

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Thursday 21 March 2024 at 2pm

Held via Zoom

MINUTES Pages 1-7

Present:

Accessible Stratford represented by Elizabeth Dixon

BID/Bell Court represented by Rich Jones

Royal Shakespeare Company represented by Rachel Sharpe

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust represented by Tim Aucott

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

The Stratford Society represented by John Scampion

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, Aoife O'Gorman and Cllrs Kate Rolfe and Tim Sinclair.

Clerk to the Strategic Partnership: Margo Galvin

Also in attendance:

Cllr Lindsay MacDonald (Stratford Town Council Observer)

Apologies for absence: Darren Tosh (Shakespeare's England) Rachel North (SBT)

Not present: Stephen Rumble (Warwickshire County Council), Joanne Bozdognali (Stratford District Council) and Emma Gibbons.

The Chair gave a vote of thanks to Emma Gibbons who will soon leave the RSC, and therefore the Partnership, to start a new role as Strategic Partnership Manager with You.Smart.Thing. Rachel Sharpe will pass on the Partnership's thanks to Emma for all her enthusiasm, commitment and hard work over the last couple of years.

1. Minutes, actions and matters arising from the meeting held on 18 January 2024

The following points were noted:

Minute item 9: The Chair thanked Elizabeth Dixon for conducting the review of Public Toilet provision. This topic will be brought back to the May meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024 were then approved.

Matters Arising from the minutes of 18 January 2024

At the meeting in May, there will be a presentation from Gary Stephens (Marrons) regarding a proposal for development.

It was agreed that Strategic Project updates on Arts & Culture Strategy, the Youth Hub and the review of Public Toilet Provision would be moved to the May meeting agenda.

All were invited to attend the Vision and Ambition session towards the development of an Arts and Culture Strategy on 12th June, 1pm-5pm, Stratford Town Hall. More to follow from Rachel Sharpe.

Cllr Rolfe requested an update on the proposed Stratford Paint festival at the next meeting. The Chair will action this.

Rich Jones advised that, following the successful re-vote for Stratforward, a BID Manager will now be recruited. Tenders have been sent out for the proposed Food Festival and other options are being considered for the Car Festival.

2. South Warwickshire Local Plan working group report – John Scampion, Colin Stewart and Cllr Tim Sinclair

John Scampion gave an overview of the SSP's response to the SWLP and group which has been convened. Three papers were circulated to the group:

1. A report summarising the working group's approach and its recommendations for the Partnership's SWLP submission to SDC.
2. A strategic projects matrix setting out the Partnership's priorities for inclusion in the preferred options stage of the SWLP.
3. A discussion paper outlining principles and priorities which the working group believes should be implemented in relation to the long-term options for locating new development across the Stratford and Warwick Districts.

Points to note on the above:

The Report:

- The Partnership is taking a short-medium term view of potential development across the Stratford district. However, the SWLP runs to 2050.
- The working group had therefore agreed that it would not submit a response to the longer-term development of the district but would consider this separately and present its thoughts to the Strategic Partnership as a discussion paper.

The Matrix (presented by Tim Sinclair):

- The Partnership's 24 key strategic projects across the four themes were cross-referenced with the areas and aspects set out in SDC's SWLP. From this work, it was agreed that all of the projects were within the scope of SDC's plan and they also linked back to the objectives, policies and projects of the NDP.
- In recommending this matrix, the Partnership also advocates that it should be submitted to the Town, District and County Councils requesting their formal support.
- Once support has been obtained there should be some form of public engagement.

Questions were invited on the matrix and the following points were noted:

- It was agreed that this was a great piece of work and very helpful.
- Cross-referencing the matrix with the relevant NDP sections: this did not seem particularly easy since the NDP is such a large document. To help with this Colin Stewart has produced a summary paper that allows easy referencing against the main document.

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| <p>Action 1: 21.03.24 - CS to forward the summary paper to the Committee Clerk for circulation to the Partnership.</p> |
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- It was proposed and agreed that a submission to the Town, District and County Councils should be drafted and circulated to Partnership members for review. The Chair should submit this to the three councils on the Partnership's behalf.
- It was felt that public engagement could be achieved through a low-cost communication campaign to incorporate the new Partnership website, press and social media activity and informal drop-in sessions at the Town Hall.
- There was concern that there is a mix of micro and macro-Strategic Projects with some requiring substantial planning and funding. This is likely to prompt questions that the Partnership cannot currently answer.
- It was noted that there will be potential HS2 money available in the future which could fund at least one of the cornerstone priority projects e.g. Bridge Street/High Street or the transport feasibility study. Cllr Sinclair advised that there will be £203.7m of funding available across Warwickshire over 7 years which would equate to c£40m for Stratford. The town should be ready to pitch for as much of this funding as possible.

The discussion paper: (presented by Colin Stewart)

The SWLP Issues and Options Consultation report identified options for locating new developments across Stratford and Warwick Districts. Many of these could have a significant impact on Stratford-upon-Avon. In working towards a strategy for the town, the Strategic Partnership has identified principles and priorities which it believes should be considered and implemented, dependent on the options chosen. The paper sets out:

- strategic general principles
- specific principles by location of potential development for discussion/endorsement by the Strategic Partnership

It was proposed that a separate session is held to discuss this further.

Questions were then invited on the discussion paper and the following points were noted:

- The discussion paper will form part of the Partnership's SWLP submission to the three local authorities.
- WCC supports the two Council's work on their respective plans and is in discussion with them about the options available to meet their transport requirements.
- It was felt that it is essential to get infrastructure (roads, bridges, connectivity etc.) in place as part of the Masterplan. However, it is also important to ensure community cohesion through the provision of suitable facilities.
- Cllr Cowcher recognised that infrastructure should be in place before housing is built.
- Colin Stewart commented that it is a question of balance, and creating neighbourhoods is key. Providing infrastructure is not easy but it can be done; transport is needed upfront.
- It was noted that the discussion paper makes no reference to affordable or accessible housing which should be included.

Next steps

John Scampion concluded that the discussion had been very helpful. A further version of the document will now be produced and circulated to the Partnership for review at the May meeting

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| <p>Action 2: 21.03.24 - ALL: please send any further comments on the above to John Scampion</p> |
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Action 3: 21.03.24 - JS/TS/CS to update the discussion paper and bring it back to the May Partnership meeting

3. High Street/Bridge Street update

Catherine Marks (WCC) provided the following update:

- WCC has assessed how it might run a pilot project to test the principles of prioritising pedestrians by closing High Street to traffic during the day. The timing of the pilot scheme will depend on funding, but it is expected to be a short to medium-term project. A key issue is how the major works being carried out at the former Debenhams site will interfere with the pilot (construction work will start in June and last for 21 months). The question of accessibility was raised given that the pilot will mean the relocation of disabled parking spaces. WCC is considering the options. Elizabeth Dixon volunteered to work with WCC on this. The pilot would support future funding applications since its aim is to prove that closing High Street works. While WCC understands people's frustrations, due process must be followed. If the pilot goes ahead the objectives and next steps should be clearly stated.
- Conversations with SDC are ongoing and WCC will report back to the Partnership on progress.
- The Chair acknowledged that it is important for the Partnership to express its views on the pilot and that it should continue to explore this proposal with WCC. She asked to see the consultation feedback on the LUF application for High Street/Bridge Street.

4. Town Transport Group and Transport Plan update

Colin Stewart (Town Transport Group) noted the following:

- The TTG recently held a well-attended workshop, which included members of the Partnership. The objective was to map a way forward to create a clear transport plan for the town. This would be a basis for funding applications. As stated, Warwickshire is in line for an extra £200m of transport funding over the next few years. The plan would potentially help Stratford obtain a share of this.
- The workshop reviewed the status of transport plans in the town, considered other areas that have achieved funding, and identified priorities and actions. The top priority identified was a bypass for Stratford to get HGVs off Clopton Bridge.
- Concern was expressed that the standard procedures and processes normally in place when designing a bypass do not seem to have been followed in Stratford's case. The TTG supports the idea of engaging a

consultant to draw up a detailed transport plan for the town that *does* follow the procedures and processes. The Group will draft a document proposing this and submit it to WCC.

Questions were invited and the following points noted:

- Funding is needed to produce a full transport plan as the TTG has probably reached its limit in terms of the level of detail it can provide.
- WCC is waiting for government guidance on the local transport fund of £200m. When more information is available the Council will look at funding some work for Stratford.

5. UKSPF and REPF - potential applications from partners

The deadline for funding applications is 9th April. A PowerPoint presentation had been circulated to the Partnership outlining criteria and funding values. As well as UKSPF, Stratford-upon-Avon is eligible for the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF). This consists of capital and revenue and represents the largest tranche of funding over the last three years. Two webinars took place recently about this. The Chair has a recording of the webinar held on 13th March and will circulate the link to anyone interested in viewing this.

Stratford Shopmobility is applying for a share of the SPF to replace the equipment inherited from SDC when the organisation separated from the Council.

There is the potential for some funding for Active Travel initiatives. The Cycle Forum is in discussion with Sustrans to investigate potential funding for one of the cycle routes (Sustrans will manage receipt of any funds awarded.)

The Town Council are considering ideas.

STT had received SPF funding two years ago to start renovation work on the buildings at the rear of Hobsons (referred to as The Old Grain Store). The hope is to develop a social enterprise offer at the site, to encompass arts projects and shared/hot workspace. The Trust is currently considering an application as part of the REPF which might provide a further contribution to the renovation work.

It was confirmed that SPF money has already been earmarked to fund the proposed High St pilot scheme.

6. Strategic Partnership finance/website – Caroline Nash

Following confirmation from SDC, it is proposed that SDC will fund the development of a website for the Partnership. The Town Council will support the hosting costs for the first year. This will give the Partnership a web presence and allow it to swiftly respond to any significant developments requiring further promotion of the Partnership's work.

Further funding for the Partnership will be considered in 2025/26.

7. Strategic Projects action/progress log

It was felt this had been covered adequately under the SWLP working group update.

8. Any Other Business

It was noted that the Park & Ride Sunday services will resume on Sunday 24th March and run between 10:00am and 18:28pm. The Monday to Saturday services will continue to run between 7:30am and 18:28pm. Find more information [here](#).

**The next meeting will take place on
Thursday 23rd May 2pm – 4pm at Elizabeth House, Stratford-upon-Avon**

Please note this will be a hybrid meeting