were then invited from the other Partnership members.

Cllr Fradgley advised that she had attended a Cycle Forum meeting at which the Clopton Bridge scheme was discussed. She reported that cyclists are very anxious about the access from Tiddington Road into the new area that will be controlled by traffic signals. This is because there is no forward box, and no cycle track leading to the forward box, that would provide safe access to that point.

Cllr Sinclair echoed this concern and noted that the scheme is likely to move queues away from the Bridge and back into Bridgefoot. Given the scheme was designed in 2017, he asked if recent modelling work had been done to assess the likely impact. David Ayton-Hill responded that further modelling work has been undertaken.

Cllr Rolfe noted that there is a slightly later drawing from 2018 but this does not differ from the 2017 version greatly. She commented that a lot has changed since 2018, but she was unsure what the Strategic Partnership could do now as a group, given the work is due to start in early 2022. She asked if Highways are saying the scheme should go ahead because of the amount of new housing going up and, if so, will it actually help? There are problems associated with the scheme and the Partnership must decide how to deal with these, for instance by making a presentation to Highways expressing concerns.

John Scampion agreed with Cllr Rolfe and raised an objection to the scheme on behalf of the Stratford Society. He commented that something could be done to improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians without the scheme.

Cllr Vos asked if lorries would be able to make the right turn onto the bridge from Tiddington Road, noting that large vehicle manoeuvres are often chaotic in the area. Colin Stewart acknowledged this problem and added that the main problem will be one of access from Shipston Road and Banbury Road onto the bridge. He has tried modelling this and believes it is impossible. The County Council is reviewing it. Colin would be happy to work with the Strategic Partnership to develop possible solutions.

Elizabeth Dixon indicated her agreement with everything that had been said, adding that the Town Transport Group had raised concerns about the scheme from Day One. These had been flagged with Highways who had responded that the scheme would proceed. It is very concerning that work is almost about to go ahead and no one has listened to the issues raised.

David Ayton Hill advised that, as part of the programme of work, the County Council is trying to mitigate potential problems by using modelling. The aim is to identify the best options, given the constraints in the Bridge area and the fact that it is using developer funding. He acknowledged it is not ideal and will not achieve everything the Partnership might want. While he supported the idea that the Partnership could consider adaptations/improvements to the scheme, he advised that it may not be possible to reject the project since planning permission had been dependent on it going ahead.

Cllr Rolfe commented that it would be very important for the Strategic Partnership and the Town Transport groups to be represented at any discussions on the scheme and that any meeting should take place before Christmas.

ACTION 2: 25.11.2021 - David Ayton-Hill to meet with Colin Stewart and Cllr Rolfe before Christmas.
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It was agreed that nothing should be communicated to the press on the matter just yet.

6. The Art of Bollards

The Town Clerk advised that she had recently visited Winchester where she had seen a bollard trail in the town centre. Each bollard featured a famous artwork and she wondered if this could work in Stratford. She subsequently met with the County Council to discuss this further and the response was positive. If the idea were to proceed, the project would use [The Colour Factory](#), a group of professional artists that works together to produce creative community and educational projects. They have indicated they would like to work in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Cllr Sinclair advised that he had spoken with Councillors about the proposed project and noted that several questions will need to be addressed before such a scheme could proceed. He highlighted Meer Street as a potential site for bollard art. Cllr Jennings added his support for the idea but noted that care would need to be taken to avoid the bollards becoming a distraction to road users.

Elizabeth Dixon reminded the Group that street furniture, including bollards, can be a hazard for wheelchair users and people with visual and mobility impairments. She also noted that colour contrast on the tops of bollards can help partially sighted people. The Chair agreed that this is an important point and noted that any bollard art scheme should comply with the relevant legislation (Equality Act).

Cllr Vos suggested that the Bollards project might involve local arts groups. The Town Clerk advised that, since she has already engaged with The Colour Factory, they would need to take the creative lead, although there may be other ways that local groups could be involved.

The meeting agreed to set up a working group to develop this idea. Cllr Sinclair volunteered to lead the group and the Chair advised she would involve one of her RSC team. Elizabeth Dixon and Cllr Jennings also volunteered to join the group. Sara Aspley advised that she could connect the working group with local organisations that could provide early input to the project. She also noted that this could potentially be a complex project and it would be important to manage expectations around involving local groups at the outset

7. Parking Strategy

Paul Harris, Senior Policy Planner at the District Council introduced Mark Fleming, Associate Transport Planner at Jacobs, who are working with the Council to produce the parking strategy. He referred attendees to the previously circulated PowerPoint presentation that sets out progress to date on the strategy and invited feedback on this from the Partnership by mid-December.

He advised that the parking strategy was identified in the Stratford transport strategy, published a few years ago. Its purpose was to consider how future demand for parking in the town could be met while contributing to wider objectives such as climate change and the reduction of vehicles to increase walking and cycling and improve the public realm.

The Council has been collecting and analysing data which Jacobs has published as a baseline report. A set of inter-related aims and objectives has been agreed which can be viewed on slide 8 in the PowerPoint presentation. A long-list of options can be found on slides 10-20 of the presentation. These build on meetings held with elected members and include input from the offices of both Councils. The immediate priority is to review the long-list, confirm that all possible options have been included and nothing missed out, and identify any unviable options. This work will generate a short-list which will be evaluated in line with Department for Transport standards with the aim of identifying a preferred option and approach.

Paul Harris advised that timescales are fluid, but he expects it will take until early January to appraise the various options. Engagement with the District and County Councils concerning the short-list is expected to happen towards the end of January, with a draft implementation plan to be produced in early February. Another round of engagement would then take place, to be followed by a public consultation in Spring 2022. It is expected that implementation of the strategy would take place in Autumn 2022.

ACTION 3: 25.11.2021 - Strategic Partnership members to provide feedback on the strategy to stephenrubble@warwickshire.gov.uk and paul.harris@stratford-dc.gov.uk by Friday 17th December.

Questions and comments were then invited from Partnership members.

Cllr Vos commented that it was very positive to see so many references to Park and Ride in the presentation which, he noted, had seldom been mentioned in the

Transport strategy meetings. He stressed the importance of including P&R and making it work.

Paul Harris confirmed that Partnership members could circulate the presentation to their respective organisations but asked the Group to remember that the plan is at an interim stage and is not for external communication.

John Scampion noted that the document should recognise the challenges around delivering a successful P&R scheme. He expressed his disappointment that, given the Partnership's commitment to the Bridge Street/High Street scheme there is nothing in the document that sets out the town centre's transition from a traffic-dominated area to a pedestrian-priority area. He would like to see an objective that addresses this. Paul Harris noted that the document may not be sufficiently clear around these points and that the wording can be reviewed.

<p>ACTION 4: 25.11.2021 - John Scampion to email Paul Harris with his feedback about the parking strategy document.</p>
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Cllr Fradgley advised that she had recently received a call from a flustered elderly lady who was having trouble finding somewhere to park in the town centre. This highlighted the parking and accessibility issues experienced by people who are not very mobile but don't qualify for a Blue Badge. This group must be considered in any parking strategy.

Cllr Shenton noted that most parking in the town centre is privately operated, and it will be important to engage with the operators when developing the town's parking vision.

8. December meeting

The Chair advised that it is still the intention to have the meeting at the Town Hall in the absence of a Covid Winter Plan B. The Town Clerk confirmed that the meeting can proceed as planned and she will put the Chair in contact with Richard Lees (Health and Safety Officer for the Town Council) so that the necessary Risk Assessments can be carried out.

It was confirmed that the public meeting will last for one hour and there will be a simple agenda, starting with approval of the minutes of today's Partnership meeting. There will then be a review of the Strategic Partnership's activities and achievements in 2021. This will be followed by an open conversation with members of the public to help set priorities for 2022. The Partnership would then come back together in January to agree a plan for the year.

Cllr Sinclair suggested that it would be helpful at the meeting to explain the roles of the different Partnership members, including the three represented Councils, and the dynamics between them. He also advised being very clear about the overarching message that should be communicated to the public. He suggested this might be that the Partnership is a group of disparate bodies coming together and working for Stratford-upon-Avon. As such, it is a very powerful entity, not seen in every town, and therefore is something to build on.

It was agreed that Advent will produce a press release to publicise that this will be a public meeting. This will be circulated to the Herald and all other local media contacts. Members of the Press will be able to attend.

ACTION 5: 25.11.2021 - Advent to draft a press release about the December meeting.

The Town Clerk commented that, while the public will not need to register to attend, it would be helpful if anyone wishing to speak at the event could advise the Partnership in advance.

Cllr Fradgley advised that the Partnership should anticipate some potentially difficult questions and be ready to answer these positively, with a clear message. The Chair asked for Partnership members with subject matter expertise to think about where they could act as a nominated responder to such questions.

ACTION 6: 25.11.2021 - Partnership members to advise the Chair of their subject matter expertise to ensure a positive response can be provided to any questions raised at the December public meeting.

9. Communications plan update

The Chair advised that she and the Committee Clerk had met with Advent Communications about developing regular and co-ordinated Partnership communications; she had also had a follow-up discussion with the Town Clerk. Advent have provided costings which will require some additional funding; this needs further discussion. She noted the importance of ensuring that the Partnership has sufficient content to maintain its public presence and that there is clarity around who can generate this content and keep it fresh. This also needs further consideration. Communications will be a priority item on the January agenda.

Adam Dent from Advent advised that Advent could sit down with a working group to develop website content. He recommended securing the domain name of Stratford-tcsp.co.uk and starting the website design work sooner rather than later. He stressed the importance of publishing a steady flow of up-to-date news, alongside more static content about the Partnership's aspirations. He recommended a monthly first-person piece, together with social media activity.

10. AOB

The Chair noted that the January meeting agenda will include a review of the Partnership's Terms of Reference, including the rolling forward of the Chair's term.

*The next meeting of the Strategic Partnership Group will be a public meeting to be held at the Town Hall on **Thursday 16 December 2021 at 2pm.***

The meeting closed at 3.36pm.