

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Thursday 19th January at 2pm

Held via Zoom

MINUTES Pages 1-6

Present:

Accessible Stratford represented by Elizabeth Dixon

Bell Court represented by Holly Woodhead

Royal Shakespeare Company represented by Emma Gibbons and Rachel Sharpe

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust represented by Tim Aucott

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council represented by the Town Clerk

Stratford District Council represented by Joanne Bozdoganli, also attended by Cllr Jenny Fradgley

Stratford Town Trust represented by Sara Aspley (Chair)

Town Transport Group represented by Colin Stewart

Warwickshire County Council represented by Dave-Ayton-Hill, Aaron Corsi, Catherine Marks and also attended by Cllrs Kate Rolfe and Tim Sinclair. Aoife O’Gorman attended as an observer.

Advent Communications represented by Sam Jackson.

Clerk to the Strategic Partnership: Margo Galvin

Apologies for absence: Stephen Rumble (Warwickshire County Council), John Scampion (Stratford society and Vice Chair), John Careford and Cllr Anne Parry, (Stratford District Council), Cllrs Gill Cleeve, Tony Jackson and Richard Vos (Stratford Town Council), Rachael North (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust), Helen Peters (Shakespeare’s England), Dianne Mansell (Stratford Upon Avon BID).

1. Welcome

The Chair welcome Aoife O’Gorman to the meeting as an observer. Aoife is a member of Catherine Marks’ team at WCC and will provide support to the Partnership (see item 3.3 below).

2. Actions and Minutes from the meeting held on 15 December 2022

Most of the actions had already been completed; Matters Arising to be covered in the agenda.

The Clerk noted that some minor corrections had been made to the minutes, which were then approved.

3. LUF update

Stratford was unsuccessful in the second round of LUF, announced by the Government on 19th January. Dave Ayton-Hill will try to obtain feedback. Around 500 applications had been submitted, of which 101 were successful (see [Levelling Up Fund Round 2: explanatory note on the assessment and decision-making process - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/levelling-up-fund-round-2-explanatory-note-on-the-assessment-and-decision-making-process)). Several of the successful bids were linked to a larger master plan/regeneration vision, highlighting Stratford's need for an overall plan to strengthen the town's future funding applications. The Government announcement indicated there may be a third round of LUF, although no timescale was mentioned. The end date for spending LUF funding is 2025, so the timing of a third round would be tight. If Stratford applies again, a different approach will be needed.

The Chair noted that the deadline for submitting UK Shared Prosperity Fund bids is Friday 27 January 2023. The funding award is a Local Authority/District-led decision. If Stratford town receives funding, this could be used as leverage for a future bid. The Strategic Partnership should discuss further.

4. Future structure of the Strategic Partnership:

4.1 - Vision/master planning feedback from Partnership members on best practice in other UK towns

The Chair thanked Emma Gibbons, John Scampion and Colin Stewart for their work on this, which is summarised below.

Colchester - a similar size to Stratford District; recently awarded city status.

- The city has a cultural strategy, developed in 2022, and a master plan.
- The City's creative partnership *Creative Colchester Partnership* <https://creativecolchester.org.uk> is chaired by Hana Loftus who is happy to talk to Stratford's Strategic Partnership. The Creative Colchester Partnership has acted mainly as a consulted client during the development of the city's strategy and plan. It was felt that although these had not been as effective as hoped, they were still a worthwhile investment.
- Culture and heritage are central to Colchester's planning and the town has chosen to work with consultants who are very culturally and socially engaged.
- Hana's advice to Stratford: consider how our commissioning group depends on the role we want our master plan to have in planning and transport frameworks.

Lowestoft - a seaside town, smaller than Stratford District.

- The town has created several documents, commissioned through East Suffolk Council (Helen Johnson, Culture and Heritage Programme Manager – who is happy to talk to Stratford). It is now delivering its cultural

strategy and investment plan, for which it received substantial Levelling Up funding.

- Lowestoft has a Place Board (required for receiving Levelling Up funding). This is a large decision-making body that approves the plans and has a very varied membership.
- There is a separate cultural leadership group who act mainly as ambassadors and hold the cultural strategy accountable. They are actively consulted.

Kendal – Lake District’s largest town, with a population similar to Stratford town

- Early 2000’s: a decline in the town’s economic activity and concerns about an increasingly out-dated public realm.
- 2008: a partnership, Kendal Futures, was formed to address these problems. Some funding was provided, mainly by the three Local Authorities.
- Around 5 years ago, South Lakeland District Council injected £285k into a vision for the town, and to invigorate the partnership. Activities increased and the Futures employed a Vision manager and another member of staff. Continued Local Authority investment has enabled them to carry out significant public realm improvements.
- A notable initiative is the re-purposing of Kendal’s department store, Beales, which has been re-established with individual stores and cafes. This was the result of a private financial initiative which the Futures partnership supported. It is suggested that the Strategic Partnership researches its set-up and ongoing management process.
- There are parallels to be drawn between Kendal and Stratford.

See following documents/links for further information:

- *Placemaking Case Studies: Colchester and Lowestoft* (Emma Gibbons presentation – attached with these minutes)
- Kendal (John Scampion notes – attached with these minutes)

Colchester links: [Colchester Cultural Strategy](#)
[City Centre Masterplan](#)
<https://creativecolchester.org.uk/>

Lowestoft links: [Lowestoft Town Investment Plan](#)
[Lowestoft Story](#)
[Lowestoft Cultural Strategy](#)
[Lowestoft Place Board](#)
[Place Board Membership](#)

Kendal link: <https://visit-Kendal.co.uk>

Visioning and master plan documents research (Colin Stewart)

Colin had spoken to colleagues at Arup, which manages the Towns Fund on behalf of the Government. Arup provided expertise and help to towns that did not have the capability themselves to bid for Towns funding. They advised as follows on the three main points raised in Colin's discussion:

Examples of making a change that worked: Case studies of changes made in 22 towns can be found in the attached Arup document *Towns Fund - Our Town Stories*. See also [Additional Topics — townsfund.org.uk](https://townsfund.org.uk)

While example projects vary from town to town, all the towns included big visions and headline statements in their Towns Fund proposals. Stratford can learn from this.

The structure that towns had in place to do this: Under the terms of the Towns Fund, towns receiving funding must have a Town Board in place consisting of public and private partners. The Chair must be from the private sector and the Local Authority must be the accountable body. While Town Board dynamics and performance vary from town to town, the public/private sector approach is seen as beneficial.

The key stages of delivery - in addition to the bid process, the following are required for Town's Fund funding:

- Business case – confirms the projects to be taken forward and provides a business case for delivery
- Town investment plan – prepared by the Town Board and submitted to the Government for the next stage of funding.

Colin noted that a lot of work is being done in Kent; Dover, Canterbury and Folkestone all received LUF funding. In Folkestone work is underway to regenerate the harbour and seafront. This stems from a private investor. Kingston has also been successful in generating external and private investment.

Catherine Marks noted that a Towns Board had been formed in Nuneaton. Nuneaton is very focused on delivering the town investment plan but it has not brought in the wider Transforming Nuneaton programme, which is overseen by a separate programme board. It was noted that Towns Boards were set up as a requirement for accessing Towns Funding and must follow a specific model. It will be interesting to see if Boards survive once individual towns have delivered their funded programmes.

4.2 Feedback from Rachel Sharpe re 'What's the Point of Creative Placemaking?'

In December the RSC ran an Open Space event: 'What's the Point of Creative Placemaking?' in conjunction with the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, West Midlands Arts Connect and Improbable Theatre. Thirty-five national and regional cultural organisations took part. The event's main theme was 'How do organisations give power over to the people they serve and what processes are necessary to do this?' Attendees and other organisations, including the Strategic

Partnership, will be invited to join an Open Space in 2023 to create a national creative placemaking network.

The Chair noted that a very successful Open Space session was held at The Playhouse just before the pandemic with the theme of 'What does Stratford-upon-Avon mean to you?'

4.3 Support from WCC – Catherine Marks

WCC have offered Officer support from Catherine Marks' team (Aoife O'Gorman) to help the Partnership develop its visioning work. Catherine and Aoife will meet with the Chair and Cllr Sinclair after this meeting to discuss next steps and work up a brief for Aoife. The brief will be circulated before the February Partnership meeting and will be added to the agenda.

A question was raised about the possibility of CIL funding being apportioned to support the Strategic Partnership's work. It was noted that, although SDC can allocate funding to projects, these usually have to deliver infrastructure, so the Partnership may not be eligible. It was felt that the Partnership must try different things and perhaps use the CIL application process as a start point.

It was noted that the Town Council had contributed a considerable amount of money to getting the Strategic Partnership off the ground; Partnership organisations had also contributed. Funding is needed to support the ongoing vision work. The three Councils should think creatively about how this work is supported.

5. Feedback from Workshop 4: 'Ease of Movement' held on 10th January

Cllr Sinclair provided an update on the final workshop, which looked at Transport. This session discussed and concurred with the work done by the Town Transport Group. Cllr Sinclair will combine the outputs of the four sessions and circulate the updated slides.

Next steps will be to prioritise projects from the 20-30 key initiatives identified across the four sessions and create a simple prospectus to go out for public consultation. It was suggested that Oife could help with prioritising these initiatives. One approach might be to map the benefits of each project against the ease and cost of delivery.

Rachel Sharpe advised that the RSC will be doing some R&D work in relation to a potential town festival and will discuss further with Cllr Sinclair offline.

6. Transport Plan/Cycle Forum/Town Transport Group update

Colin Stewart advised that all TTG notes, minutes and papers are available at [Stratford-upon-Avon Town Transport Group \(stratford-tc.gov.uk\)](http://stratford-upon-Avon Town Transport Group (stratford-tc.gov.uk))

Key topics at the January TTG meeting were dissuading traffic from coming into town and Park and Ride. This is of concern because work will soon start on the

Birmingham Road to change the traffic flow in and out of town. This will result in two lanes of traffic coming into town, and one going out. It does nothing to encourage people to use P&R and does not reflect what is in the NDP. It is symptomatic of not having a wider strategic plan for Stratford.

The next TTG meeting will be devoted to discussing the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP). The consultation period is short (deadline for responses is 6th March) and the Strategic Partnership should take a view. A summary document about the SWLP prepared by Aoife will be circulated with these minutes. See also <https://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp/>

Action 1 29.01.23: <u>ALL</u> to review the SWLG summary document and be prepared to discuss at the Partnership meeting on 23 February.
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Cycle Forum update: Cllr Fradgley advised that a Cycle Liaison meeting will take place at WCC on 20th January. An update will be provided at the February Strategic Partnership meeting.

7. Communications

LUF bid: Advent Communications has prepared a holding statement to use in the event of any press enquiries regarding Stratford's unsuccessful funding bid. The Chair will discuss this with Dave Ayton-Hill at WCC.

Strategic Partnership website: Consideration needs to be given to the content of the new website. Sam Jackson will meet with the Chair to start scoping this work.

SWLP: the Strategic Partnership's line on the SWLP needs to be agreed before the February meeting.

8. Any Other Business

The Chair noted that Stratford Upon Avon BID is preparing for the BID revote which will take place in September. There is a lot of crossover between the work of the Strategic Partnership and the BID so it would be helpful for Diane Mansell to present at either the February or March Partnership meeting.

The next Strategic Partnership meeting will be in-person only at the Town Hall on Thursday 23 February, 2pm – 3.30pm.