



**Minutes of the meeting of the
REGENERATION WORKING GROUP
20th June 2024, at 10.00am
Virtual Meeting (Zoom)**

Present

Town Cllrs: Tony Davey (Chair), Jeremy Green, Liz Hillary, Craig Horrocks, Adrian Oldman, Lucas Schoemaker; Mike Towson (SDC), Brendan Cleere (SDC); Leonie Lockwood (SDC), Andrew Watton (Stroud District Chamber of Trade)

In attendance

Helen Bojaniwska (CEO, Town Clerk) and Kate Buckingham (Communications and Engagement Officer)

Absent

Cllr Mick Fealty

1. Apologies

Town Cllrs Geoffrey Andrews and David Drew

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

There were no questions.

5. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 25th April 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 May 2024

The budget report was noted. Cllr Oldman asked for the budget for RTPi and Bus Shelters to be included in discussion under item 8.

The agenda was reordered as follows.

8. CEO's report

The CEO presented her report and provided an update on a progress meeting on the feasibility study for active travel provision on the A419. Three options had been looked at and some costings provided. The final report would be presented at the next meeting.

Cllr Oldman queried the lack of progress on the delivery of new bus shelters, Real Time Passenger Information, seating, landscaping and bike storage at Merrywalks. It

was reported that the public consultation had been delayed due to the general election and there would be a further delay because Gloucestershire County Council have to import the bus shelters from China, so the project might not be completed until Spring 2025.

Action: CEO to invite Gloucestershire County Council to report on the Merrywalks project at the next meeting.

Cllr Schoemaker asked for an update on the Wallbridge plans and the underpass leading to the Rodborough cycle path. Leonie Lockwood reported that Stroud District Council are working on land ownership matters to enable some improvements to be made to the tarmacked area at the bottom of the site. There is a budget of £60,000 for this project.

It was further reported that plans for improvements to both the Wallbridge site and the cycle path were drawn up for the unsuccessful Levelling Up bid, but there is currently no funding to progress this. The CEO confirmed that Highways have reported that they are unable to make improvements to the underpass because of underground utilities. Rodborough Parish Council are purchasing land to support the cycle path improvements when funds become available.

Action: Leonie Lockwood (SDC) to circulate the Wallbridge site and the cycle path plans

7. Update on actions from previous meetings

The Working Group updated the list of actions shown in [Appendix 1](#).

New Actions:

- CEO to research replacement of missing History Board and seek funding from Five Valleys Shopping Centre – location to be decided.
- CEO to investigate potential to extend History trail to include the St Laurence Church grounds.
- Stroud District Council to transfer ownership of notice boards opposite Sims Clock and at the top of the High Street to Stroud Town Council.
- Stroud Town Council to refurbish and repurpose notice boards.

9. Report from the Stroud District Chamber of Trade

The Chair of the Chamber reported that businesses in the town centre had been experiencing mixed buying patterns, with some zero spend days, including Farmers' market stallholders. Some businesses were doing better.

Shoplifting was reported to be prevalent and had been reported to be the worst in the South West. Businesses were finding it difficult to report incidents. The PCC had been asked to put it on his agenda. Some broken windows were appearing.

The premises vacancy rate in the town centre was reported to be higher than the national average at 14.59%. The opening of a new Peacocks store and a new market store on the High Street were welcomed, but there were now 54 vacant business premises available, including offices.

Some sources of optimism were reported, including the return of some staff to Ecotricity's office on Russell Street and the refurbishment of shops on Kendrick Street.

With regard to tourism the Chamber had been prioritising the promotion of other towns in the District due to the poor state of Stroud town centre. A car had been seen being broken into in broad daylight in the London Road car park.

Footfall in Stroud was reported to be the lowest compared to other local towns and falling; Cirencester in comparison was rising. It was felt to be too early to assess whether the campaign to promote free parking after 2pm was having an impact.

Other stakeholders were encouraged to join in with the police's operation Unity.

In response to discussions at a Partnership meeting convened by Stroud District Council, posters had been produced on the themes of litter, fly-posting and graffiti. Approval of the campaign proposal by Stroud District Council was awaited.

Action: Chamber to circulate footfall data for Stroud.

10. Report from Stroud District Council on town centre cleanliness

Mike Towson (SDC) reported that monitoring of cleanliness standards had increased. He felt that litter levels were OK, but there were still issues relating to general detritus, graffiti, stickering and fly-posting. It was noted that the CEO was liaising with Stroud District Council's Environmental Health Manager on a fly-posting campaign and more enforcement was anticipated.

Mike thanked Gloucestershire Highways for installing new fencing around the bin storage area in Fawkes Place. Stroud District Council would be carrying out jet washing of the area and tidying up the bins.

It was reported that Stroud District Council would soon be acquiring equipment for removing chewing gum and promotional resources. The equipment could also be used on some graffiti.

Brendan Cleere (SDC) reported on the recent Partnership meeting attended by officers from Stroud District Council, Stroud Town Council and Gloucestershire County Council, and the Chamber, but sadly the police had not been able to attend.

The meeting had been convened to develop a multi-agency approach to improving the look and feel of the town. It was noted that criminal behaviour also needs to be addressed. The group would meet again in September 2024.

It was noted that Stroud District Council's contractors Ubico now have some technology in their cabs, which enables to the report any issues that they find, for example broken bins or fly-tipping.

Cllr Davey reported that 25% of the low level Anti-Social Behaviour in the district occurs in Stroud.

Cllr Oldman asked whether Stroud District Council carry out enforcement on fly-posting. The CEO explained that a project is in development to deter fly-posting in partnership with Stroud District Council's Environment Health manager.

Cllr Horrocks asked about graffiti. The CEO explained that the Town Council has arranged the installation of boards at the Market Tavern with the support of the owner. The boards are used for diversionary activities and will also be part of the upcoming Paint Festival, during which a number of frequently tagged walls will also be painted.

Cllr Hillary asked about legal windows for fly-posting and it was confirmed that some owners of empty shops allow people to put posters up inside. Andrew Watton reported that there can be insurance issues with allowing entry into otherwise empty buildings to insert posters. There had also been past instances where buildings were not properly secured after access. All this had created a reluctance to continue this practice.

Cllr Schoemaker asked what is Stroud District Council's timetable for progressing enforcement work on environmental crimes and have they written to the worst fly-posting offenders?

Action: Brendan Cleere (SDC) to investigate with Community Safety and Environmental Health and report back.

Cllr Oldman called for more enforcement and asked whether there are legal sites for putting up posters. Cllr Davey recommended online promotion and noticeboards. It was acknowledged that there is a shortage of sites for legal posters.

Cllr Green shared suggestions for Colonnades Morris and Litfass columns. Empty shops were not felt to be ideal locations because they are labour intensive and there are potential insurance issues.

Action: Communications and Engagement Officer to collate a list of poster locations for sharing.

11. Report from Stroud District Council on town centre toilets

Mike Towson (SDC) reported that the District Council want the toilets to be spic and span, but they are thwarted by: anti-social behaviour issues, rough sleepers, and drug users. They are working on the appearance of the exteriors, including installing poster frames on the doors, so that any notices can be displayed without leaving gluey marks on the paintwork.

The British Toilets Association had been commissioned to write a report on the toilets, but the document presented had been poor, containing only generic recommendations. The Association had been contacted for further information. Improvements to the family change cubicle would be progressed and the disabled cubicle had been complimented.

Action: Mike Towson to share final report with the CEO and Chamber Chair to review and agree priorities.

Cllr Davey suggested that when cubicles are closed it would be helpful to explain the reason why, to mitigate public concerns. Mike agreed that this could be included in future closure signs.

Action: Mike Towson to include the reasons for toilet closures in posters.

12. Report from Stroud District Council on car park improvements

Mike Towson (SDC) reported that he was currently prioritising the real time information LED signs at Brunel Mall. The procurement process had been completed and a final design was being reviewed.

With regard to door closers Mike confirmed that a new system had been ordered and would be installed throughout the whole car park.

13. Report from Stroud District Council on the installation of bike lockers at Brunel Mall car park

Mike Towson (SDC) reported that bike lockers would be purchased using any underspend from the LED signage. Cllr Davey suggested a collaboration with other towns to potentially secure bulk discounts.

Action: Mike Towson and Cllr Davey to discuss potential collaboration.

Cllr Schoemaker asked why the LED signs were only being installed at the car park and not on the approaches to the town. It was explained that there is currently no budget for this, but it might be possible in future. Cllr Davey agreed that further signage is needed, but the project is aiming to solve the problem of people not using the multi-storey. The CEO suggested using CIL funding to support further work on this.

14. Report from Stroud District Council on tourism activity

Brendan Cleere (SDC) had nothing to report but would send a written update.

Action: Brendan Cleere to send report on tourism activity.

The Chamber Chair reported that their application to the Rural England Prosperity Fund for printing tourism leaflets had been rejected. No response had been received to their reapplication to the Vitality Fund.

15. Update on Stroud District Council regeneration projects in the station area

Leonie Lockwood (SDC) confirmed that Stroud station had been awarded government funding for a feasibility study on step-free access between the two platforms, which would build on work already progressed. It was noted that the funding for this programme comes from the HS2 development. The project would be led by Network Rail, who already had it in their capital programme for the current financial year. The project is expected to take 2-3 years to complete.

It was reported that the purchases of the Good Shed and the car park next to Brunel Mall were both progressing well. Relocating the track access to the other side of Brunel Mall will make use of this land more straightforward and support connectivity between the car park and the proposed Golden Valley walking and cycling route.

In response to a question from Cllr Oldman it was confirmed that plans to refurbish and repaint the existing station bridge will still go ahead this year and will not be delayed by the funding announcement.

Action: Leonie to find out what colour paints will be used.

Cllr Oldman also asked about progress on the Cheapside housing site. Leonie confirmed that a Biodiversity Net Gain baseline report would be required, after which the District Council plans to tidy up the site.

16. Update on Stroud District Council on Wallbridge improvements

Already covered under item 8.

Action: Leonie Lockwood to liaise with CEO.

17. Review progress on Stroud District Council's Vitality Fund

Brendan Cleere explained the history of the fund and criteria.

The CEO explained potential projects and it was **agreed** to submit applications for:

- Town maps and noticeboards
- Support for the tourism leaflets proposal submitted by the Chamber
- A Shopfront improvements scheme (to be operated by Stroud District Council)
- Stroud Goodwill evening

It was noted that Stroud District Council are researching the shopfronts scheme, but Brendan Cleere expressed concern about the potential costs. He asked for the projects to be submitted in priority order and with offers of match funding. He thanked the Chamber Chair for his support on this project.

18. Review of Regeneration Working Group's work programme and potential projects

The Working Group noted the work programme. The following ideas were suggested for future project:

- Creating a safe link between the schools on Cainscross Road and Stroud station.
- Transfer responsibility for town centre benches and street furniture to Stroud Town Council.

It was noted that the new County Council funded on demand "Robin" bus service had been launched, but would not visit Stroud.

The meeting closed at 12.00pm

Chair

Date

Appendix 1

UPDATE ON ACTIONS OUTSTANDING OR IN PROGRESS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

| DATE OF MEETING | ACTION | OFFICER | STATUS | Priority | NOTES |
|-----------------|---|--------------------------------|-------------|----------|---|
| 23/05/2023 | Clerk to set up meeting with Simon Maher & James Jeffrey re London Road closures | Clerk | Cancelled | | Included in A419 Feasibility study. |
| 20/07/2023 | Inform group when Market Tavern planning application has been submitted | Project Officer | In progress | | Updated designs to be discussed at a Council meeting in July. |
| 12/10/2023 | Deputy Clerk to discuss setting up SLA with SDTF with the Town Clerk | Deputy Clerk | Not started | | SDTF On hold. Cllr Davey to update at next meeting. |
| 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) | In progress | | See item 10 |
| 12/10/2023 | Leonie Lockwood to report on plans for toilet improvements | Mike Towson (SDC) | In progress | | See item 11 |
| 30/11/2023 | Cleanliness of Bedford Street toilets. | Mike Towson (SDC) | In progress | | See item 11 |
| 30/11/2023 | Brendan Cleere will investigate lack of cycle parking at the museum | Brendan Cleere (SDC) | COMPLETE | | |
| 30/11/2023 | The Clerk to follow up with the Deputy Clerk with regard to the on-site meeting regarding lifts at the railway station. | Clerk | COMPLETE | | See item 15 |
| 15/2/2024 | Accurate footfall data, SDC to get the supplier to revert back to the accurate standard of March 2023 and previously | SDC (officer to be identified) | COMPLETE | | The Chamber now has a login. |
| 15/2/2024 | Update on Tourism Grant for Enjoy Stroud District leaflet campaign | Chamber of Trade | In progress | | See item 17 |
| 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 | | |
| 15/2/2024 | Missing history board – sign now confirmed as lost | Unknown | Unknown | | See item 7 |
| 15/2/2024 | Town info boards, top of High Street and opposite Sims Clock, Chamber offered to pay for the new boards in Spring 2023 | SDC | In progress | | See item 7 |

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| 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 | | See item 12 |
| 15/2/2024 | Installation of tourism insert into upper tariff board in Church Street. Delivered to be inserted into the Tariff board in November 2023 | SDC | Complete | | |
| 25/4/2024 | Chair and Cllr Drew to submit complaints about delay in completing Merrywalks bus shelters and RTP1 | Chair and Cllr Drew | Complete | | |
| 25/4/2024 | CEO to contact Rodborough Parish Council for more information about progress on Wallbridge subway and Rodborough cycle link. | STC | Complete | | See item 16 |
| 25/4/2024 | MT to report back on British Toilets Association findings and investigate concerns about the doors and water supply | SDC | In progress | | See item 11 |
| 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 10 |
| 25/4/2024 | CEO to add cleaning of the bin store area to the Town Council's Ubico contract. | STC | Complete | | SDC agreed to add to their contract. |
| 25/4/2024 | CEO to circulate SDC Strategy and Resources report [Vitality Fund] with the minutes | STC | Complete | | See item 17 |