

Cheltenham Development Task Force Board Meeting

22/15 (i)

Friday 23rd January 2015 - 2.00pm – 4:45 pm
Pittville Room, Municipal offices, Cheltenham

Open Minutes of meeting

Present: Graham Garbutt (Independent Chair)
Stephen Clarke
Cllr Will Windsor-Clive
Bernice Thomson
Robert Duncan
David Oldham
Michael Ratcliffe
Cllr Andrew McKinlay
Cllr Chris Nelson
Andrew North
Simon Excell
Joyce Clifford
Ross Simmonds

Other: Jeremy Williamson
Cllr Steve Jordan
Richard Cornell
David Roberts
Andrew Hieron
Scott Tompkins

No.	Item	Action
03/15	Apologies: Diane Savory, Jeff Brinley, Mark Sheldon, Mike Redman, Amanda Lawson-Smith, Dorian Wragg, Tracey Crews, Chris Riley, Wilf Tomaney, Howard Barber, Andrew North & Cllr Vernon Smith.	
04/15	Declarations of Interest – Cllr W-C and S.Excell confirmed the same declarations of interest as recorded previously as sponsors of GLTB projects see item 07/15.	
05/15	Minutes of previous meeting(10/10/14 and 16/12/14) / Matters Arising The minutes of the above mentioned meetings were approved as an accurate record conditional to the following corrections: Under item 76/14 7 th paragraph of the Open Minutes of 10/10/14 should read 'implementation' not 'implication'. Under item 75/14 mention was been made of convening a meeting of the review group to debate the '50 year plan'.	

	Regarding the Confidential minutes of 16 th December, the Chair asked Cllr CN if his concerns in relation to risks had now been fully addressed. Cllr CN still had some concerns, but thanked JW for his hard work in producing a Risk Register and for meeting with him several times since to try and allay those reservations.	
06/15	<p>Action Matrix and Matters Arising Items were either actioned, on the agenda or updated as follows:</p> <p>73/14 – Peer Group Challenge JW quoted the following statement, extracted from the Peer Review Team’s Cabinet report following their review:</p> <p>“Although referred to as ‘a town within a park’ and with a proud Regency character, the Council and its partners are nevertheless focused on regeneration and growth. The Cheltenham Development Task Force helps drive this growth and helps deliver significant change which is keeping the place prosperous.”</p> <p>A further statement from the covering report read, “Cheltenham Development Task Force – highly effective delivery model”</p> <p>78/14 – Scheme updates – St Mary’s DR reported on the wall repair and future maintenance. Owners of 225 High Street will assume responsibility once repaired. BT noted that the rubbish from behind wall now cleared.</p> <p>90/14 – update regarding the ‘communications’ vacancy The Chair requested JW give an update under the confidential part of the agenda as part of AoB.</p>	
07/15	<p>Confirmation of confidentiality of items Items agreed.</p>	
	Matters for information	

<p>8/15</p>	<p>Wider Matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Cllr SJ stated that since the last meeting the Plan had been formally lodged with the Secretary of State for examination in public by the Inspectorate, though start date for this not yet advised. SC queried whether the general election would cause interference, but Cllr SJ explained it would make not.</p> <p>LEP SE explained there was now a wider plan going forward to combine schemes, so Cheltenham Spa (Bay platform bid) was now part of a £22m Rail Package County bid. An associated £2.7m bid for a cycle route from the Racecourse to Bishops Cleeve had also been put forward.</p> <p>The Chair raised a 'centre for cities' outlook for 2016 discussing economic performance. Gloucester was shown bottom of the table in terms of job performance. Cheltenham fared better but key would be the emerging Cheltenham Economic Development Strategy (EDS). It seemed that combined authorities would get the greatest share of Government money.</p> <p>Cllr SJ explained that Gloucestershire had put a Joint Committee approach in place. The Chair highlighted the EDS report that CBC had commissioned, but questioned whether the right culture was to suggest Cheltenham was in competition? Cllr SJ tended to agree; he believed working together would be a better approach. The Chair highlighted the need for growth. MR believed the biggest problem was lack of land. The EDS would form part of the Local Plan going out to public consultation later this year. RD noted his concern over the lack of employment land, raised most recently at a JCS Assessment Panel. Cllr SJ stressed that the JCS was dealing with Strategic Land so was only looking at none strategic sites.</p> <p>Action: JW to arrange with Tracey Crews an ad-hoc meeting for Board members to discuss the Cheltenham Economic Strategy.</p> 	<p>JW</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>J10 SE reported that the Highways Agency was now on site for maintenance works. Estimated completion of works was Jan 2016.</p> <p>SE also advised that the JCS predicated levels of growth had resulted in a highways assessment that did not warrant an 'all ways junction'. In terms of SEP growth, consideration was being given to a possible 'all ways junction' but modelling had not taken place as the £20k funding, had not yet been secured.</p> <p>JW highlighted the issue of land ownership, stating that Bruton Knowles had met with a number of landowners before Christmas to establish level of landowner support.</p> 	

<p>09/15</p>	<p>Gloucestershire Local Transport Body – update on Cheltenham Spa Railway Station bid JW confirmed that GLTB commitment to a £1.5M award remained firm subject to securing other funding from the rail industry. The outcome of the cycle rail bid anticipated by the end of February. Martin Horwood MP was leading on ‘commercial facilities’ and discussions with Network Rail and the Treasury.</p> <p>The Office of Rail Regulation had issued their latest figures, stating that there was now over 1.9 million passengers pa, which meant current facilities were woefully inadequate.</p>	
<p>Matters for consideration</p>		
<p>10/15</p>	<p>High Street analysis ST explained that works were due to start on 26th January and finish on 6th March 2015, on the phase not completed before Christmas. The quality of infill had been raised so re-consideration was being given to a retrofit of material.</p> <p>Regarding wider High Street works, HB had progressed the Brewery phase 2 improvements and was working with the Brewery and Contractors Kier who were scheduled to start works on 16th March. Conservation kerbs would be installed and Yorkstone paving. Consultation with disability groups had identified appropriate kerb heights etc. Three new bus shelters were being installed. A hot-rolled material with chippings of buff coloured stone planned to be used for the bus lane.</p> <p>The co-ordination group had managed to reduce 3 planned closures to one lasting for up to 14 weeks maximum. This would allow for works by Severn Trent, Kier and GCC.</p> <p>Following a meeting with Blackrock on 16th December 2014 JW reported that a consensus on approach and materials was emerging. The Chair referenced comment in previous minutes about traffic not keeping to the areas of High Street dedicated for vehicle movement; HB planned to strategically place potted trees alongside existing street furniture in that area to constrain traffic to the area they should be using.</p>	

<p>11/15</p>	<p>Cheltenham Transport Plan</p> <p>The Chair congratulated all those involved with the process to date. ST explained that the recommendation to the TRO Committee on 15th January was to adopt all of the TRO's associated with changes to inner ring road and adopt Boots Corner as an experimental trial for review after 10 months. If CBC's report goes through Special Council on Monday, 26th January then Nigel Riglar would hopefully get final approved at GCC's Cabinet on 4th February to put the Orders in place. There would be four phases of delivery – scheme design, the construction phase; then after changes to the inner ring road have been completed, closure of Boots Corner for a 10 month trial, then finally take back to Committee after the 10 month trial period concludes. During the design phase traffic surveys would be carried out, following by a robust monitoring process. Although the trial period could be for a maximum of 18 months, it was felt a 10 month period would allow further options for the TRO Committee to potentially abandon the scheme; make it permanent or trial an alternative.</p> <p>In response to a query by Cllr CN, ST confirmed that it would be at GCC's Cabinet on 4th February that a decision would be taken about changes to the inner ring-road, which would take several months to implement. Physical works were therefore scheduled during Autumn/Winter 2015/16 and the closure of Boots Corner to through traffic on an experimental basis would potentially commence Spring 2016.</p> <p>ST explained that when the scheme goes back to the TRO Committee for review of the 10 month trial, the public would be able to input comments, and the Committee could add other TRO's if thought necessary</p> <p>In response to a query raised by Cllr SJ about local resident groups being consulted about the design work, ST confirmed there was no statutory consultation required, but the County had involved disability groups and been asked to engage with residents of Trafalgar Street. AH fed back comments on the current Bath Road safety scheme trial that started on 19th January, the objective of which was to reduce speeds, allow better pedestrian and cyclist crossings; and improve air quality between The Strand and Vernon Place. The impact to date had been very limited. Queueing had occurred during peak time and the perception was that the queue lane was longer, as merging with the ring-road occurs closer to the town centre, which he would be looking at the following week.</p> <p>Some effect was anticipated during off-peak (ie between 9:30am and 3pm) but further tests needed to be carried out before the trial ends on 6th February.</p> <p>Again the Chair conveyed thanks for the Transport Plan related work carried out to date, which was very impressive, and asked that it be added to future agenda as a standard item for regular update.</p>	<p>3:05pm ST left</p>
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<p>12/15</p>	<p>Lower High Street</p> <p>BT gave an interesting presentation with an historical perspective on the Lower High Street as the oldest part of Cheltenham, and which historically had always been the working class part of town. Nowadays it was an eclectic mix of food shops catering for local residents (Eastern European and Asian), a high concentration of takeaways and other bespoke services.</p> <p>There are a number of Listed Buildings (ie: Normandy House) and No 331; a 17th century house. Places of worship in that area were also numerous (ie a mosque, Hindu temple, synagogue, chapels and a 17th century burial ground), demonstrating that the Lower High Street had always catered for a diverse community.</p> <p>The 1980's neighbourhood renewal scheme and development of the St James' site including housing developments had not gentrified the Lower High Street area as might have been feared; in fact there still remains a mixed tenure. CBC Scrutiny Task Group had previously looked at licensing in the area.</p> <p>Three years ago work was undertaken with the businesses in the area to try and promote community engagement, with limited effect but a number of issues were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• too many takeaways• inconsistent parking enforcement (associated with takeaways)• street drinking (easy access to cheap alcohol) & drug dealing;• constraints for Listed Buildings altering shop fronts and windows;• high walling around Poole Way (by the Post Office) masking the car park;• the junction between Ambrose St and St George's Square creating a barrier;• the disused toilet block (by the Bowling Green) <p>Overall BT felt the Lower High Street lacks a cohesive identity. She noted that CBC actions tend to address deprived areas where their own housing stock tends is located. Where people were living above shops in Lower High Street BT was aware of some people having to share one bathroom with up to six families.</p> <p>JW spoke further about the analysis, highlighting what he felt were the key issue to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heritage assets• Property analysis• Highway issues/challenges• Off street parking• Signage• Community engagement – key <p>Development and strategy options</p> <p>Although time consuming an initial on-site analysis would be needed. JW felt that once the Brewery re-development had taken place there would be an opportunity to get some businesses to re-engage. The opportunities he could see in the short term were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the railway bridge and linkage to Honeybourne Gate• Widows Motors/Ace Bingo• 453 High Street (County owned)	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions with Markeys had been taking place about refurbishing the bridge alongside the Honeybourne Gate development in place of Public Art Work as part of their S106 contribution. <p>JW felt that by running both approaches in parallel it would trigger the opportunity for community engagement. RD raised the issue that by trying to retain the character of Lower High Street properties would need to be maintained in such a manner that may be unaffordable by their owners. The Chair reiterated the need to keep the area sustainable with low cost accommodation and low shop rentals. There was also need to apply reasonable Conservation policies. RS stressed that there was something about striking the right balance, as retailers tend to upgrade an area. It would be helpful he thought to undertake a heritage analysis as the area was within the Conservation Area, and suggested contacting the HLF (Townscape Heritage) about possible funding to refurbish a couple of key assets; addressing the fabric of the buildings.</p> <p>RS suggested looking at policies within the Local Plan and the possibility to take a slightly benign approach to Conservation in taking a relaxed attitude to recognise the issues raised. RS offered to liaise with HLF</p> <p>BT had considered taking a Neighbourhood Plan approach but felt it would be difficult to engage with local residents. The Chair also offered to help source funding through the CLG, and stressed how the Gloucestershire Rural Community Council had huge resources. RS highlighted that there were now over 3000 Neighbourhood Plans, but that they tend to form around Parishes.</p> <p>The Chair referred to earlier comment about traffic enforcement, and inappropriate parking associated with takeaways. BT noted the positive work undertaken by PCO's. New belisha beacons had been installed at the crossing by the Highways Authority, and BT hoped they would also carry out some re-lining, so things were improving. MR questioned whether the Highways Authority could demolish the disused toilet block to enable junction improvements at the East End, but DR noted that it was a CBC asset for which he had a purchaser, which the Chair voiced disappointment about. When Boots Corner closes BT stressed that Ambrose Street would be busier. SE suggested property sub-group consider both proposals and recommendations about Lower High Street and No 455 High Street.</p> <p>Action: JW to discuss with WT/HB & bring back paper to next meeting including possible HLF funding sources.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">JW</p>
Confidential items		