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Notes of the meeting of the **DOVER BEACON AND DOVER TOWN REGENERATION PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Tuesday, 16 April 2024 at 3.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor K Mills

Councillors: T J Bartlett
M Bates
S H Beer
E A Biggs
D R Friend
S Hill
J L Pout

Officers: Regeneration Delivery Manager
Projects and Engagement Coordinator
Project Manager
Democratic Services Officer

26 APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors P M Brivio, G Cowan and O C de R Richardson.

27 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillors J P Pout and D R Friend had been appointed as substitute members for Councillors P M Brivio and O C de R Richardson respectively.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

29 NOTES

The notes of the meeting of the Group held on 12 September 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30 PROJECT UPDATE - SEPTEMBER 2023 TO MARCH 2024

Members received a presentation and project update. The Regeneration Delivery Manager (RDM) advised that, following a mini competition carried out in accordance with the agreed project procurement strategy, the first-stage pre-construction design and build contract (or pre-construction services agreement (PCSA)) had been awarded to Jenner Contractors Ltd by Cabinet on 4 March. The tender process had been overseen by the Council's procurement team and conducted in accordance with national legislation and Contract Procedure Rules.

In response to Councillor E A Biggs, the RDM explained that Atkins Realis had been managing the project before the PCSA but would now act as the Council's employer's agent and protect its interests as Jenners assumed responsibility for the detailed design of the project. The team was working with Jenners on the potential

social value gains of the project, including the use of local supply chains and apprenticeships. He added that the team intended to work with Jenners on maximising construction opportunities that would benefit the town such as improving the public realm, etc.

In respect of procuring tenants for the creative centre, the Project Advisory Group (PAG) was reminded that a marketing exercise in July 2023 had failed to identify a suitable third tenant. A further exercise in November had secured an expression of interest from Screen South, an Arts Council National Portfolio organisation. Turning to funding arrangements, the RDM reminded Members that funding of £18.1 million had come from the government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF) and another £3.2 million from the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF). Match funding of £3.5 million had come from the Council and £650,000 from the tenants (East Kent College and East Kent Spatial Development Company) for fixtures and fittings. With agreement, the deadlines for funding had been extended to March 2026 for the LUF and March 2025 for the FHSF, although a request had been submitted to align the draw-down of funding from both streams to March 2026. The PAG was advised that the design had evolved into a single building to achieve economies of scale and maintenance, etc.

In response to Councillor D R Friend, the RDM gave an update on the café which would initially be a 'grab and go' type facility, with the potential for developing a larger menu and offer later. The idea was that it would attract not only students and creative centre staff but also business occupants and Discovery Centre staff, thus helping to generate income for the building.

The Projects and Engagement Coordinator advised that the planning application had been submitted and a determination was expected on 19 June. The project had been picked up by Kent Online and been generally well publicised. It was anticipated that construction would start on site in late summer. Bi-monthly meetings were held with internal stakeholders to ensure they were fully engaged on the project, and, amongst other things, regular newsletters were issued to update interested parties on construction progress. It was clarified that the name of the new building (The Bench) had come from Bench Street which had been named after an historic customs bench which had once stood in the street.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

31 ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS (RIBA) 3 DESIGN PRESENTATION

The PAG received a presentation from Lee Evans Partnership.

Ms Liz Gibney advised that the location of the building had been pulled away from the corner of the site to reduce the chances of harming whatever archaeology might be below ground and also of finding anything else (relevant given that the Bronze Age Boat had been found nearby). She reported that there had been very constructive engagement with the Council's Principal Heritage Officer and some changes had been made as a result. She clarified that there were several communal areas of the building that could be used by everybody, such as the café and meeting spaces. The aim was for the ground floor to have the wow factor and accessibility, with more access restrictions on the higher floors. Screen South had indicated that there could be 50/60 creative people working in the building which was an exciting prospect. There would be a big studio space for the college on the second floor and options for tenants to 'evolve' within their spaces if necessary.

The third floor would provide teaching spaces and studios within the Creative Campus, and flexible working spaces in the Business Centre.

Councillor Biggs queried how flexible the internal spaces would be and what facilities there were to clean and maintain rooflights and glazed areas. Ms Gibney acknowledged that the building's location by a main road and the coast was challenging. The team had avoided the use of certain materials to reflect Dover's environment, and brick samples had been tested for durability, for example. She confirmed that there were doors that led out onto the roof that would give easy access for cleaning and maintenance. Whilst the flexibility of different spaces varied, the business centre spaces would be extremely versatile. That said, the suspended ceiling was not flexible as services/utilities would be visible if it were moved. There would be a generous floor to ceiling height which made spaces more flexible. The window layout had also been carefully considered. Overall, she confirmed that as much as possible had been removed that could be restricting to users of the spaces.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor S H Beer, Ms Gibney advised that the size of the lift in the Creative Centre had been increased, but the lifts in the other two areas of the building were the standard larger size used in schools, etc. The RDM advised that the first lift could be used to access all floors but undertook to look at things like access fobs and cards to ensure that disabled users were afforded as much independence as possible when moving around the building.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

32 REVIEW OF KEY PROJECT RISKS

Referring to the presentation, the RDM advised that finding archaeological remains was a particularly significant risk. In terms of clarifying tenants' requirements, these were well ahead in relation to East Kent College and the East Kent Spatial Development Company. Room specifications would be signed off by tenants and the Council at the appropriate time to mitigate any risk of not getting tenants' needs and requirements right. In respect of a fire strategy, a fire consultant would be coming on board shortly. There was a need to guard against over-provision as a result of new fire legislation which could lead to an overly cautious approach being taken and thus more expense. It was acknowledged that it was a tight site in the town centre, but any constraints would be mitigated by way of a construction management plan. Turning to services/utilities, the design team was engaging with providers at an early stage as this aspect of build projects could take a good deal of time. He was aware that UK Power Networks would be upgrading the existing sub-station behind the museum.

Councillor Biggs mentioned the construction management plan, specifically the traffic congestion issues that gridlocked the town during the summer and how each could affect the other. The RDM advised that the contractors' compound would be situated at Stembrook Place, 150 metres away from the site so there should be no problems with deliverability. In relation to the A20, there would be a temporary closure of Mill Lane and the main deliveries would come straight off the A20. Discussions with Kent County Council and National Highways about how the closure would work were ongoing.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

33 NEXT STEPS AND MILESTONES

The Project Manager advised that the next report to the LUF was due soon. The LUF was happy that things were on track and that every milestone had been achieved. Discussions had been held with the FHSF about the underpass and cycle routes, and National Highways and KCC were being consulted on lighting.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

34 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that a date would be confirmed.

35 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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

36 REVIEW OF DELIVERY AGAINST PROGRAMME

Ms Carswell assured Members that overall progress remained on track. The team had worked closely with the Council's Planners to ensure that all milestones were being met. Regular meetings were held with tenants, and the team was currently focusing on the RIBA Stage 4 design.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

37 REVIEW OF RIBA 3 COST PLAN AGAINST BUDGET

Members received an update on costs against budget.

RESOLVED: The Project Advisory Group acknowledged the potential for cost overruns and, given the stage that the project had reached, recommended that Cabinet satisfies itself that there is a robust plan in place prior to signing off the RIBA Stage 3 report, and that other key risks have been looked at and mitigations established.

The meeting ended at 4.31 pm.