

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 September 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Luke Spillman (Chair), Alex Anderson (Vice-Chair), Vikki Hartstean, Tom Kelly, Jacqui Maney and Lee Watson

In attendance: Mark Bradbury, Interim Director for Place
Kevin Munnely, Assistant Director, Regeneration and Place Delivery
Alec Scragg, Place & Design Manager
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed to the Council's website.

12. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

13. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Kelly declared that he worked at DP World and they were referred to within Item 5 (Stanford-le-Hope (SLH) Station / Interchange Update) of the agenda.

14. Stanford-le-Hope (SLH) Station / Interchange Update

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Place Delivery presented the report outlining when officers reviewed the project in relation to the excessive spend to date in relation to the overall budget, the decision was taken to protect the existing selected funding, retain it and to focus on securing the design for phase two, which was the interchange element. Following this a new business case could be provided, which would include revised costings for the overall project. Members were informed the recommendations within the report were to keep them updated as to the position the project and the progress which could now be made.

During the discussion the following was acknowledged:

- Conversations were also being had with the C2C and Network Rail in relation to potential delivery options for the project, which would be reported back at a later stage.
- Additional funding options were being sought from SELEP and Freeport funding.
- Timelines for the project had taken longer and been more complicated than anticipated. Officers gave assurances they had been in constant

communication with SELEP and were on track to meet the February 2024 deadline for approval of the revised Business Case.

- In relation to the new business case due to be submitted, Officers confirmed they did not want to end up in the same position as other projects and were investigating all possible options. They were confident that funding could be secured to enable them to deliver the scheme.

Members thanked Officers for the report and for their honesty within the report. The importance of delivering the project for the people of Stanford Le Hope was highlighted by the Committee.

Action 1 – Officers agreed to circulate a breakdown of the current costs of the design stage of the project to Members.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the outcomes of the project review process and funding options set in Paragraph 8.8.**
- 2. That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the Phase 2 SLH Transport Interchange design option and the submission of the planning application.**

15. Grays Underpass Update Report

The report described the findings of the recent review process into the Underpass scheme and detailed in its current form that it was not in a technical state for the project to move forward and did not continue to represent value for money.

During the discussion the following was highlighted:

- Members agreed with the recommendations given costing of the project to date and welcomed the outcome of the review and that Officers were learning lessons from this.
- It was noted that conversations were being had with National Rail and C2C as to funding the project and moving forwards with the scheme. It was commented there were plenty of benefits and opportunity to regenerate Grays Train Station and surrounding area of the town and dialogues were to be kept open.
- It was Officers understandings that most of the land used to deliver the new CO3 office building was owned by the Council, however there was some land which was required to be purchased to allow the build to go ahead in the best interest of the regeneration of Grays.
- Redevelopment of the High Street was still a possible opportunity. Discussions would need to be had with business owners as to possible options.

Action 2 – Officers agreed to circulate a breakdown of the current costs of the project to date to Members of the Committee.

Action 3 – Officers agreed to keep the Committee updated with regular reports as to the progression of the project.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the action to cease further development work on the Underpass scheme and withdraw the planning application.**
- 2. That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the delegation to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships and Commissioners authority to implement the development strategy set out in Paragraphs 4.1- 4.3 and to negotiate the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding cover a potential Station Quarter development partnership with Network Rail and other strategic partners.**

16. Purfleet-On-Thames Regeneration

The Assistant Director, Regeneration and Place Delivery presented the report outlining in order for Purfleet Centre Regeneration Limited (PCRL) to fulfil its role as lead developer and deliver the planned programme set out in the Development Agreement, they were required to access sufficient additional levels of funding to bring the project forward. PCRL had insufficient funding and had sought investment from several third parties.

Members heard that PCRL had continued to attempt to address the funding situation, however the Council was mindful to examine alternative funding options, the latest being a proposal involving the English Cities Fund (ECF). Officers were therefore recommending that the Council work with PCRL and ECF, over a period of up to 3 months, to establish whether there were firm proposals that could be brought back to Members to enable the project to continue.

Following the update from the Assistant Director, Regeneration and Place Delivery, Members were invited to ask questions. Key points raised included:

- It was raised how frustrating it was that officers had not been able to get to this situation sooner, given a partner of project was unable to secure the funding required.
- This was an area of prime real estate within the borough and had great potential for development.
- The scheme was designed by local residents for local residents and if the best situation was to withdraw from the current partnership, then

this was something that should be reviewed, however Members specified they did not want the area left as it was and for the scheme to not to be completed.

- The Interim Director of Place advised Members he had been speaking with the Purfleet Forum and had agreed that he would meet with local residents and to keep the community engaged with the project.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the written legal opinion, and the financial risk assessment and delegates authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships and Commissioners (1) to endeavour to negotiate a tripartite exit agreement with Homes England and Purfleet Centre Regeneration Limited and if that is not a viable option to agree a mutual withdrawal, with Homes England, from the Purfleet Housing Grant Determination Agreement which will lead to the determination of the Back to Back GDA with Purfleet Centre Regeneration Limited and (2) to take all steps necessary to terminate the Development Agreement and other associated agreements following the termination of the Grant Determination Agreement and the Back to Back GDA.**
- 2. That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the development option being proposed by PCRL and English Cities Fund and delegates authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance and the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships to negotiate and bring back to Cabinet an alternative development proposal no later than 13th March 2024 Cabinet Meeting.**

17. Draft Thurrock Design Charter

The report was presented by the Place & Design Manager who explained the Charter establishes principles for good design and the quality of developments in the borough. The Charter reflects recent changes to national policy, guidance, and best practice in relation to design and place-making as well as aligning with more recent published Council strategies. The development of the Charter and its consultation aligns with the development of the Local Plan and helps inform and provide a baseline for strategic policies on design. The Charter acts as a vision document for the more detailed and, forthcoming borough-wide design code.

During the discussion the following was highlighted:

- The Design Charter set out high level principles and expectations for design quality.

- The Design Charter recognises that places are different in every part of the borough, with the countryside, the riverfront, villages and urban areas. What the design standards tried to do is incorporate the consideration of these aspects into the design process of a planning application and how it could look.
- It also considered how to incorporate the heritage of the local area, such as the riverfront, within the design of developments.
- The document set out the Council's expectations around design quality should a developer come into a Ward wishing to pursue a development within the area.
- It was commented that the Design Charter should be promoted within the Borough as it was there to protect communities and areas across the Borough such as Greenbelt.
- It was commented that the issues and opportunities expressed in the Design Charter were complex but important to local communities. Care should therefore be taken in the language used and the means in which the Charter is communicated and explained within the forthcoming public consultation.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny Committee note progress on the draft Thurrock Design Charter and provide comment that will help shape this work.**
- 2. That Committee note that the draft Thurrock Design Charter will be used to inform wider community engagement.**
- 3. That Committee note the opportunity to discuss this work in greater detail as the draft document is developed and engagement feedback is received.**

The meeting finished at 9.05 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**