



## **TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING**

**Thursday 20 November 2025**

**2:00pm-3:54pm**

Held online via Teams

### **Present:**

**Accessible Stratford** represented by Elizabeth Dixon

**Royal Shakespeare Company** represented by Rachel Sharpe

**Shakespeare Birthplace Trust** represented by Rachael O'Connor-Boyd

**Stratford BID** represented by Aaron Corsi

**Stratford Society** represented by John Scampion

**Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council** represented by Caroline Nash (Vice Chair),  
Councillor Vos and Jenny Chantratita (Clerk)

**Stratford District Council** represented by Councillor Cowcher, John Tonge, John  
Careford, Ali Chafekar, Heidi A and Lorraine Grocott

**Stratford Town Trust** represented by Rebecca Hampson

**Town Transport Group** represented by Colin Stewart

**Warwickshire County Council** represented by Catherine Marks, Councillors Rolfe  
and Albon.

**Apologies for absence:** Councillor J Fradgley (SDC), Dave Ayton-Hill  
(Warwickshire County Council), Aoife O'Gorman (Warwickshire County Council)

### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Vice-Chair welcomed all attendees and noted apologies. New attendees were welcomed, including Heidi A, Interim Senior Policy Planning/Town Planning Contractor (SDC) and Rebecca Hampson, Acting CEO (Stratford Town Trust).

### **2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2025**

The minutes were approved with no amendments.

### **3. Matters Arising and Action Points**

There were none.

### **4. Strategic Partnership – current position**

JS led a discussion on the need to review the Strategic Partnership's direction. The appointment of a new Chair presented a timely opportunity to review the Partnership's purpose, strategic direction and future structure.

Discussion surrounding the need for the Partnership to take greater ownership and accountability for project delivery. Concerns regarding the lack of funding were raised.

**ACTION:** CN, on behalf of STC, to facilitate a working group tasked with reviewing the partnership's structure, terms of reference, and membership.

Members consist of Aaron Corsi, Elizabeth Dixon, John Scampion, Colin Stewart and Councillors Vos and Rolfe.

## **5. Appointment of Chair**

Deferred to the next meeting pending the outcome of the working group review.

## **6. Strategic Partnership – membership**

Two membership enquiries were received and considered:

There was broad agreement that admitting a representative of the press would not be appropriate due to a confidentiality consideration.

Mixed views on hotel representation. Recognised a gap in hospitality sector representation as a key economic sector. However, it was noted that hotels were already represented via the BID.

Discussion regarding expanding membership to include healthcare, education, police and other key sectors. Some noted this could make the group too large and the focus could be lost. Suggestion for these sectors to be engaged through subgroups or consultation meetings.

**ACTION:** No changes to the membership at this stage. Membership structure to be reviewed by the working group.

## **7. Pedestrianisation of High Street - update**

CM reported that the County Council is now in favour of progressing directly to a permanent pedestrianisation scheme, rather than a temporary or experimental solution. This would involve commissioning design work and applying for a permanent Traffic Regulation Order (TRO).

The permanent scheme was estimated to take at least 18 months before implementation if started immediately. The design work would take 4-6 months, and the TRO process would take about 12 months.

Funding sources were discussed. It was noted that previous design work should be used as a starting point and technical details and integration with public realm work would be considered.

**ACTION:** CM to set up a working group meeting to continue to monitor the project and develop a more detailed plan. This will be reported at the next Strategic Partnership meeting.

## **8. UK Town of Culture 2028 – expression of interest**

AC expressed an intention to submit an expression of interest for the UK Town of Culture 2028. This aligned with the progress of the Arts and Culture Strategy.

If successful, expected benefits included £60,000 for BID development and £3.5m cultural investment if successful. Expression of interest would be led through the Arts and Culture Strategy Working Group.

## **9. Arts and Culture Strategy – update**

RS provided a final update before stepping down from her role at the RSC. The Vice Chair thanked her for her significant contribution to the Arts and Culture Strategy. This project would be handed over to AC for finalisation and implementation.

The Arts and Culture Strategy draft has been completed. A final draft was ready for sign-off and a designer was appointed for visual design. This was funded in part by the RSC.

## **10. Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations**

RV proposed developing the Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations into an international festival over the next five years. This would involve more entertainment and community participation (Friday-Sunday). STC would look to lead initial coordination and may commission external support.

## **11. Vacant Shops/Place Partnership – update**

JT presented the latest vacant shops data for Stratford town centre:

Overall vacancy rate – 8.4%, compared to a national average of 14%.

Greenhill Street continues to have the highest vacancy rate (19.4%) in the town. Bridge Street - Vacancy at 11.1%, with BHS now included in figures for completeness.

Place Partnerships update – work continues to establish an informal business-led High Street group aimed at capturing day-to-day insights from businesses, identifying challenges and enabling practical action by interested organisations. JT noted the challenge of duplication given the number of groups already discussing High Street issues.

Concerns were raised about the NatWest building. JT verified by GIS that the building is not listed.

Interest was expressed in exploring a future accessibility or shopfront improvement scheme, should funding become available.

## **12. Strategy Document and Consultation – update**

CN noted the 206 responses received to date.

**ACTION:** A full review of consultation findings and next steps for the Vision document will be presented at the next meeting.

## **13. Stratford BID – update**

AC highlighted the upcoming launch of the new website hub for all Stratford organisations, venues and events (15 December 2025).

Christmas Lights Event – approximately 25,000 attended the switch-on, bringing total footfall for the day to 66,000.

2024 tourism figures were reported to be on par with 2019, indicating a strong recovery.

#### **14. Town Transport Group – update**

CS noted that the next meeting would focus on buses and the use of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding for Stratford. Construction of the A46 roundabout has commenced, indicating progress toward opening the Shottery Relief Road.

The Western Bypass Study had expanded significantly in scope, now covering wider Warwickshire issues. The group was concerned that strategic transport planning must proceed before more land is developed, or future transport schemes may become financially or physically unviable.

Birmingham Road Scheme – some of the group’s recommendations had been implemented. However, Justins Avenue and Oakley Road junction redesigns did not meet recognised design standards. This matter has been escalated to senior County Council officers.

Greenway – noted improvement of recent surface work. However, this would be unlikely to be durable long-term. A specification would be sought from Warwickshire for Phase 2 work.

The next Town Transport Group meeting will be held on 11 December 2025 at Stratford Town Hall.

#### **15. Any other business**

There were none.

**16. Date of next meeting:** 5 February 2025, 2-4pm, Microsoft Teams