

Cheltenham Development Task Force Board Meeting

03/15 (i)

Friday 10th October 2014 - 2.00pm – 4:30 pm
Pittville Room, Municipal offices, Cheltenham

Open Minutes of meeting

Present: Graham Garbutt (Independent Chair)
Stephen Clarke
Cllr Will Windsor-Clive
Bernice Thomson
Robert Duncan
Michael Ratcliffe
Cllr Andrew McKinlay
Cllr Chris Nelson
Simon Excell
Dorian Wragg
Joyce Clifford

Other: Jeremy Williamson
Cllr Steve Jordan
Richard Cornell
Chris Riley
Wilf Tomaney
David Roberts
Andrew Hieron
Mike Redman
Tracey Crews

No.	Item	Action
	The Chair welcomed Joyce Clifford as a new member to the Board.	
68/14	Apologies: Diane Savory, David Oldham, Andrew North, Jeff Brinley, Ross Simmonds, Mark Sheldon, Amanda Lawson-Smith and Cllr Vernon Smith.	
69/14	Declarations of Interest – Cllr W-C and S.Excell confirmed the same declarations of interest as recorded previously as sponsors of GLTB projects see item 74/14.	
70/14	Minutes of previous meeting / Matters Arising The minutes of the last meeting (04/07/14) were approved as an accurate record conditional to the following corrections: Mike Redman to be added to the list of attendees for both the 'Open' and 'Confidential' minutes. Two typographical errors were picked up on pages 4 and 5 of the 'Open' minutes, and on pages 1 and 5 of the 'Confidential' minutes.	

71/14	<p>Action Matrix and Matters Arising Items were either actioned, on the agenda or updated as follows:</p> <p>54/14 – Task Force Membership JW confirmed that the Chair had written to retiring members to thank them for their input, but the issue of Sarah Pullen’s replacement on the Board was still outstanding. Members were encouraged to come forward with any suggestions of potentially eligible people, ideally with a communication or media background.</p>	ALL
72/14	<p>Confirmation of confidentiality of items Items agreed.</p>	
Matters for information		
73/14	<p>Wider Matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Cllr SJ explained that all three councils had approved the pre-submission document, and that had triggered a public consultation, leading to 2,800 responses; the assessment of which is publically available on the JCS website. The plan has to demonstrate “soundness” to be approved by the Secretary of State through examination in public. Outstanding viability assessments and traffic modelling concerning some urban extensions should be complete by the end of October. <p>It was noted that the Stroud Plan had stalled for 6 months for a further look at housing needs.</p> <p>The issue of objective need was complex and it is believed that the Government would provide a different context for developments coming forward before the JCS is approved.</p> <p>RD raised continued concerns about employment land and that those involved in the debate at the last LEP Infrastructure Group meeting were still very unhappy about the lack of employment land being considered within the JCS. Whilst aware that the Group’s views would feed into the LEP Board in due course, he was concerned of an impasse developing. Cllr SJ stressed that the plan could be reviewed every 5 years and adjustments made if necessary.</p> <p>Some members did not perceive a shortage given the safeguarded land at J10 but RD explained that Tewkesbury BC had increased their employment land annually by 23 hectares since 1991, so he feared that the employment land allocated through the JCS would be woefully inadequate.</p> <p>An issue was the mismatch between current office availability and quality office accommodation, which to build new required rental levels of £20/ft², not £14/ft² as currently.</p>	

	<p>Cllr CN drew attention to the fact that the view from planning was that there were no material issues arising from the JCS consultation, which he felt was at variance with RD's comments. MR highlighted that the Chamber of Commerce also believed that there was insufficient employment land availability. Cllr SJ acknowledged the concerns, but there would be opportunity to incorporate changes within the plan over a 20 year period.</p> <p>The Chair stressed that the Task Force was not the place to resolve or mediate inconsistencies, but suggested the lack of employment land may be something they would wish to make their own comments on. RD highlighted the message he was getting was that if more employment land is made available occupiers would come. JW noted that it was a supply not demand led issue.</p> <p>TC explained that Glos LEP had agreed to enter a statement of co-operation with the JCS, which was now drafted and is recognised by the LEP as two documents – the SEP element is about aspirations and the JCS element about land use delivery. There would be a need to improve subsequent progression on economic and strategic development as part of the plan.</p> <p>In there is perception of differing views between the LEP and JCS, Eric Pickles would take the final decision.</p> <p>The Chair acknowledged the debate as having been helpful and looked forward to seeing any further evidence RD or TC could provide to the Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• LEP <p>In providing an update in DS's absence, JW flagged up the success of round one of the growth fund; and that the "growth hub" had now opened in Gloucester. Bids for the growth fund round 2 had to be submitted by 6th October, but the level of funding likely to be available was unknown at this stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• J10 <p>SE explained that the Highways Agency was on site and that works affecting the J10 / A419 interchange had now been reduced to just one weekend; a very positive outcome.</p> <p>Further development of the junction would depend on the growth debate, but currently the Highways Agency considered it unnecessary to make the junction four ways. JCS modelling had been undertaken based upon demand as currently set out, but did not require a junction upgrade.</p> <p>SE explained that the modelling had been funded to test scenarios dictated by the JCS, not to identify the "tipping point" when future growth would require a junction upgrade. Whilst members felt this would be useful the unfunded c£100k cost posed a challenge. Whilst recognising this, MRa stressed the need to look forward and plan for the future.</p>	<p>TC/RD</p>
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	<p>MRa requested access to the modelling report, which SE would provide but noted that its complexities would may it difficult to digest without specialist traffic input.</p> <p>Acknowledging an earlier comment by DR about supply and demand, SC stressed that development of J10 would in itself generate growth.</p> <p>Cllr W-C commented that the process was mostly driven by political will as to have a four ways junction there was need to potentially increase housing numbers, and Cllr SJ highlighted that whilst there was universal agreement for a four ways junction, there was not universal agreement to increasing development in order to achieve it.</p> <p>The Chair concluded that it was a matter for elected politicians to resolve any differences of view on this matter.</p>	SE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Association CBC Corporate Peer Challenge <p>Cllr AMc explained how Cheltenham BC had gone through a Peer Review by the Local Government Association whose purpose was to examine the effectiveness of Council operations; decision making processes and functional delivery. The Peer Review Group was most impressed by the Task Force and its effectiveness in bridging the private and public sectors to deliver outcomes and noted its achievements. The Chair congratulated the Board and Cllr SJ confirmed that an official statement would be made when the document was made public.</p>	Cllr SJ/AMc
74/14	<p>Gloucestershire Local Transport Body – update on Cheltenham Spa Railway Station bid</p> <p>At the GLTB meeting on 04/09/14 funding of c£1.5m had been confirmed for the Cheltenham Spa station scheme. This would contribute to other confirmed funds such as Access for All and National Stations Improvement Programme – although amounts yet to be confirmed.</p> <p>Working with Sustrans, a further bid for between £500k and £750k funding was being prepared to connect the station to Lansdowne. The £4k cost for bid preparation is being jointly funded by LSTF and CBC. This bid has the bonus of linking to the ambitious 4 mile Cheltenham – Bishops Cleeve cycle link, which is the subject of a further GCC bid to growth fund round 2. SE noted that a bid for £1m had been made which would be enhanced by both local developer and employer contributions.</p> <p>A £10m bid to fund the extra bay platforms as a second phase at Cheltenham had also been submitted to growth fund round 2.</p> <p>In response to a query raised by Cllr CN about the timing of cycle route related funding, JW confirmed it was anticipated around the New Year / February time,</p>	
	Matters for consideration	

<p>75/14</p>	<p>Business plan mid-term review and lessons learned</p> <p>GG extended thanks to those involved in the review meeting on 2nd September; the outputs of which were encompassed in the circulated document.</p> <p>Key items flagged were</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the future role of LEP's post-election• the issue of best practice and learning from other towns and cities and how that knowledge could be pursued• Michael Lyons' report about accommodating housing which would be interesting to look at. Likewise the recent prize sponsored by Lord Wolfson for ideas on building satellites to towns and cities. <p>JW noted that the study cited Cheltenham as capable of having a garden city built on its periphery. SC thought it feasible within the JCS to have centres constructed in the character of Cheltenham's Garden Town. MR highlighted the advantage of satellite towns was that developers are forced to put in all the service facilities.</p> <p>Regarding 'lessons learnt', the Chair felt it was important to have a broad strategic view of linkages into processes that could trigger other developments not anticipated, highlighting how the North Place development had safeguarded the Council's financial position which was a huge success. MRa stressed that while time had been spent on talking about the future, no mention was made of the importance to look ahead 50 years in terms of what we want Cheltenham to look like. The Chair suggested a mechanism was required to ensure those strands of the work plan be returned to regularly.</p> <p>In terms of the Cheltenham Local Development Plan Cllr CN queried the need for a forum to pull together the economic element. TC confirmed that the plan would set out ambitions for the town in terms of who we aim to attract, and whether there's the infrastructure and market to support those ideals. The Cheltenham Plan would be produced in several phases. Phase 1 would deal with allocation, to which the Task Force would feed their comments into, and towards the New Year a collection of sites would be taken out for public consultation. MR queried if discussions had taken place with GCHQ and their future needs; Cllr SJ supported the idea, although noting that 'the doughnut' was built under a PFI initiative which committed GCHQ to this area for 30 years.</p> <p>SC stressed that inevitably a 50 year plan would need to be re-visited and adapted over time. TC confirmed that the Cheltenham Plan would span to 2031, however, economic projections would be refreshed on a regular basis.</p> <p>SC did not feel it appropriate to be dependent on one Government organisation in trying to maintain an attractive town. Cycling, electric cars, and bikes were the sort of things he felt would attract industries. MRa raised the issue of a light rail transit system.</p> <p>The Chair concluded that there was need to re-convene the group with a specific agenda to debate what scenarios might develop for 50 years hence and the principles to follow. The outcome would be fed back to the next Board meeting in January.</p>	<p>JW</p>
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76/14	<p>High Street analysis</p> <p>The Chair thanked HB for managing the feedback on this document. It was now about delivery and bringing forward funding pots. CR explained there was a funding proposal going to CBC Council 13/10/14 which if approved, would replicate previous work on the Promenade as a joint GCC/CBC venture.</p> <p>If the works presently taking place between Pittville Street and Winchcombe Street prove effective it would provide a template for future works on the High Street.</p> <p>CR stressed that the County was committed to investing on improvement works in Cheltenham town centre over the next 5 years. Works on the Promenade provided a good example of the maintenance schemes intended to improve the public realm. In those areas that required the most amount of work, ie: not only pure maintenance but uplift too, then opportunities to utilise top-up funding CBC would be identified.</p> <p>Cllr CN queried the principle of top up funding being applied by GCC and CR stressed that CBC was very good at providing top-up funding; something the rural councils found more difficult.</p> <p>JW highlighted an opportunity in the Lower High street where 3 adjoining properties with a mix of consented schemes and applications created an opportunity for a holistic output. Although some schemes consented the developer had committed to co-operate.</p> <p>JW suggested the Honeybourne Gate scheme might provide the impetus to refurbish the bridge on Tewkesbury Road, as well as other sites in close proximity. CR felt bridge refurbishment works could potentially increase the visibility of the Honeybourne Line. BT agreed with this view and welcomed any improvement works dealing with the West End.</p> <p>BT was concerned that the central conservation area was stopping improvements to properties, e.g. by wooden windows being replaced by pvc. A suggestion was made that planning restrictions for this needed to be looked at. MR felt something needed doing but in a studied way, as the properties in that area were being conserved for good reason. BT stressed that she was not looking to remove their status, but build in some flexibility within that status to allow properties to be improved without spoiling any original features. WT stressed that in conservation terms any development had to consider or enhance the amenity value of the property. It was also pointed out that there were 19 separate guidance documents relating to the central conservation area. Guidance existed on preserving such features, however SC did not feel people were getting guidance in practice; just a yes or no. There was also a perception that commercial buildings were able to make changes but not privately owned properties.</p>	
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	<p>The key was consistency and transparency in dealing with the matter through a democratic process which members could adopt. TC stressed that this was a borough-wide problem that needed to be looked at in context.</p> <p>The Chair felt it was important to get a set of policies and a practical implication plan to upgrade the Lower High Street, and that it would be good to find a way to kick-start a delivery strategy encompassed by policy. BT acknowledged that conservation was needed but that it was unfair on individual business properties when they are told they can't change their windows to match those next door. Bath Road was a successful shopping area inside the conservation area so it must be about the quality of public realm and accessibility to the type of businesses there.</p> <p>Cllr CN felt a possible solution to the problem might be if planning applications for improvement to property in the Lower High Street area, that normally get dealt with as a delegated officer decision, could automatically be referred to Planning Committee so a debate could be held around the issue.</p> <p>TC felt the key issue was to talk about what the future of Lower High Street was. As an affordable area of town it encourages ethnic and other specialist shops different from Bath Road. In her view it was not about window details, but about having a strategy to invest in that area. WT used St George's Square as an example of the need to make decent connections.</p> <p>Cllr AMc did not recommend deferring all such decisions to Planning Committee, but felt it was an interesting point made about the distinctions between Bath Road and Lower High Street, and the latter being significantly paralysed from preventing their listed properties falling to pieces. The issue needed to be looked at but he warned against knee jerk reactions. MRa commented that a strategy specifically for the West End only could be put in place, that didn't apply to the rest of the Borough. The Chair stressed that some kind of strategic approach was required, taking a similar approach to providing supplementary planning guidance. It was key to look at the history of that area in terms of its local economic activity, which must not be hampered or impeded to continue.</p> <p>Cllr SJ would look at potential funding streams, as well as promote debate on the issues raised in that area. The Chair was keen the Task Force actually make things happen by pursuing it through one avenue or other. Cllr CN prompted the need to look at potential funding at the following Monday's Council meeting. JW would pick up suggested funding related conversations outside the meeting. BT stressed that every town needs a West End and that it wasn't about making it like Bath Road, but just defining and supporting its future role.</p>	
	Confidential items	

The public part of the meeting concluded at this point