

NOTES OF THE TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION BOARD

27th January 2016

Attending: Cllr Gerry Clarkson (Chair)
Cllr Graham Galpin
Cllr Noel Ovenden
Cllr Neil Shorter

John Bunnett – JB
Tracey Kerly – TK
Andrew Osborne – AO
Jo Fox – JF
Charlotte Hammersley – CH
Stewart Smith – SS
Steve Parish – SP
Dean Spurrell – DS
Richard Alderton – RA
Amy Lillington
Ashton West
Rosie Reid – minutes

<p>1. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Cllr Clarkson made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Director of A Better Choice for Property Ltd.</p> <p>Councillor Shorter made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Director of Kent Play Clubs and A Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd.</p> <p>John Bunnett made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Director of A Better Choice for Property Ltd and A Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd. He also declared an interest in respect of the Conningbrook Site item, but the Board agreed that that it was not necessary for him to leave the room for the discussion. It was considered that there would be no conflict of interest as it was only an update that was being provided.</p> <p>Tracey Kerly made a Voluntary Announcement that she was a Director of A Better Choice for Property Ltd.</p>	
<p>2. Notes of the Meeting held on 16th December 2015</p> <p>The Notes of the Meeting held on 16th December 2015 were agreed as a correct record.</p>	

3. Update Report on Prioritised Projects

a) The Commercial Quarter

SS introduced the Update Report and ran through the information relating to the Commercial Quarter. Councillor Galpin advised that he had received a letter from the one of the tenants indicating that they may wish to request an extension to the lease. The Board agreed that an extension was not desirable as it would delay development of the digital hub. SS to explain to the tenant and look separately at their terms of tenancy in Park Mall.

SS
SS

The Board noted that Recommendation 6.1.3 of the Update Report should refer to Ashford Youth Theatre. The Board also noted that the funding requested under recommendation 6.1.4 of the Update Report was already in the budget and allocated from committed funds for this project.

b) Conningbrook

SS ran through the Update Report. He confirmed that he had been advised that agreement between the landowner and residential developer would be concluded in February. In response to a question on Recommendation 6.1.5 of the Update Report, SP advised that the Employers Agent would act as a project overseer in legal and planning terms. He confirmed that whoever was appointed for the role would have appropriate professional indemnity. He would also ensure that an individual surveyor was appointed to avoid ransom strip risk. JB confirmed that the £20,000 funding would come from new funds. NS stressed the need for independent valuation advice in relation to the pub/hotel offer.

c) Elwick Place

JB went through the Update report and advised that the hotel lease had been signed and negotiations with the cinema operator were progressing well. Agreements with the eateries were also nearing conclusion. Under the Council's lease with the developer it would be agreed that the Council would pay rent for use of the car park but retain income from the parking spaces. Income figures were based on assumptions extrapolated from other locations in town, such as the Vicarage Lane car park. JF explained that much of the car parking income was from short stay fees and the Council was keen to encourage this kind of usage..

d) Northdown House

SS went through the Update report and the Board agreed that it was undesirable for this key property to remain vacant.

Resolved:

i. That the Board as an amendment to the previously agreed

Phase 1 Commercial Quarter Office Build approve to the freehold transfer of the smaller parcel of land identified in Plan B, rather than that identified in Plan A, on the same terms as previously agreed and also to the long leasehold disposal (999 years at a peppercorn rent) of the land identified on Plan C on the condition that this land is leased only for the purpose of car parking and that a right is reserved to the Council to develop the land for additional car parking should it so wish at any point during the term of the lease.

- ii. That the Board approve the service of notice on Ashford Youth Theatre to terminate the lease of the premises it occupies on Dover Place on 3 May 2016 and no sooner so as not to jeopardise the Youth Theatre's performances scheduled for March/April 2016.**
- iii. That the Board approve the spend of up to £50,000.00 on the demolition of Ashford Youth Theatre and surrounding ancillary structures and buildings once vacant possession is secured.**
- iv. That the Board approve the spend of up to £25,000 on professional fees in respect of works to be carried out in relation to the development of both the Ashford Furniture Gateway site (Ashford Digital Hub) and the Ashford Youth Theatre site (Ashford Goods Yard).**
- v. That the Board approve the appointment of an Employers Agent to act in respect of the works required at Conningbrook at a cost of no more than £20,000 per year over two years.**
- vi. That the Board agree to enter in to a 25 year and 3 month lease with the developer for the public car park within the Elwick Road site on the basis of Heads of Terms to be agreed.**
- vii. That, in relation to the Elwick Rd development, the Board note the due diligence required to be carried out to consider the viability of acquiring the freehold investment of both the commercial and residential parts of the development and of providing capital finance and that the Board delegate to the Head of Corporate Property and Projects the authority to appoint consultants necessary to carry out the due diligence required at a spend of up to £50,000. The findings from that due diligence together with full financial modelling is to be reported back to the Board once completed.**
- viii. That the Board are reminded of the need for the Chief Executive in consultation the Leader to use his delegations to acquire the land from KCC which is required to facilitate**

<p>both the Elwick Road and Commercial Quarter projects.</p> <p>ix. That the Board review the position in relation to Northdown House</p>	
<p>4. Land at Riverside Close, Kingsnorth and the Principle of Giving Land to Parish Councils</p> <p>SS introduced the report, which he said dealt with 2 issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the general principle of the Council gifting land to Parish Councils; • the Council had recently identified land at Kingsnorth for housing purposes. However, the land had subsequently been designated as a village green, which had suffocated any plans to develop there. This report requested whether the Council was content to pass over the land to Kingsnorth Parish Council, who wished to take over the maintenance and upkeep of the village green. <p>The Board considered that parish residents would benefit from the Parish Council managing the land, and agreed that the land could be rented to the Parish Council at a nominal rent, with a break clause in the event of the land becoming redesignated.</p> <p>The Board agreed that each application from Parish Councils should come to the Board and be judged on its individual merits.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <p>i) That the land at Riverside Close be leased to KPC for 99 years at a peppercorn rent, that use be restricted to public amenity use in keeping with its designation as a village green and that there should be a landlord only break clause exercisable in the event that the land ever loses village green status. There should also be a requirement to maintain the land to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council.</p> <p>ii) That any Parish Council application to acquire small recreational rural areas should come before the Board for consideration on a case-by-case basis.</p>	
<p>5. Update of The British Volunteer Pub</p> <p>JB advised that the British Volunteer Pub had come onto the market. The Council had given some consideration to its potential for use as a short-term accommodation unit, but had decided not to pursue the matter further as the Council's main focus was on the Big 8.</p>	
<p>6. Update on the Grounds Maintenance Depot Purchase</p> <p>SS said that a suitable piece of land had been identified, and meetings with the owner would take place shortly.</p>	

7. ABC Project Management Programme

CH introduced this item. She said she had been tasked with developing a programme to deliver the Council's priorities, and she was in discussions with officers to determine key projects and resources. She considered that more rigour was needed regarding project development in the Council, and she intended to introduce more structure, discipline and consistency into the method of selection of competing projects. She proposed using a Project Initiation Document to assist with preparatory thinking ahead of decisions.

Queries concerning these minutes? Please contact Rosie Reid:
Telephone: 01233 330565 Email: rosie.reid@ashford.gov.uk
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: www.ashford.gov.uk/committees