

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Thursday 26 May 2022 at 2pm

Held remotely on Zoom

MINUTES Pages 1-6

Present:

Accessible Stratford represented by Elizabeth Dixon

Royal Shakespeare Company represented by Geraldine Collinge (Chair)

Shakespeare's England represented by Helen Peters

Stratford-on-Avon District Council represented by John Careford, Cllr Matt Jennings, also attended by Cllr J Fradgley

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council represented by Cllr Richard Vos, also attended by the Mayor, Cllr Gill Cleeve and the Town Clerk, Sarah Summers

The Stratford Society represented by John Scampion (Vice Chair)

Town Transport Group represented by Colin Stewart

Warwickshire County Council represented by Dave Ayton-Hill, Catherine Marks and Cllr Tim Sinclair, also attended by Stephen Rumble and Cllr Kate Rolfe.

Advent Communications represented by Sam Jackson

Clerk to the Strategic Partnership: Margo Galvin

Apologies for absence:

Aaron Corsi (WCC); Sara Aspley (Stratford Town Trust); John Stacey (Bell Court) and Tim Aucott (Stratford Birthplace Trust).

Not present: Diane Mansell (Stratford BID); Cllr Tony Jackson

1. Minutes and actions from previous meeting held on 28 April 2022

A correction was requested to item 6 in the minutes (Street Furniture) which should now read: "*Elizabeth Dixon will represent people with visual and mobility impairments to ensure that the overall work on the new bollards, including their artwork, meets the needs of all users*". The minutes were then approved.

2. Matters arising

Public Consultation update: Stephen Rumble advised that 813 responses have now been received, which is excellent. The hope is to achieve 1000 completed surveys.

A mailout to Blue Badge holders has highlighted concerns about the proposals, but also includes some supportive comments.

The equality monitoring feedback shows that 18% of respondents say they have a long-term illness or disability. Targeted work is being done with Equip who will run focus groups with WCC in the next week, involving people with disabilities and hidden disabilities. It is hoped this will provide further useful feedback.

Partnership members were urged to encourage participation across their networks before the consultation closes on 5th June.

Survey feedback is consistent. There is less opposition than expected to the proposed changes to Pay & Display parking in Bridge Street/High Street. There is concern around changes to taxi locations, particularly in relation to accessibility (rear and side access).

Other issues include the no right turn from Union Street into Guild Street and the impact of extra traffic on surrounding roads, notably in Old Town, and the need to take longer routes to avoid the town centre.

The next step is to explore solutions to the issues raised in the consultation, although the proposed scheme will remain unchanged for the purposes of the LUF2 bid. Some of the concerns will be highlighted in the submission, together with potential solutions. WCC will look at producing a report on the feedback received. This may take some time, given that the focus is currently on drafting the funding bid. Therefore, Stephen Rumble will investigate the possibility of producing a high-level summary document in the interim.

Cllr Sinclair noted that very few under 18s had completed the survey. John Careford advised there has been some engagement with youth groups and a shorter version of the survey has been produced to encourage uptake by younger people. The Stratford Youth Forum is also involved. So far, this effort has not yet resulted in greater participation in the survey. The following link was shared to the shorter survey for Partnership members to share with young people within their networks: <https://ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/transport-planning/ab795b95/>.

Cllr Fradgley advised that she had met with some of the 55+ groups. It is difficult to get this age group to complete the survey online as many do not have computers. Despite this, many people were very engaged and had great suggestions, although they were disappointed that the survey is online which makes them feel excluded. Helen Peters suggested directing people into the library so that they could use the computers there. Library staff can assist.

Geraldine Collinge asked if conversations had taken place with the local businesses. Stephen Rumble advised that, with Diane Mansell's support, a drop-in session for businesses had been arranged, with PJA in attendance. This was very poorly attended. Part of the reason for this was because businesses had already attended other drop-in events. Some interesting conversations had been held with a couple of businesses but, overall, engagement was disappointing.

There has been engagement with Boots, but not yet with M&S. Boots were very supportive of the town centre proposals. While they value the current parking arrangements, they understand the need for town centre investment and would welcome this.

3. Meetings updates

LUF2 - Stephen Rumble advised that a stakeholder workshop had taken place on Thursday morning (25th May). The purpose was to review DfT feedback from the previous bid and to try to draw together additional information around some of the town's challenges e.g. tourism and the changing face of the high street, and to use this to strengthen the business case for LUF2. Strategic Partnership members were asked to forward any relevant information (data, studies etc.) to Stephen.

Discussions took place concerning the most appropriate LUF criteria to bid for. The clear message from the DfT and LUF team is that a pure transport scheme should be submitted, so the bid will progress on that basis. However, there will still be the opportunity to set out in the business case how the proposal will achieve some of the wider public realms, culture, heritage and economic benefits that fit into the other criteria.

(John Myatt from consultants PJA joined the meeting at 14.35.)

Cllr Jennings advised that the District Council will not submit a separate bid and will support the Bridge Street/High Street bid.

Geraldine Collinge advised that a letter of support is being drafted on behalf of Nadim Zahawi. The fact that only one bid is being submitted will help to strengthen the funding case. It is hoped that a meeting can be arranged with Nadim to discuss this further. Stephen Rumble noted that the letter must be submitted using a specific pro-forma. Geraldine will follow up with Stephen offline.

Helen Peters asked if there would be an opportunity to obtain funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. John Careford advised that SDC has an allocation of £3.6m over three years for this. It is a relatively small fund and SDC are exploring different avenues. A business case must be submitted to Government to indicate where the money is being allocated; there are several criteria that must be satisfied. SDC is currently drafting an investment plan and deciding what to include to meet the criteria; 'Skills' and 'Place' will be prominent. The STT site on Henley Street might be a good fit for this. It is both a capital- and place-based project but is ultimately about skills and culture, so it ticks the boxes. Cllr Jennings advised that SDC must consider the whole of the district for this funding.

John Scampion asked for clarification about the nature of the bid. At the last Strategic Partnership meeting the impression was given that the bid would be focused on regeneration, not transport. At that point, SDC's support for this had not been confirmed.

Geraldine Collinge advised that various meetings had taken place since the last Strategic Partnership meeting, which had changed some of the thinking in this regard. Dave Ayton-Hill's meeting with the LUF team had made it clear that this should remain a transport bid.

(Stephen Rumble left the meeting.)

John Myatt (PJA) confirmed that this must be a transport bid to meet the criteria. He appealed for any qualitative or quantitative data that Strategic Partnership members might have that could strengthen the business case.

Action: Committee Clerk to circulate PJA's slides from this session with these minutes.

Additional meetings:

Geraldine Collinge then provided updates on three further meetings that had taken place since the April Strategic Partnership meeting:

- **Investment workshop**
- **Vision session**
- **WMCA workshop**

Investment workshop: this sub-group has been set up to investigate how the Partnership can attract different types of investment into the town. WCC and SDC are represented at the meetings. Dave Ayton-Hill has also invited Stuart Buckley, who runs the new Warwickshire investment group, to attend. Sara Aspley attends in the capacity of landowner and John Stacey brings a strong business perspective. Geraldine had also asked Paul Spooner to participate following his involvement with the Fred Winter Centre. Four meetings have been held so far to work through the LUF detail and consider how to achieve the best bid. She will prepare a paper summarising progress to date to be circulated ahead of the June Strategic Partnership meeting.

Vision session – Geraldine Collinge thanked Cllr Sinclair for running this very productive half-day session. There were five participants, with Cllr Sinclair facilitating. The session sought to define the Partnership's vision and mission, and the key themes (referred to in the session as 'territories') that should be developed. Good progress was made. A visual artist, Jimmy Rogers, attended and produced visual representations of what had been discussed. The next step is to distill and polish this work and then present it for discussion, hopefully at the next Strategic Partnership meeting.

WMCA – John Careford had set up a brainstorming meeting with the WMCA taskforce with the aim of generating ideas from private and third sector organisations outside Stratford to help strengthen any future bids. The areas to focus on are Stratford's night-time economy (which is very lacking), understanding the town's visitor demographic (seasonal, age etc.), transport and

connectivity across/through the town and animating Bridge Street (creating activity and a sense of place); the latter relates directly to the LUF.

Action: Committee Clerk to include the above focus areas on the July agenda.

Geraldine Collinge thanked John for setting up the meeting and stressed the importance of animating the town centre. It is clear that Henley Street in the evening is not busy, despite being pedestrianised. Bridge Street is a large space and could look very empty, once pedestrianised, if no activity is planned or resourced in this area. Another workshop will be held to look further into the Stratford Town Trust project at the rear of Henley Street.

John Careford advised that the town centre benchmarking data will be published on the SDC website.

4. Communications update (Advent Communications)

Sam Jackson confirmed that the preferred Strategic Partnership logo had been refined and the final design agreed (featuring the quill and the river).

Two domain names are being registered for the Partnership: stratfordstrategicpartnership.co.uk and a shortened version, stratford-sp.co.uk.

An update on the public consultation, including a quote from Geraldine, has been published in the Herald. Sam noted that WCC are keeping Advent in the loop when planning their media activity and this is helping to ensure that the Partnership's role is communicated effectively. Both the Observer and the Herald are increasingly interested in the Partnership's work and public awareness is growing accordingly.

Advent have reviewed the Benchmarking Audit and suggested drafting an article to show how some of the audit's findings reinforce the need for the Strategic Partnership's work e.g. pedestrianisation of Bridge Street/High Street, improving parking, addressing transport issues.

Transport update

Colin Stewart noted that, in January 2022, the Town Transport Group (TTG) put forward a proposal that highlighted various issues and proposed a transport vision that might align with an overall vision for the town. The issues included: piecemeal schemes that do not result in a general improvement in transport; funding issues in relation to the Clopton bridge traffic lights; lack of clarity around the aims/objectives of Birmingham Road; the Western relief road that doesn't connect; ineffective Park & Ride; a Canal Quarter proposal that does not provide strategic access to the canal path.

Frustratingly, the Long Marston garden village is doing a transport study with SDC but in isolation to everything else. There is also a call for potential development sites with no plan to put infrastructure first.

In summary, transport in Stratford-upon-Avon does not work and the town is heading for a transport 'disaster' if nothing is done. The Bridge Street/High Street proposal is a step forward, however. The TTG's plea is that WCC and SDC engage a consultant to do a sustainable transport study so that a plan can be developed. The Strategic Partnership's support is needed to help move things forward.

Cllr Vos agreed that the Partnership must not shy away from the transport issue. He noted that WCC and SDC do not always work to the same agenda in relation to planning and transport; each body has its own agenda. This does not help to address the issues that Colin Stewart mentioned. The Partnership will have to be prepared to grasp the political mettle if progress is to be made.

John Careford commented that SDC is aware of the issues and trying to resolve them. The new Local Development Plan is underway and this has infrastructure and climate change at its core. The ideal is to think differently and holistically, be more proactive e.g. by engaging stakeholders early on in a bid to understand the issues sooner and plan the infrastructure upfront.

He noted that, while the study at Long Marston is focused on this area specifically, he hopes that the outcomes and recommendations will be applied across the district. He also advised that SDC is working to understand where potential development sites are being put forward and is engaging early with WCC to resolve issues. A Steering Group has been set up for the South Warwickshire Local Development Plan and stakeholders are being engaged.

5. Any Other Business

There was none.

*The next meeting of the Strategic Partnership will be on
Thursday 16 June at 2pm on Zoom.*