

Cheltenham Development Task Force Board Meeting

Item 42/13 (i)

Friday 26th April 2013 - 2.00pm – 4:30 pm
Pittville Room, Municipal offices, Cheltenham

Open Minutes of meeting

Present: Graham Garbutt (Independent Chair)
 Stephen Clarke
 Simon Excell
 Cllr Rob Garnham
 Bernice Thomson
 Robert Duncan
 Michael Ratcliffe
 Cllr Steve Jordan
 Ross Simmonds – sub for Andrew Vines
 Diane Savory
 David Oldham
 Andrew North
 Andrew Willetts

Other: Wilf Tomaney
 Howard Barber
 Jeremy Williamson
 Richard Cornell
 Andrew Hieron

No.	Item	Action
21/13	<p>Apologies: Cllr Andrew McKinlay, Andrew Vines, Dorian Wragg, Amanda Lawson-Smith, Mark Sheldon, David Roberts, Sarah Pullen, Nigel Riglar, Chris Riley, Cllr Chas Fellows and Cllr Antonia Noble</p> <p>It was highlighted that neither Cllr Fellows or Cllr Noble would be standing for re-election in early May.</p>	
	GG welcomed Ross Simmonds (English Heritage) who was subbing for Andrew Vines.	
22/13	Declarations of Interest - none	
23/13	<p>Minutes of previous meeting. Following amendments were noted</p> <p>Open minutes from 25/01/13</p> <p>Page 5 (para 4): Cllr SJ hoped the poor condition of paving on the High Street could be clarified now works had been completed. It was reported that Chris Riley was initially carrying out a 're-fresh' trial at the front entrance to M&S before rolling out further improvement works.</p> <p>Page 2 07/13.2: SC pointed out that it is Stephen Hammond, not Philip Hammond.</p> <p>Page 3 (para 2): Cllr SJ flagged up 'JSC' should read 'JCS'.</p> <p>Confidential minutes from 25/01/13</p> <p>Page 2: Cllr SJ left at 4pm not 3pm</p> <p>Both sets of minutes were otherwise approved as accurate.</p>	
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<p>24/13</p>	<p>Action Matrix and Matters Arising Items were either actioned, on the agenda or updated as follows:</p> <p>04/13 Extended shop opening hours – from MR research findings, six towns comparable with Cheltenham all opened until 8pm on Thursday's pre-Christmas. The tendency was for only shopping centres within those towns to open late on Thursdays and in Bath, Bristol, Gloucester and Swindon they opened generally until 7pm or 8pm. Oxford's M&S stayed open until 7pm every evening, which could spark direct competition if retail shops within the Brewery did likewise based largely on the social aspect of the site. DS acknowledged that as typical activity for a destination place such as the cinema, but that it would be difficult to achieve until the Brewery re-invented itself. MR felt it would take a concerted effort and investment to publicise late night opening in that area, but that the Chamber did not have the necessary reserves.</p> <p>Cllr RG flagged having raised this issue some time ago that the market was those people that worked in town, walking home early evening that would benefit from late night opening.</p> <p>JW agreed the Brewery held the key due to the fact that it already has an evening economy and that local retail could benefit from this when the new development is delivered.</p> <p>10/13 Pedestrianised promenade design RD had previously raised the issue of reducing a number of bollards from the scheme which HB confirmed to be considering.</p> <p>11/13 Business Plan High Street repairs and upgrade works; Chris Riley has reported that works are scheduled to be undertaken with an initial trial in the M&S area.</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	
<p>25/13</p>	<p>Confirmation of confidentiality of items – agreed.</p>	
<p>Matters for Information</p>		
<p>26/13</p>	<p>Business plan update JW confirmed having taken the 2013-15 business plan to Cabinet and had circulated a copy of the Executive Decision Notice taken by Cabinet on 12th March 2013. This had been reported in the Echo led by Cllrs McKinlay & Rawson.</p> <p>The next step was therefore to tease out the key priorities in readiness for the coming financial and budget setting round. JW suggested setting up a sub-group chaired by Mark Sheldon to best achieve this.</p>	<p>JW to co-ordinate</p>

	<p>GG was keen to ensure the Task Force took an overview of priorities and was clear about timescales fitting in with the Council's priorities. Cllr RG, RD and GG volunteered themselves for the sub-group.</p> <p>Members endorsed the proposal and that a report would be brought back to the next Task Force meeting on 26th July to agree target priorities for the forthcoming budgetary round.</p>	
27/13	<p>Local Enterprise Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloucestershire Infrastructure Investment Fund – GIIF DS reported that since the budget the Government had supported 81 of the 89 Heseltine report recommendations which had put the LEP in the spotlight in terms of how they will be taking forward growth plans, with input from others. The LEP were currently considering how to galvanise bids for Gloucestershire, which now required a degree of urgency. • Growing Places Over £8m funding was available, of which £3m had been agreed for a project at Lydney. A further sum was to be considered for the Cinderford spine road project at the next Board meeting in May, leaving just over £2m available. • Retail Pathfinder A successful event had taken place in Gloucester Quays, where there had been some interesting discussions around the night-time economy. The Government had given the LEP £250k as resource for the next two years. 	
28/13	<p>Wider matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Core Strategy Cllr SJ had received a county-wide growth statement, indicating potential growth sectors. Related census information was being interpreted by Cambridge Econometrics in trying to reach a preferred option as soon as possible; ideally by the first week of September. <p>MR asked if there was any chance initial views could be released as a piece of research? Cllr SJ believed the 'Assess Need' stage would have to take place beforehand, hopefully determined by a Member Steering Group by the end of June/early September. The aim was to publish both reports at once.</p> <p>RD feared that if the situation starts to drag developers would try to promote a position in advance. Cllr RG raised concerns about the commercially sensitive nature the discussion maybe heading towards and the possible need for him to withdraw to avoid a conflict of interest. AN gave an assurance that everything spoken so far was in the public domain and that there was lots of evidence on the Council's website that people could read for themselves.</p> <p>AN suggested that if MR or any other Board members had specific questions and concerns they might want to arrange to meet with him or a member of his team outside the meeting.</p>	

	<p>In terms of vulnerability to developers AN explained that currently the green belt was protected by the NPPF so the aim was to get the plan through before that status falls away. He acknowledged however that when the preferred options document goes to the three Councils in September there will be a political risk. GG queried if a statement and timetable for the process was on the Council's website, which AN confirmed it was.</p> <p>Cllr SJ flagged up that Council on 7th September had been earmarked for document sign-off so it can then go out to consultation. GG questioned whether the Task Force should take a view that could be fed into the consultation process, and therefore whether an ad-hoc meeting should be scheduled to meet that timetable. If agreed AN felt it would increase credibility, but would still require public examination before it carries full weight. Cllr RG stressed that prematurity was not a reason for refusal and that it would be up to the Inspector to decide how much credibility counts.</p> <p>It was agreed that depending on the JCS timetable there may be need for an ad-hoc Task Force meeting to be set up before the next scheduled meeting on 26th July, in order to reflect the views of the Task Force on the JCS proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Junction 10 SE explained that a meeting had taken place earlier in the month at which the County, Districts and JMP?? were represented, when it was agreed to pursue a business case for an all movements junction. GCC would lead on the fee proposals and Atkins would be preparing a brief in readiness for a full study this Summer. <p>The bridge repair works issue is still on-going, but the intention is to now complete the work without needing to fully close the A4019. Weekend operation and partial road closures may still be required but the whole situation was looking much more positive. The work is scheduled to start on 13th September and meetings with the Highways Agency take place monthly. SE would keep the Task Force updated.</p> <p>RD highlighted the need for there being some kind of tie between the LEP trying to provide economic development opportunities and linkages with the JCS. Cllr SJ explained that the preferred option will determine if the proposed junction improvement work goes ahead or not, as both are inter-related. DS stressed how the growth element would impact on funding for Junction 10. SE explained that the benefit cost ratio would be the critical factor in securing Highways Agency / central govt funding.</p>	<p>SE</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gloucestershire Local Transport Body JW confirmed having submitted a bid which the Chamber of Commerce and RD had helped drive through. Out of 20 bids, 17 were still in the frame but that figure may fall to circa 15. Of the initial 20 bids, 3 were railway focussed. JW gave a brief resume of the content and measures incorporated within the document, flagging up that during 1997/98 731,388 passenger journeys were made from the station compared to 1,812,624 in 2011/12, but during that 15 years there had been no change in facilities at the station. JW reported on a positive meeting with Network Rail and the need to focus on a preferred option. This would require some funding to undertake the technical drawings required – CBC and LSTF had offered some match funding and it was hoped that rail operating companies might match this as necessary in order to develop a round two bid which will need to be submitted by 10th May. SE confirmed the approval of £5k from the LSTF had been granted that morning. JW explained that the Local Transport Body were looking at 17 bids, which meant £15m would be allocated between 2015-19 (ie £4m/pa) so anticipated the number of successful bids would be limited.. SC felt Cheltenham’s case could be strengthened by the use of numbers. JW confirmed that Network Rail had given him permission to access their data for use in developing a second round bit. A key factor is that Cheltenham needs bi-directional platforms to improve its service. MR explained the actual cost to Network Rail for delay caused by the existing arrangement was substantial (ie: every 8-10 minute delay caused by trains having to cross over equated to £40k / hr). On a separate matter, MR explained how the Edinburgh College were running a competition to identify fuel efficient transport links and the Chamber’s application for a medium light rail link from the Honeybourne Line to the Racetrack has come sixth in the first round of judging, so stood a chance of winning first prize worth £50k. 	
Matters for consideration		

<p>29/13</p>	<p>Junction Efficiency Trial</p> <p>In absence of Chris Riley, AH explained how a 3 week trial had taken place in November 2012, unfortunately delayed by emergency sewer works in Bath Road. The outcome was generally positive, but the statistics produced showed journey times to be much the same as before, which meant that a scheme would not score well in any GCC priority assessment. JW had circulated with the supporting papers a copy of the motion taken at Council on 25th March which he felt accurately reflected the outcome of the study. GG stressed the difference between the data and the perception of the public and questioned what methodology had been put in place for capturing public opinion. AH explained that it had been achieved through a collation of incoming calls and requests; no survey as such.</p> <p>GG queried whether the average times being monitored included the rush hour. AH confirmed that monitoring had taken place during mornings and afternoon's but that the timings in the morning had been peak time between 8-10am.</p> <p>RD pointed out that with 7 other sets of traffic lights operating outside the trial area inevitably journey times were unlikely to increase. SC felt the whole run of lights, 12 sets in total between Tewkesbury Road and College Road needed to be synchronised to make a difference. Cllr RG confirmed having benefited from the trial coming in from Bishops Cleeve.</p> <p>GG questioned if the County's recommendation had now been made. Cllr SJ sought clarity as to whether a scheme would go ahead if funding could be found. SE explained that in its current guise the scheme trialled would not score well so was very low down in terms of funding. Therefore in terms of a permanent solution he felt the Task Force should be talking to the developer for North Place about focusing on specific areas in the vicinity that would benefit from network improvements afforded through S106 negotiations. A revised scheme that takes on board the recommendations shown could then be put forward with the developer's money, as explicitly the conclusion to the trial undertaken was that no benefit had been derived in terms of reduced congestion or improved travel times.</p> <p>JW stressed that whilst this was fair comment, the Task Force had been asking for a trial during the previous 18 months in order that they could negotiate with the developer for North Place / Portland Street when S106 negotiations were taking place. However, due to delays in implementing the trial, this had not been possible, so the developers had agreed changes via S106 outside North Place but these did not include changes to the signal junctions.</p> <p>As planning permission for North Place / Portland Street was approved on 20th February there had been a lost opportunity. It was difficult to go back to the developer now for further S106 monies. SE explained how he regularly re-negotiated S106's so JW should not rule that approach out. Alternatively he could not see a problem in linking the improvements trial to other development sites within the town centre. JW requested SE to provide a cost for</p>	
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	<p>negotiating S106 funding but SE advised that the remit for the report had not included that element.</p> <p>RD suggested the trial area should be extended and SC thought a modelling exercise would help determine traffic loads.</p> <p>WT asked if network improvements were still part of the overall development process that a message be passed onto the Highways Development Management Team whose preferred option would be the removal of traffic lights. He felt it would be useful if instruction could be given by the County to pursue that aim. AN queried if there would be potential for part funding through the LSTF, to improve traffic flows around Cheltenham when Boots Corner works had been completed.</p> <p>GG noted that the Task Force did not wish to let go the idea of finding a partial solution. SE stressed however it should not be led by the County as they had already completed their brief which was to commission Atkins, and not to provide costings for a revised scheme. GG asked SE to confirm however that the report being considered had been a report to the County from Atkins. SE explained that Atkins had been funded by a 3rd party to carry out the trial; therefore no money to date had been put into a scheme. GG stressed the merit of joint working but wanted to clarify where the next decision would be made, as presumably the County still needed to make their response. He noted that the Borough Council had unanimously approved a resolution supporting the project and felt that the county Council would want the opportunity to consider the strength of opinion in Cheltenham. SE stressed that he would only end up repeating what had been stated already at the next meeting, so suggested the Task Force Board should write to the County.</p> <p>As a point of clarity JW highlighted that under item 6.1 of Atkins' report it referred to a software issue that needed to be addressed by GCC and Atkins, and could not see therefore how a 3rd party would be able to undertake that work as it was an in-house issue. SE stressed that the point was to inform future development, but JW believed that related to item 6.3 only. Action: SE to take back for further clarity with Chris Riley.</p> <p>Cllr SJ suggested a meeting to specifically look at this particular issue might prove useful. He understood the funding issue but wanted to be clear that if the County were supportive of a scheme that met their recommendations, and funding could be found, that the County would consider a revised scheme proposal. SE agreed that was so.</p> <p>GG wanted to ensure the process could continue and outlined that Cllr SJ/AN were best placed to take the matter forward as suggested. Agreed that SJ will take forward.</p>	<p>GG</p> <p>SE</p> <p>Cllr SJ</p>
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The public part of the meeting concluded at this point