

# TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Thursday 27 July 2023 at 2pm

Held via Zoom

## MINUTES Pages 1-8

### Present:

**Accessible Stratford** represented by Elizabeth Dixon

**Royal Shakespeare Company** represented by Emma Gibbons and 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

**Stratford District Council** represented by Cllr George Cowcher; 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 Dave Ayton-Hill and Aaron Corsi; also attended by Cllrs Kate Rolfe and Tim Sinclair. Aoife O'Gorman attended as an observer.

**Advent Communications** represented by Sam Jackson (*who had to leave early due urgent business*)

**Guest speakers:** Kate Cox (a Creative Producer of arts-based events) and Ali Glover (local artist).

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

**Apologies for absence:** Catherine Marks (Warwickshire County Council), John Careford and Joanne Bozdognali (Stratford District Council)

**Not present:** Stephen Rumble (Warwickshire County Council), Cllr L MacDonald (Town Council Observer).

### 1. Welcomes

The Chair welcomed Cllr George Cowcher (the new District Council Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development), Rich Jones (the new Chair of Stratford Upon Avon BID and Centre Manager at Bell Court) and guest speakers Kate Cox and Ali Glover.

## 2. Actions and Minutes from the meeting held on 25 May 2023

Action 1: 25.5.2023: Cllr Cowcher has now been invited to the remaining Partnership meetings for 2023.

Action 2: 25.5.2023: The Chair has requested a meeting with Susan Juned at the District Council. Susan is currently very busy but the aim is to meet as soon as possible.

Elizabeth Dixon noted an error in the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2023 (minute item 8: 'Unibus' should read 'UBUS'). The Committee Clerk will correct. The minutes were then approved.

## 3. Matters Arising

Strategic Partnership draft Terms of Reference document: only one response had been received to the Chair's request for feedback on this.

<p><b>Action 1: 27.7.2023</b> – Committee Clerk to recirculate the document. Members to review by Friday 4<sup>th</sup> August (COMPLETE).</p>
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Strategic Partnership vision sessions follow up: The Chair, John Careford and Cllr Sinclair have produced a long list of projects from the sessions and will bring these back to the September Partnership meeting for further consideration. Partnership members will be asked to do prepare in advance.

Rich Jones advised that a new interim BID manager has been appointed to take the BID up to the next ballot, scheduled for early 2024. In the meantime, upcoming events include the Food Festival (16 September) and the Christmas lights switch-on (18 November). A BID Board meeting will take place shortly and Rich hopes to provide a further update at the September Partnership meeting.

## 4. Update on the Stratford Gateway Masterplan workshop

John Scampion gave a summary of the June workshop which began with a presentation on the proposed project (which has a strong focus on the World Shakespeare Centre) and continued with group work. (Notes from the event were circulated with the Strategic Partnership meeting agenda.) It was stressed that the Partnership will expect to be an ongoing consultee in the development of this project and this wish will be expressed in writing.

## 5. Stratford-upon-Avon Street Art Festival

Cllr Rolfe introduced Kate Cox and Ali Glover who had contacted her recently about creating a potential street arts festival in Stratford-upon-Avon that would involve painting some of the town's buildings to improve their appearance. Kate runs Worcester Paint Festival and Ali is a local street artist. Cllrs Rolfe and Fradgley subsequently met with Kate and Ali to discuss the proposal further and invited them to present their ideas at the Partnership meeting.

## **The vision for Stratford – aims and benefits**

**Purpose:** to create a legacy for Stratford by transforming some of the town's unloved spaces into beautiful places that bring joy and are accessible to everyone.

### Social and economic

- To transform Stratford's visual landscape in a creative and colourful way, making it more attractive to residents, businesses, workers, shoppers, tourists and investors.
- To enhance the town's existing character while delivering popular public art that generates footfall and encourages town centre users to increase their time in Stratford
- In the longer term, to develop a regular event that people will love for years to come.

### Access and inclusivity

- Inclusion, diversity and engagement will be high on the agenda for this event to ensure an audience of all backgrounds and abilities.
- It will be important to make people feel welcome and cultivate a feeling of togetherness and belonging.
- Community trust will be essential, along with the opportunity to experience creativity with a sense of local identity and pride.
- There will be opportunities for local sponsorship to promote the town's offering
- Local volunteers will be recruited and trained (good for upskilling and local involvement).
- Local charities and businesses to be invited to run creative activities alongside the main event.

### Locations, artists and audience

- Live murals will take place near the entrances to the town and there will be an art trail that people can follow around the town.
- Printed art location maps to be available during the festival, with interactive maps online.
- People can join the trail at any point and move around the locations.
- Travel and parking advice to be published in advance.
- Visits to the Tourist Information Centre and Accessible Stratford to be encouraged. It is also hoped there will be a central HQ space in Bell Court with activities going on there, too.
- There will be a 50/50 mix of local artists and visiting headliners with wide social media reach
- 10 established artists will paint large scale works on walls, with 10 emerging artists creating smaller pieces that could be distributed around the community.

- It is expected that Stratford's businesses and attractions will benefit beyond the event
- Street art culture features photographers and bloggers who share information on their platforms on an ongoing basis, helping to make the festival a year-round exp.

In summary, a paint/street art festival in Stratford will demonstrate cultural progression, increase footfall, enhance social activity and personal interactions and encourage creative engagement.

It is proposed that the Stratford festival will take place in early summer 2024, subject to the town's existing events calendar. Then it will be a case of fundraising and agreeing which walls will be used.

It was noted that the Worcester Paint Festival is a good example of how such a festival could work. Funded by various supporters and involving local organisations and volunteers, it has been running very successfully since 2020, has grown year-on-year and is very popular with visitors to the city. Through their extensive experience and wide network of contacts, Kate and Ali can offer an established and vibrant arts-based brand to deliver a successful event in Stratford.

*A discussion followed and the key points are summarised below:*

- In Stratford, an organisation called 'Street Arts' works with the homeless and vulnerable. The new festival's name should be chosen carefully to avoid any confusion.
- Recent community arts projects in the town (murals and bollards) had consulted local people to identify what they wanted to see painted; Cllr Sinclair advised that there is a document summarising these findings which can be shared. It will be important to use local artists and involve the local community in the festival to ensure people are engaged and supportive.
- The 2023 'windows' project run by Global Street Art in Henley Street, and supported by SDC, has proved very popular. A paint festival would need to build on this work.
- It was noted that Global Street Art are a London-based arts agency that works very differently to the Worcester Paint Festival which celebrates artists' work and gives them free rein to create their murals. The Henley Street project did not involve local artists and it would be very important to do so at any Stratford paint festival.
- The Stratford festival would be an opportunity to challenge people with new art and not repeat what has already been painted in the town.
- Some of the buildings that might be painted are privately owned and permission will be needed to use them. The timescales of obtaining

permissions can vary, depending on the owners. In Worcester, people tend to offer their walls.

- The project should involve Stratford neighbourhoods, not just the town centre, to encourage a sense of belonging and pride of place.
- A proposed budget for the Stratford festival would be £20-25k. Potential funding sources include Arts Council England, local authorities and sponsorship. Additional ideas and advice from the Partnership would be welcome. It was noted that it is too early for Stratford BID to commit to providing funding but it would be an ideal opportunity for Kate/Ali to sit down with the BID team while they create the business plan for next year. It was also noted that Stratford Town Trust can only support CICs and CIOs. SDC may not be able to contribute financially but would welcome further discussion.
- The Strategic Partnership should be involved in discussions about the proposal, and can advise and support. However, funding should be down to individual bodies and organisations.

The Chair thanked Kate and Ali for presenting their proposal, noting that this has the potential to be a fantastic project that could bring huge benefits to Stratford. It was agreed that a further meeting should be held with Kate Cox, Ali Glover and key stakeholders in the town to include the Town Council, Stratford Upon Avon BID, the RSC and others (tbc).

<p><b>Action 2:</b> 27.7.2023 – Chair and Committee Clerk to organise a meeting between the main stakeholders of the proposed Stratford Street Art Festival: Stratford Town Council, BID, RSC, Kate Cox and Ali Glover.</p>
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## 6. Town Transport Group (TTG) and Cycle Forum

Cllrs Rolfe and Fradgley attended a full County Council meeting on 25 July at which they voted against LTP4 on the basis that it lacked detail, ambition and direction. The plan was approved and signed off at this meeting. Local plans will flow out from this.

Cllr Fradgley had received an update from Stephen Rumble on the Alcester Road cycle path. Final plans for this have been produced and they include significant improvements, particularly in relation to side roads coming onto the main road.

Hopefully more funding from Active Travel England will be forthcoming if the improvements are made as they will make cycling in the town more effective. Although timescales have not been confirmed, progress is being made and this is a positive story for Stratford.

Colin Stewart noted that the TTG has been very active recently and minutes are available for all to view. These can be requested by emailing

[colin.i.stewart@btinternet.com](mailto:colin.i.stewart@btinternet.com) or [med2swan@gmail.com](mailto:med2swan@gmail.com) (Elizabeth Dixon). They can also be viewed at [Stratford Town Council \(stratford-tc.gov.uk\)](http://stratford-tc.gov.uk) .

The TTG had met with SDC about the canal quarter development , the plan for which does not appear to include transport. Currently, individual planning applications are coming forward without consideration of the transport network. This is a critical issue. Concerns have been raised with SDC and the TTG is waiting to hear more from Council officers.

Cllr Cowcher advised that input is awaited from WCC regarding the Long Marston and Meon Vale housing developments. Nearly all the houses that can be built have been built until there is a solution to the transport problem.

Cllr Sinclair commented that work on the Birmingham Road is progressing and is on schedule. The Phase 3 designs are currently being reworked and Tim can share details. Designs for the Warwick Rd safety improvements are nearing completion and he will share information.

## **7. Park & Ride Pilot scheme**

Dave Ayton-Hill provided an update on the summer P&R pilot scheme which will run until the weekend of the Stratford Food Festival (16<sup>th</sup> September). Additional benefits have been introduced for the duration of the pilot in a bid to boost usage. These include:

- Extending the service to 7 days a week
- Free parking at the P&R site
- Value for money on the bus into town: tickets are £2 for an adult + 2 children or £3.30 for a family of 5 (this is much cheaper than parking all day in town)
- A 7.30pm late bus back from the town centre
- Free travel for carers accompanying anyone with a blue parking badge.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to extend the opening of toilet facilities at the P&R as this is outside the County Council's control.

The pilot has been supported by various communications, including social media.

Take-up of P&R will be monitored to see what difference the additional pilot benefits make. Additionally, it is hoped that a qualitative survey will be conducted in the town centre to better understand usage uptake and the reasons for not using the scheme. Dave is seeking market researchers to carry out this survey but this is proving difficult. Cllr Sinclair offered to put Dave in touch with his market research contacts who may be able to help. Additional contacts would be appreciated.

Feedback from Partnership members on the pilot scheme was positive. The following points were noted:

- While the pilot is a very positive step, it doesn't solve the problem of people wanting to use the service later in the evening e.g. returning from the theatre or an evening out.
- Extensive marketing and promotion of the pilot will be essential to its success. Electronic signs on the major routes into Stratford would help to make the service much more visible.
- Currently, it is difficult to find accurate and up-to-date information about the pilot online. Dave Ayton-Hill advised that there is a dedicated web page which is not currently showing up on Google searches. He will investigate and circulate a link to the correct page.
- Many workers who commute into Stratford park in residential areas which can be disruptive – how can local employers be incentivised to make better use of the P&R service?

An evaluation report will be produced after the pilot and shared with the Partnership to facilitate continued discussion. Discussions will also take place with SDC in the autumn about the future direction of the P&R scheme and the wider parking strategy.

## **8. Communications update – new Strategic Partnership website**

Sam Jackson had to leave the meeting early to attend to an urgent matter. On his behalf, the Chair reminded members that volunteers are still needed to work with Advent Communications on developing the new website. So far, only one person has come forward.

## **9. You.Smart.Thing**

Emma Gibbons shared a link in the Zoom Chat box for the You.Smart.Thing app which would also be circulated to Partnership members via email.

## **10. Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations**

SDC had approached the Town Council to suggest a meeting with Birthday Celebrations stakeholders as SDC may not continue to fund the event. Traditionally, the Town Council (TC) has organised the event and SDC has matched the funding. However, the TC lacks the resources to continue running it. A Task & Finish group has been formed to look into this and it was felt the matter should be brought to the Strategic Partnership for their input. A discussion followed and the following main points were noted:

- Some Partnership members felt that the birthday parade had become rather dull. It could be much more spectacular and entertaining and do a lot more to create a 'great vibe' in Stratford and make the town 'a fun place to be'. The 2016 event was an example of how things can be done differently with great results.
- If the TC does not run the event, it probably won't happen at all. An alternative would be to organise the event as a partnership and involve

local groups. This is likely to work better than employing an event management company, which is expensive.

- There needs to be some shared responsibility for funding. The event doesn't have to be expensive. Following the change of administration at SDC, funding may become available.
- It takes around six months of hard work to plan and deliver the event. Therefore identifying a suitable organiser/s early is key. The Task & Finish Group will approach stakeholders who might help with this. The TC has a process and template in place to help with this.
- The RSC is already discussing who will perform at the 2024 event as they need to plan well in advance. They are happy to share information and discuss how they can collaborate with other organisations in the town.
- As a strategic organisation, the Strategic Partnership should not become involved in the details of this project. However, it can give feedback to the Task & Finish Group as the project develops.

## **11. Any Other Business**

Elizabeth Dixon encouraged members to sign up to the campaign objecting to the proposed closure of station ticket offices (a link was circulated after the meeting).

Rachel Sharpe offered some free trans awareness training to members (an invitation was circulated after the meeting).

*The next meeting will take place on Thursday 28 September 2023  
2pm – 4pm at the Town Hall.*