



TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Thursday 5 February 2026

2:00pm-3:48pm

Held online via Teams

Present:

Accessible Stratford represented by Elizabeth Dixon

Royal Shakespeare Company represented by Joanne Crawshaw

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust represented by Amanda Seadler

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

Stratford District Council represented by, John Tonge, John Careford, Ali
Chafekar, Heidi, Hannah Heath and Councillor J Fradgley

Town Transport Group represented by Colin Stewart

Warwickshire County Council represented by Catherine Marks and Aoife
O’Gorman

Apologies for absence: Dave Ayton-Hill (Warwickshire County Council) Rachel
North (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust).

Apologies: Darren Tosh (Shakespeare’s England); Rachel North (SBT); Rebecca
Hampson (Town Trust);
County Councillors Rolfe, Cowcher, Albon and Grocott (attending County Council
meeting). Manuella Perteghella MP

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Vice-Chair opened the meeting and noted apologies received. New attendees were welcomed.

2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2025

The minutes were approved with no amendments.

Celebrations and the Strategy Vision Document were noted as appearing on the current agenda and would not be discussed at this stage.

3. Approval of the Strategic Partnership Working Group minutes (19 January 2026)

The minutes were noted.

4. Matters Arising and Action Points

No additional matters were raised beyond those scheduled on the agenda.

5. Appointment of Chair

Following previous discussions and the ongoing review of the Partnership's structure, it was agreed to defer the appointment of Chair until the Working Group had completed its recommendations. The Vice-Chair would continue to chair meetings in the interim.

6. Strategic Partnership Working Group

JS reported that the Working Group had met twice and made good progress in identifying the Partnership's strengths, weaknesses and future needs.

A key issue identified was the need for clearer strategic input from senior leadership at both the District and County Councils. While there had been regular engagement with officers and councillors, the group felt that a conversation with both Chief Executives would be essential in shaping realistic and effective recommendations for the Partnership's future role and structure. A meeting had therefore been arranged with the Chief Executives of Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwickshire County Council, to be attended by JS, CS and CN.

A full report would be presented at the next Strategic Partnership meeting. It was noted that a special meeting may be required depending on the scale of recommendations.

7. Pedestrianisation of High Street

The Partnership received an update from CM and AO'G on progress towards the permanent pedestrianisation of High Street, following the County Council's proposal that a permanent scheme be progressed in place of any further temporary arrangements. The proposal had already been submitted to the Working Group for consideration earlier in the week.

Key steps identified to progress the project include:

- Updating highway modelling to ensure closures would not adversely affect the town centre network
- Commissioning urban realm design work, including both a lower-cost, quicker-to-deliver option and a longer-term, high-quality solution
- Developing a cost plan to inform future funding discussions
- Engaging with businesses and other stakeholders in advance of any formal Traffic Regulation Order consultation

- Securing necessary approvals from the Highway Authority and, if required, planning consent
- Progressing procurement to appoint a design team once the brief was finalised; and
- District Council Budget approval – 23 Feb 2026

The Partnership noted the approach and development. Further updates would follow once modelling and design commissioning had progressed.

8. UK Town of Culture 2028

AC and Hannah Heath (SDC) who was supporting the bid preparation gave an update on progress:

- The national competition for UK Town of Culture 2028 had been formally launched and the Expression of Interest (EOI) deadline was 30 March 2026, leaving approximately eight weeks to confirm Stratford's bid and shape the narrative
- Stratford was well positioned due to the extensive consultation already undertaken for the Arts & Culture Strategy
- A stakeholder session would be held on 6 March to gather wider input
- If shortlisted, Stratford would receive £60,000 to develop a full bid; and
- The total award is £3.4m, with £250,000 for two runners-up.

The Partnership expressed unanimous support for submitting the Expression of Interest.

9. Town Centre Public Realm Design Work

HA provided an update on the District Council's consideration of either preparing a Masterplan or developing a Public Realm Toolkit.

Following internal discussions, and considering the emerging South Warwickshire Local Plan, as well as planned growth around Stratford and associated transport infrastructure developments, it had been agreed that the Council would proceed with developing a Public Realm Toolkit at this stage. A draft brief had now been prepared.

It was noted that a Masterplan may be considered at a later date, although no timescale had been agreed. The importance of ensuring alignment between this work and related initiatives, and avoiding duplication or overlap, was emphasised.

JC then updated on the Local Plan, targeted for submission in December, with a publication stage consultation planned for June–July. The Plan would set out a growth strategy to 2050, balancing housing and employment needs, and would focus on infrastructure delivery through larger-scale developments such as urban extensions or new settlements.

The meeting was also informed of the upcoming revised Local Development Scheme, the Government's consultation on the updated National Planning Policy Framework, and progress on the Stratford bypass.

Action – Share Public Realm Toolkit

10. Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations

RV outlined the ongoing work to develop the celebrations into a broader festival-style weekend and confirmed further discussions were taking place with partners.

11. Vacant Shops / Place Partnership

The Partnership received an update from JT on High Street vacancy monitoring, although the latest figures were not circulated they would be provided in the coming weeks for circulation with the minutes.

Analysis of the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) data over the past few years indicated a vacancy rate of approximately 8.6% on the High Street.

It was noted that a dedicated page would shortly be available on the District Council website to publish and regularly update vacancy information for each town centre.

12. Arts and Culture Strategy

The Partnership received an update on the Arts and Culture Strategy from AC and the proposed delivery framework. The Strategy, informed by extensive consultation, set out a 10-year vision to increase cultural participation.

The Partnership expressed its general support for the document and endorsed its overall direction of travel. Comments on accessibility, design, imagery, the wording of actions and overall inclusivity, including the need to recognise the position of low-income households was identified and would be taken onboard.

13. Vision Document and Consultation

CN provided an update on the Vision consultation, which concluded prior to Christmas. A total of 180 responses were received, representing a reasonable level of engagement. Feedback was generally positive, with no substantive changes required.

The Partnership was asked to note the consultation outcome and endorse the Vision document in its final form to enable progression to delivery. CN confirmed that the Town Council had agreed to look at allocating Community Infrastructure Levy funding towards resourcing the implementation of the Vision and to support the monitoring of Neighbourhood Development Plan priorities and this would be further considered at the Partnership's Working Group.

14. Stratford BID

AC provided an update on BID activity, noting ongoing work following the successful Christmas events and the development of a new website hub for Stratford organisations, venues and events.

15. Town Transport Group

CS provided a brief update from the Group:

- Presentation from WCC - including Bus Service Improvement Plan funding
- A46 roundabout construction progress
- Western Bypass Study developments
- Concerns regarding Birmingham Road scheme design standards
- Greenway surface improvements and future specification needs

16. Any Other Business

- Local Government re-organisation consultation launched
- Work on the old BHS building hoardings by Paint Stratford

17. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 19 March 2026, 2:00pm–4:00pm, MS Teams.

Items for next meeting:

- Footfall Counters – Andrew Green (SDC)