

Cheltenham Development Task Force Board Meeting

Friday 25th January 2013 - 2.00pm – 4:30 pm
Pittville Room, Municipal offices, Cheltenham

Item 23/13 (i)

Open Minutes of meeting

Present: Graham Garbutt (Independent Chair)
Stephen Clarke
Cllr Andrew McKinley
Cllr Rob Garnham
Bernice Thomson
Robert Duncan
Michael Ratcliffe
Cllr Steve Jordan
Andrew Vines
Diane Savory – from 3.00pm
David Oldham
Dorian Wragg
Andrew North

Other: Amanda Lawson-Smith
Wilf Tomaney
Howard Barber
Jeremy Williamson
Mark Sheldon
Richard Cornell
Andrew Hieron
David Roberts
Jeff Brinley

| No. | Item | Action |
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| 01/13 | Apologies: Sarah Pullen, Andrew Willetts, Nigel Riglar, Chris Riley, Cllr Chas Fellows and Cllr Antonia Noble GG welcomed Jeff Brinley now on the Risk & Accountabilities Group, plus Andrew Hieron and Richard Cornell from GCC to the meeting. | |
| 02/13 | Declarations of Interest - none | |
| 03/13 | Minutes of previous meeting (12/10/12) – the minutes were approved for accuracy. Matters Arising – Open Minutes Item 74/12 - to clarify a query raised about Buchanan’s being “unable to support a trial which needed to cater for vulnerable users” – JW explained that Buchanan’s scheme had not catered sufficiently for vulnerable needs leaving the County to adopt a revised scheme more focussed on perceived risks. Item 75/12 (page 4) - AL-S commented that Richard Cornell (RC), not Andrew Hieron (AH) was heading up the LSTF team. AH was leading on the Boots Corner scheme. | |
| 04/13 | Action Matrix and Matters Arising Items were either actioned, on the agenda or updated as follows: | |

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| | <p>78/12 Town centre co-ordination group – MR updated on discussions at the Chamber concerning late opening opportunities. MR referred to an email response from Martin Quantock expressing strong resistance from retailers about late night opening except for Thursday evenings in December. Previous attempts to extend opening hours during the year had proved unsuccessful. There was however an appetite to extend Sunday opening hours. GG suggested MR might pursue that idea by enquiring about late night opening in Bath or other similar towns</p> | MR |
| 05/13 | <p>Confirmation of confidentiality of items – agreed. The Chair felt it was appropriate to move item 6/13 down the agenda to enable Diane Savory to have joined the meeting, and to also move item 9/13 under ‘confidential items’ as data relating to the trial had not yet been considered by GCC Cabinet Members.</p> | |
| Matters for Information | | |
| 06/13 | <p>Local Enterprise partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloucestershire Infrastructure Investment Fund – GIIF • Retail pathfinder <p>Item deferred to allow attendance of Diane Savory.</p> | |
| 07/13 | <p>Wider Matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint Core Strategy - Cllr SJ updated on the current position by explaining the process being undertaken to assess housing needs and the assumption that household size would go down but actually remained static. JCS had contracted Cambridge University to provide a report which would be discussed at Steering Group next week. LEP and Glos First undertaking economic work to identify target areas. Further public consultation around the preferred option would take place late Spring. • Junction 10 of the M5 – Cllr SJ started his update by stressing that Junction 10 was he believed the only M5 junction that was not a four way junction. He explained how the Highways Agency had initially announced a year long closure of the bridge for repair works costing £13m. There was no HA funding for a four way junction to go in, but a possibility that the JCS could help fund that work, although repairs would be done this calendar year so timescales were tight. TBC's Chief Executive, Mike Dawson had scheduled a meeting later in the month to determine various options which may not be possible to co-ordinate in time. LEP would look at trying to help fund and Mike Dawson was leading on pulling together an immediate response. JW confirmed that MP Laurence Robertson was lobbying Minister Philip Hammond on the issue and had a further appointment to see the Minister and was trying to get as much support from Cheltenham and Tewkesbury to drive the issue forward. <p>In relation to maintenance of the bridge AL-S confirmed discussions between the HA and GCC had taken place but final costs had not yet been determined. JW explained that Laurence Robertson's office was also pushing for information on costs. RD highlighted the difficulty meanwhile for the JCS to determine household numbers prior to the outcome of Junction 10. GG believed the LEP should be putting together a formal</p> | |

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| | <p>business case to take to Government with support of interested bodies.</p> <p>AL-S stressed that Junction 10 was outside the County's Major Scheme Plan not purely due to cost but because it was not a County road.</p> <p>GG asked if the Group wished to put representation forward, although AN confirmed there would be representation from CBC. Cllr AMc felt that representation from the Task Force could helpfully provide a coherent and co-ordinated voice, but that the future economic viability of the situation lay behind the JSC.</p> <p>AL-S welcomed pressure to help get sight of the full report which was needed before any pre-application discussions with developers about north/west Cheltenham could take place. GG would aim to add weight to the debate on behalf of the Task Force and asked AL-S to provide some content that he could incorporate in a letter of representation from the Group.</p> | AL-S |
| | Matters for consideration | |
| 08/13 | <p>Local Sustainable Transport Fund</p> <p>RC explained how the key objectives of the LSTF programme for Cheltenham would jointly promote economic growth whilst reducing traffic congestion and carbon emissions. The catalyst for these aims was by developing and promoting travel planning initiatives with residents, businesses and schools eg encouraging use of local shops and services. £4.9m was the total programme cost which they were also using to promote a pedestrian signage strategy and updating 70km of cycling routes with signs about distance to destinations. Bus shelters on the Promenade were being improved and using the fact that bus route 10 has new vehicles as an opportunity to promote trying to use buses as an alternate mode of transport.</p> <p>Personalised travel planning would be introduced and the County would be targeting over 20,000 households in Cheltenham to encourage them to explore other options of travel; an effective way to reduce traffic and hopefully reduce car use by 10% over the total length of the project.</p> <p>In relation to working with workplaces, GCHQ had been very successful and six local schools were promoting cycling. The County's car sharing scheme would also to be re-launched.</p> <p>The above-mentioned campaigns were all being introduced through the LSTF tied in with the works to Boots Corner.</p> <p>SC cited a recent parking improvement scheme that the County had implemented, but criticised the lack of joined up thinking as although parking in Bath Road had improved the situation for cyclists had deteriorated; cyclists were now being forced into the main stream of traffic. With buses now being infrequent, and Cheltenham not being easy to cycle round, SC felt these issues needed jointly resolving.</p> <p>RC stressed that the LSTF programme spanned all modes of</p> | |

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| | <p>transport so focuses on all road users. Work was therefore being done to promote better awareness of cycling, but noted SC's area of concern.</p> <p>GG suggested the County might introduce a similar mechanism to the pot hole website reporting facility for cyclists to report cycling related issues. RC would investigate. GG also questioned what would the County do to find good cycle routes. RC was re-issuing their key cycling route map showing proposed changes around Boots Corner, meanwhile they were investigating Google for on-line journey planners which are being developed alongside other similar websites. SC flagged up that in London defined cycle routes are recommended amongst the quieter streets; keeping cyclists out of traffic. RC was aiming at making cycling a different experience, so would make sure both mainstream and quieter routes were catered for.</p> <p>WT was working with RC on a suite of maps similar in style for bus, cycle and pedestrian routes and was looking to integrate cycle signage along cycle routes. GCC were talking to consultants Placemarque about bus and cycle mapping so both being addressed. A workshop was held on 21.1.13 on pedestrian signage following a previous session with stakeholders and the LSTF team, so mapping existing cycle routes will be done as part of the work he's doing.</p> <p>WT explained that the proposed lettering and colouring for the information boards being planned would help the visually impaired. The main focus was on signing for the town centre initially and then developing it for the suburbs. The preferred ordering of destinations was still to be determined. By the end of the Placemarque project the whole of the town would be mapped.</p> <p>GG felt the current mapping proposal reflects north/south access, so suggested encouraging people east/west. WT explained an odd stretching of the map was due to the railway, racecourse and other out of town locations needing to be covered. Trailing something in Bath Road as the neighbourhood element was dependant on the LSTF budget.</p> <p>BT felt it was important to determine what the reasoning was for signage, ie is it aimed at shoppers, entertainment, and historians? WT stressed it was not intended as an historic interpretation board, just mapping for the benefit of residents, shoppers and visitors alike. The tendency historically had been to focus on visitors too much.</p> <p>SC asked what street furniture would be removed to ensure views of the town centre weren't cluttered more than at present. WT was aware of that problem and would plan positioning of the new maps carefully. JW raised the issue of long term maintenance and cited the glass panel design used in Oxford which can be installed on a chosen viewing platform, but still needs a long term budget for maintenance. GG felt some of the displays were very high, which wheelchairs users might struggle with. HB acknowledged the issue and would consider.</p> <p>Design concepts for Boots Corner/Imperial Circus</p> | <p>Diane Savory arrived 2:50pm</p> |
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| | <p>HB provided the Group with an interesting update, stressing that Boots Corner was the LSTF's main focus from an urban design perspective. Public Realm improvements (phases 1& 2) had been completed with phase 3 planned later this year.</p> <p>Improvements to the area covering St Mary's Churchyard, the pedestrianised area of the Promenade and Boots Corner are critical in freeing up Boots Corner towards the High Street. A co-ordinated approach was being taken to the proposed treatments around the Brewery development and the wider context of the High Street in order to link everything to the Boots Corner scheme. A conceptual context of the Boots Corner scheme was about joining the medieval character with the regency part of the town. HB confirmed that a pallet of both materials and colours had been chosen and would be applied as a unified treatment. It was also planned to have tree linkages and bring in a high quality space between Imperial Circus and St Mary's churchyard which could be used by markets. Whilst looking at conceptual views of the scheme GG highlighted the importance of the view of the bank building from the High Street.</p> <p>The next stage would entail a joint presentation with Highways on several options on the public realm element of the scheme for consultation and feedback on different proposals. As cost is a key parameter HB would not be raising aspirations. SC felt it was important to find a way of providing identifying characteristics within the design, especially along the High Street which the clock above Specsavers currently provides.</p> <p>Cllr SJ was happy with the coherent approach but raised concerns about the condition of pavement from High Street to Boots Corner and on into the Strand, which would be highlighted once the Regent Arcade entrance works are completed. He felt the designers need to understand the worst bit of the existing fabric. GG asked AL-S to escalate that factor in the funding bid. AL-S stressed the County had the cost of materials covered, and that a process was in place to avoid poor maintenance recurring in future; no top-up from CBC required.</p> <p>BT felt it was important to enhance both the quality and definition of the High Street and agreed with HB about differentiating between the medieval and regency elements of the town. HB confirmed there was a 5 year license on the market space and that there was potential for extending it along the High Street.</p> <p>GG asked the Group to consider the information HB had provided. JW felt it was mainly about timescales, co-ordinating activities and communicating with the public.</p> <p>AH provided a brief update on Boots Corner from the County's perspective. He explained his position as Project Manager at Gloucestershire Highways and that he was looking at interim traffic management works to deliver the scheme. An update handout was circulated.</p> | |
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| | <p>AH stressed that the HA were looking to eliminate overspends where possible but that a number of issues to do with prohibitions and exemptions need to be resolved before a public exhibition could take place.</p> <p>He was currently working towards an exhibition starting in mid May until the start of June, allowing 28 days TRO consultation, so that issues could be resolved before Christmas to ensure Christmas trade is protected.</p> <p>AH was confident the issues were resolvable, but that potential answers to questions were needed in order to provide a robust argument. AH was currently looking into rising bollards and camera enforcement as possible enforcement solutions.</p> | |
| <p>10/13</p> | <p>Design Concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>• Pedestrianised Promenade</p> <p>HB had previously explained the assessment process for the area and the proposed condition of tree pits as sweepers could not avoid exposed tree routes being protected properly. As the tree roots protrude above ground level tree pits are required to avoid trip hazards. What HB was proposing would be easy to maintain and would reduce the amount of street clutter for visual clarity. The proposed tree protection pits with combined seating would be made from highly polished concrete and would enhance the character of the space. HB showed images of previously raised beds in that area that had set the precedence of his design. RD questioned whether the raised tree pits would come out far enough to enable the demarcation bollards to be removed? HB would investigate whether they could be extended to define the strengthened part of the pedestrianised area which vehicles use.</p> <p>• St. Mary's churchyard</p> <p>BT explained how at the last meeting the Town Centre Co-ordination Group had put together a small working group who would work on improvements to the Churchyard. The group comprised a number of CBC officers, ie community protection, tree and green environment plus Friends of St Mary's, a representative from the Drugs Agency and Ward Councillors. The group had met for a second time and had come up with a list of issues such as entrances, planting and car parking which needed to be addressed.</p> <p>HB/WT gave a short presentation which demonstrated their thoughts to date. Finding sufficient funding would be key to any works progressing but now the Art Gallery & Museum are involved with the working group HB was looking into possible art related funding amongst other possible funding sources.</p> <p>The most significant problem to overcome related to car parking within the curtilage of the church grounds. BT and HB would be meeting with the Friends of the Parochial Council, Rector Tudor Griffiths and Natalie Hill from the Diocese on 7th February to look at ways to overcome the problem. HB clarified that the only right</p> | <p>HB</p> |

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| | <p>of way was via the adopted footpaths.</p> <p>HB gave a brief insight into the proposed design of project, which was based around the Grade 1 Listed Building which was once opened to the High Street. Now an enclosed site, historically surrounded by railings along existing paths dating back to 1880. Edging and gravestones have over time been eroded and removed, but the main thing destroying the character and environment of the site is cars parking randomly and often over graves. GG questioned whether exclusion of vehicles could be enforced? HB felt this would be difficult as the land was owned by the Diocese. However, RC stated that it was illegal to drive on a footpath therefore access to the area where cars were being parked was a criminal activity. GG felt the Task Force should not commit funding to the project until agreement to exclude vehicles is reached.</p> <p>HB plans to develop the space by touching as little as possible of the existing historical features (eg the cross) which he intends protecting with railings to displace anti-social activities, and introduce defined areas such as an activity lawn, a bio-diversity garden and a meeting zone. He looked to link to the Art Gallery & Museum with use of the activity lawn and bio-diversity garden for exhibitions of sculpture and community art.</p> <p>A parking area would be clearly defined off the activity lawn alongside Chester Walk, which would be within 50m of the main entrance to the church, therefore complying with 'blue badge' requirements. Using the layout of the site as a framework he also hopes to reinstate railings along Chester Walk.</p> <p>HB wanted to encourage as much activity as possible within the site, eg people using the meeting zone to eat their sandwiches at lunchtime, music festival events, etc. GG suggested HB look at the circular bench at St Mary Crypt, Southgate Street in Gloucester as a project that worked really well. It was created by Cathedral stonemasons.</p> <p>AN highlighted that St Mary's Church was being launched as a Minster on 3rd February focusing on both religious and non religious events which fits in neatly with the development works being proposed.</p> <p>GG acknowledged the very good work carried out to date and thanked those involved accordingly. He also offered his and JW's help and support if required.</p> | |
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The public part of the meeting concluded at this point