

CINDERFORD REGENERATION BOARD

MINUTES

Wednesday 16 October 2019

Meeting minutes of the Cinderford Regeneration Board held on Wednesday 16 October 2019 at the Belle Vue Centre, Cinderford

PRESENT:

Chairman:	Councillor Graham Morgan – Cinderford Town Council
Board Members:	Simon Excell – Gloucestershire County Council Councillor Terry Hale – Gloucestershire County Council Councillor Tim Holder – Cinderford Town Council Garry King – Two Rivers Housing Councillor Richard Leppington – Forest of Dean District Council Dave Wildin – Steam Mills Primary School Peter Williams – Forest of Dean District Council
Ex-Officio:	Wendy Jackson – Forest of Dean District Council
Observers:	Mikki Liddiatt – Forest of Dean District Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from: Louise John (Forest of Dean District Council), Tim Davis (Homes England), Nigel Johnson (Forest High School), Mike Price (Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council), Stuart Tait (Private Sector) and Sandra Tyrell (Gloucestershire College).

2. ELECTING A NEW CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN

Wendy Jackson informed the board that it was timely to elect a Chairman and Vice-Chairman to serve in the coming year. A unanimous vote concluded the re-election of both Chairman Councillor Graham Morgan and Vice-Chairman Councillor Tim Holder.

3. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Graham Morgan welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Mikki Liddiatt who was attending in the absence of Louise John.

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Graham Morgan congratulated the Forest of Dean District Council on the acquisition of the Five Acres Site from Homes England, "well done to all, this is a good thing for the District".

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Simon Excell – Lead Commissioner (GCC), involvement with Gloucestershire Infrastructure Investment Fund and Growth Deal projects.
- Garry King – Two Rivers Housing Chief Executive, involvement with multiple housing projects within Cinderford and the Forest of Dean. Potential interest in sites at the Cinderford Northern Quarter.
- Councillor Richard Leppington – Cabinet Member, Forest of Dean District Council, Landowner within the Northern Quarter and related sites.
- Peter Williams – Head of Paid Service, Forest of Dean District Council, Landowner within the Northern Quarter and related sites.

6. MINUTES OF MEETING ON 3 July 2019 & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

Wendy confirmed that following a meeting with Matt Burgess of Gloucestershire College, Sandra Tyrell, site principle at Gloucestershire College, Forest Campus has been invited to join the board. The College has also taken away an action to submit the college building into architecture/design award schemes.

Wendy also informed that James O’Neill, Stage Coach Commercial Manager has been attending the FEP Transport and Infrastructure Sub-Group meeting and has taken feedback from the group regarding buses to the college. Concerns were raised regarding buses along Valley Road where the new GP surgery is being built.

POST MEETING NOTES: Any complaints regarding Stage Coach commercial routes should be directed to Stagecoach at west.enquires@stagecoachbus.com. Complaints regarding GCC routes will be issues to GGC, however as they work closely together they are already sharing information on the complaints. Bill Carr (GCC) & Clive Elsmore expressed that they are happy for people to direct complaints directly to them and they direct them as appropriate: bill.carr@gloucestershire.gov.uk & Clive.elsmore@fdean.gov.uk.

7. TOWN CENTRE UPDATES

Future High Street Fund (FHSF)

Wendy Jackson provided an update. The Future High Street Fund was launched last year with £675m to revive high streets. The deadline for the first call for sites was in March this year. Due to population size, the Forest of Dean District Council was allowed to submit one bid for one town within the District. Following a ‘mini-competition’, Cinderford was selected as the town to progress to the application stage. Forest of Dean District Council submitted a bid on behalf of Cinderford Town Council. This bid was approved in September making Cinderford town centre the only application in Gloucestershire to be selected. A total £49,338 revenue funding is available to prepare a business case that will seek approximately £3m capital funding to deliver the following projects:-

- Cinderford Methodist Church – Purchase the church (which is now closed to worship) and seek to maintain activities that are run within the building. Plans also include designating the Church as an Asset of Community Value.

- Triangle – Fully pedestrianise the triangle to increase open space and market space.
- BT Exchange Site – Create a long stay car park adding 20 extra car parking spaces to the town centre.
- HSBC Bank – Cinderford Town Council have already purchased the buildings. Plans would see the building bought back into use as a retail space.
- Acorn House – Seek to acquire the building and bring back into use as housing.

There will be a second round of FHSF nationally however, as Cinderford were successful in their bid, the Forest of Dean District Council will not be able to submit any other bids to this round.

Councillor Graham Morgan informed that both he and Max Coborn have been invited to meet with MP Mark Harper on Friday 18th October 2019 to discuss this and other town matters.

The next stage for Cinderford's FHSF bid is to look at the technical work, statutory and financial business case which is to be submitted in March 2020 and prior to Christmas 2019 they aim to have a Consultant or Contracted Project Manager in place to take this forward.

Councillor Graham Morgan added that Chris Brown has led some "rich picturing" work with the School and Police regarding safety issues in the Town Centre. The highways agency has previously expressed concerns with two-way traffic on Market Street with correlated with the feedback from the rich picturing work.

Town Centre Audit Reports

Wendy provided an update on the Town Centre Audit Reports. The reports for this year were completed by Matthew Green, the Publica graduate intern using the GFirst Retail Pathfinder Toolkit Methodology used in the reports since 2013.

All town centre audit reports are available of the Forest of Dean District Councils website:
<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/residents/planning-building/regeneration/>

Councillor Graham Morgan expressed a concern with losing the core of the town to the conversion of shop fronts to flats and advised that we need to preserve the town centres such as the areas surrounded the Triangle in Cinderford.

8. FODDC LED DEVELOPMENT

One Public Estate

Councillor Richard Leppington provided an update. As referenced at the last Board meeting, the current planning permission at the Cinderford Northern Quarter specifies that no other development plots (other than that of the College) can come forward for development prior to the completion of the whole of the spine road.

In June 2017 Gloucestershire County Council as the Local Highway Authority commissioned work to test whether the remaining development plots can come forward without the need for the spine road to be completed in its entirety.

As such, the District Council are looking to progress the scheme in order to allow some of the development plots to come forward, with an extension to the spine road.

It should be noted that the intention is still to complete the spine road in its entirety, however this would allow some of the plots to be released at an earlier stage.

This will require a Section 73 Amendment (Variation of Planning Condition application) and a Reserved Matters application (for the access points into the plots only).

The District Council has recently run a competitive tender process to appoint consultants to submit the two applications. We received three submissions, and following an appraisal process consultants 'RSK ADAS' were appointed.

The District Council will be applying for the planning permission. Submission documents will include an Environmental Statement Addendum to assess changes in the spine road phasing – the 2017 regulations will be applied. Additionally, revisions will be made to the Species Masterplans.

A Phase 1 Ecological Assessment is being completed across the proposed spine road extension area, and the access point areas. Fieldwork was completed week commencing 23 September for the Assessment.

The current timeline is to prepare the draft application documents prior to Christmas with a target submission date in the New Year.

We are looking to arrange a FODDC member briefing for the S.73 Amendment and Reserved Matters applications in mid-November. We will also be inviting the Environmental Forum members, and Town Council to attend the briefing.

Northern Quarter Spine Road Phase 2 and Development Plots

Councillor Richard Leppington provided an update. The District Council are looking to develop Plots F1 and F2. This would see two modern workspace units on the plots (with associated parking and servicing arrangements).

The Council have an end user in mind for the plots, and are currently going through the necessary legal procedures to formalise the agreement. Once this is completed, further details can be provided.

They are a District business, who is looking to move to larger premises in order to expand. In addition, they are very keen to ensure the building is of a high environmental rating.

We are running a competitive tender process to appoint consultants to design the building and submit a planning application for the development. The invitation to tender commences this week, with appointment of a consultant targeted for mid-November.

The aim is to submit a planning application in Spring 2020 and commence construction in Autumn 2020. The completion date will be Spring 2021.

We are looking to arrange a member briefing for Plots F1 and F2 in January/February next year, and again Forum members and the Town Council will be invited to attend.

As part of the pre-planning application work, we have commissioned a Sustainability Consultant to undertake an assessment of what BREEAM level could be achieved on the site.

The ambition is to reach BREEAM Excellent or even BREEAM Outstanding. Prior to committing to a target, we want to have a clear understanding of whether this can be achieved on the site, what is required and the costs associated with the different certification levels.

The Pre-Assessment report has been commissioned and will inform early designs with the appointed architect team.

Simon Excell advised that the revised route has not been subjected to transport modelling, which will need to be submitted. Wendy confirmed that the Forest of Dean District Council are currently asking for quotes for this piece of work [REDACTED]

Simon Excell also queried funding for the project. Wendy advised that they are still looking for funding for the project with no capital funds secured at present. This project is already on Gfirst LEP's radar, however the LEP do not have any available funds to support pipeline projects at present.

The Forest of Dean District Council has secured funding from the One Public Estate programme to fund the S.73 & reserved matters planning application work and will be looking to bid into round 8 of this funding which will have a housing delivery focus.

Gary King questioned whether partners were being asked to invest in the sites. Peter Williams confirmed that the current round of One Public Estate money is being used to make the sites shovel ready for any potential partners.

Homes England had invited sealed bids for their site in Newtown Road (Plot G2) and this process was due to close 18th October 2019 at 1pm.

9. LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

No update provided from GFirst LEP as LEP representative not in attendance.

Wendy informed that the Local Industrial Strategy Draft has been circulated by the GFirst LEP for comment closing 31st October. Simon Excell and Peter Williams confirmed that both Forest of Dean District Council and Gloucestershire County Council will be responding to the draft. Wendy confirmed that the FEP will also be submitting a response.

10. CINDERFORD AAP PROJECT UPDATES

Northern Quarter Spine Road Phase 1 – Adoption & Lighting

Simon Excell noted that work was in progress on the adoption of the first phase of Northern United Way and were currently awaiting information from the Forest of Dean District Council and Forestry England.

Simon confirmed that they are working with a contractor in regards to bat friendly lighting and are looking at shielding across the bridge in phase 1 which has been identified as a bat corridor.

Homes England Site Marketing and Disposal (Plot G2)

Wendy Jackson advised that the invitation to submit sealed bids for Plot G2 will close at 1pm on 18th October 2019. Homes England has confirmed there has been interest in the site.

The Northern United site disposal is currently awaiting a ministerial approval and is expected by the end of the calendar year.

POST MEETING NOTE: [outcome of sealed bids]

Ecological Monitoring Work & Wildtowns Project Funding

Wendy Jackson informed that she attended the CREF meeting on Tuesday 1 October at Cinderford Baptist Church

Three main topics of conversation:

- Church Bank – GWT Wildtowns project. General support for the Greenway Road scheme which will see grazing of the land, there are a few issues around potential fencing, which relates mainly to overall objections to fencing of any open land in the Forest.
- CNQ Ecological Monitoring – Surveys completed for Dormouse, GCN'S and Grassland. Results are on the website. Monitoring work and results are very positive.
- S.73 Amendment/Reserved Matters Application and F1/2 Commercial Development –
 - General support for F1/2 development.
 - Questions were asked around clarifications of timing for the S.73 amendment
 - The first time it has been mentioned publically was with CREF, which was appreciated.

CREF Members will be invited to the All Member Briefing for the Section 73 Amendment/Reserved Matters application (Mid November) and the F1/2 Commercial Development (January/February).

11. CRB GOVERNANCE

MOU and Register of Interest Forms

Wendy Jackson informed that the final version of the MOU will now be circulated and requested any Register of Interest Forms outstanding to be completed and returned to her.

Communications

Wendy Jackson tabled the Forest of Dean District Council's press release regarding Five Acres site acquisition.

Risk Register

Wendy Jackson provided an update. Some minor changes had been made to the Risk Register as follows:

- S.04 – Lack of Private Investment in Northern Quarter
- S.05 – Housing: Local Partnership retained. Housing delivery for Forest of Dean will not go forward due to negative costs.
- L.01 – Risk rating increased
- O.01 – Transparency prior to application

Simon Excell raised a risk register issue for F02 and advised that he would send some suggested wording to Wendy and Louise post meeting.

POST MEETING NOTE: Simon has suggested the following –

Gloucestershire County Council decides not to be the delivery manager for Phase 2 of the spine road.

Probability increase to 3 (from 2)

Mitigation Proposals (1) Secure funding (2) Secure planning permission.

Both of these issues need to be satisfactorily resolved before a report can be presented to GCC Cabinet.

12. AOB

None

13. 2020 MEETING DATES

Wednesday 22 January, Wednesday 29 April, Wednesday 8 July, Wednesday 14 October 2020.

MEETING END: 15:40