



**Minutes of the meeting of the
REGENERATION WORKING GROUP
3rd October 2024, at 10.00am
Virtual Meeting (Zoom)**

Present

Town Cllrs: Geoffrey Andrews, Tony Davey (Chair), Mick Fealty, Liz Hillary, Adrian Oldman, Lucas Schoemaker; Stroud District Cllr: Katy Hofmann, Gloucestershire County Councillor David Drew (from item 13); Mike Towson (SDC), Brendan Cleere (SDC); Sarah Williams (GCC), Luisa Seft-Hayward (GCC), Tom Main (GCC), Danielle Chick (GCC) Tim Mars (Stroud Civic Society)

In attendance

Helen Bojaniwska (CEO, Town Clerk)

Absent

1. Apologies

Town Cllrs Jeremy Green and Craig Horrocks, 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

A representation from a Stroud resident regarding the suitability of Merrywalks as a bus station was noted.

5. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 18th July 2024 were **approved** by the members present and will be signed as a correct record by the Chair at the next opportunity.

6. 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.

Updates were received as follows:

- The Market Tavern site would soon be presented to Stroud District Council for a pre-application consultation.
- The Stroud District Tourism Forum, it was noted that this had become a networking group only, so a Service Level Agreement was no longer relevant.
- Windows of Opportunity – starts in November – applications were awaited.
- Enforcement action had been taken about flyposting.
- Poster locations – outstanding.

- Potential discounts for bulk purchases of bike stores – Wotton-under-Edge and Berkeley were interested. **Action:** Cllr Davey to follow up.
- Station paint colours – Cllr Davey reported that heritage colours would be used.
- Merrywalks map – completed.
- Roundabout weeds – SDC and GCC in discussion. Concerns were raised about resources.

7. To receive progress reports from Gloucestershire County Council on:

Merrywalks Transport Hub

GCC Officers gave a presentation providing an update on the project following the recent public consultation. Their report on the consultation would be circulated for comment before publication. It was noted that there had been a good response rate to the consultation, with 1,700 visits to the website, 595 people engaged in person or online, 98 surveys completed and 94 ideas received.

Action: consultation report to be circulated by GCC

The responses had been positive in line with the proposals. Issues that came up included: the lack of public toilets nearby, and the need for CCTV and better street lighting to improve public safety.

HB reported that Stroud District Council were planning to review their CCTV in the town centre in the near future.

Action: GCC/STC/SDC to stay in dialogue regarding CCTV, toilets, and planting

A concern was raised about the reliability of the RTPi. GCC officers confirmed that both Stagecoach and Cotswold Green buses would be providing live data via their ticket machines.

The lack of toilets was discussed and it was felt there needed to be more dialogue with relevant partners to resolve this. It was noted that the former toilets on the ground floor of the shopping centre had been closed due to repeated vandalism. It was felt that a community toilet scheme should be researched.

A question was raised about the potential to progress the RTPi independently of the bus shelter installations, as a potential quick win. GCC officers confirmed that the standalone totems at the railway station and bus station could be progressed independently, with the bus shelter units following on when the new shelters are installed.

Action: TM to check timescale for installations and report back

With regard to bike storage, it was reported that the shopping centre had asked GCC for a meeting to discuss installation on their land. It was felt that the location needed further discussion at the next meeting.

Action: GCC to inform STC and SDC once cycle storage location is firmed up

The Town Council had objected to a planning application by Clear Channel for digital advertising on one of the bus shelters at Merrywalks. TM reported that the application would be amended to rolling paper adverts.

With regard to overall project timetables, it was reported that subject to planning permission and internal approvals, the installation would go ahead in 2025.

Action: GCC to send through emerging programme

LSH reported that only one of the shelters would be suitable for a green roof because of the level of natural light in the area. It was **agreed** that this should be included. Cllr Oldman asked whether the seats would have arms.

Action: GCC to share bus shelter designs (including seating) before confirming the order.

Bus shelter installation on King Street

HB had written to Lloyds Bank to request permission to install a shelter on their forecourt, but had not received a reply.

8. To receive progress reports from Stroud District Council on:

Town Centre Cleanliness

MT reported that town centre clean up days had been really successful and were followed up with regular inspections and splitting open bags of flytipped rubbish. Cigarette pouches were distributed and more are available.

A new gum removal machine was now in operation, but it had been taking more time than expected to clean off gum. A pedestrian operated sweeper had now also arrived. Signage related to gum disposal had been erected and messages painted on the pavements. The painted messages would need regular repainting.

BC reported that there had been two successful partnership meetings regarding the town centre, which also considered vitality and antisocial behaviour. A further meeting was planned for January 2025 which would include the police and consider joint action.

Town Centre Toilets

MT reported that he had met with a representative of the British Toilets Association to discuss the recommendations from their recent report on the Bedford Street toilets. Recommendations which would be considered included: updating the "wallgate" units, overhauling the locks and removing graffiti from walls. SDC were not keen to pursue a recommendation to introduce charging. Consideration would be given to a Community Toilets scheme. SDC surveyors had also recommended painting the doors and removing the moss from the roof. It was noted that the family cubicle had recently been closed following a fire.

Cllr Davey suggested that charging might be acceptable if it helped to keep the toilets up together and deterred antisocial behaviour.

Cllr Oldman suggested that the cinema might be a good candidate for a community toilets scheme.

Action: STC, SDC and GCC to discuss community toilets scheme.

Car Park Improvements at Brunel Mall Car Park

MT reported that a spaces counter would be installed in October 2024. The installation of door closers linked to the fire alarm system had been delayed. It was reported that the mat at the entrance to Brunel Mall had been damaged by equipment used during recent painting work. Cllr Davey congratulated SDC on the redecoration.

Action: MT to report on door closers by email

Installation Of Bike Lockers at Brunel Mall Car Park

It was reported that these would come from the same budget as the spaces counter, so it was now known how much money remains for the lockers, so this would be progressed by the end of 2024.

Actions:

MT to consult working group members on the lockers design by email.

TD to share with other towns interested in purchasing lockers.

Wallbridge Improvements

Site meeting planned for mid-October.

Tourism

BC reported that SDC had funded upgrades to the Stroud app, which now has 2,600 users.

A report on the Unique Selling Points (USPs) for the district had been commissioned.

A grant of £1,000 had been awarded for photographs of the canal for use on social media.

Data from footfalls counters was now being regularly circulated. Creative England had been contacted about promoting the district as a film location. The Commons had recently featured in White Stuff adverts on Channel 4 and there was potential for a Netflix feature.

Priorities for the local visitor economy include: biodiversity and sustainability.

SDC had also supported a bid for Gloucester and Cheltenham to host the annual EuroPride event.

Actions:

BC to invite SDC's tourism officer to future meetings and share the USP report when received.

9. To receive a report on bus shelters

A report on bus shelters was considered. It was **agreed** to ask the CEO to carry out the actions listed below:

Actions:

- Discuss a potential asset transfer of bus shelters currently in District and County Council ownership. (MT to discuss with colleagues at SDC.)
- Work with bus operators and Gloucestershire County Council to identify which bus stops attract the most passengers and where there is scope for new shelters,

then run a public consultation to prioritise sites, with a view to developing a 3-year installation plan.

- Investigate whether any of the shelters being removed from Merrywalks could be reused at other locations.

10. To receive a budget report to end August 2024

The budget report was noted.

11. To receive the CEO's verbal report

HB reported that resurfacing works were due to be completed in London Road, near Waitrose.

TM asked whether there were any plans for resurfacing the town centre pavements and King Street. HB reported that no plans for pavements had been reported to the Town Council.

Action: include surfacing of King Street on the next agenda.

12. To receive a verbal report from the Stroud District Chamber of Trade

The Chair of the Chamber reported that monthly footfall had gone down.

The Chamber had agreed to take on the organisation of Goodwill, but were finding the road closure process challenging.

Vacancies in Stroud town centre had improved – now at 13.1%.

The economic situation was still troubling and businesses were uncertain about what the upcoming budget would bring. He was concerned that more closures could follow.

Events were being well publicised and the Calvium app was getting a good number of hits.

Catch the Bus month had been publicised in October and November would see a Slovenber campaign.

A Bear Hunt around the town would run alongside the Book Festival between 2nd and 17th November, which would be celebrating the 35th anniversary of the Michael Rosen book of the same name.

The Chamber had formulated a response to Stroud District Council's Strategic Plan consultation.

Sadly, there had been no funding for leaflets or brochures.

The Chamber would be encouraging people to attend organised fireworks events to celebrate Bonfire night.

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

Cllr Drew joined the meeting.

BC reported that the deadline for submitting applications had been 16th September and the results and requests for further information would be shared in the next few days. The total value of the applications received was less than the available budget.

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: HB	In progress		Update: Soon to be presented to SDC for a pre-application consultation.
12/10/2023	Deputy Clerk to discuss setting up SLA with SDTF with the Town Clerk	Deputy Clerk	CANCELLED		SDTF now a discussion forum only
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		Update: starts in November – applications awaited.
15/2/2024	Bike lockers in Brunel Mall Car Park	SDC	In progress		See item 8
15/2/2024	New information boards for car parks (with “spaces remaining info)	SDC	In progress		See item 8
15/2/2024	Fire Door Holders in Brunel Mall Car Park, many still out of action	SDC	In progress		Work started
20/6/2024	Research replacement of missing History Board and seek funding from Five Valleys Shopping Centre – location to be decided	STC: HB	In progress		
20/6/2024	Investigate potential to extend History trail to include the St Laurence Church grounds.	STC: HB	In progress		
20/6/2024	Transfer ownership of notice boards opposite Sims Clock and at the top of the High Street to Stroud Town Council.	SDC	In progress		
20/6/2024	Refurbish and repurpose notice boards	STC: HB	In progress		Vitality Fund application submitted for replacement with larger boards
20/6/2024	Collate a list of poster locations for sharing.	STC: HB	In progress		
20/6/2024	Share final report on public toilets with the CEO and Chamber Chair to review and agree priorities.	SDC: Mike Towson	In progress		Report in progress
20/6/2024	Discuss potential collaboration with other towns on the procurement of bike	SDC: Mike Towson STC: Cllr Davey	In progress		Berkeley interested

	storage lockers to potentially secure bulk discounts.				
20/6/2024	Liaise with CEO on Wallbridge improvements	SDC: Leonie Lockwood	In progress		Site meeting booked
20/6/2024	Submit Vitality Fund applications	STC: HB Chamber	Complete		All done – results awaited
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		
18/7/2024	Bus shelter for King Street CEO to approach Lloyds Bank	STC: HB	In progress		Letter sent. Awaiting response
18/7/2024	Consider relocation of bus stop on King Street.	GCC	Outstanding		
18/7/2024	Investigate responsibility for roundabout weeding	SDC: Mike Towson GCC	In progress		SDC and GCC in discussion.