



STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

<http://lsp.stroud.gov.uk>

Meeting held on Friday 9 June 2023

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill

Theme: Stroud District: The Natural Place

Present:

Russell Warner (Chair)	Gloucestershire Area Lead, Federation of Small Businesses	Cllr Catherine Braun	Leader of Council
Will Mansell (Vice Chair)	The Grace Network	Kathy O'Leary	Chief Executive, Stroud District Council
Anna Bonallack	Chief Executive Officer, Creative Sustainability	Steve Elliott- Mead	Trustee, OPENhouse
Beth Whittaker	Stroud Businesswomen's Network	Steve Olczak	Partnership Manager, Department of Work and Pensions
Cate James- Hodges	SDYC Leader		

Apologies received:

Adele Kendall	Head of HR, Ecotricity	Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP	MP for The Cotswolds
Alison Robinson	Chief Executive Officer, GAPTC	Kerrin Cocks	Strategic Support Officer, GAPTC
Alison Truphet	Executive Director, New Ventures Trust	Cllr Lindsey Green	Leader of the Opposition, Stroud District Council
Anna Herbert	Chief Executive Officer, OPENhouse	Lisa Ferneyhough- Moss	Deputy Director Care Operations, Lilian Faithfull Care
Barbara Piranty	Chief Executive, GRCC	Mark McShane	Head, Stroud High School
Brandon Watkins	SDYC Chair	Matt Fellows	CEO, Age UK Gloucestershire
David Owen	CE, Gfirst Local Enterprise partnership	Max Comfort	Director, Stroud Commonwealth
Eilis Cope	Director, Cope Sales and Marketing Ltd	Cllr Natalie Bennett	Deputy Leader of Council
Elizabeth Hall	CE, Citizens Advice Stroud & Cotswolds	Paul Cruise	Stroud and Dursley Inspector, Gloucestershire Police
Geoffrey Beckerleg	Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Stroud	Simon Bernstein	Chief Executive, Longfield

Absent and apologies not received:

Carole Stubbs	Job Centre Plus, Avon, Somerset and Gloucestershire District	Matt Amey	Stroud and Nailsworth Station Manager, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service
Chris Pockett	Head of Communications, Renishaw	Dr Roma Walker	Stroud League of Friends
Fred Barker	Director, Transition Stroud	Sarah Scott	Executive Director Adult Social Care, Gloucestershire County Council
Helen Edwards	Deputy Director of Primary Care and Place, NHS Gloucestershire	Siobhan Baillie MP	MP for Stroud
Katie Jarvis	Group Secretary Gloucestershire, National Famers' Union	Cllr Symon Ackroyd	Mayor, Dursley Town Council
Kevin Hamblin	Group Chief Executive Principal, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College		

Guests and Support Officers

Amy Beckett	Senior Economic Development Specialist, Stroud District Council	Steve Miles	Senior Youth Officer, Stroud District Council
Hannah Barton	LSP Co-ordinator, Stroud District Council		

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone and noted the apologies.

2. Updated LSP Terms of Reference (circulated in advance of the meeting)

The updated LSP Terms of Reference were presented to the attendees. It was noted that the Stroud district is lucky to still have an LSP and the group were asked to consider how the forum could be changed or improved to ensure it really works.

Kathy O'Leary and Cllr Catherine Braun offered to meet with the LSP Chair and Vice Chair to discuss how the LSP could be moved forwards.

The members of the LSP in attendance unanimously voted to approve the Terms of Reference, however due to low attendance it was agreed that LSP members not in attendance would be given an opportunity to provide comments and amendments out-of-session. If none are received ahead of the next LSP meeting in September, the Terms of Reference will be taken as approved.

3. Place Prospectus and what it means for you – Amy Beckett, Senior Economic Development Specialist, Stroud District Council (presentation attached)

Amy gave a presentation on the new Stroud District Prospectus which was launched in April at Stroud Brewery. The Prospectus is to help celebrate the district as a place to do business.

The Stroud district is diverse and its successes should be shouted about, and the online prospectus is a great place to be able to do this. Some of the main points included in the prospectus are Stroud district's green economy, and how the district develops and attracts talent as well as nurtures homegrown talent.

The prospectus includes a vision for the future of the Stroud district, and this is to develop and nurture communities and spaces whilst maintaining the commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030. The ambition is to become an example of best practice nationally and internationally. This is already the case in some areas including the canal regeneration project where Stroud district is an exemplar for other parts of the country.

Stroud district is rooted in its ambition to support carbon neutrality for businesses and residents. An example of this is through the Warm and Well energy efficiency programme. In 2018/19 alone, this programme saved 32.95 tonnes of CO2.

Amy covered some two ways in which the LSP could be involved – by becoming a Changemaker or by joining the Ambassador Programme.

Changemakers are organisations that keep community in mind, for example Woodchester Valley Vineyard, Gloucester Services, Stroud Brewery, and Ecotricity. They are disruptors, innovators, environmentalists, and they are progressive. They aren't just large organisations, with 89% being micro and small businesses. Amy encouraged LSP members to take some time to read through the website (<https://strouddistrict.co.uk/>) and see if your organisation would like to be put forward as a changemaker.

The Ambassador Programme involves how businesses can support the prosperity of the district, promoting businesses and driving good practice amongst businesses. This could be by encouraging upskilling and by paying the Living Wage. The programme is in its early stages but if the LSP are interested in finding out more please contact Amy on amy.beckett@stroud.gov.uk.

Beth Whittaker raised that she was selected to be a Gloucestershire Ambassador for the LEP several years ago, and one of the issues with this programme was not knowing exactly what the role meant and what was expected. In order to attract people and organisations to the Ambassador Programme it needs to be clear what is expected.

It was also highlighted that very small businesses often do not have the headspace to take on additional responsibilities, and in this case the focus should be on what SDC can do for them rather than the other way around. Amy agreed that the Ambassador Programme has to work both ways and it will be really valuable to have businesses on board at an early stage so they can provide feedback and help inform the programme.

One suggestion is to create something like the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter.

Cate James-Hodges asked whether there would be support for businesses to become B Corp certified. Amy said this is something that is being looked at as well as support with other certifications that have gravitas in the business sector. This includes looking at DWP initiatives like being a Disability Confident employer.

Anna Bonallack said the prospectus is really exciting and the LSP should embrace it. She noted that the canal project is an exemplar project because there was a big investment into community engagement at the outset. Whilst this would mean a significant time investment, it would be really valuable to do this for the Ambassador Programme. There are Models of Practice in an activity pamphlet that was created for the canal project that could be used for this project.

Cllr Braun asked what the best ways are to engage with the majority of micro and small businesses who do not have a lot of time. Amy responded that to engage in the most productive way, engagement has to be through direct contact. Typically, surveys have the same respondents every time.

Kathy O'Leary noted that it is important to contextualise where this all started. When Kathy first joined SDC as the Chief Executive, government officials consistently said that SDC would do better in funding bids if SDC told their story better and set out plans of where to take this story. Often the investment was concentrated on bigger towns like Cheltenham and Gloucester, and the Stroud district missed out. The prospectus coming out is timely as the Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is coming to an end and it's not yet known what will supersede the LEP. What is the gap in provision that SDC could seek to fill? Did the LEP serve small businesses well? This is not a statutory requirement of the Council, but it is important for our communities because it is how we can achieve prosperity. Whilst a huge amount of engagement has been done with businesses already, SDC really want to listen to as many businesses as possible to find out what more can be done and what the gaps are that SDC can fill.

Will Mansell asked how SDC can grow out of the shift in the LEP. Amy noted that there is an opportunity for SDC to grab onto the change and push forward more localised prosperity, but this still needs to be done in partnership with the County Council and the new form of the LEP once more is known about it.

Will noted that it is important to engage with policies whilst they are in development and can still be influenced, and asked whether there are any policies the LSP should consider. Amy highlighted the Economic Development Strategy, the Council Plan and the Local Plan which is currently going through examination. It is useful to hear how these policies and strategies have worked or not worked for individuals and organisations.

Anna Bonallack noted that there appears to be a gap around youth in the prospectus. There is a massive outward migration of young people in Gloucestershire and there are over 600 unemployed young people aged between 18 and 25. Within this group there are lots of complex barriers meaning that work can be difficult. Anna cannot see representation of this in the prospectus and highlighted that often people look at

something once and if they do not see something relevant to them, they do not revisit it.

Beth Whittaker noted that several years ago there was discussion around how to reach young people who leave the Stroud district for university or other studies and work in order to find out how to attract them back to the district. The prospectus could be a great presentation for universities to bring young people back to the district.

The lack of affordable housing in the district – both to buy and rent – was noted as a particular issue for young people.

4. Partners' Updates

Cate James-Hodges, Leader, Stroud District Youth Council:

- Stroud District Youth Council (SDYC) can help with the link between the Stroud Prospectus and young people in the district.
- The LSP has always welcomed representatives from the Youth Council and been very inclusive. The feedback that Steve Miles, SDC's Senior Youth Officer, has received from Youth Council representatives on the LSP has always been positive and the LSP tends to be one of the highlights in their experience as a youth voice representative.
- SDYC just held round one and two of elections and nominations, and Cate has been re-elected as the Leader and Brandon Watkins has been re-elected as the Chair. Round three is in progress as a couple of positions were not filled.
- As SDYC enter a new annual cycle they will launch their new manifesto soon.

Cllr Catherine Braun, Leader, SDC and Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive, SDC:

- There was recently a by-election in Painswick and Upton St Leonards which saw a new Green Councillor elected to SDC.
- At SDC's Annual General Meeting in May Cllr Braun was re-elected as Leader of the Council and Cllr Natalie Bennett was re-elected as Deputy Leader of the Council.
- SDC are looking at a refresh of the Council Plan. When it was written there were not some issues that are happening now, for example the cost-of-living crisis.
- The Local Plan is a hugely important area of work for SDC where new housing, developments and other infrastructure are allocated. The inspection of the Local Plan is underway and is continuing throughout the summer.
- SDC have submitted UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England funding bids.
- SDYC are very important to the work of the wider council and Cllr Braun and Kathy are looking forward to meeting them once their elections are over. They are interested to hear what more they can do to engage young people where they want to be involved, and where the gaps are. SDYC work with each committee on their performance management, and this gives an insight into areas where policy can be shaped.
- Tricorn House is being converted into 44 reasonably high-end 1-bedroom flats. This is under permitted development so SDC has very limited control over what is being done with it, but they are working closely with the developers. There

are [FAQs regarding Tricorn House](#) on the SDC website, and they are updating local groups regularly.

Steve Elliott-Mead, Trustee, OPENHouse

- Steve noted that OPENHouse's CEO finds it very useful having people in the room at LSP meetings to find out what new opportunities there are.
- OPENHouse have a shared 4-bed flat and 1-bed available in the centre of Stroud and there are vacancies here. They need to fill these vacancies in order to break even.
- They are working with SDC to turn a property into a direct access room in order to quickly get people off the streets.
- When someone leaves rehab they must be housed for 12 weeks, and OPENHouse are looking into provision for this in Stroud instead of Bristol.
- Several people being helped by OPENHouse are desperate to work but the current system doesn't allow them to because they are in social housing. If they work more than 16 hours per week at minimum wage, they are no longer eligible for social housing. OPENHouse have been unable to get a clear answer from any organisation they have contacted on how this can be helped. Steve Olczak from the DWP confirmed he would speak to Steve outside of the meeting.

Anna Bonallack, CEO, Creative Sustainability:

- Creative Sustainability are holding an open day on Monday 19 June to showcase everything they do.
- They offer multiple programmes including Access Bike, short breaks for young disabled people, and the 3rd Space Youth Programme.
- A big part of what they do is workability for young people.
- They are in the process of buying their building. They are working closely with the building owner and are looking for £500k investment.
- There is an issue with the Community Hubs model regarding permanent sites.
- They employ 20 people, many of whom have mental health issues who may otherwise not be able to get a job.

Beth Whittaker, Stroud Businesswomen's Network:

- The Businesswomen's Network numbers are slightly down and haven't picked up post-Covid. During Covid lots of small and micro businesses struggled so people sought employment rather than being self-employed.
- They have a newsletter that goes out to 210 people. Beth would be happy to request items are included in here to help spread the word.
- Beth noted that the general public does not have much idea of what each tier of local government does until something goes wrong and they need the Council. SDC's Communications team are working on a diagram that illustrates the different responsibilities of each tier of Council. However, it was also noted that you cannot expect the general public to always be interested in this and they don't necessarily need to know, but it is important that SDC tries to help the public regardless of this and triage them where necessary.
- Beth also highlighted how members of the public are encouraged to stand for election at Parish and Town Council level. To be a good councillor you have to put in a lot of time. SDC are putting on some events about becoming a councillor and these details will be shared with the LSP.

- Beth noted that the LSP is beneficial for partnership and making contacts. Networking is hugely important, and links have been made over the years that led to great things. Beth enjoyed her time as Chair and having the ability to invite people to join the LSP. It was also noted that people who do not attend the meetings should be considered, as you need people with passion for the LSP to work. It is bigger than the sum of its parts and has great potential.

Steve Olczak, Partnership Manager, Department of Work and Pensions:

- Steve praised the work that Creative Sustainability are doing.
- The DWP are seeing a lot of young people with fit notes from their GP who are also suffering from a lack of confidence and motivation. Sometimes the language on the fit notes is not helpful because it only says what they cannot do, not what they can do. As such, they are looking to contact local GP surgeries to see if they can change the way the fit notes are worded so they become less of a barrier to young people seeking work.
- They are putting on an intensive English course primarily for Ukrainian refugees but there may also be spaces for other nationalities. This will be 16 hours a week for 6 weeks.
- Beth highlighted that there are Syrian and Afghan families in the district who can only go to daytime courses but they are also expected to get jobs, therefore online courses are preferable in this scenario. Steve confirmed they are looking at an online aspect too.

Amy Beckett, Senior Economic Development Specialist, SDC:

- SDC have been awarded approximately £1.7m in total from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund. SDC are waiting for this to be processed.
- Some of this funding will be used for a capital grant programme that businesses and community organisations in the Stroud district can apply for, as long as they are in a rural locality as defined by DEFRA.

Russell Warner, Federation of Small Businesses Gloucestershire Area and LSP Chair:

- Russell noted that the LSP is a great place to share ideas and presentations and some great things come out of these meetings. Physical meetings are a challenge post-covid.
- LSP members were asked to send any suggestions for new members to Hannah.

Will Mansell, The Grace Network:

- Will has had a constructive conversation about void clearance and a pilot trial at SDC.
- It should be considered how regional organisations like Bromford Housing can be persuaded to run their pilot trials in the Stroud district. The prospectus could be an opportunity for them to showcase best practice here.
- Will is meeting soon about the Bath Place site that has been purchased by SDC in Cheapside, Stroud. The earlier the LSP can identify opportunities the more they can influence, and this could include land and infrastructure.
- The Grace Network are piloting a 'meals on wheels' service in the district.

Please send any requests for future agenda items or suggestions for future meeting themes to Hannah Barton, hannah.barton@stroud.gov.uk

Next meeting
Friday 8 September

The meetings are 9:00am for a 9:15am start, with meeting end by 11:30am.