



**Minutes of the meeting of the
REGENERATION WORKING GROUP
18th July 2024, at 10.00am
Virtual Meeting (Zoom)**

Present

Town Cllrs: Tony Davey (Chair), Mick Fealty, Liz Hillary, Adrian Oldman, Lucas Schoemaker; District Cllr: Katy Hofmann; Brimscombe and Thrupp Parish Cllr Martin Whiteside; Simon Maher (SDC), Mike Towson (SDC), Brendan Cleere (SDC); Sarah Williams (GCC), Luisa Seft-Hayward (GCC), Pete Salvin (AtkinsRéalis), Yara Al Hamdan (AtkinsRéalis)

In attendance

Cllr Louisa Stinton, Helen Bojaniwska (CEO, Town Clerk)

Absent

Cllr Jeremy Green

1. Apologies

Town Cllrs Geoffrey Andrews and Craig Horrocks, Gloucestershire County Councillor David Drew and Leonie Lockwood (SDC),

2. Declarations of interest

None declared.

3. To consider requests for dispensations

There were no requests for dispensations.

4. Questions from members of the public

Cllr Davey asked the Working Group to deal with a request raised at the Council meeting on 15th July 2024. The Council had been asked to take over the running of the annual Goodwill events. It was noted that the Stroud District Chamber of Trade had already volunteered to assist with business engagement and communications, but not the lantern parade or funfair. A “Winter Wonderland” had been proposed as an alternative. Councillors felt that more information would be needed to make a decision on this question and were concerned about the lateness of the request and the impact on Council resources. It was noted that the Chamber had offered to meet the previous organiser and it was **agreed** that this should be followed by a meeting with councillors.

5. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 20th June 2024 were **approved** by the members present and will be signed as a correct record by the Chair at the next opportunity.

6. Budget report to end June 2024

The budget report was noted.

7. Update on actions from previous meetings

A written report had been circulated. It was noted that some of the items would be covered later in the meeting.

It was further reported that the extension of the History Trail could be discussed as part of St Laurence Church's ideas of the generation of their site, to be known as the St Laurence Quarter.

The CEO noted that bids had been submitted to the Vitality Fund for some of the projects.

No report had been received from Stroud District Council on tourism activity.

8. CEO's report

The CEO's report was noted.

9. Report from the Stroud District Chamber of Trade

Footfall data for June reported a 0.5% reduction on the previous month and a 3.5% reduction on the previous year. Dwell time was down 54% at an average of 22 minutes.

Vacancy rates were 14.05% - close to the national average, but it was noted that several properties were currently being refurbished. Concerns were raised about the continuation of Lloyds Bank and another large unit looked uncertain to remain. It was felt that if Lloyds closes a local banking hub will be essential.

The Cornhill area was felt to be looking tired, with several empty or closed units, including the "job centre". It was reported that the centre was due to reopen in September.

Policing in the area was reported to have improved. The Chair of the Chamber had recently met the new Neighbourhood Inspector and PC, and more new staff were due to be recruited.

The terms of reference had been drafted for the Windows of Opportunity project, which would provide opportunities for micro-leases in good locations to support local businesses.

10. Stroud-Thrupp Active Travel Feasibility Study

Pete Salvin gave a presentation on the recently completed feasibility study on the potential for active travel infrastructure on the A419 between Stroud and Thrupp. The study built on the previous Golden Valley route Vision study, but took into account new technical requirements and Active Travel England design tools. Several options had been considered.

The favoured option was compared to a precedent scheme in Churchdown, which has drops in levels at junctions. A new crossing would be required on the A419 to replicate this.

It was noted that much of the section of the route into the town centre would be very challenging, because doesn't even offer enough space for pedestrian facilities. It

would be necessary to reduce traffic volumes to deliver a viable, compliant scheme. The scheme designed for the Levelling Up Fund bid, could potentially achieve this.

Cllr Davey proposed a study of the volume of traffic using the town centre as a through route, rather than using Dr Newtons Way to provide evidence for the potential to reduce traffic volumes. It was felt that some drivers use the town centre route to avoid the roundabout at Wallbridge.

Cllr Schoemaker proposed that a radical solution would be needed and suggested that connections to the planned developments at Cheapside, the route between London Road car park and Brunel Mall (promoted in the Neighbourhood Development Plan), disused land, Capels Mill and connections to the cycle track should be explored. Concerns were also raised about school students crossing the road on Brewery Bridge.

Cllr Whiteside (Brimscombe and Thrupp) felt that the section from the edge of town towards Thrupp could be delivered in isolation. He raised a concern that in spite of the one-way and two-way options being similarly priced, the better option might be rejected on grounds of cost. Pete Salvin explained that the key issue dividing the two options is the pinch points, where there is not enough land available to deliver the preferred option.

Sarah Williams noted that the route could be added to the end of the Gloucestershire County Council cycle spine project. Luisa Senft-Hayward advised that whilst no funding was currently available, the study would put the project in a good position when future opportunities arise. The current use of the route and links to future development sites would be key factors in funding allocations.

11. Progress reports from Gloucestershire County Council on:

Merrywalks Transport Hub

Sarah Williams from Gloucestershire County Council explained the development of the project for a new transport hub at Merrywalks. The scheme would be funded by SDC CIL funding, GCC budget for the shelters and Town Council funding for Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) screens. Site meetings had been held in September 2023 and April 2024.

It was reported that Dransfield Properties had given permission for secure bike lockers to be installed on their land and offered to maintain them. All elements of the project were being managed in house by GCC, including: shelters, lighting, seating, bike parking, surfacing and RTPI. Technical surveys were in progress.

The public consultation had been delayed by the General Election, but had now started. Lots of responses had been received to the online consultation. On site consultation was also planned. The consultation would help validate the designs.

One issue that already emerged was a concern about the lack of toilets and the inadequacy of the toilet provision in the Five Valleys Shopping Centre – too few cubicles and too far away.

A question was raised about advertising on the bus shelters. GCC's preferred option is for the suppliers to retain responsibility for maintenance in return for advertising income. Maintenance costs were estimated to be about £5,000 per year.

It was not possible to confirm whether RTPI could be installed at the railway station and inside the shopping centre ahead of the Merrywalks works.

Action: Sarah Williams to check with GCC IT team

Councillors raised concerns about the management arrangements for the bike lockers. It was felt that a robust legal agreement would be needed to ensure that locker users are properly supported.

The timetable for delivering the project was unknown – quotations were still being evaluated, but it was likely to be in 2025. The project had been delayed by slow funding confirmations and concerns about original quotations. Sarah Williams apologised for the delay. Luisa Senft-Hayward celebrated securing additional funding for resurfacing.

There was a general discussion about alternative locations for bike lockers, including potentially Fawkes Place. A map of the land ownership in Merrywalks was requested.

Action: HB to circulate map

Cllr Fealty was concerned about a lack of GCC funds for maintenance and welcomed the announcement in the recent King's Speech about local ownership of bus services. He felt that RTPI was essential for improving passengers' experience.

Bus shelter installation on King Street

The proposed cantilever shelter had been ruled on due to the narrowness of the footway. A potential solution would be to install the shelter on the Lloyds Bank forecourt behind the fence. Alternatively, could the bus stop be relocated to outside the Sub Rooms, which is more central to town and has more space?

Action: CEO to approach Lloyds Bank
GCC to consider relocation of bus stop.

12. Progress reports from Stroud District Council

Cllr Davey noted the lack of a report on SDC tourism activity and reported that local tourism was down 10%.

Town centre cleanliness

Mike Towson reported on a recent partnership meeting and confirmed that a 2-day cleanup was planned for 12th and 13th August. GCC would be providing resources to tackle ongoing concerns about weeding, with neither council accepting responsibility for this work. SDC had increased their monitoring of the contractors and a pedestrian sweeper was now being used.

Cllr Davey reported that the Chamber and Five Valleys Shopping Centre had sent out messages to the members/tenants encouraging them to clear up weeds outside their shopfronts. The CEO reported that a recent complaint from a member of the public about weeds on roundabouts had been passed to both SDC and GCC who had both denied responsibility.

Action: MT to investigate responsibility for roundabout weeding

Town centre toilets

A final report from the British Toilets Association was awaited and would be circulated when received. The first draft had been too generic. In the meantime, poster frames had been installed on the doors, which would also be repainted.

Car park improvements

Installation of real time information on parking space availability was in progress. In response to a question from Cllr Fealty it was confirmed that the only data collected relates to the number of cars entering or leaving the car park.

Work on installing door openers was due to start on 15th July and take one month

It was reported that there had been numerous hold ups on the installation of EV chargers, but an order had now been placed to deliver government funded resident and visitor chargers in London Road car park. Parliament Street car park had been ruled out and Stratford Park was still under consideration.

Installation of bike lockers at Brunel Mall car park

The next project would be bike lockers.

Wallbridge improvements

Brendan Cleere stated the project was on hold awaiting funding.

13. To review progress on Stroud District Council's Vitality Fund

Brendan Cleere confirmed that applications would be considered in the Autumn. All of the qualifying councils had confirmed that they would be submitting bids, and the fund was likely to be oversubscribed. Cllr Davey asked what the timetable would be for reviewing applications. It was confirmed that they would be reviewed on receipt.

The meeting closed at 11.30am

Chair

Date

Appendix 1

UPDATE ON ACTIONS OUTSTANDING OR IN PROGRESS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

DATE OF MEETING	ACTION	OFFICER	STATUS	Priority	NOTES
20/07/2023	Inform group when Market Tavern planning application has been submitted	CEO	In progress		Updated designs discussed at C&H meeting in July.
12/10/2023	Deputy Clerk to discuss setting up SLA with SDTF with the Town Clerk	Deputy Clerk	On hold		
12/10/2023	Mike Towson to speak to colleagues re progress to improve untidiness of town first raised at 20/7 Regen	Mike Towson (SDC)	Replaced		See Item 12
12/10/2023	Leonie Lockwood to report on plans for toilet improvements	Mike Towson (SDC)	Replaced		See Item 12
30/11/2023	Cleanliness of Bedford Street toilets.	Mike Towson (SDC)	Replaced		See Item 12
15/2/2024	Update on Tourism Grant for Enjoy Stroud District leaflet campaign	Chamber of Trade	Replaced		Now submitted to Vitality Fund
15/2/2024	Delivering the Windows of Opportunity pilot - to get the future high street champions a presence on in the town	Chamber of Trade	In progress		See Item 9
15/2/2024	Bike lockers in Brunel Mall Car Park	SDC	In progress		See item 12
15/2/2024	New information boards for car parks (with "spaces remaining info)	SDC	In progress		See item 12
15/2/2024	Fire Door Holders in Brunel Mall Car Park, many still out of action	SDC	In progress		Work started
25/4/2024	SDC to organise an action day to search black bags and fly-tipped waste. Cllr Drew to enquire about the request for support with back-edging. SDC to confirm whether litter and recycling bins, and street furniture can be washed. SDC officers to investigate enforcement of fly-posting. CEO to share previous emails about fly-posting.	SDC/Cllr Drew	In progress		See item 12
20/6/2024	Invite Gloucestershire County Council to report on the Merrywalks project at the next meeting.	CEO	In progress		

20/6/2024	Circulate the Wallbridge site and the cycle path plans	Leonie Lockwood (SDC)	Complete		
20/6/2024	Research replacement of missing History Board and seek funding from Five Valleys Shopping Centre – location to be decided	CEO	Not started		
20/6/2024	Investigate potential to extend History trail to include the St Laurence Church grounds.	CEO	Not started		
20/6/2024	Transfer ownership of notice boards opposite Sims Clock and at the top of the High Street to Stroud Town Council.	Stroud District Council	Not started		
20/6/2024	Refurbish and repurpose notice boards	CEO	In progress		Vitality Fund application submitted for replacement with larger boards
20/6/2024	Circulate footfall data for Stroud.	Chamber	Complete		
20/6/2024	investigate with Community Safety and Environmental Health and report back on SDC's timetable for progressing enforcement work on environmental crimes and have they written to the worst flyposting offenders?	Brendan Cleere	Not known		
20/6/2024	Collate a list of poster locations for sharing.	STC Comms and Engagement Officer	In progress		
20/6/2024	Share final report on public toilets with the CEO and Chamber Chair to review and agree priorities.	Mike Towson	In progress		Report in progress
20/6/2024	Include the reasons for toilet closures in posters.	Mike Towson	Complete		New poster holders installed
20/6/2024	Discuss potential collaboration with other towns on the procurement of bike storage lockers to potentially secure bulk discounts.	Mike Towson and Cllr Davey	Not known		
20/6/2024	Send report on tourism activity.	Brendan Cleere	Incomplete		Outstanding
20/6/2024	Find out what colour paints will be used on the station bridge refurbishment	Leonie Lockwood	In progress		
20/6/2024	Liaise with CEO on Wallbridge improvements	Leonie Lockwood	Not started		
20/6/2024	Submit Vitality Fund applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town maps and noticeboards 	CEO Chamber	In progress		All done except for Goodwill

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the tourism leaflets proposal submitted by the Chamber • A Shopfront improvements scheme (to be operated by Stroud District Council) • Stroud Goodwill evening 				
20/6/2024	Creating a safe link between the schools on Cainscross Road and Stroud station.	All partners	Future work plan		
20/6/2024	Transfer responsibility for town centre benches and street furniture to Stroud Town Council	SDC	Future work plan		