

# TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

THURSDAY 17 JUNE

2PM

Held remotely on Zoom

MINUTES

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## **Present:**

**Accessible Stratford** represented by Elizabeth Dixon

**BID** represented by Lindsey Armstrong

**Royal Shakespeare Company** represented by Geraldine Collinge (Chair)

**Shakespeare's England** represented by Helen Peters

**Stratford-upon-Avon District Council** represented by Cllr J Fradgley, Julie Lewis

**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 David Ayton-Hill, Aaron Corsi, Cllr Kate Rolfe and Stephen Rumble

**Advent Communications** represented by Sam Jackson

**Observers:** The Mayor, Cllr Kevin Taylor; Cllr Tony Jackson

**Clerk:** Margo Galvin

## **Apologies:**

Apologies for absence were received from Tim Aucott (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust); John Scampion (Stratford Society); John Stacey (Bell Court); Helen Peters (Shakespeare's England)

## **1. Welcome and introductions**

The Chair welcomed the new Mayor, Cllr Kevin Taylor, Sam Jackson from Advent Communications and Lindsey Armstrong, temporarily representing Stratford BID, to the meeting. Sam will be a regular attendee from now on.

The Mayor expressed his great interest in the Strategic Partnership Group and his intention to attend as many meetings as possible.

## **2. Minutes from previous meetings held on 22 April 2021 and 13 May 2021.**

The minutes from these meetings were noted and accepted.

## **3. Update on the SDC application for the Levelling Up fund**

Julie Lewis advised that Tony Perks is working on the District Council's application for the Levelling Up fund. This is the Gateway project discussed at the Strategic Partnership meeting on 13 May. The District Council plans to issue a press release once the bid has been submitted. The deadline for submissions is noon on Friday 18 June.

Sara Aspley asked whether, if the bid were successful, funding might be awarded to part or all of the submission. Julie Lewis advised that funding would probably be awarded to either all of the submission or none; it would be considered as a single bid. Aaron Corsi advised that the recent successful Leamington Spa 'Future High Street' funding award was not for the full amount requested.

The Chair acknowledged that a lot of good work had been done to develop the bid. Julie Lewis stated that there will be other Levelling Up funding opportunities if the current submission was unsuccessful, but the advice had been to apply to the first round. It is hoped that the final submission can be circulated to the Strategic Partnership in due course.

## **4. Update on Town Centre plans**

Stephen Rumble noted that the Levelling Up funding opportunity has accelerated the work that PJA were commissioned to undertake on producing initial concept ideas for the Bridge Street/High Street project and developing a preferred option. It was noted that a great deal of work still needs to be done post submission to take the preferred option forward, especially around design and public engagement.

He also stated that the Bridge Street/High Street scheme plan had evolved while it was being developed for the bid. Sharing the current proposed plan onscreen with the Group, he explained that the bus stops have now been retained and the promenade area at the bottom of the street has been narrowed. Another change is that High Street will be closed to traffic from 11am to 4pm. Traffic modelling has confirmed that there would be minimal difference in impact between 1-way and 2-way traffic. The other noticeable change is the inclusion of Union Street in the scheme, and a proposed left turn only onto Guild Street. It was acknowledged that, during town events, bus operators may need to turn right out of Union Street onto Guild Street and this needs to be considered as part of the scheme.

It was confirmed that parking in Union Street would be Blue Badge only; there would be no parking in Bridge Street. It is likely that taxis would be able to use

bus stops in Bridge Street as dropping-off points. These, and other questions, will need to be resolved as the plan develops.

Cllr Rolfe noted that the plan should try to address the issue of buses idling in Bridge Street. Stephen Rumble advised that conversations had taken place with Stagecoach as the street design was being developed to understand how the buses currently use Bridge Street. He acknowledged that this is a challenge and that the scheme will have to retain some space in Bridge Street so that buses can continue to provide their services. The Mayor advised that Stagecoach and Johnsons are discussing electric buses with Arrival Ltd., leading providers of electric vehicles. Both organisations have a long-term plan to convert to fully electric vehicles, which are much smaller than those currently used in towns and cities.

Colin Stewart stated that the Bridge Street/High Street scheme will need to address parking issues up front and clearly communicate alternative parking facilities through clear signage. It was acknowledged that parking will be a key issue arising from the scheme. Cllr Fradgley noted that the multi-storey car park on the gyratory would be the obvious car park for people wanting to access the Bridge Street area of the town. The walk from the car park to Bridge Street could be made more attractive. Parking at the other side of the town would need to be considered.

The Mayor advised that he has been communicating with Brenda Puech who pioneered the use of parklets in Hackney, the first area in the UK to adopt this idea. He will share information about this scheme with the Strategic Partnership; this could be useful for the High Street project. Sara Aspley confirmed that the Town Trust would be very supportive of parklets in the High Street and suggested these could eventually be devolved to local neighbourhoods and communities. Brenda Puech will be attending the July Town Council meeting to share further information. The Chair stated it would be worth presenting this concept to the Strategic Partnership in due course.

The Chair thanked the Group for working so hard on the Bridge Street/High Street project proposal for the funding bid, noting that this had been a very fast turnaround. The funding submission has the support of all the Strategic Partnership Group member organisations. Some of the organisations have also provided their own letters of support as part of the submission. It is expected that an announcement about funding awards will be made in the autumn. Stephen Rumble noted that, in the interim, work should continue on developing the proposal so that it can be shared with key stakeholders and the public.

## **5. Programme prioritisation discussion and next steps**

The Group split into two breakout sessions, led by the Chair and Colin Stewart, to discuss how to prioritise the Neighbourhood Plan projects should the Levelling Up funding application be successful. It was noted that prioritising the projects is not straightforward given that several of them impact on each other. The two groups identified the priorities as follows:

### **Group 1** (led by Colin Stewart)

- Bridge Street/High Street
- Greenhill Street (ties in with parking)
- Town centre traffic and how this should be dealt with (including Rother Street traffic flow)
- Gateway / Birmingham Road
- Tramway (and river crossings in general, including access for cyclists and pedestrians)
- Getting a coach termination point

### **Group 2** (led by the Chair)

- **Environment:** Cllr Fradgley noted that the work of the Climate Change group might feed into some of the Neighbourhood Plan project priorities. She will investigate further and report back to the Partnership.
- **Parking:** the parking work that Stephen Rumble has begun will help to deliver the Bridge Street/High Street project.
- **Park & Ride scheme** - this needs to work better to help reduce traffic into the town centre; it also needs to be communicated effectively. The scheme can support disabled access into the town as many people with disabilities can use the Park & Ride service.
- **Greenhill Street deliveries** - work needs to be done to manage the timing of deliveries.
- **Cycling into town** - some of this will be delivered by the Riverside project. Additionally, there could be a cycle route along with the pedestrian route from Bridgeway into the town centre.

**Action:** The Chair proposed that she and Colin Stewart should discuss the priorities further and then bring back to the group for further discussion. She noted that it will be very important to consider who will sponsor and own the various priority projects to enable them to be delivered.

## **6. Communications update**

The Chair had spoken briefly to Adam Dent at Advent Communications. It was agreed that a follow-up meeting should be arranged to discuss communications strategy in full. Proposed attendees: Advent Communications, Geraldine Collinge and Margo Galvin. Aaron Corsi offered his support to this group. **Action owner:** Margo Galvin.

The Chair noted that part of the communications work should include a prospectus for Stratford based on the work already done on the Vision for the town. This should be an online document that highlights the town's priority projects and explains how these changes will be effected to ensure Stratford retains its popularity with both residents and visitors.

Sam Jackson of Advent Communications provided an update on Bridge Street/High Street communications. He confirmed that the latest press release about the forthcoming Levelling Up funding application had resulted in a front-page story in the Herald.

It was noted that Stratford District Council is preparing a press release to confirm that a bid has been submitted to the Levelling Up fund for the Gateway project. Advent will draft a similar release about the Bridge Street/High Street submission. It was agreed that the release should include the amount of funding requested since this will soon become public knowledge. The release should also stress that there is more work to be done on the Bridge Street/High Street project which will involve a range of organisations across the town and include a public consultation. The two press releases should be coordinated to ensure they are issued at the same time. **Action:** Aaron Corsi agreed to oversee this.

Cllr Vos noted that one of the key themes of the bid is that it is the result of excellent collaboration between the local authorities, Stratford attractions and other organisations that comprise the Strategic Partnership. This will be an important message to bring out in any communications as people may be swift to criticise the funding bid. The Chair noted that it will be possible to anticipate the types of criticisms that might arise based on feedback generated by the Covid project.

## **7. AOB**

Colin Stewart asked what can be done to manage traffic during the summer months, especially at weekends and Bank Holidays; this is already causing problems in the town. Cllrs Rolfe and Fradgley advised that they have met with the County Council to discuss the issue. Park and Ride, signage and alternative parking are currently being looked at and the Cllrs will report back to the Strategic Partnership in due course.

The Chair thanked the Group for a very fruitful meeting.

## **8. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Strategic Partnership Group will be on **Thursday 15 July 2021 at 2pm** via Zoom.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm.