

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Thursday 23 May 2024 at 2pm

Held at Elizabeth House, Stratford-upon-Avon and online via Teams

MINUTES Pages 1-6

Present:

Accessible Stratford represented by Elizabeth Dixon

BID/Bell Court represented by Rich Jones (attended online)

Royal Shakespeare Company represented by Rachel Sharpe and Natasha Goodge

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council represented by Caroline Nash (Vice Chair) and Cllr R Vos

Stratford District Council represented by John Careford, Cllr George Cowcher and Cllr J Fradgley (attended online)

The Stratford Society represented by John Scampion

Stratford Town Trust represented by Sara Aspley (Chair)

Town Transport Group represented by Mark Haselden on behalf of Colin Stewart

Warwickshire County Council represented by Aaron Corsi, Catherine Marks, Aoife O'Gorman and Cllrs Kate Rolfe (attended online) and Tim Sinclair.

Clerk to the Strategic Partnership: Margo Galvin

Also in attendance: Cllr Lindsay MacDonald (Stratford Town Council Observer)

Apologies for absence: Tim Aucott and Rachael North (SBT)

Not present: Darren Tosh (Shakespeare's England), Stephen Rumble and Dave Ayton-Hill, (Warwickshire County Council), Joanne Bozdoghali (Stratford District Council).

The Chair welcomed Natasha (RSC) and Mark Haselden to the meeting.

1. Minutes, actions and matters arising from the meeting held on 21 March 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2024 were approved.

2. Matters and Arising and Action Points

BID update: The BID is waiting for the Secretary of State's response to the BID's right to reply in respect of the recent challenge that was raised. It is not known if a response will be received before the General Election.

The BID has tendered for the summer planting scheme around the town and the planters have all been replanted. The BID has also tendered for the two-day

Food and Drink Festival to be held over the late May Bank Holiday weekend. LSD will be the supplier for the food stalls. Looking ahead, the BID will work with the Town Council on the Christmas lights switch on.

Candidates have been interviewed for the role of BID Manager and it is hoped that an announcement can be made if there is a positive outcome from the challenge.

3. UKSPF and REPF applications submitted by partners

Applications will be discussed at Cabinet w/c 29th May, and announcements are expected soon. The following applications were pertinent to the Strategic Partnership:

- Shopmobility seek funding to replace equipment (mainly mobility scooters) inherited from SDC which is no longer fit for purpose.
- STT applied to the REPF to support the renovation of the building at the rear of Henley Street which is intended to become a social enterprise shared workspace/creativity hub.
- The Town Council applied for ambient lighting for the Waterside trees for late summer evenings as part of a placemaking exercise (this was turned down).
- SDC applied for funding for digital footfall counters. These will be able to read the serial numbers of mobile phones connected to WiFi and track the routes people take around the town in order to better understand footfall.

<p>Action 1: 23.05.24 - JC to send details of the type, number, operation and positioning of the footfall counters to the Committee Clerk for circulation to Partnership members.</p>
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4. SWLP Working Group principles and priorities and Strategic Projects matrix

John Scampion formally presented the Group's report, noting the following in relation to the Partnership's submission to the SWLP:

The submission will be in two parts:

- A matrix setting out the Partnership's strategic priorities for inclusion in the preferred options stage of the SWLP. It was recommended that these priorities be submitted to the Town, District and County Councils requesting that they be formally supported and, once agreed, there should be public consultation on them.

- A paper setting out general and specific principles by location of potential development which the Strategic Partnership believes should be considered and implemented, dependent on the options chosen. (The paper was circulated to Partnership members before the meeting.) It is accepted that these wider considerations will extend beyond the Partnership's obvious remit. However, the outcomes of the SWLP will have an impact on the centre of Stratford and therefore will be relevant to the Partnership. The work done by the Town Transport Group on producing the paper has been extremely helpful.

It is recommended that the matrix and the paper be submitted to SDC by the Strategic Partnership Chair with a request for further dialogue.

After a brief discussion, the following points were noted:

- General Principles – transportation policies: it was agreed that an additional point should be included concerning the preservation of Stratford's heritage buildings e.g. minimising the flow of heavy traffic over Clopton Bridge.

Action 2: 23.05.24 – JS to add a point to the Transport Policies bullet point in the paper's Principles and Priorities section concerning the need to preserve Stratford's heritage buildings.

- The paper will be re-ordered slightly to group all like-minded items together.
- The overall aspiration is to achieve a Masterplan or Strategic Vision document for Stratford upon Avon. For reference see <https://transformingleamington.co.uk> .

5. Strategic Projects Action Log progress updates

Public Toilets review: Elizabeth Dixon thanked the Town Council for their assistance with carrying out the review. She noted that baby change facilities are available in the accessible toilets and that the town now has two Changing Places toilets, one at the Leisure Centre and one at Bell Court.

It was noted that a potential 'gap' toilet provision might be in the Wood Street / Henley area.

In terms of usage it was noted that when large events take place in Stratford, the shops' toilets can become over-used as often no additional temporary toilet facilities are provided. The Town Clerk commented that extra cleaning takes places during large events and public toilets stay open for longer. It was suggested that extra toilet provision should be considered as part of the contract issued to organisers of large events.

Everyone thanked ED for her work so far. Partnership members agreed that this had been a very helpful exercise.

An extension to the review was considered to include number of toilets by user group together with the opening/closing times of the toilets.

Action 3: 23.05.24 – ED to research number of toilets by user group and toilet opening/closing times and bring her findings back to the next meeting.

Arts and culture strategy: Rachel Sharpe advised that a cross-organisational group has been set up to develop an arts and culture strategy for the Partnership. Cllr Tim Sinclair will be the Partnership's sponsor for this work. A workshop will take place on Wednesday 12 June at the Town Hall to start building consensus on the strategy. All Partnership members are invited. After the workshop an online session will be held with a selected group of attendees to refine the visions and ambitions. This will result in a report that Rachel will bring back to the Partnership at a future meeting.

It was agreed that a lot of work will be required to develop the strategy which will build both form and confidence around the town's cultural aspirations and involve many local organisations

Rachel had met with Tony Perks to consider how the strategy, once developed, should be embedded in and taken forward with the Local Plan.

Youth Hub: Sara Aspley advised that around 130 people had attended the launch of the new Hub on 26 April. It is a huge achievement that there is now a building dedicated to young people in the town. The Hub is open access, with no referrals needed. An Operations Manager has been appointed to extend the Hub's reach and function. A report on the Hub's progress will be brought to a future Partnership meeting.

6. High Street pilot

The implementation of a pilot will depend on the timing of the programme of work to develop the old Debenhams building. It had been hoped to run this during June/July before the demolition and construction work starts. However, after considering the many practicalities of closing High Street, it was felt that this timeframe would not work given the lead times needed for purchasing and installing barriers and the impact of the other highways works scheduled in and around the town over the summer.

WCC stressed that this is a live project and it was a question of when, not if, a pedestrianisation/road closure pilot would take place.

Rich Jones is working closely with WCC and SDC to keep both Local Authorities apprised of the latest programme of works. In the background, work will continue to understand how the pilot can be implemented and a further update will be shared with the Partnership when more detail is available. This includes a detailed budget for the work to enable funding to be sought.

The proposed pilot will encourage more space-led activity in the town centre. Local organisations are being approached to see how activities can be introduced onto the street when it is closed.

A discussion followed and the following points were noted:

- It is important to understand exactly what is being piloted and how success will be measured.
- Timing of the pilot is important. Rushing into it may create negative feedback.
- From an Arts and Culture perspective, the delay in running the pilot will provide more time to consider how High Street could be used during the closure.
- The impact of the proposed pilot of closure on High Street shops should be carefully considered. Many units on High Street are vacant and there is concern from shop owners about the impact the construction work will have on their business.
- WCC stressed that there are many practical issues to be considered in relation to a pilot scheme. For example, traffic diversions need to be planned. Once the programme of building work is known, WCC will be better able to agree the timing and operation of the pilot to maximise success.

<p>Action 4: 23.05.24 – CM and AC to bring an update on the High Street pilot back to the next SSP meeting.</p>
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7. Stratford Paint Festival

Ali Glover and Kate Cox have received funding to run a small festival this year and a plan is in place. Four wall locations have been identified in the town centre and the installation is scheduled for July.

The RSC would like to offer the project access to the RSC's collection of art, props and costumes for research purposes.

If a festival is planned for 2025, it is recommended that the organisers start planning in October /November 2024.

8. Draft Integrated Transport Plan

The draft Integrated Transport Plan has been discussed in detail at two TTG meetings. The TGG approved the plan on 9 May.

It has also been discussed with both the SDC portfolio holder, who sits on the TTG, and the Head of Planning at SDC who provided some helpful feedback.

In addition to the County Councillors already represented on the TTG, there still needs to be further engagement with WCC.

The next step is to present the plan to a wider audience, including the Partnership, and seek their buy in. It is really important that the Partnership endorses the plan and this will be an opportunity to go through it in detail. The aim is for this to take place between 24 June and 12th July.

The significance of this plan should not be underestimated as it is an opportunity for local stakeholders to help shape the town for decades to come. It is therefore essential that Partnership members attend the presentation.

It was agreed that Colin Stewart should meet with separately with WCC in addition to a wider presentation to SSP members and other stakeholders.

<p>Action 5: 23.05.24 – CS to suggest a date/time to present the draft Integrated Transport Plan to the Strategic Partnership. The Committee Clerk will circulate the details.</p>

9. Strategic Partnership website

The Town Clerk recently met with the SDC web team who are currently working on some designs for the Partnership's new website. These will be circulated before the next Partnership meeting for discussion so that the project can get under way. This work is being funded by the Town and District Councils.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The date of the next meeting will be Thursday 18th July, 2pm-4pm, via Zoom