

News release

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Stratford Town Centre temporary COVID-19 Safety Measures update

Businesses in Stratford town centre have voted on proposed changes to the temporary COVID-19 safety measures currently in place.

This was part of the ongoing review and consultation exercise underway to ensure Stratford is COVID safe with measures providing confidence for users of the town, while enabling businesses to begin rebuilding economically as lockdown measures are eased by the Government.

In addition, views of residents, partner authorities and other stakeholders were sought through a variety of formal and informal means.

Two options were put before the Stratford BID members:

- 1. Make comprehensive enhancements to the current scheme:**

Including return of two way traffic, some on-street parking, a crossing point and bus stop while retaining wider pavements on Bridge Street. Closure of High Street during the daytime and removal of physical measures on Sheep Street, Chapel Street, Wood Street and Greenhill Street.

- 2. Removal of the entire scheme**

The results were as follows:

- 1. Make comprehensive alterations to the current scheme – 56%**
- 2. Remove the entire scheme – 44%**

Total number of votes cast – 207

The cost of implementing these temporary COVID-19 safety measures is funded through a mixture of HM Government pandemic emergency funding and the re-purposing of EU funds that, if not spent, would otherwise have to be returned as part of the withdrawal agreement.

Warwickshire County Council is currently in discussions with its contractors to determine the most effective way of incorporating these changes, and to ensure minimal disruption.

Cllr Jeff Clarke, Warwickshire's County Council's portfolio holder for transport and planning, said: "We have always said that we would listen to local stakeholders and take their views on board. We have been clear that, wherever possible, we would make adaptations in line with their feedback. Our foremost priority when these schemes were installed was public health and there has been wider support for measures that would support social distancing from many residents which we have also taken on board. It's pleasing that the businesses did not vote for a total removal and that a compromise could be reached.

"We are working hard to accommodate as many people's priorities as we can and hope that these adaptations will be welcomed by businesses and still provide the element of safety that will give residents and visitors to the town the confidence to go and spend time there and visit the local businesses. Public health has to be our main priority and I am sure that businesses will benefit from people feeling that measures are in place that will make people feel they are safe to visit Stratford."

Cllr Daren Pemberton, Deputy Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council said: "I am pleased these enhancements have received backing from residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. I was also pleased that Stratford BID Board voted unanimously in support. It was always the intention to review and modify based on lessons learnt on the ground. We now have measures that meet the public health need for a COVID safe environment, delivered in a way that gives users of the town the confidence they need to come out and support the businesses and enjoy everything that Stratford has to offer.

He went on to say: "Our businesses now have certainty about the environment and can plan to maximise opportunities as the economy recovers with more people coming into the town as evidenced by the footfall figures which have been rising for some weeks. I know there has been some controversy about these measures but now is the time for the town to put that behind us, pull together and go into bat promoting Stratford. The recovery will be tough and every town will be pushing hard to attract people to spend their money. We now need one Team Stratford if we are going to secure our futures."

Joe Baconnet, BID Director said: "I am confident that we finally have a plan that strikes the right balance for businesses, local residents and visitors. Many of our member businesses, already on their knees because of lockdown, believed passionately that the covid traffic scheme was making their efforts to try recover their livelihoods' impossible. Others felt that it was essential to make Stratford look and feel as safe as possible, in order to try to encourage consumer confidence and entice people back into the town centre.

"Following weeks of discussions, meetings, surveys and monitoring, I think what we have now agreed takes account of both these stances. We have only been able to get to this point thanks to the huge efforts of our members engaging passionately with key local stakeholders."

Councillor Tony Jackson, Mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon said: "The Town Council considered the two options at its Town Council Meeting last night and unanimously endorsed the joint decision to make comprehensive alterations to the current scheme.

"We welcome the fact that the new arrangement will be more palatable and welcoming, whilst ensuring that the town remains as safe as possible. I am particularly pleased to see that the new proposal to close High Street from 11am until 6pm complies with our Neighbourhood Development Plan which was subject to intense consultation. Undoubtedly, we are '*not out of the woods yet*', and I would urge everyone to act responsibly and continue to observe social distancing."

The changes for Stratford-upon-Avon are as follows.

Please note that Legal Orders are needed to be made to allow the changes on High Street and Bridge Street to be implemented.

- **Sheep Street, Chapel Street, Wood Street, Greenhill Street** - remove all aspects of the temporary scheme and reinstate the permanent signs and markings, with the exception of the temporary bus stop on Wood Street.
- **Union Street** - temporary scheme to stay, with the addition of two parking spaces (1hr), at the end of the taxi rank (Birmingham Road end). Additional 'taxi' markings are also required.
- **High Street** - full closure from its junction with Bridge Street to its junction with Sheep Street, from 11am until 6pm seven days a week, with no deliveries permitted during this closure. Outside of these hours to be 2-way traffic and previous parking restrictions.
- **Bridge Street** - 2-way traffic to be reinstated, removal of temporary central barrier, provide barriers from the golden post boxes to just past M&S to provide additional space for social distancing, echelon parking and one bus stop to be provided between L'Occitane shop to the old BHS (1hr, no return 2hrs). Temporary barriers are to stay as they are on the Boots side. A gap in the barriers is required at a suitable location within the vicinity of Sainsbury's to provide an informal crossing point with the provision of tactile paving and tarmac. The existing temporary trees to be situated either side of the tactile paving on both sides.
- **Gyratory** - all cones to be removed.
- The 20mph speed limit is to stay.
- The right turn at the Arden Street signals is to stay.

Ends

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