

STROUD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the REGENERATION WORKING GROUP

Thursday, 28th April 2022, at 10.00am

Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Present

Cllrs Geoffrey Andrews, Liz Child, Kevin Cranston, (Deputy Chair), Tony Davey, Camilla Hale, Stella Parkes (Chair)

In attendance

Cllr Adrian Oldman, Helen Bojaniwska (Town Clerk), Alison Rood (Project Officer); Gloucestershire County Council: Cllr David Drew; Stroud Chamber: Andrew Watton

1. Apologies

Cllr Mick Fealty; Stroud District Council: Leonie Lockwood (Regeneration Delivery Lead)

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

Two questions had been received. The first was from a retailer on London Road who expressed disappointment at the ending of the Saturday road closure. Members had received varied feedback and retailers appeared to have mixed views on the benefits of the re-opening/closure of London Road. Some retailers originally opposed to closure were now more supportive. Discussion included potential for a future, permanent Saturday closure. This would need the support of businesses. Traffic management had been expensive so Members suggested money raised by Stroud District Council's increased car parking charges could be used to help cover a permanent closure on Saturday's e.g. pay for training in traffic management.

A meeting was also due to take place soon with the owner of the Market Tavern to discuss the development of the site. Given its proximity to the London Road it was **agreed** to await the outcome of that meeting. It was also **agreed** that Saturday closure of London Road be included in the Town Council's parking strategy (see Item 7).

Action: Clerk to approach Stroud District Council to determine where additional car parking revenue was being spent.

The second question was from a business on the High Street concerned about demonstrations held outside their business on Saturdays. These caused an obstruction which discouraged/prevented shoppers from accessing the shop. The manager wanted to know if the demonstrations could be relocated to a more suitable

location e.g. Subscription Room forecourt. The demonstration organiser had contacted the Town Council and they intended to hold further, smaller demonstrations. In future they would ensure marshals kept access to shops clear.

Members acknowledged the Town Council had no formal powers to ensure demonstrations only happened in certain areas of the town. They also recognised that for some members of the public demonstrations may be intimidating and off-putting and discourage them from shopping in the town centre, with a detrimental impact on businesses. The necessity of a street licence to sell food, but not for a demonstration was discussed as was the policing of such events.

The Clerk suggested the development of a town centre code of conduct which, if not followed, could trigger action by the Police. It was **agreed** that Members would use their formal and informal networks to highlight these issues to demonstration organisers.

Action: Clerk to set up a meeting with the Chamber and the Police to discuss a code of conduct.

5. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the Committee meeting on 17th February 2022 were noted by the members present and will be approved by the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

6. Approved Budget for 2022-23 financial year

The budget report was noted. The Clerk reported CIL payments to the Town Council were in the region of £14k, which is significantly higher than those received previously. Reflecting this the Clerk highlighted the need for a policy to cover Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spending.

Action: Clerk to include an item on the Finance and Policy Committee agenda to discuss spending priorities for CIL funds.

7. Project Officer report

Members were updated on the progress of the Market Towns Tourism work. Tenders had been received and a shortlist developed. Following Stroud District Council's procurement of a place experience platform/app, the Project Officer had undertaken training to upload information for the Stroud pages. Some disappointment was expressed that the town councils did not take full advantage of the Visit Stroud site already available. Members asked for further clarification regarding future funding for the app.

Action: Project Officer to check on-going app funding with Stroud District Council.

Development of a brief for a town centre parking study had not progressed as well as expected. A brief outline of the streets to be covered was given. It was suggested more streets be included e.g. Gloucester Street, Station Road and Lansdown. Following earlier conversations regarding London Road closure (Item 4) it was **agreed** to include any potential Saturday closure of London Road in the study.

Updates on the train station survey and Access for All funding were noted.

8. Bus services and facilities report

The Project Officer reported on a recent meeting, arranged by Cllr Oldman, between Stagecoach, Gloucestershire County Councillors (GCC), Dransfield, the Town Council and members of the public. This meeting discussed the facilities at Merrywalks and the continuing unreliability of bus services in the Stroud area. Another meeting was due to be held later in the year

Members agreed that services were poor, unreliable, and expensive and facilities at Merrywalks needed upgrading. It was accepted that it was now too late to include improvements in the Levelling Up Fund bid. Members raised the potential to work with other market towns to look at other options including the provision of buses and to set own routes. This approach had also been discussed at a recent Market Towns Forum meeting. It was suggested that Gloucestershire Rural Community Council be invited to any future bus meeting given their active involvement in bus service provision.

Members **agreed** to note the update on bus services and to approve in principle future support and resources for public realm and bus shelter improvements funded from CIL contributions, working in partnership with Dransfield Properties, GCC, Stroud District Council (SDC) and bus service providers.

It was further **agreed** to progress research into alternative bus services, when staff resources allow.

Cllr Oldman offered his time to assist in taking this work forward.

9. Design work update at Subscription Rooms forecourt

The Clerk reported that the public consultation will end on 29th April. Consultation had highlighted a variety of potential improvements for the design team to consider. An Accessibility Audit had now been completed.

Members of the Civic Society had expressed strong views on the design and developed their own proposals, but it was unclear if these had undergone any consultation. Atkins, Gloucestershire County Council's highways consultants, had been instructed to look at how the new town square would interact with the surrounding roads.

10. Update on Levelling Up Fund bid

The Clerk gave an update on progress, highlighting that currently potential projects would require funding of approximately £25m, £5m above the maximum amount available. Some projects would inevitably need be dropped.

At an extraordinary meeting organised by Siobhan Baillie MP, the District Council had been urged to finalise and cost the different elements as soon as possible. In addition, she had recommended the inclusion of some private development and the District Council were now exploring opportunities with Dransfield. Job creation was seen as an important element of any successful bid. Members discussed the importance of consultation on the bid, especially with significant local employers e.g. Ecotricity.

The meeting closed at 11.57

Chair

Date