

Minutes of the meeting of the **DOVER LEISURE CENTRE ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Thursday, 3 November 2016 at 5.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor T J Bartlett

Councillors: P M Beresford
N J Collor
M R Eddy
Mr P Ward

Officers: Mr Stephen Jepson (Hadron Consulting)
Mr Dean Lucas (Faithful & Gould)
Mr Gary Thomason (GT3 Architects)
Director of Environment and Corporate Assets
Corporate Architectural Project Officer
Principal Infrastructure and Delivery Officer
Principal Leisure Officer
Democratic Support Officer

44 APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors M D Conolly and P Walker.

45 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor M R Eddy had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor P Walker.

46 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

47 MINUTES

The notes of the meeting of the Group held on 29 September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

48 UPDATE ON SPA OPTION

The Group was advised that Jacqueline Ross had now been appointed as the Council's spa consultant, charged with investigating the feasibility of including a spa facility in the new leisure centre. She would be reporting to the Group at its meeting on 8 December.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

49 PROGRAMME

Mr Stephen Jepson referred Members to the revised programme which had been circulated as a supplementary paper. Progress was currently broadly in line with the timescales shown in the paper. Initial feedback on the proposed construction programme was that it was very tight, but this would be tested more formally with

the market and views reported to the next meeting. It was accepted that, if approved, the design and construction of a spa would put pressure on the programme.

The Principal Leisure Officer (PLO) advised that the Council's target was for the new leisure centre to be built and operating by the first quarter of 2019. Mr Jepson advised that the review period for the inclusion of a spa had only pushed the completion date back by a month. However, this did not take into account the additional construction time needed for the spa. He added that, whilst the contractor would have ideally been on board at the feasibility stage, this had not been possible for reasons of confidentiality.

In response to Councillor N J Collor who requested that reports for Cabinet meetings be circulated well in advance, the Director of Environment and Corporate Assets (DECA) advised that the intention was to only take decisions to Cabinet when absolutely necessary, with Officers using delegated powers wherever possible. Members were advised that, regrettably, it would not always be possible to publish reports at the same time as the agenda, due to the tight timetable.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

50 LAND ACQUISITION

The DECA advised that draft documents had been exchanged. A further meeting was scheduled for the following week, with a view to concluding matters this month. There were no issues to report.

51 RISKS

Mr Jepson referred Members to the Top Project Risks paper which had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Whilst there were significant risks at this early stage of the project, these would reduce as the project progressed. Planning in particular was a significant risk, with uncertainties surrounding securing planning permission and determining appropriate development contributions - for example, towards improving transport links to the proposed leisure centre site. Until negotiations over land transfer had been concluded, site ownership was another significant risk. The addition of a spa might also potentially affect the building's location and project funding. Initial desktop studies indicated that ground conditions at the Whitfield site were good, but definitive results would be known in a couple of months once investigations were completed. The DECA reassured the Group that Officers were monitoring the risks on a regular basis.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

52 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed that the future meeting dates be noted.

53 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 remainder of the business on the grounds that the items to be considered involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Members were shown plans of the site. Mr Gary Thomason advised that there were three key areas to the new centre, namely the site layout, building design and accessibility/visibility. Subject to Cabinet approval, the location of the spa – adjacent to the wetside pool - had already been agreed since options for this were limited. The 5-a-side pitch had been moved next to the building. The building itself had been moved nearer the roundabout in order to improve visibility and accessibility.

Design work on the spa and the leisure centre itself were being undertaken concurrently in order to avoid any unnecessary delays. There was still more to do but work was continuing apace. The plan was to target money where it would be of most benefit, for example at the entrance to ensure the building had kerb appeal. Work was also being done on making the building easily accessible to people with disabilities, including the use of equipment which could be operated by a disabled person without assistance. Discussions on disabled access had been held with Sport England, and more detail on disabled facilities would be available when the detailed specifications were being drawn up. The DECA added that fortnightly meetings were being held with the consultants to develop and fine-tune designs.

It was agreed that the update be noted.

PROJECT COST

Mr Dean Lucas advised Members that the project costs had not changed, but he was working closely with Mr Thomason in order to track any design changes that were likely to have an impact on costs. It was anticipated that an updated cost estimate would be produced in January. His team would also work with the appointed contractor to finalise the design, costs, etc. In response to the DECA who queried whether there were any cost pressures as a result of the Brexit vote, he advised that the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) was predicting 0% inflation for the next 12 months and 2-3% inflation beyond that. However, a local contractor had reported a 15-20% increase in the cost of imported materials. Mr Lucas stated that there was clearly some uncertainty over inflation forecasts which could be affected locally by the availability of labour. His team was predicting an overall reduction in inflation, from the 7.6% allowed for within the Stage 2 cost plan to between 2 and 3%. Mr Jepson added that it would be interesting to see what the situation was in 8-9 months' time when sub-contractors would be asked to submit prices.

The DECA advised that his team would be looking to bring key design points to the Group for its input. Mr Thomason advised that he was currently concentrating on external and internal materials, finishes, etc, and these would be brought to Members for their views at the appropriate time. He anticipated that he would be in a position to present a virtual tour/images of the building to Members in approximately 6 to 8 weeks' time. Councillor M R Eddy suggested that it would be helpful to present these images to full Council as well in order to win Members over, some of whom were still wedded to a town centre site.

It was agreed: (a) That there should be a standing agenda item on project costs.

(b) That the update be noted.

The meeting ended at 5.52 pm.