

Minutes of the meeting of the **DOVER LEISURE CENTRE PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 6 April 2017 at 4.45 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor T J Bartlett

Councillors: P M Beresford
N J Collor
M D Conolly
P Walker
Mr P Ward

Also present: Mr S Jepson (Hadron Consulting)
Mr R Thompson (Hadron Consulting)

Officers: Director of Environment and Corporate Assets
Principal Infrastructure and Delivery Officer
Principal Leisure Officer
Corporate Architectural Project Officer
Democratic Support Officer

112 APOLOGIES

It was noted that there were no apologies for absence.

113 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that no substitute members had been appointed.

114 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

115 MINUTES

The notes of the meeting of the Group held on 9 March 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

116 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Mr Jepson advised that design details such as lighting, ventilation and plant were close to being finalised. Once confirmed they would be packaged up and sent out to sub-contractors for pricing.

The Principal Infrastructure and Delivery Officer (PIDO) reported that, following information received since the last meeting, hearing loops would be installed in some other rooms in addition to the reception, including the studios.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

117 PROGRAMME

A programme summary was circulated to the Group. Mr Jepson confirmed that the technical design stage was practically complete and individual packages for

groundworks, electrical works, etc. would be sent out by BAM for testing/costing. Some packages, e.g. pool filtration and lifts, had already been sent out and some prices were coming back lower than expected. Initial interest from the market had been encouraging. It was anticipated that local companies would be used for groundworks, tiling, plastering, etc. but specialist services would be procured nationally. Progress was broadly in line with the programme schedule.

In response to Councillor P Walker, Mr Jepson advised that if costings came back higher than anticipated, some of the shortfall could be covered by the contingency budget. However, if this proved insufficient, other ways of making savings would be explored, such as value engineering and changing finishes. Going back out to the market would be a last resort. There was confidence that the predicted costs were accurate as those that had already been tested were coming back within the forecast range. Moreover, many actions had already been taken to 'de-risk' the project, including unexploded ordnance and archaeological investigations.

Councillor Walker emphasised the need to reassure the public that costs would not rise inexorably as had been the case with some other projects. Councillor M D Conolly agreed, stating that it was important that costs were monitored on a weekly basis.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

118 PLANNING

The PIDO confirmed that a planning application had been submitted. The Planning Officer had advised that two letters of objection and one of support had been received to date. One of the objectors had raised concerns about the impact of the new centre on Tides and the need for investment there. The other objector had raised concerns about the proposed boundary treatment.

Southern Water (SW) had now responded and advised that there was insufficient capacity in the existing foul water drainage network. It had suggested the wording for a condition that would be attached to the planning permission. The Group was reassured that officers and consultants would work closely with SW. It might be necessary to put in a temporary solution until the foul water network was upgraded by SW. Mr Jepson added that SW had been commissioned to carry out further investigations. Progress on this would be closely monitored, and it was hoped that the investigations would be completed by September.

The PIDO reported that Langdon Parish Council had indicated its support for the location of the leisure centre, but it was not convinced that the public transport arrangements would be adequate. Sport England and Whitfield Parish Council supported the application. Natural England had raised no objections and comments were awaited from Highways England.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

119 LAND ACQUISITION

The Principal Leisure Officer (PLO) advised that the Group could suggest road names if it wished. The site of the centre now had a postcode.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

120 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that the May meeting should be cancelled as it was unlikely that officers/consultants would have anything significant to report on.

121 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that the items involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

122 RISKS

Referring to the risks summary circulated to Members, Mr Jepson advised that a lot of the risks remained 'static'. It was known that the ground conditions were less favourable than originally anticipated and the design had been amended to accommodate these. Options for the disposal of material from the site were being explored, including transferring it to The Danes recreation ground to bring football pitches back into use. Disposing of material in this way would achieve a project cost saving.

In respect of Section 106 matters, the PIDO advised that a response from Affinity Water was awaited. Kent County Council's (KCC) public transport team had advised that the leisure centre would be adequately served by existing bus routes, given that there were plans to extend bus route 89 to accommodate the new Lidl store. This meant that any new service would compete with existing services. It was clarified that, whilst KCC was keen to see greater use of public transport, it was not permitted to procure a bus service that was in direct competition with a commercially-operated service and, as such, it would not be possible to procure an additional bus service to the leisure centre through a Section 106 agreement.

Councillor N J Collor commented that bus routes 12 and 60A also served Whitfield. Mr Peter Ward agreed that Whitfield was well served by buses. Councillor Walker stated that there was a need to improve the whole public transport network in order to support the Council's regeneration agenda for Dover. The existing bus network was not well coordinated and there was poor linkage between Dover's historical, business and leisure sites. KCC's unwillingness to address this was unfortunate.

Councillor Collor responded that these issues were being addressed by the Quality Bus Partnership. The issue was the commerciality of routes and whether KCC was able to support non-commercial routes which Stagecoach would not operate without financial support. He was pushing for Stagecoach to review all its services this year.

The PIDO advised that, as an alternative to procuring additional bus services, officers were attempting to agree a ticketing incentive scheme with KCC's public transport team and Stagecoach which would be funded by means of a Section 106 agreement attached to the planning permission. The level of contribution would be linked to achieving targets set out in the travel plan submitted with the planning application.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

123 PROJECT COSTS

Mr Jepson reported that efforts to address the overspend had succeeded in reducing it to £250,000. Whilst it was anticipated that further savings could be made, any shortfall would be covered by the contingency budget. To achieve further savings, the PLO advised that landscaping works could potentially be done by the Council's in-house team. Mr Jepson confirmed that savings would not be sought if there would be an operational cost or impact on revenue.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

124 OPERATOR PROCUREMENT

The PLO advised that 11 companies had registered an interest following the issue of operator procurement tenders, of which 8 were charitable trusts. The consultants were pleased with the response which included some of the leading contenders in the market. Site visits were being arranged for the interested companies and tenders were due to be returned by mid-May. It was expected that 4 or 5 companies would submit tenders. The Group would be updated on the progress of the procurement process in July.

The Director of Environment and Corporate Assets suggested that there should be Member involvement in the quality assessment of tender bids. It was anticipated that Councillor Bartlett would participate in the contractor procurement interviews. Councillor Walker stated that he would like to see the whole Group involved in some way.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

125 FUNDING APPLICATION TO SPORT ENGLAND

The PLO advised that an expression of interest had been submitted to Sport England on 16 March. Improvements to Tides Leisure Centre had been mentioned but, following earlier discussions with SE, no specific request for possible funding had been made at this stage. The next phase would be the submission of a formal application on 14 June which would be considered by SE's investment committee on 11 July.

The PLO advised that proposals for the refurbishment of Tides were estimated at £2.2 million to refurbish defective plant equipment and improve pool design. The estimated cost of dryside improvements was £2.8 million. Officers were exploring options to amalgamate both projects to maximise design opportunities and review project costs and viability. A detailed report would go to Cabinet in late autumn.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

The meeting ended at 5.52 pm.