STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

TOWN CENTRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Thursday 19 March 2026

2:00pm-3:32pm

Held online via Teams

Present:

Accessible Stratford represented by Elizabeth Dixon
Bell Court represented by Rich Jones
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust represented by Rachel North
Stratford BID represented by Aaron Corsi
Stratford Society represented by John Scampion
Stratford Town Trust represented by Matthew Poole
Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council represented by Councillor Vos, Caroline Nash (Vice Chair)
Stratford-on Avon District Council represented by Councillors Cowcher and Fradgley, Graham Nelson, Ali Chafekar John Tonge
Town Transport Group represented by Colin Stewart
Warwickshire County Council represented by Councillors Albon, Grocott and Rolfe
Dave Ayton-Hill, Catherine Marks and Aoife O'Gorman

Apologies: John Stacey (Bell Court), Jacqui O'Hanlon (Royal Shakespeare Company) Darren Tosh (Shakespeare's England) and Manuella Perteghella MP

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Vice-Chair opened the meeting and noted apologies received. A welcome was extended to those new to the Partnership.

2. Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2026

The minutes were approved with no amendments.

3. Matters Arising and Action Points

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

4. Strategic Partnership Working Group – Final Report

JS presented the final report on the review of the Strategic Partnership, which outlined its achievements, identified weaknesses, and proposed a new structure to enhance strategic focus, inclusivity, and delivery.

- **Review of Partnership Achievements and Weaknesses:** Achievements such as the High Street/Bridge Street scheme, the Vision development, Arts and Culture Strategy whilst acknowledging loss of key strategic members of senior level.
- **Role and Purpose of the Partnership:** The group clarified that the partnership's role was to identify themes, issues, and projects that benefit from collective action, focusing on advocacy, research, and promoting ideas, rather than acting as an executive body.
- **Proposed New Structure and Membership:** a hybrid structure featuring a steering panel with senior representatives from local authorities and delivery groups covering; town centre evolution, creativity/culture/arts, great vibe/fun place, ease of movement and investment/funding, ideally supported by a part-time Strategic Partnership Monitoring Officer to coordinate activities.

Feedback from Members was positive with the emphasis on the need for inclusivity, flexibility in thematic groups, proactive engagement for funding, and the importance of programme management to track outcomes and progress.

Next Steps and Funding Considerations: The group agreed that the working party would continue to lead discussions with key stakeholders and local authorities, refine the structure based on feedback, and address the need for officer support funding.

5. Pedestrianisation of High Street

CM updated the meeting on the procurement and commissioning work to progress the project with the District Council regarding funding arrangements and practicalities, alongside preparations for a business survey to inform the design process during procurement.

AO'G gave details on the procurement process, confirming:

- The aim to issue the tender at the end of April.
- Appointment expected to commence work at the start of June.
- Documentation for tender was mostly prepared, with a meeting planned with the working group to ensure completeness and inclusion of previous studies to avoid duplication.
- Regular updates would be provided as the process progressed.

JF raised a query from local residents seeking information on the High Street development. CM advised engagement would be more appropriate once the design team was on board, likely from July onwards, allowing residents to meaningfully contribute ideas.

ACTION: It was agreed to maintain a list of stakeholders and residents for engagement as the project developed.

6. UK Town of Culture 2028

AC advised that the application was progressing, drawing on over 1,000 responses from the Arts and Culture Strategy consultation. A recent workshop with 50 local organisations provided input on potential projects and priorities for a "Year of Town of

Culture." The application would focus on high-level themes and aspirations rather than detailed delivery plans.

7. Vacant Shops/Place Partnership

The Partnership received an update from JT on vacancy monitoring. The current overall vacancy rate was 6%, down from 8.4% in October, largely due to three units on Greenhill Street coming back into use. It was noted that using the Knight Frank Retail Monitor, national vacancies stood at 14.6%.

Of the monitored streets, Meer Street, Bridge Street, High Street, and Sheep Street have remained unchanged in vacancy, whilst along with Greenhill Street, Henley Street, Wood Street, and Rother Street had all seen reductions.

8. 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.

The Strategy was to be launched on 24 April 2026.

9. Stratford BID

AC reported on the new Town Website **www.stratforduponavon.org.uk** and reported a steady increase of visitors.

The Warden Service was nearing the end of the financial year, having been in post since July 2025. The team had continued to work proactively on shoplifting and retail crime and reported a total recovery to date of £10,000. They were also working closely with retailers, businesses, Councils in reporting and addressing antisocial behaviour, demonstrating effective partnership working.

The Motor Festival preparation was underway for the May Bank Holiday weekend (23–24 May). The event was expected to be a significant and busy highlight of the year.

10. Town Transport

CS provided a brief update from the Group:

The recent Town Transport Group had been constructive including Warwickshire County Council Director of Highways and the Birmingham Road project manager. Attendance at officer level was welcomed, marking improved engagement after a long gap.

Discussions focused on Birmingham Road, with recognition that aspects of the scheme would likely have been delivered differently in hindsight and that changes were expected going forward.

GC gave an update on South Warwickshire Local Plan and the Western Bypass and confirmed work was ongoing with securing funding.

11. Any Other Business

None

12. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 21 May 2026, 2:00pm–4:00pm, MS Teams.

Items for next meeting:

Footfall Counters – Andrew Green (SDC)