

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Thursday 25 May 2023 at 2pm

Held via Zoom

MINUTES Pages 1-5

Present:

Royal Shakespeare Company represented by Emma Gibbons and Rachel Sharpe

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust represented by Tim Aucott

Shakespeare's England represented by Helen Peters

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council represented by Cllr R Vos and the Town Clerk

Stratford District Council represented by Tony Perks and John Careford; also attended by Cllr Jenny Fradgley

The Stratford Society represented by John Scampion (Vice Chair)

Stratford Town Trust represented by Sara Aspley (Chair)

Town Transport Group representation by Colin Stewart

Warwickshire County Council represented by Aaron Corsi; 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: Dave-Ayton-Hill and Catherine Marks (Warwickshire County Council) and Elizabeth Dixon (Accessible Stratford). It was noted that Holly Woodhead (representing Bell Court) is now on maternity leave.

1. Welcomes

The Chair congratulated those Councillors who had been re-appointed in the May elections and welcomed Tony Perks (Stratford District Council) and the new Mayor Cllr Kate Rolfe. Cllr Lindsay MacDonald (new Town Councillor) was also welcomed to the meeting as an observer.

It was noted that Cllr George Cowcher is the new District Council Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development (includes tourism) and he should be invited to attend future Partnership meetings. The Chair will arrange to meet with him before the next meeting. The Chair has contacted the new leader of SDC, Susan Juned, to set up a meeting.

Action 1: 25.5.2023 – Committee Clerk and SA to invite Cllr Cowcher to Strategic Partnership meetings.

Action 2: 25.5.2023 – SA to follow up on meeting date with Susan Junad

2. Actions and Minutes from the meeting held on 23 March 2023

It was noted that all actions had been completed. The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023 were then approved.

3. Matters Arising

Shared Prosperity Funding: Tim Aucott and Sara Aspley met to discuss their respective projects that had been awarded funding. Tim will update the Strategic Partnership on the two SBT projects in due course. The Chair hopes that work will start on the Town Trust's project in July.

The SPF Year 2 *Call for Projects* application process opens on Monday 5th June 2023 and will close on Friday 14th July 2023. All project applications will be assessed prior to approval. This process is being run in tandem with CIL funding allocations (SPF will be assessed first).

South Warwickshire Local Plan: John Scampion has formed a small sub-group to develop a response to the SWLP on behalf of the Strategic Partnership (deadline is October). The first meeting will be on 18th July. John Careford will attend.

South Warwickshire Economic Strategy consultation: the Chair thanked everyone who fed back on the consultation. The Partnership's formal response was submitted by 31st March deadline. John Careford advised that all responses will be assessed over the summer. Once approved by the new SDC administration, this will be the final document and will run for five years, with annual reviews.

Stratford BID – a new BID manager is still being sought.

You.Smart.Thing Travel Assistant: Emma Gibbons will make a presentation on this at the July Strategic Partnership meeting.

4. Stratford-upon-Avon Gateway Project

Tony Perks presented a draft of the Gateway Project Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), the key points of which are summarised below:

- The project site is located at the junction of Birmingham Road and Arden Street. SDC sees this as a key corridor that will link the canal quarter redevelopment zone to the town centre via Henley Street and down to the riverside leisure areas. Something more coherent and attractive is needed on the site.
- The land required for this project is currently under three ownerships: SDC owns the Windsor Street car park, the Elizabeth Creek Trust owns the central area (where Ladders is located) and Peter Warwick owns the rest.

- The project suggests moving transport away from the site to make it more of a pedestrian experience. Initial ideas include relocating the Windsor Street multi-storey car park to Arden Street and the coach drop-off point to Rother Market. This would make the area at the top of Henley Street less coach-dominated and more of a public realm/pedestrian space.
- SDC thinks there is an opportunity to create an impact/view for people coming down Birmingham Road into the town centre. A desire for a public square at the top of Henley Street is emerging within this context.
- It is proposed that part of the site be used to build a world-class Shakespeare Centre. Stratford lacks a world-class museum to showcase Shakespeare and must compete with the Globe Theatre in London in this respect. The SBT is taking the lead on this initiative which could incorporate a museum of Stratford.
- The key principle of the project is to create a pedestrian route from the canal quarter redevelopment zone through the town that links all the key heritage sites. Ideas about pedestrian space and key views along the route will be explored, including the appearance of the proposed World Shakespeare Centre (WSC). It is currently thought that, architecturally speaking, this should be a site that people move through rather than stop and look at. It was noted that no architectural concepts have been developed yet. The SBT thinks the WSC would need to occupy around 8k square metres.

A Q&A session followed. The key points raised are summarised below:

- It is hoped that the land currently owned by Peter Warwick can be brought into public ownership. WMCA and Peter Warwick are currently being consulted in this regard. The challenge will be to create some value to the land that will help create an attractive offer to the landowner.
- The design strategy presented is not set in concrete and is open to discussion. It was noted that the images shown in the draft document are placeholders only.
- It would be possible to deliver the project in phases. For example, the WSC could be built first, although it would be better to develop the site holistically. The Master Plan should be the one that is delivered and should not be watered down as sections of the scheme come forward. The overriding connectivity and flow-through is extremely important.
- The Transport strategy for the plan should consider where people are dropped off and picked up. All ideas presented are open to discussion. The Park & Ride scheme will be an important part of the conversation.
- It was generally agreed that this is an excellent opportunity to 'connect' the different areas of the town. However, it is not clear how the Gateway project aligns with the Birmingham Road improvement plan. Tony Perks

suggested that it might be helpful if some of the team working on the transport aspect of the project met with the Town Transport Group. Tony Perks and Colin Stewart to pick this up separately.

- Tony Perks agreed that the Gateway project complements the Bridge Street/High Street project and it would be preferable if both projects could be realised. He will speak to the new SDC administration to understand their priorities. It is hoped that they will be supportive of both projects.
- From the WMCA's perspective, the priority is to try to acquire Peter Warwick's land. SDC does not have the funds to do this. A phased development approach might trigger funding opportunities.

It was agreed that Tony Perks will run a workshop with Corstophine & Wright (project architects) and the Strategic Partnership at the June Partnership meeting. This will take place in person on 22nd June, 2pm-4pm at the Town Hall. An updated version of the Supplementary Planning Document will be circulated to Partnership members before the meeting.

5. May 2023 elections

The Town Clerk advised that seven new LibDem councillors had been elected to the Town Council which now comprises 17 LibDem and 1 Labour councillors.

At the Town Council annual meeting it was confirmed that Cllr Richard Vos will represent the Town Council at the Strategic Partnership. Cllr Vos will brief new Town Councillors on the Strategic Partnership at the July Town Council meeting.

John Careford advised that boundaries have changed across the district meaning that the number of district councillors has increased from 36 to 41. The Liberal Democrats now have majority control of the District Council which comprises 25 LibDem, 12 Conservative, 3 Green and 1 independent councillors.

6. Review of Strategic Partnership Terms of Reference and membership

The Terms of Reference have not yet been reviewed, but the following points were raised during the meeting:

Name of Partnership: should it be 'Town Centre Strategic Partnership' or 'Stratford-upon-Avon Strategic Partnership'? Sam Jackson advised that the latter had been agreed when the new Partnership logo was designed.

Operational vs. non-operational: The Terms of Reference refer to the Partnership as being non-operational, but aspects of its work are operational. Clarity is needed, especially around applying for funding.

Language used in the Terms of Reference: currently the document does not talk about people (residents, visitors) very much. This needs to be reviewed.

Focus on residents: The Strategic Partnership has its roots in the Town Council and the Local Neighbourhood Plan. All projects should benefit the people of the town as well as considering the commercial sector and visitors to the town. Getting local residents on board with projects is critical.

Action 3: 25.5.2023 – SA to review and edit the Terms of Reference with tracked changes and circulate to everyone before the June meeting for comment.

7. Communications update – new Strategic Partnership website

The Chair asked for volunteers to form a sub-group to work with Advent Communications on developing the new website.

8. Town Transport Group and Cycle Forum

Colin Stewart and Cllr Fradgley provided the following update:

Canal Quarter proposal: The TTG has reviewed the proposal and has concerns about how connectivity can be delivered when sections of the project are developed piecemeal. A joint venture might be a good way to get this done.

Birmingham Road project: Colin and Cllr Sinclair walked along Birmingham Road. The focus is currently on the middle section of the road to see what can be delivered. However, there are considerable problems with the project that the TTG believes should have been identified a long time ago.

Bus system: the extension to the £2 fare cap on bus fares across Warwickshire was welcomed but it was noted that this did not extend to the UBUS scheme

A lot of work is going on in the background on cycle routes across the county. The cycle routes agreed for Stratford need to come forward, hopefully by the end of the year.

9. Any Other Business

Follow up on the creative workshops undertaken earlier in the year had been paused before the elections. The Chair has picked these up again with Cllr Sinclair and will bring them back to future meetings.

Rachel Sharpe advised that the RSC has carried out some further research around 'performance and town vibe' that she will feed back into the group.

Cllr MacDonald has invited everyone to come along to a lecture about the Stratfire project on Wednesday 31st May, 6pm at Harvard House.

Action 4: 23.03.2023 – Committee Clerk to circulate details of the Stratfire Project lecture to Strategic Partnership members.

*The next meeting will be a workshop on the Gateway project with a short agenda of Strategic Partnership items. This will take place on Thursday 22 June 2023
2pm – 4pm at the Town Hall.*