



Stratford
Town Trust

at the heart of our community

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

2021 - 2025

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Stratford Town Trust

Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025

1. Executive Summary

In setting the strategic direction for the five years to 2025 this plan looks back on the learnings and outcomes from the strategic plan period 2017 – 2020. A period when the Trust set out to engage more and connect with the local community and to have a more accessible approach to grant applications with the aim to widen the diversity of reach and impact. It also reflects on the profound impact that COVID-19 has had on the organisation and the community through 2020 with the understanding that, at the time of writing, there are more changes yet to come.

Looking to the future this new strategic plan is built from four key and interconnected strategies: Finance, Investment and Property; Grant Making; Community Engagement; and Place Making, supported by the purpose statement ***to maximise our assets and work in partnership to enhance the quality of life for the people of Stratford-upon-Avon*** and working towards delivering our vision of creating ***a connected and vibrant community***.

Stratford-upon-Avon is a unique town with circa 28,000 residents supported by good infrastructure of schools, health care and, until 2020, high employment and a solid economy. The town typically welcomes four million visitors each year many, but not all, attracted by William Shakespeare to enjoy performance or to understand more about his life and times. This gives the town a dependency upon tourism that is often at odds with the needs of the local residents. Further, within the community, there is a pronounced socio-economic divide evidenced as part of the work to underpin our consultation which adds to the dichotomy of the town.

In preparing to write this plan the Trust undertook its largest ever public consultation, becoming a listening organisation and with the aim to be one that was truly at the heart of the community. Respondents told us that there were three clear areas of focus for our future grant making: support for young people; for those who are vulnerable; and those in our communities who are isolated. Emphasis was placed on the value of arts and culture locally and easy access to green spaces within and close to the town centre. Critically we heard that residents felt that the town had a fractured community with a desire to see people coming together more. In our plan to 2025 we seek to

address this specific issue through our communication and engagement; our role as a property owner; through our civic assets; our community hub and, above all, through our grantmaking. Our financial model has, until now, been built on a self-funding principle with core costs and grants supported almost entirely from income raised by the endowed estate. This plan recognises the need for the income generation model to adapt to the changing nature of the economy. Even with the economic opportunities that should be delivered to the region, district, and town by City of Culture in 2021 and the Commonwealth Games 2022, with the economy not predicted to recover to pre COVID-19 levels until at least 2025, there is a need for us to take control of our own financial destiny in the short to medium term.

It is our aim to restore gross income to 2019 levels. To achieve this we intend to pivot away from a reliance upon commercial rents towards a more mixed approach that includes exploring routes to building a solid fundraising strategy with the aim to reduce our exposure in a recession and provide resilience as we emerge from the current crisis.

We will play our part as a key stakeholder, maximising opportunity in development of long-term plans for the town, for example in the Riverside project, the Canal Quarter, and the Creative Quarter.

Through our grant making we recognise that working in partnership delivers greater trust, understanding and stronger foundations. Therefore, in this plan period we commit to becoming a participatory grant maker, by valuing and involving those with lived experience in the co-development and co-delivery of our funding.

We will grow and develop our engagement with the community through our relationships with those who use Foundation House and a heightened presence within the community. By the end of the plan period, we aim to have delivered a proposal for Foundation House version 2.0. We commit to a deepened engagement with our members working in ways that will increase and diversify the membership base.

Through development of positive relationships with partners and stakeholders we will be an advocate for place making, working with partners and the community to deliver and sustain place making initiatives to targeted neighbourhoods within Stratford-upon-Avon. To demonstrate our commitment, we will devise and deliver specific grant funding programmes and products to meet place making objectives.

As a significant custodian of some of the rich heritage within the town we will return to our successful relationship with the University of York to support the Guild Chapel. Building on the success of the 2016 conservation and redevelopment project, Death Reawakened, phase 2 will see a programme of conservation of the internationally significant medieval wall paintings highlighting the value of skills and craftsmanship; shining a light on the 20th century wall paneling that gives the chapel its distinctive collegiate style and engaging with the public at a local, national, and international level through a series of events, activities, and digital interventions.

We will help support approaches to combating the climate emergency by prioritising our green space - Rowley Fields, Church Lane Allotments and Warwick Road Lands - with projects that make a positive contribution to the climate agenda and promote health, happiness, and well-being. Working with partner organisations and voluntary groups we want to open up the landscape to enable access for everyone whilst protecting and increasing the biodiversity of these unique and valuable spaces.

The impact of COVID-19

Overnight, in March 2020, the Trust's operation underwent a profound change and the same was true for the groups and charities that we support. Many of them having to rapidly rethink how to deliver specialist services to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our community. As return on investments declined and town centre businesses, forced to close their doors, struggled to pay rent, we took some difficult decisions to protect the future of the organisation and support the community in different ways. Localism is right at the heart of Stratford Town Trust, our income and consequently our ability to award grants depends on it. The interdependence of the different sections of our town has never been more evident as we begin to build back. Shops, businesses and attractions need local people to back them, to show their support. And simply put, without income the Trust will struggle to meet previous levels of grant funding to our brilliant groups and charities. Shopping in the town and parking in the Trust car park is in itself an act of philanthropy that enables us to continue to make financial awards to Stratford schools and charities who work with and support our communities. Recovery will be slow and maybe hard won but by working together in Stratford-upon-Avon the whole really is bigger than the sum of its parts.

2. Background to Stratford Town Trust

Stratford Town Trust can trace its origins back to the thirteenth century, through the Guild and College Estates. The Guild of the Holy Cross played a significant part in governing the town. The Guild was gifted many properties in and around Stratford and some of the rental income generated was used to fund welfare facilities for its members, such as the employment of a schoolmaster and the building of almshouses. Holy Trinity Church served by priests living in the College was also gifted property in the town and had the right to collect tithes within the parish.

Both institutions were suppressed at the Reformation and their property confiscated by the Crown. This ended the 'welfare provision' they had supplied and caused a breakdown in local government. To meet this crisis, in 1553 the townspeople of Stratford petitioned Edward VI for a charter and on 25 June, just nine days before his death at the age of sixteen, Edward granted it.

The Royal Charter that Edward granted established the first Stratford Corporation and gave to it much of the property of the former Guild and College with specific responsibilities to provide a school, maintain the almshouses and pay a small stipend to the vicar of Holy Trinity church. This is where the historical, non-discretionary funding relationship started, setting the foundations of the organisation that would ultimately become Stratford Town Trust. Fast forward 468 years and the Trust is still here supporting the Stratford community, through the grants that we make and as custodian of some of our treasured heritage, buildings and assets. Our income is generated in four ways: from return on financial investments; from rents we receive from town centre commercial and residential property; profit from charges at the Rother Street car park; and from donations by visitors to the Guild Chapel.

3. Governance and Leadership

Stratford Town Trust is governed by eleven trustees made up of five elected by the membership, three nominated by Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council and three co-opted via an open recruitment process. All trustees serve an initial term of four years after which they may put themselves up for re-selection or re-election for a further four-year term. Two non-executive members serve on the Audit and Governance Committee to ensure impartiality and independence. There are three committees that meet at intervals throughout the year. They are the Finance, Investment and Property Committee, the Grants and Community Engagement Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee. The full board meets seven times each year including a strategic planning day.

A team of 15 staff (9 full time equivalents) are led by the Chief Executive supported by a senior management team.

As an organisation we are committed to a culture of respect. We strive for excellence and value, integrity, inclusion, ambition, and innovation. We act with respect, show leadership, and build resilient ways of working in all our activities with the aim to create a welcoming, supportive environment which is happy, healthy, and safe.

With every resident of Stratford-upon-Avon over the age of 18 years eligible for membership the Trust is distinctive as a grant making charity. Our members support our decision making through their contributions at member events and the AGM. Due to the unique way in which the Trust is funded our commitment to transparency, accountability and compliance runs through every aspect of our work.

4. Review of Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020

This plan was informed by, and focused on, community engagement of which the guiding principles were: strong and active community outreach; accessibility and open-door policy; transparency and accountability. The intended outcomes were for the Trust to:

- Be more than just a Grant Funder, become a community support organisation
- Set a corporate direction based on policy not just strategy with the evolution and development of the:
 - Financial Investment Policy
 - Community Investment Policy
- Become a less bureaucratic organisation, focused on supporting, sustaining and enabling our community
- Be continually receptive to new ideas and initiatives
- Attract a greater diversity of funding applications
- Demonstrate impact and need as key drivers for funding
- Adopt a model of continual prioritisation
- Increase profile of grant recipients
- Carry out impact analysis for each and every project

What have we learned & what did we achieve?

Implementation of the plan has been, and will continue to be, an iterative process. Across the plan period Foundation House became the embodiment of our commitment to **community support**, growing in reputation and reach. Through a renewed commitment to communication and with a refreshed communications strategy we have been able to break down barriers to engage and open a dialogue with the wider community. Our social media channels have seen an increase in followers, we have regular coverage in local print and broadcast media, and have started the process that will see our website become a more dynamic and responsive shop window for our work.

That open dialogue and lively communication are the routes to a diverse application base. The community hub model is effective in reaching and understanding grass roots organisations. We will build on these elements through our **Community Engagement Strategy**.

An increase in communication and widening the channels has raised awareness of our work and through initiatives such as Takeover Tuesdays we have seen the profile of grant recipients increase.

Through our financial investment policy, we have seen a solid performance from the endowed Guild and College Estates. This policy, led by our Finance Investment and Property Committee, is the engine that drives the work of the Trust. The strategy for 2021-2025 will be strengthened by review of, and recommendations for, the Trust's endowed estate by an independent third party.

Having a clear and robust Financial Investment Policy has enabled the committee to make sound, strategically led decisions and we will continue to work in this way through our **Finance, Investment and Property Strategy** to 2025.

Our Community Investment Policy evolved with the recruitment of a new Grants Manager in 2019 and a shift towards a model of participatory grant making, that sees the Trust working with and alongside charities to co-create projects. Our commitment to transparency and accountability combined with an open-door policy saw us fund a smaller number but more diverse range of charities and attract an increased number of first-time applications. We have used impact assessment to a greater or lesser extent with all our grantees and refining our commitment to this will be a key focus of our **Grant Making Strategy** to 2025.

Listening to the community and our members is an active part of the Trust's work. By making ourselves open to new ideas, by asking questions and building networks we have started to understand what really matters to our community in relation to the place where they live. This has led to the formation of our **Place Making Strategy**.

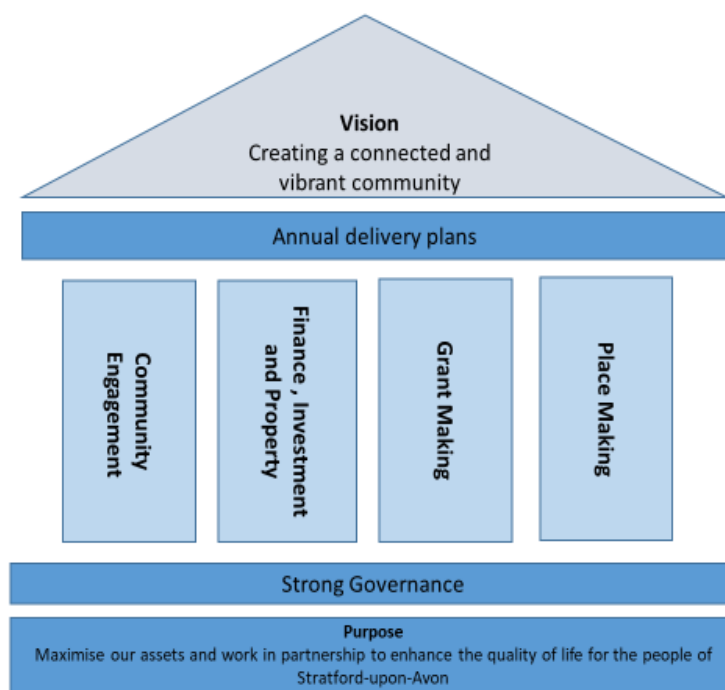
5. The Process for Writing the Plan

In 2019, we held our biggest ever consultation to find out what matters most to the people who live, work and study in Stratford-upon-Avon. Through an online questionnaire, postcards, focus groups and meetings, we were able to gather the opinions of nearly 1500 people. We met with local groups, pupils from our three secondary schools, and canvassed the opinions of the teaching staff from the local primary schools. We held member led focus groups and a session with our Foundation House community. We had one to one sessions with key stakeholders including Stratford District Council, Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council, Royal Shakespeare Company, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratfordward and Shakespeare's England.

The collated results from the consultation have directly informed our Strategic Plan which will set our direction to 2025.

To support our findings, we enlisted the help of Warwick Business School through a cohort of MBA students to research socio economic data for the town and district and make recommendations aligned with our own quantitative and qualitative survey data. The board were kept informed of the process and timetable and signed off on the Place Making Strategy. The Finance Investment and Property Committee and Grants and Community Engagement Committee took responsibility for feedback and sign off and recommendation to the board of the other three strategies, led by nominated members of the senior management team as authors.

6. The Plan



The plan is supported by the strong foundations of effective governance and a clear purpose. The pillars comprise four interdependent strategies delivering to the overall vision.

6.1 Finance, Investment and Property

Background & Context

Stratford Town Trust, as the corporate trustee of Guild & College Estates, is responsible for managing their permanent endowed investment portfolios, valued at £57m on 31 December 2019. The Trust also has non endowed investments of £2.8m. Together, these investment funds generate income via dividends and rent which, after deducting costs, are defined as ‘clear income’.

Once the non-discretionary grants (to the trustees of King Edward VI School; other education purposes; maintenance of almshouses in Chapel Street; and a small stipend to the vicar of Holy Trinity) are deducted, the balance of this ‘clear income’ is then gifted to Stratford Town Trust. These funds support our place making, community engagement and grant making activities, thus delivering against the charity’s objects as set out in its Memorandum and Articles of Association. For the last 10 years, at least, we have been able to disburse annual discretionary grants of £1m or more.

Over 99% of our income is self-generated, with a small degree of fundraising in relation to Guild Chapel donations. Historically, the Trust has operated a 'self-funding model' ensuring that investments are managed efficiently and effectively to deliver a healthy income stream, whilst maintaining capital values in perpetuity. We will continue to operate robust systems and controls to ensure a sustainable operating model, in which risks are mitigated wherever possible through active management.

Just like other investors, the Trust has had to endure the impact of the wider economic climate for centuries, whether it be the rise and fall of share values or the ups and downs of the property market. At present, it is fair to say that the retail property climate is tough, especially following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Gone are the days of high rent review uplifts and low voids. Many retailers are struggling to find a successful and viable solution for the High Street with increased competition from ecommerce. As a result, the Trust is facing a higher proportion of voids for extended periods and this is expected to continue through the plan period.

However, the Trust is uniquely positioned, as it owns a high proportion of town centre properties, to help drive the future proofing of Stratford town centre for both residents and visitors. We anticipate that ongoing the town centre composition will be a more mixed and vibrant offering with less bias towards traditional retail.

Consistent with best practise for charities the Trust has a reserves policy which defines the various categories of reserves held, their purpose, how they should be funded and what value they should represent. The Trust currently has a healthy level of free reserves (£2m in December 2019), which is a useful balancing resource although it should be recognised that there may be pressure on reserves as we build back after the impact of COVID-19.

Consultation findings relevant to Finance, Investment and Property

The consultation included a section of questions about public buildings or spaces but didn't ask questions specifically about the finance and investments.

The survey proved that the respondents are well aware that the Trust is a grant giving charity, although the level of grant giving was less well known. However, 43% of members and 32% of non-members responding thought the Trust awarded between £0.75m and £2.0m of grants a year. Respondents' answers ranged from less than £100k to more than £3m. Many respondents

acknowledged that the Trust is a major landlord in Stratford-upon-Avon and when commenting on the property portfolio respondents suggested:

- Using void shops for community groups; venues or pop-up art galleries; performance spaces
- Curate an offer that delivers to the local community rather tourists. For example, independent shops and community activities

Strategic objectives

The fundamental purpose of the financial strategy to 2025 is two-fold: to restore gross income to 2019 levels, enabling the Trust to support and engage with the community through proactive and participatory grant making; and to maintain the perpetual capital value of the investment portfolio in line with inflation.

6.2 Grant Making

Background and Context

“We are the people we have been waiting for” Cormac Russell, Managing Director, Nurture Development

Grant making is a broad term for a vast range of mechanisms for moving money from institutions (Funders, Government, Trusts, Philanthropists etc) generally towards community-focused organisations.

The processes of grant making are varied – from traditional transactional application forms to community-owned decision-making.

Grant-makers are generally split into three broad streams:

- **Cause specific** – focusing grants towards supporting a particular community or cause - young people, homelessness, environmental issues
- **Open** – funding for any project that benefits the community – demand and portfolio make-up is shaped by the organisations applying for funding
- **Place-based** – a funder that focuses resources and funding into a specific geographical location. This can be regional or ward/street level focus

Funders can be a combination of these at the same time, and sometimes flex depending on their mission and learning outcomes.

Stratford Town Trust is a place-based open funder (with a set of broad priorities). This allows us to support a wide range of community focused projects that work with and alongside residents, without restricting focus to a narrow set of causes. In addition, we make a grant each year towards broad community reach through Foundation House, providing flexible space to eleven groups and offering a warm welcome to hundreds of local people; and the Play House, a much loved community arts venue with an eclectic schedule of music, comedy, performance and community events. The community element of their work is made possible, in part, by our annual grant subsidy.

Building on our aim to be more than just a grant funder and become a community support organisation, at its core, this strategy focuses on how we fund as opposed to what we will fund. Our new grant making strategy will see the Town Trust become:

- A participatory grant maker – genuinely working with the broader community and bringing them into our decision making and leadership work. For those individuals and communities that are impacted by decisions made by others about their life or face traditional barriers to engagement in decision-making because of their identity and/or background, it is essential that we genuinely bring their voices and experiences into our work at all levels
- An empowering organisation – building skills, capacity, and raising aspirations across our community through our grant making
- A grant maker with a human approach that is centred on the aspirations and hopes of the community and assets present (sometimes unrealised!) across our community
- A grant maker that understands its reach and data in order to make better decisions around
 - Who and what is funded?
 - Geographic hot and cold spots with a bespoke approach in engagement
 - Themes and trend analysis to understand how our funding is evolving
- One that champions and celebrates diversity. We will commit to inclusive funding practise – in how and what we fund

We need to offer more than simple transactional financial support to potential applicants and grant holders, and understand that in the future, communities may well decide to develop and fund projects and solutions we may not have traditionally supported. They will not be ‘wrong’, but simply different.

Consultation findings relevant to grant making

Our consultation results revealed a desire for space where communities can connect. Specifically, spaces where they could develop networks and build relationships without the need to be a consumer to access them. They said they wanted:

“More activities/places for families, independent shops, community activities”

“Somewhere free for people to go and have coffee and read and talk”

We can both help create these spaces – physically and virtually – and actively spend more time and energy based within these spaces. We will better be placed to more thoughtfully notice, interpret, and respond to what we see and hear. We will be better placed to understand what the emerging and/or longstanding priorities are for the different communities that make up Stratford-upon-Avon. Respondents also told us that there was a sense of a fractured community expressing that pockets of community and relationships exist, but a feeling that there is a lack of cohesion – based on, in part, lack of access to shared spaces and activities.

Being present (physically and emotionally) within the community also allows us to develop genuine relationship-based funding approaches that allow us to support the development of the sector more broadly. We will develop our technical and behavioural skill sets as we shift towards a participatory, partnership-based way of working. We will build a more equitable, judgement-led approach to working, and a workforce that engages and supports diverse communities of identity and interest, and building connections with those with lived experience, ensuring their voice and skills are at the heart of our grant making.

56% of members and 43% of non-members find the Trust approachable. We need to consider our language and approach across the board, but particularly when focusing on grant making, where we have the direct ability and agency to support communities to build community capital, to harness passion and to realise change. If we are unable to understand who we fund, and what works, we cannot, jointly with the community, achieve our goals.

Being embedded more deeply into the community – and delivering day-to-day work and activity in places residents feel comfortable - means **we can create a sense of shared purpose** and use our grant making at a hyperlocal level to engage and empower people. Community groups with fantastic ideas will be able to connect with us at an earlier stage, creating the opportunity to explore joint working as well as **allow us to connect organisations with complementary missions and**

aspirations, leading to a more connected and vibrant community. It will also allow us to have a better understanding and more developed relationships with those organisations that are genuinely led by and involve their target community in their planning and operational delivery.

We know, from evidence and experience, that community-owned change is more likely to be sustainable, and lead to deeper and more meaningful impact and outcomes.

Our consultation shows us that, moving towards a more democratic and participatory grant making approach, requires us to develop a range of resources and support tools to enable communities to be empowered.

Strategic Objectives

- Commit to becoming a participatory grant maker, by valuing and involving those with lived experience in the co-development and co-delivery of our funding; so that we are able to build community owned and driven solutions that lead to long term positive change for individuals and the town
- Identify and create opportunities to collaborate with other funders and institutions (including Warwickshire County Council, Stratford District Council, Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council, Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, as well as regional and national organisations) in order to maximise positive outcomes for the community, and share learning to create a more vibrant and connected community
- Develop our grant making to truly value equality, diversity, and inclusion, and build grant making approaches and products that ensure our funding reaches and supports all members of our community in order to tackle entrenched and emerging inequality, supporting them to realise their aspirations, and leading to long lasting positive outcomes
- Become a funder that champions innovation and supports the community to create inspiring responses to help realise their aspirations and tackle needs that goes beyond the simple provision of financial support
- Provide a suite of non-financial support to realise outcomes, including the delivery of community training and learning events to build and strengthen connections across the sector
- Diversify our funding options, exploring social finance and loans, alongside traditional grant funding, for community groups and businesses to maximise the positive impact we can have on the community

6.3 Community Engagement

Background and Context

Community engagement is most effective when part of a clear strategy with flexible, yet focused, guiding principles as opposed to a rigid model. Good community engagement that's based on a flexible but clear framework is likely to achieve sustainable, long-term outcomes, including stronger, more genuine relationships with the community and stakeholders, more thoughtful and impactful decisions and decision-making, and is likely to be better understood by different audiences.

This description of Community Engagement easily relates to our **Grant Making** strategy, as well as our **Place Making** strategy, putting people at the heart of our work.

We currently interact with and engage our community in a number of ways:

- As a grant giver with our beneficiaries
- Through our membership communication and meetings
- Through our Foundation House community, in person and digitally
- In direct contact through the Guild Chapel visitors and volunteers
- Through our green spaces, Church Lane Allotments, Rowley Fields and Warwick Road Lands
- As a landowner
- As a commercial property owner
- As a key stakeholder across the town more broadly and as part of strategic networks

Through the plan period we will deliver a more cohesive and unified approach to communication and engagement through effective use of our existing Customer Relationship Management system. This will give us a greater understanding of the relationships between our groups and our community.

Across the UK devolution of power to communities by institutions continues to gather pace. We have a chance and reach to better support communities to grasp the opportunity this presents – putting them at the heart of the decisions that impact them.

Consultation findings relevant to Community Engagement

Our consultation results revealed a feeling of disconnection across the town. A disconnection from both the Trust and its work but also between communities across Stratford. Many residents, despite living in close proximity, experience a completely different Stratford-upon-Avon. For instance, those in the community living in social housing, with a lack of access to private cars, exacerbated by a lack of affordable and regular public transport talk about a sense of reduced ability to access both employment and leisure opportunities compared to those in the community from more affluent backgrounds. Whilst this may not always be true in every case, it is important to understand and acknowledge the truth in the feeling that this impacts on our community, particularly young people - in terms of their aspirations, a sense of belonging, mental health and broader wellbeing.

Community hubs, places for young people, and evening events and activities were the most discussed through the face-to-face sessions and via the questionnaire. Through working with our networks, we have seen the absolute need for safe spaces for key communities of identity that traditionally face barriers to acceptance and access.

We also know that an element of community sees our Community Hub as a valuable and trusted space for them to come together. We need to continue to engage the wider community and identify how and where Foundation House can deliver activities that are attractive and inclusive. Many comments also mentioned the value of community hubs. Developing our understanding of the impact of Foundation House has within a neighbourhood, and how we can build on that to maximise its impact on the community moving forward, is also essential. We will use learning to develop future outcomes of our Community Hub model – in terms of locality, services on offer, and how we engage the community.

We also need to broaden our reach and relationships as evidenced in respondents to our consultation survey who were disproportionately drawn from those identified as from a more affluent social background (ABC1) when compared to the broader Warwickshire population. Responses were predominantly from White British, with responses from those identifying as Black or from a Minority Ethnic community at a rate below expected (based on the 2011 Census – 1.7% compared to 3% for Stratford-upon-Avon).

These two simple statistics suggest we currently fail to engage with all communities of identity and social grade across the town.

People also told us that they want to see communities come together.

“Empty shops being used for other purposes such as community groups – e.g. pop up art galleries, performance spaces etc. Get community groups to work together. Get the nightlife more vibrant and have things on - take Edinburgh as an example - The Fringe etc.”

This comment, from one of our completed surveys, cuts across many of the ways we can potentially support a vibrant and thriving community – as a retail property owner, as a community group supporter (through grants and Foundation House) and as a convener, through our networks.

Less than half of non-members, and only just over 50% of members stated that the Town Trust is approachable (43% and 56% respectively). When asked *“is the Town Trust for people like me?”* only 49% of members agreed, and only 36% of non-members. In response to this it is imperative that we build lasting and positive relationships to understand what is important to them, and to identify where and how we can support all of our communities, and the town to flourish.

“Change is disturbing when it is done to us, exhilarating when it is done by us.” Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Professor of Business at Harvard Business School.

Our consultation outlined that 99% of respondents were aware of the Trust, but that 59% knew little or nothing about what it does. Only 54% felt neutral or favourable towards the Trust. These are areas that can and need to be improved through targeted, thoughtful, clear storytelling - focusing on the positive activities and impact delivered by the Trust and partners. These include the impact of grant making, the opportunities offered by areas such as Rowley Fields and Warwick Road Lands, and the range and depth of community activity taking place at Foundation House and The Playhouse.

Our strategy is one that constantly values, encourages, and amplifies the voices of the town: the aspirations, needs, desires and fears, in order to ensure that we can build these into our planning – **financially**, as a **place maker**, our **membership** make-up and activities, and of course our **grant making**.

Strategic Objectives

- Generate and engage in conversations in order to act as a connector to share learning and drive change, leading to a more vibrant and connected community by 2025, measure through ongoing engagement and consultation with the community
- Create and deliver a suite of inclusive activities designed to bring the community together – virtually and in person - in order to build relationships. Feedback will evidence an increased feeling of connectedness as well as an increase in community members reporting that the Trust is welcoming and approachable
- Build a more diverse, more engaged, and increased membership that acts as ambassadors and advocates. Members are better able to understand and articulate the impact the Trust has on the town (aligned to place making, grant making, and finance, investment and property strategies) and can connect the Trust to emerging community-driven solutions and activities
- Through clear, appropriate communication and storytelling (via regular face to face community events, social and traditional media output, and impactful community case studies aligned to a robust impact assessment strategy for our grantmaking), residents and stakeholders have a stronger understanding of the work of the Trust and are better able to articulate and understand the impact of our Grant Making and Place Making strategies
- Develop and deliver a community hub that is responsive to the changing and emerging needs and aspirations of the community and one that provides space to come together, to share skills and stories, and that act as a catalyst for organisations and residents to develop and flourish

6.4 Place Making

Background and Context

The concept of place making originated in the 1960s and is best described as multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Place making capitalises on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces and a community culture that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being. The built environment and importance of shared sense of identity through a common cultural heritage is so much more

than bricks and mortar. Place making is both a process and a philosophy that makes use of urban design principles. It can be either official and government led, or community driven grass roots tactical urbanism, such as extending pavements with chalk, paint, and planters. Good place making makes use of underutilised space to enhance the urban experience at the pedestrian scale for all and to strengthen community at a local level.

Temporary, low cost, high impact

Great public spaces do not have to be design heavy, costly projects situated in city centres. In fact, some of the most exciting projects are low key, low cost and in the most unexpected locations. Place making already exists in Stratford through initiatives like the Christmas lights and Stratford in Bloom; the River Festival and Festival of Motoring delivered by the Business Improvement District; Orbit Housing's grass roots centred Better Days Fund; initiatives funded by Warwickshire County Council's Place Making Fund; the Space Hive crowd funding platform and charity fundraising initiatives like the yarn bombing of trees for Goodwill and Growth for Africa.

Through our endowed property portfolio, much of which is listed as being of national architectural and historic interest, we have a role to play in caring for the extraordinary heritage of the town. These cherished buildings add to the rich cultural fabric of the town that in conjunction with stakeholders such as the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Royal Shakespeare Company, Shakespeare's Schoolroom and Holy Trinity Church, means that Stratford-upon-Avon will continue to be a place of pilgrimage for many and will ultimately deliver economic recovery.

Our Placemaking commitment to the environment and the green agenda will be largely delivered through Church Lane allotments, Rowley Fields with the community orchard, and Warwick Road Lands.

Consultation findings relevant to place making

Through our consultation process we learned that although 91% of people feel that Stratford-upon-Avon is a good place to live only 57% reported that it had a strong sense of community. Many people commented that community would be strengthened by everyday inclusive events and activities to bring generations together and based in the town centre. Others wanted more locally focused uniting activities like the "Playing Out" scheme.

Research into the community demographics report inequality between wards related to low paid, insecure employment opportunities; expensive housing and an aging population that is higher as a percentage than the national average. We saw a lower response rate to our questionnaire from neighbourhoods where residents were more likely to face social and economic disadvantage. These facts underpin the reported disconnection within the community.

Placemaking creates emotional links to places, and sharing these links helps strengthen community and in the case of Stratford reinforcing the heritage of the town and surroundings. Through the activities that will fall out of this strategic document we wish to see a narrowing of the gap between sections of our community in the treatment of public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being.

As a grant funder we are committed to working in a participatory way with groups and charities enabling us to have a full understanding of their work and are able to reach deeper into communities in order to make a difference.

We will use our community assets, Foundation House, Rowley Fields, Warwick Road Lands, the Guild Chapel, Bandstand and Swan Fountain to create meaningful, exciting, playful and affecting links that connect people through conversation, shared experience, or a sense of place.

Through our retail property portfolio, we have a responsibility to maximise the income that we earn from our endowed estate. In addition, we will collaborate with others to curate a town centre offer that is relevant to both residents and visitors. We will work hard to ensure that the community and positive placemaking is at the centre of any development.

Strategic Objectives

Over the next 5 years Stratford Town Trust will:

- Be an advocate by actively promoting place making to other delivery partners in sharing examples and demonstrating the wider benefits to the community and the town
- Work with partners and the community to deliver and sustain place making initiatives to targeted neighbourhoods within Stratford-upon-Avon
- Prioritise work in our green spaces, Rowley Fields, Church Lane Allotments and Warwick Road Lands, that promotes people's health, happiness, and well-being

- Enable place making through our discretionary grant making by allocating a percentage of funding each year to localised/neighbourhood centred grass roots initiatives
- Use the City of Culture 2021 and Commonwealth Games 2022 as a catalyst to encourage/lead on partnership initiatives in the town centre to create a place that welcomes and celebrates a diverse mix of residents and visitors
- Work with others including Stratford District Council, Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Royal Shakespeare Company and Stratforward to curate a town centre offer that is sustainable, relevant and unique

7. Measuring success

The success of this plan will be measured across several quantitative and qualitative metrics. We will continue to develop impact assessment criteria for all grant applications and awards recognising the imprecise nature of measuring success across a range of diverse activities and organisations. Where appropriate we will report on the number of people we have reached and further we will work to develop mechanisms that will enable us to define and measure outcomes that go beyond statistics.

All projects outside of core organisational activity will be supported by a costed plan, an agreed set of objectives and outcomes and be subject to a review at agreed periods.

8. Conclusion

The Trust is at a strategic crossroads in its journey through history – the Town Trust as the corporate trustee of the Guild and College Estates has now been in existence for 20 years.

In that time, it has demonstrated that it can manage the endowed portfolios efficiently and effectively for the benefit of the town against a continually challenging social and economic backdrop. Through the work outlined in this plan we aim to secure our financial position for the next strategic plan period and beyond. Moreover, we anticipate an increase in the level of awareness of Stratford Town Trust generally and specifically in our work at a grass roots level.

The Trust will continue with its current direction, managing the investment portfolio on a day to day basis to maximise clear income and, in turn, optimise the funds available for community funding and grants. In addition, we will work to develop new income streams to mitigate the risk presented by COVID-19. We will continue to strive towards becoming an exemplar in place based funding by strengthening our commitment to participatory grant making, by developing our networks within the community and highlighting the value of heritage, arts, culture and wellbeing through effective management of our civic assets.

Through this plan we will demonstrate our commitment to ongoing positive and proactive communication and our ability to provide a variety of support. This means that Stratford-upon-Avon residents should describe a strengthened community and civic pride that cuts across generations, socio economic categories and special interest groups; that young people tell us they have a voice as valued members of our community and that there is a mixed and curated approach to the town centre that delivers economic regeneration for all.