

# TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday 24 March at 2pm

Held remotely on Zoom

## MINUTES Pages 1-6

### Present:

**Accessible Stratford** represented by Elizabeth Dixon

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

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

**Stratford-on-Avon District Council** represented by John Careford and Cllr Matt Jennings, also attended by Cllr J Fradgley

**Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council** represented by Cllr Richard Vos, also attended by the Mayor, Cllr K Taylor and the Town Clerk, Sarah Summers

**Stratford Town Trust** represented by Sara Aspley (who left the meeting early due to ill health)

**Town Transport Group** represented by Colin Stewart

**Warwickshire County Council** represented by Dave Ayton-Hill, Catherine Marks and Cllr Tim Sinclair, also attended by Stephen Rumble and Cllr Kate Rolfe

**Advent Communications** represented by Adam Dent and Sam Jackson

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

### Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from Aaron Corsi (WCC), Tim Aucott (Stratford Birthplace Trust) and John Stacey (Bell Court).

Not present: Diane Mansell (Stratforward BID).

## 1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair introduced Catherine Marks from Warwickshire County Council who will share attendance at Strategic Partnership meetings with Aaron Corsi, depending on the topics being discussed. Catherine works closely with Aaron looking at strategies for improving and regenerating towns across Warwickshire. She looks forward to supporting the Partnership and its ideas for Stratford-upon-Avon.

## 1. Minutes and actions from previous meeting held on 24 February 2022

These were noted and approved.

ACTION 1: 24.02.2022 – Stephen Rumble to liaise with the Committee Clerk regarding the sharing of draft consultation communications with the Partnership.

It was noted that a public consultation summary document had been circulated to Partnership members prior to this meeting. Communications materials will be shared with members to help them promote the consultation to their respective organisations.

ACTION 3: 24.02.2022 – Dave Ayton-Hill to put Sara Aspley in touch with the WCC funding specialist. Sara advised that she had had a useful meeting with the specialist.

## **2. Matters arising**

Public Consultation update: Stephen Rumble advised that the public consultation is now live at Ask Warwickshire ([Warwickshire County Council - Citizen Space](#)). It will run for 10 weeks, closing on 5<sup>th</sup> June. There will be three public drop-in events on 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> April and one online and Q&A session on 6<sup>th</sup> April. Response levels to the consultation will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

Consultation promotion: A press release has been distributed and there is promotional coverage and advertising in the Herald. An A4 poster will be distributed across the town and exhibition panels will be displayed in the Debenhams building from 5<sup>th</sup> April. Additionally, c230 stakeholders will receive an email with information about the consultation. Social media will be used extensively to help promote the survey. Stephen Rumble advised that copy and images would be available very soon for Partnership members to use in their social media posts.

Stephen Rumble noted that the public consultation document that had been circulated to Partnership members ahead of this meeting was designed as a briefing note only and its purpose was not to 'sell' the consultation to the wider public. The County Council had worked closely with its Consultation and Engagement team and Legal team to get the questions right. He noted that the issue of parking is likely to divide opinion and it will be interesting to see the responses to this.

Colin Stewart asked if there would be replacement parking given that 40 parking spaces would be lost in the proposed Bridge Street/High Street design. Stephen Rumble advised there is no plan to replace these spaces elsewhere in the town. The consultation does advise that an alternative would be the Bridgefoot car park which provides one-hour free parking. It also highlights the work being done on the parking strategy.

Cllr Vos noted that it will be important to react quickly to any negative comments made on public forums about parking and transport. Comments had already appeared on the Stratford-upon-Avon forum. He suggested tracking these to help the Partnership respond effectively.

Cllr Fradgley noted she had attended a meeting of residents whose age demographic would usually suggest opposition to the Bridge St/High St project. She had discussed the proposal with the group and several individuals subsequently stated they would be in favour of the idea. She noted that having

these kinds of conversations can help change perceptions. She added that it would be useful to circulate the dates of the public events to people such as this group who would have normally difficulty accessing information via social media.

Stephen Rumble advised that the County Council must remain objective in the consultation and will look to the Strategic Partnership to work with local residents to 'sell' the benefits of the proposed project.

Helen Peters requested clarification on the consultation process. Stephen Rumble advised that the Council would analyse the responses and present a report to Cabinet. This will help inform decisions about what happens next. As this is a partner project, additional steps will be taken to involve the Strategic Partnership. It is expected that a headline report indicating how many people supported the project and highlighting key themes would be available soon after the consultation closes. The detailed analysis will take longer.

It was noted that this is a consultation, not a vote. It is about understanding what people think. People's feedback will be used to help develop the project.

Cllr Fradgley commented that, in her experience, consultations can become unpleasant and this can be exacerbated by social media. It will be important for the Strategic Partnership to remain calm, work together and communicate consistent, positive messages, while taking criticism on board. Any negative issues raised should be brought back to the Strategic Partnership to be discussed. Taking sides in public should be avoided.

Advent Communications will work to ensure consistent messages are communicated and will prepare a set of statements to help with this. Sam Jackson advised that he had looked at the County Council press release about the consultation and will draft one from the Strategic Partnership that encourages people to get involved and help make this the best plan for Stratford. He reiterated the need for a united response and advised the Partnership against discussing individual elements of the consultation, for example via social media. If anyone is approached by the media for comment, they should let Advent know.

Stephen Rumble noted that he is meeting with Diane Mansell (Stratford BID Manager) to discuss how best to engage with town centre businesses regarding the consultation. This will be a key stakeholder group.

Elizabeth Dixon asked if paper copies of the consultation will be made available. Stephen Rumble advised that paper copies would not normally be produced in advance given the size of the document and the need to avoid waste. However, copies can be produced on demand and support can be provided for those needing help to complete the survey.

Stephen Rumble also noted that A4 posters and A6 flyers will be made available to Strategic Partnership members to distribute around the town. The posters will be left at the Town Hall on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March for members to collect.

### 3. Levelling Up Fund round 2 (included on the agenda as an additional item)

Details of the next round of Levelling-up bids have now been published (see [Levelling Up Fund Round 2: Prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/106421/levelling-up-fund-round-2-prospectus.pdf) ). It was noted that, while some towns had changed priority category since the first round, Stratford remains a category 2. There were no other significant changes. The timetable for submission is 5<sup>th</sup> July.

Colin Stewart commented that, while County Councils are not listed in the category index, they can submit transport bids. However, the Bridge St/High St project does not meet any of the 'Transport Pillar criteria. Therefore, a single District Council bid focussing on regenerating and revitalising the town would seem more appropriate and would be more powerful. The Partnership would need to agree what percentage of the likely Bridge St/High St costs would be requested via the bid and how much would be sought via investment funding. He recommended that a professional writer be brought in to review the bid document prior to submission. John Careford noted his agreement with these points.

Cllr Vos advised that the prospectus includes a large section on the role of MPs who will, as in the first round of funding submissions, have a formal role in the bidding process to reflect their valuable local perspective. All MPs can provide formal priority support to **one** bid. The importance of securing Nadim Zahawi's support for this bid was noted.

**ACTION 1: 24.03.2022 – John Careford** to provide an update on the bid at the April Strategic Partnership meeting.

### 4. Investment Workshop update

The Chair advised that Paul Spooner had recently chaired a workshop at the Fred Winter Centre to consider opportunities for investment in the town. Attending were Stuart Buckley from Warwick Property and Development Group Ltd, Geraldine Collinge, Dave Ayton-Hill, John Careford and Sara Aspley. Apologies were received from John Stacey and Colin Stewart.

It was agreed that there is merit in holding these meetings and they should take place monthly over the next six months. Margo Galvin has agreed to attend these meetings and take notes. They will take place before each Strategic Partnership meeting to enable feedback to be incorporated into the Partnership agenda.

### 5. Communications update (Advent Communications)

Sam Jackson advised that Elizabeth Dixon's blog on Accessible Stratford and its importance to the Strategic Partnership has been published on the Stratford Observer website. It is also on the Town Council website (see [Town Centre Strategic Partnership \(stratford-tc.gov.uk\)](https://www.stratford-observer.com/2022/03/01/accessible-stratford/) ). The next blog will feature Colin Stewart and the Town Transport Group. Sam reminded Partnership members to

promote the blogs and Partnership articles via their own communications channels.

A new Partnership-led piece on the consultation has been drafted and shared with the Chair. It is expected that this will be published w/c 28<sup>th</sup> March. The message is around encouraging people to take part in the consultation.

Adam Dent advised that work is due to start on creating a bespoke website for the Strategic Partnership. The County Council will support this financially and the work will include creation of a Partnership logo. Advent hope to bring logo ideas back to the next meeting. The Chair asked to see a copy of the brief that Advent will send to the designers. Thanks to the County Council for funding this.

## **6. Vision and future direction – Town Centre Prospectus**

It was noted that, in 2021, the Strategic Partnership had agreed it would be beneficial to publish a brochure or prospectus setting out its ambitions for the town. This could be used as a tool to bid for funds and a lever when seeking investment.

Following the February 2022 Partnership meeting, John Careford had drafted and circulated a '*Town Centre Prospectus Report*'. He presented this document to meeting, explaining that it sets out the two existing visions for the town, as well as some key themes, and seeks to move the creation of a prospectus forward by outlining the work that needs to be undertaken. It was noted that the Partnership now needs to agree and articulate the vision it wants to take forward. It was suggested that a helpful way to crystallise some of the Partnership's thoughts would be for members to complete the Vitality and Viability matrix (also circulated previously to members).

It was felt that the prospectus project would need to be professionally co-ordinated for which funding would be required. The prospectus would also need to be formally adopted by the County Council to give it credibility. It is hoped to publish the document in the autumn, meaning work needs to start soon. It was noted that the prospectus could be published as an online document on the new Strategic Partnership website.

Cllr Sinclair commented that the Partnership's vision must be simple, clear, memorable, motivated, based on a core truth and be owned by everyone. He felt the current vision wording is too wordy/detailed and should be simpler and clearer. He felt the '*Town Centre Prospectus Report*' paper has helped move the Partnership towards this.

Cllr Vos reminded the meeting that the Neighbourhood Development Plan had been the original Stratford vision and noted that it needs updating. He agreed that the challenge in any new document will be to communicate the vision clearly and simply to Stratford residents (and not re-invent the wheel) to gain their support.

It was agreed that the Partnership should define and communicate the vision quickly, given this has been under discussion for several months. Resource will

be required to do this. It was felt that, while the Partnership would be able to agree the vision within the group, additional resource would be required to draft the prospectus. Cllr Sinclair has expertise in this area and offered to work on this free of charge. He felt that most of the work could be done within the group. His offer was accepted and the Chair thanked Cllr Sinclair for taking this on. Geraldine Collinge, Cllr Vos and Elizabeth Dixon agreed to support Cllr Sinclair in this piece of work. Anyone else who would like to be involved should email [Cllr Sinclair](#) separately. John Careford will support as required.

**ACTION 2: 24.03.2022 – All** to complete the Vitality and Viability matrix and return to John Careford for collating via 7<sup>th</sup> April. (Committee Clerk to circulate the matrix document to everyone after the meeting - *complete*).

The possibility of funding a Project Co-Ordinator role for creating the Vision prospectus was briefly discussed. It was agreed to raise this at the next meeting when the Town Trust and BID Manager would hopefully be in attendance.

**ACTION 3: 24.03.2022 – Committee Clerk** to include funding of Project Co-ordinator role on April agenda.

The Chair thanked John Careford for producing the '*Town Centre Prospectus Report.*'

#### **7. Street furniture (including The Art of Bollards) – Tim Sinclair.**

Due to time constraints, it was agreed to move this item to the April agenda.

#### **8. Transport Plan**

Due to time constraints, it was agreed to move this item to the April agenda.

#### **9. Any Other Business**

The Committee Clerk advised that she would circulate dates for the remaining 2022 Strategic Partnership meetings after the meeting. It was proposed that there be no meeting in August due to members' potential holiday commitments and the Clerk being unavailable for most of the month.

The chair thanked the members for another productive meeting and closed the meeting at 3.37pm.

*The next meeting of the Strategic Partnership Group will be on  
Thursday 28 April at 2pm on Zoom.*