

Minutes of the meeting of the **DOVER TOWN CENTRE AND WATERFRONT PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Wednesday, 30 November 2016 at 11.00 am.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor P A Watkins

Councillors: T J Bartlett
P M Beresford
P M Brivio
N J Collor
M R Eddy

Also Present: Councillor B Gardner
Mr Patrick Carter (Baca Architects)
Mr Paul Connelly (Dover Harbour Board)
Mr Richard Coutts (Baca Architects)
Mr Jordan Godden (Godden Gaming Organisation)
Mr Jason Ransley (Dover Harbour Board)

Officers: Head of Inward Investment
Head of Regeneration and Development
Policy and Projects Manager
Democratic Support Officer

1 APOLOGIES

It was noted that there were no apologies for absence.

2 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that there were no substitute members.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest.

4 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Group considered the draft Terms of Reference and agreed that they should be accepted.

5 UPDATE ON DOVER WATERFRONT

The Head of Inward Investment updated Members on the progress made in relation to the Dover Waterfront project. The Group was advised that the waterfront's location offered a unique opportunity to continue the momentum created by the redevelopment of the St James's site. As a result of a competitive tender exercise, a multi-disciplinary grouping of architects, led by WSP/Baca and LDA Design, had been appointed to provide costing and commercial expertise. Baca Architects and LDA were undertaking a baseline study (due to be concluded in January) that would provide a robust basis on which to inform the Masterplan and a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The SPD would provide a clear policy framework for

how the waterfront could be developed, and would be used to support strategic funding bids to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). It was hoped that these agencies, which strongly supported the proposals, would exert political pressure in favour of the scheme.

Mr Richard Coutts (Baca) advised that information acquired through the baseline exercise would be used to create an overarching document that would identify key ideas for the Masterplan. Consultation would take place on the latter, and Members' aspirations and views were sought to inform the document. Drawing from its experience of other waterfront projects, Baca was very familiar with the most innovative initiatives at home and abroad. One of the clear outcomes of this work was the commitment to fully integrate Dover's waterfront with the town centre, creating distinctive foreground buildings and ensuring that there was good connectivity and parking. A cable car linking the castle to the waterfront was being considered, as was a land-bridge to by-pass the A20. The project would be required to align with Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy.

Councillor M R Eddy commented that the fundamental problem with Dover's existing seafront was its isolation from the town centre, caused by the A20. The buildings constructed in Dover since the Second World War had not been built to a high standard and were an amalgamation of styles. Any buildings of merit had not been well maintained, and the street layout of the town was not conducive to connectivity. That said, due to its white cliffs and castle, Dover enjoyed international recognition. Councillor P M Brivio commented that visitors to the town centre did not always realise there was a seafront and better signposting was therefore needed to encourage footfall. She added that Dover's geography, being situated in a valley, did not help. There was agreement that people tended to drive through the town without stopping. This needed to change so that Dover was an exciting place to visit and come back to.

Councillor P Watkins agreed that connectivity, quality and branding were the key issues. Good connectivity from the seafront to the town hall was crucial, as was linkage with Dover Priory railway station. Councillor N J Collor agreed that the A20 was the biggest stumbling block, and suggested that the speed limit along Townwall Street should be reduced. Car parking on the seafront was also a problem. Building a new car park would be expensive and difficult due to archaeology and the need to demolish properties.

Councillor Eddy added that Dover had much to recommend it: the Bronze Age Boat, the largest medieval castle in Britain, the only Roman lighthouse, the Roman Painted House and the largest collection of Napoleonic defences on the Western Heights. The study should pay particular attention to ensuring that these attractions were properly connected to each other and to the town centre. Councillor Watkins stressed that any vision for Dover must be a sustainable vision.

The Head of Regeneration and Development commented that this was a major opportunity to reshape the town and the public's perception of it. The right choices therefore needed to be made. The Gateway building was a particular barrier. Whilst the Council could not do anything about the building, it needed to ask whether, as landowner, it had particular expectations or outcomes it wanted to see.

Mr Jordan Godden advised that a retail impact study had been undertaken to identify which retail areas the Council wished to focus on. Councillor Watkins confirmed that the proposed retail areas should be based on those outlined in red

on the map. The Head of Inward Investment referred to Margate's regeneration as a result of the Turner Gallery. Dover had a head start in that it already had a 'brand' due to the castle, Western Heights, etc. Councillor B Gardner commented that he would like to see the Ladywell area included in the SPD as there were some attractive buildings there, albeit that some were run-down. Whilst some were currently used as shops, it would be good to see them returned to residential accommodation. In response to Councillor Watkins, the Head of Regeneration and Development advised that the SPD could not include areas outside the waterfront area. The designation of central retail areas, hospitality, heritage, etc was a matter for the Local Plan rather than the SPD.

Mr Coutts advised that a number of meetings had recently been held with interested parties, including Highways England, the HCA, Kent County Council, the LEP, Dover's key businesses and the Dover Society. Mr Jason Ransley advised Members that tourism had been one of the key issues highlighted at the meetings. There had been little discussion about employment and the need to attract employers to the district. Other matters arising at the meetings were the need to attract more people to live in the town centre, for example, by making better use of accommodation above shops. It was also recognised that Dover's low land values had hampered investment and regeneration. Car parking capacity in York Street and connections between the east and west of the town had also come up. Reference had been made to the need to dual the A2 to bring more traffic down from the east of the county. Mr Paul Connelly advised that it was Dover Harbour Board's intention to bring Cambridge Terrace forward for residential conversion. However, the terrace was Grade II-listed and there were therefore restrictions on what could be done to the buildings.

In respect of the cable car, Mr Coutts advised that it was a viable proposition which sought to link Dover Castle to the waterfront (with possibly an additional spur to the Western Heights). A meeting had been held with the operators of the Heights of Abraham cable car in Derbyshire, and consultations were underway with Historic England and English Heritage. A report on the scheme was due to be completed by March.

Councillor Collor emphasised the importance of ensuring that the seafront was served by a bus service given that it currently terminated at Pencester Road. Mr Ransley advised that discussions had been held with Stagecoach which had indicated that its ability to serve the seafront depended upon what was done with the A20. It had raised concerns that cheap car parking could potentially undermine the viability of any service provided.

The meeting ended at 1.00 pm.