

# TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Thursday 28 September 2023 at 2pm

Held at the Town Hall

## MINUTES Pages 1-4

### Present:

**Accessible Stratford** represented by Elizabeth Dixon

**Royal Shakespeare Company** represented by Rachel Sharpe

**Stratford Upon Avon BID and Bell Court** (Blue Coast Capital) represented by Rich Jones

**Shakespeare Birthplace Trust** represented by Tim Aucott and Rachael North

**Shakespeare's England** represented by Darren Tosh

**Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council** represented by Cllr R Vos and the Town Clerk; also Cllr L MacDonald (Observer)

**Stratford District Council** represented by John Careford and Cllr George Cowcher

**The Stratford Society** represented by John Scampion (Vice Chair)

**Stratford Town Trust** represented by Sara Aspley (Chair)

**Town Transport Group** represented by Andy List on behalf of Colin Stewart

**Warwickshire County Council** represented by Aaron Coris and Catherine Marks; also attended by Cllr Kate Rolfe and Cllr Tim Sinclair.

**Advent Communications** represented by Sam Jackson

**Clerk to the Strategic Partnership:** Margo Galvin

**Apologies for absence:** Dave Ayton-Hill and Aoife O'Gorman (Warwickshire County Council), Cllr J Fradgley, Emma Gibbons (RSC), Colin Stewart (Town Transport Group).

**Not present:** Stephen Rumble (Warwickshire County Council), Joanne Bozdognali (Stratford District Council)

### 1. Election of Town Centre Strategic Partnership Chair and Deputy Chair

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED** and **AGREED** that Sara Aspley be re-elected as Chair.

It was **PROPOSED, SECONDED** and **AGREED** that Caroline Nash (Town Clerk) be elected as Deputy Chair. The previous Deputy Chair, John Scampion, will remain on the committee.

### 2. Actions and Minutes from the meeting held on 27 July 2023

**Action 1:** 27.7.2023 – Committee Clerk to recirculate the document. Members to review by Friday 4<sup>th</sup> August - COMPLETE.

**Action 2:** 27.7.2023 – Chair to set up a meeting between the main stakeholders of the proposed Stratford Street Art Festival (Stratford Town Council, BID, RSC, Kate Cox and Ali Glover) – a meeting has been arranged for 9<sup>th</sup> October.

### **3. Matters Arising**

Terms of Reference: The Chair asked for any further comments on the updated ToR document which had been circulated before the meeting.

Cllr R Vos commented that the ToR should make it clear who holds funds on behalf of the Partnership (currently this is the Town Council). It was generally felt that item 2.5 in the ToR covers this.

The Chair noted that the Town Council held some funds on behalf of the Partnership at its formation in 2021, but this money is now coming to an end. It was also noted that not all Partnership member organisations have an income and, therefore, cannot contribute.

It was agreed that the agenda for the next Partnership meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> October should include an item on how funds are obtained and where they should be held.

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July were then approved.

### **4. Update on the proposed redevelopment of the former Edinburgh Wool Mill building, Henley Street**

Tim Aucott and Rachael North (SBT) introduced a new project to convert the former Edinburgh Woollen Mill (EWM) shop in Henley Street into a new learning and community hub. This has been driven by the Trust's need to find a new town centre site for its schools programme which was previously based at the Shakespeare Centre.

The EWM building falls within the Trust's estate, making it an ideal site for the project which could transform the top of Henley Street. Plans are still evolving, but the current proposal comprises 350 seats, including a 200-seat ground-floor lecture theatre and break-out areas on the first floor. While the building will primarily serve as a new learning centre, it is hoped that it will also be open to community groups to use after hours.

A feasibility study has been carried out and the local community has been consulted. Local creatives lack suitable space to showcase their work and this project could help solve the issue by providing shop window display space and a gallery. It may also be possible to provide studio space at weekends.

Partnership members agreed that the project is an excellent idea and Tim and Rachael were thanked for their presentation.

## **5. Strategic Partnership website subgroup update**

It was noted that Elizabeth Dixon had volunteered to be a member of this group and should be included in all future communications.

Sam Jackson, Margo Galvin, Emma Gibbons, and Darren Tosh met on 8 September to review the website project and agree on the next steps. It had been agreed that Sam will develop a content plan for the next four to six months to include Partnership project updates, as appropriate, and regular blogs from Partnership members. Sam advised that the new website could potentially be up and running in November.

A discussion followed around the purpose of the website, who it is for and how to raise awareness. Partners agreed that signposting to the SSP website from organisational sites seemed to be the clearest way to illustrate the work of the partner stakeholders along with a programme of simple social media activity attached to specific projects.

After a short discussion about whether a dedicated website was necessary, the Chair reminded the meeting that the Partnership had agreed to have a new website over a year ago and that funding has been put aside for this.

It was noted that a website independent of the stakeholder organisations and specifically the three councils was important in underpinning the neutral and apolitical status of the group.

It was agreed that work should continue on developing the new site. Sam Jackson will communicate a date for the next sub group meeting (subsequently confirmed as 17 October).

## **6. South Warwickshire Local Plan update from working group**

The working group has now met and will meet again on 25 October to continue developing the Partnership's response to the Local Plan. This is an opportunity for the Partnership to request some strong policies in the Local Plan (LP) around what the Partnership wants the town to be.

It was noted that the Preferred Options consultation has been delayed and will now take place at the start of 2024. The intention is to set out the Partnership's response to the consultation by the end of the year.

The Chair noted that SDC is preparing a new Council Plan 2023 -2027. Residents, local businesses, parish and town councils, voluntary groups and partners are being given the chance to help create this new plan as the District Council begins a consultation (see [Council Plan 2023 - 2027 | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#) ). The closing date for comments is 24 October 2023. The Partnership need to consider how it can answer this.

## **7. Strategy Development**

Cllr Sinclair circulated the document '*A Strategy for Stratford*'. This built on previous versions and included the previous work done in the four priority project workshops with Partnership members to develop a strategic action plan for the town. From these workshops a long list of 24 priority projects had been agreed across the four themes. These were organised into an ease/cost benefit matrix resulting in 16 projects that fell within the cost effective, easy to deliver and/or high benefit area. There was also a suggestion regarding which organisation might lead on each project.

A discussion was held and comments / feedback noted. It was agreed that the partnership should quickly identify projects that can be delivered by the partnership organisations. As an example, WCC agreed to look at the project plans for Bridge Street/ High Street to parcel it up into more deliverable sections.

The following next steps were agreed:

- Feedback from the meeting should be reflected in a revised document, including priority projects reframed as actions rather than strategies.
- This work should feed into the South Warwickshire local plan (deadline 25<sup>th</sup> October).
- Further discussion regarding the prioritisation of the 24 projects should take place at the next meeting.

## **8. Any Other Business**

The Chair thanked John Scampion for his work as Deputy Chair since the Partnership's formation and his continued valuable contribution to the partnership.

**The next meeting will take place on Thursday 19 October 2023  
2pm – 4pm at Stratford Town Trust Community Hub, Venture House.**