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Minutes of the meeting of the **DOVER LEISURE CENTRE PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 9 March 2017 at 4.47 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor T J Bartlett

Councillors: N J Collor
M D Conolly
P Walker (Minute Nos 99-108 only)
Mr P Ward

Also Present: Mr Daniel Brenchley (BAM)
Mr Stephen Jepson (Hadron Consulting)
Mr Dean Lucas (Faithful & Gould)
Mr Gary Thomason (GT3 Architects)

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

99 APOLOGIES

It was noted that Councillor P M Beresford had sent an apology for absence.

100 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that no substitute members had been appointed.

101 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

102 MINUTES

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

103 DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Mr Thomason informed Members that a few tweaks had been made to the design prior to the planning application being lodged on 13 March. The services intake had been moved but the overall site plan had not changed.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor N J Collor over car parking, it was confirmed that the centre would have a minimum of 250 parking spaces which was the norm for a centre of this size. The current proposal for 160/170 spaces in the main car park and the remainder in an overflow car park would address concerns raised by Kent County Council (KCC) Highways. This proposal was based on data obtained through trip generation modelling.

Mr Thomason advised that he and Officers had visited a number of buildings with Sport England to look at the colour schemes used on external and internal walls. It was proposed that the external wall of Dover's sports hall would have some colour, highlighted by up-lighting. With Members' consent, it was proposed that a dark grey and lime palette would be used around the pool and wetside areas, with random tones of blue on things like lockers. This would create a more sophisticated look than the blue tiles traditionally used.

The Principal Leisure Officer (PLO) advised that, having seen good and bad design examples in other centres, they were confident that their proposal to use zoned colouring and materials to distinguish between the café and reception areas would work well. Recent visit had also given the team reassurance regarding earlier design decisions, including the use of moveable walls. It would be the operator's decision where the retail area was located, but it was likely to be positioned where the greatest number of people passed by, and the design proposals allowed for this space. The Principal Infrastructure and Delivery Officer (PIDO) praised the use of a mobile trolley for membership registrations at one of the centres visited as it lessened the likelihood of queues forming at the main reception.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

104 PROGRAMME

A programme summary was circulated to the Group which was advised that progress was broadly in line with the programme. Mr Jepson advised that BAM was about to start testing the market through its big five sub-contractors. Some testing had already been carried out in relation to lifts, 5-a-side pitches, etc, and prices quoted were generally below those in the costings plan. Ground conditions were not as good as anticipated, and a piling solution would probably have to be used. In response to Mr P Ward, the PLO confirmed that the leisure centre's website would be integrated with its booking system in order to meet customers' digital expectations. The provision of such a system would be built into the operator's leisure management contract.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

105 PLANNING

The PIDO advised that it was hoped to reduce the number of conditions attached to the planning permission by submitting as much information as possible with the application which would probably go to Planning Committee in June.

As demonstrated by the Statement of Community Involvement, consultation on the proposals had been extensive, and Officers would continue to liaise with interested user groups such as Dover Lifeguards. Officers would also continue to liaise with the providers of sports halls. For example, Sir Roger Manwood's School had recently obtained permission to hire its hall out to external users, supporting assumptions made when modelling sports hall requirements during preparation of the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

106 LAND ACQUISITION

The Director of Environment and Corporate Assets advised that the site at Whitfield was now owned by the Council, contracts having been exchanged and completed on 24 February.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

107 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of future meetings were noted.

108 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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.

109 RISKS

Referring to the risks summary circulated to Members, Mr Jepson highlighted that the Planning risk associated with relocation from the town centre had gone down now that the Town Centre Impact Assessment for the planning application had been completed. The risk of high ground water had also reduced. However, the risk of poor ground conditions had materialised and the design of the centre would need to reflect this.

The risks of insufficient water supply and foul drainage capacity had also materialised and were of serious concern. Mr Lucas advised that, in the first instance, a fee would need to be paid to Southern Water to advise what works were required. There would then be a further cost to increase capacity and this could be significant, particularly if off-site works were required. Councillor M D Conolly expressed concern about these issues, and was advised that Officers were attempting to move things forward with Southern Water at a senior level.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

110 PROJECT COSTS

Mr Lucas advised that efforts to realise savings in order to reduce the projected £1 million overspend, as reported at the end of RIBA Stage III, were continuing. It was anticipated that savings of at least £700,000 could be achieved in connection with services and design, with potentially another saving of £100,000. Any shortfall would be covered by the contingency budget which was sufficient for this stage of the project. Although the team was confident that the costings were sound, they would only be genuinely tested when the construction market had quoted. Overall, the Council remained in a strong position.

Mr Jepson advised that the construction market in the south-east remained buoyant, with a large number of new schools, offices, etc being built. However, a lot of construction activity meant an increased demand for materials and labour which in turn pushed up prices. Mr Brenchley added that, whilst complex projects were not so attractive to the market, BAM was a respected contractor which stood it in good stead.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

111 OPERATOR PROCUREMENT

The PLO advised that the operator procurement tenders were due to be issued on 15 March. Following the Cabinet decision to separate the Dover and Tides contracts, the tender was likely to have greater appeal to operators. The tender process would take 9 weeks, and it was expected that 5 or 6 operators would submit bids. The successful bidder would be appointed to start running the existing leisure centre on 1 April 2018.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Conolly, it was clarified that the proposed arrangement would benefit the new operator in terms of training staff and moving them from the old centre to the new one. Officers had held regular meetings with Your Leisure and would continue to work with them to ensure that there was a smooth handover to the new operator. The PIDO added that the large leisure centre operators deployed specialist teams to open new centres.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

The meeting ended at 5.52 pm.