

Notes of the meeting of the **DOVER BEACON AND DOVER TOWN REGENERATION PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Tuesday, 12 September 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor K Mills

Councillors: C D Zosseder  
T J Bartlett  
M Bates  
D G Beaney  
S H Beer  
E A Biggs  
P M Brivio  
G Cowan  
D R Friend  
S Hill

Also present: Councillor S Jones (Mayor of Dover)  
Ms E Carswell (Faithful and Gould)  
Mr L Brown (Faithful and Gould)  
Mr D Shelley (East Kent College)

Officers: Head of Place and Growth  
Head of Property Assets  
Major Projects and Programme Manager  
Regeneration Delivery Manager  
Project Manager  
Democratic Services Officer

15 APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillor O C de R Richardson and Debbie Spalding from the East Kent Spatial Development Company.

16 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillor D R Friend had been appointed as substitute member for Councillor O C de R Richardson.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

18 NOTES

The notes of the meeting of the Group held on 28 November 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19 MARKET SQUARE UPDATE

Members received a presentation and update on the Market Square. The Major Projects and Programme Manager (MPPM) recapped as follows:

- £3.6 million public realm improvement delivered in collaboration with Dover Town Team and Dover Town Council and officially opened in August 2022
- A pedestrian friendly space with innovative water feature
- Pedestrian counter recorded 193,023 passers-by in October 2022 compared to 40,020 in October 2019
- The first year's maintenance (which came under main contract) has ended, and responsibility transferred to the Council's Property Assets team which is reviewing procedures

Members raised questions about vehicles parking outside the shops and rubbish. The MPPM advised that enforcement officers were regularly patrolling the area to tackle illegal parking. She agreed that there was a design fault with the benches which meant that a litter picker could not get into the curved parts where the benches converged. She reassured Members that all aspects of cleaning would be reviewed when the project's maintenance was handed over to Property Assets.

The Head of Property Assets concurred, adding that it was important for the new features to continue looking as good as they did currently. In response to Councillor T J Bartlett and the Mayor of Dover who queried why the water feature had been turned off during the summer, he advised that the switch-off had coincided with the end of the current maintenance contract and issues identified with the rings which were beginning to rust. The future maintenance and cleaning of the whole area would be reviewed to ensure that essential maintenance was being carried out and value for money was achieved from any new contract.

The MPPM acknowledged that communication with the public about switching the water feature off could have been better. The Head of Place and Growth (HPG) undertook to issue something that week. The Chairman emphasised the importance of communicating with the public and ensuring the maintenance contract was fit for purpose.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and update be noted.

## 20 DOVER FASTRACK UPDATE

The MPPM advised Members in relation to the following:

- New link road between B&Q roundabout and Dover Road south of Guston almost complete
- Bridge over A2; steels lifted into place 14, 15 and 16 July
- Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) of land for link road to Richmond Park completed and construction underway
- Surveys of partially constructed roads within Richmond Park completed
- Consultation on Traffic Regulation Orders to commence soon
- Construction expected to be completed late January/early February 2024
- Bus service to commence early 2024

Councillor M Bates welcomed a good news story for Dover and urged Officers to ramp up their communications strategy, particularly around pricing structure, etc. He suggested that the pedestrian and cycle parts of the scheme could be trialled by residents before the official opening. Councillor S H Beer queried whether the signage by the B&Q roundabout reflected the new completion date. The MPPM advised that Officers were working on a communications policy that would trumpet the new service. Ticket prices would be £3.50 and controlled by the Government until November 2024.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and update be noted.

21 STRATEGIES UPDATE

The HPG advised that engagement on the Cultural Strategy was going well, with 181 young carers, other groups and members of the public consulted. The intention was to present a report to Cabinet in November. The aims of the Strategy, amongst other things, were to:

- Expand the district's events programme
- Improve access to heritage sites
- Reopen Silver Screen Cinema
- Write a Place Plan
- Investigate an Arts and Culture Officer
- Target empty properties
- Establish a new networking group

The Strategy was designed to support the Place Plan, in connection with which there had been a visit to Dover in August by an expert from the High Streets Task Force who was supportive of what the Council was doing. It was acknowledged that a new group was needed to replace the Dover Town Team.

Councillor Beer emphasised the importance of including a digital element to the Strategy to ensure that today's young teenagers who were immersed in digital culture could enjoy what was on offer in a few years' time. She mentioned that Game Base in Dover had recently started engaging with young people with autism. The Mayor of Dover suggested that the photograph of the Bairstow Eves building should be replaced as it was about to become an arts and cultural bar.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and update be noted.

22 DOVER BEACON UPDATE

The Regeneration Delivery Manager (RDM) reported that the RIBA Stage 2 report had been delivered on time, with other milestones approaching thick and fast, such as the contractor package being let (October) and the pre-Planning application (3 October). He advised that the Funky Monkey building had now been demolished. Good links had been established with East Kent College (EKC) and the East Kent Spatial Development Company, tenants of the new building, and Officers were working closely with them.

In response to Councillor Bates, the RDM advised that an exercise to secure tenants for the arts centre, carried out in July, had generated two bids which had been considered by a panel. However, it was felt that neither bid was at a stage where it could be accepted and another exercise would therefore be conducted in November. He confirmed that the bid process had been reviewed to ensure that it was not deterring bidders. In response to Councillor Bates, he advised that there was flexibility around the tenure of leases, but they were likely to be around 25/30 years in length. It was clarified that the lease for EKC had to be a minimum of 125 years in order to secure government funding.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and update be noted.

23 DOVER BEACON DISCUSSION FORUM - DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

The RDM advised that the Council was required by funders to have monthly oversight of the project. It was proposed that a Dover Beacon Discussion Forum should be established to provide this oversight without tying up the Project Advisory

Group (PAG). The Forum would have fewer members and be more informal than the PAG.

RESOLVED: (a) That the draft Terms of Reference be approved

(b) That Councillors Trevor Bartlett and Pam Brivio be appointed to the Forum.

## 24 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

## 25 RIBA (ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS) 2 SIGN-OFF REPORT AND FINANCES

Members received an update from Faithful and Gould on progress with the design and layout of the building which were not final and would be developed further, in consultation with the Council and end-users. Proposals included a flexible learning space within the creative campus that could be used by students and the public.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Beer about the amount of open space, it was explained that the concept was to provide a dual-purpose area to ensure that the building was not 'shut off' after hours or during the summer holidays. The space could be used as a pop-up venue for talks, music, etc which was currently lacking in the town centre. Councillor C D Zosseder supported the concept which reminded her of Warwick University's arts centre which was a popular facility for both students and the public.

In response to questions, the RDM and HPG spoke about the following:

- RIBA Stage 2 - design concept of project, setting out what the building had to do and an outline of what it might look like
- RIBA Stage 3 – sufficiently detailed project to support submission of Planning application (March 2024)
- Flexibility of leases and tenancies - internal walls similar to partitions would permit tenants to expand or make other changes to spaces
- Recognition of building's coastal location and other challenges such as traffic and seagulls, elements that had been factored into the design to ensure appropriate materials were used that would stand the test of time.
- Design team would work with the contractor to achieve savings whilst ensuring quality and practicality were not compromised
- Regular conversations held with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities which was content with project delivery being extended to March 2026
- Dover's project more advanced than others which received funding at same time

Representatives from Faithful and Gould advised that any areas of risk would be included in the contractor tender to ensure that the successful bidder was fully aware and on board with them. This was an interesting site with challenges around archaeology, access, etc. Nevertheless, whilst the project programme was ambitious, it was ahead of where it would normally be at this stage which meant there was time to address any issues that arose.

In response to queries, Members were advised that work was going on behind the scenes in relation to thermal modelling, heating, cooling, acoustics, etc. Mr Dan

Shelley from EKC commented that the creative element of the building was exciting, particularly the ability to offer art and design and digital creative spaces, including provision for adults. The project would support plans to create a triangle of digital excellence in east Kent (at Ashford, Margate and Dover) which would not only deliver educational opportunities but also attract investment and businesses to the area.

RESOLVED: That the RIBA Stage 2 Report be recommended for approval.

The meeting ended at 7.29 pm.