

LITTLEHAMPTON REGENERATION SUB-COMMITTEE

10 June 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present:

Councillors Cooper (Chairman for the meeting), Bicknell, Buckland, Goodheart, Gunner, Miss Rhodes, Miss Seex and Dr Walsh

[Councillor Buckland was absent from the meeting during consideration of Minutes 9 – 11.]

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

Due to the exceptional circumstances created by the pandemic, the Chairman of the Subcommittee, Councillor Miss Seex, was unable to chair the meeting (although she would be in attendance and would participate in the proceedings) and the Vice-Chairman had given apologies on compassionate grounds. It was therefore necessary to elect a Chairman for the meeting and, having been formally proposed and seconded, the Subcommittee

RESOLVED

That Councillor Cooper be elected Chairman for the meeting.

2. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Members, guests, press and the public to this virtual meeting of the Subcommittee and explained the process that would be followed.

3. APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Blanchard-Cooper.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Dr Walsh and Buckland declared a personal interest as Members of West Sussex County Council and Littlehampton Town Council.

Councillors Miss Seex and Miss Rhodes declared a personal interest as Members of Littlehampton Town Council.

5. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 18 November 2020 were approved by the Subcommittee as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman as soon as possible following the Council's resumption of normal working.

6. START TIMES

The Subcommittee

RESOLVED

That the start times of meeting be 6.00 p.m. for the remainder of 2020/2021.

7. LITTLEHAMPTON TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

The Chairman was pleased to welcome to the meeting:-

Tim South, Principal Design Consultant, LDA Design

Max Barnes, Landscape Architect, LDA Design

Tom Newman, Senior Project Manager for the regeneration scheme, Faithful + Gould

Mr South gave a comprehensive slide presentation on the detail of what was envisaged to improve Littlehampton's public realm and to create a more positive and welcoming vista for the town. He congratulated officers on their efforts in securing external funding to make the project achievable.

The importance of Littlehampton's maritime heritage had been acknowledged in the design and it was suggested that perhaps the clock tower could be retained but moved as its present location reduced the flexibility of that space and detracted from the open aspect that was integral to the overall feel of the whole scheme. It was hoped that it could be worked into the design proposal in an alternative way.

Members were advised that this ambitious but deliverable plan would take the emphasis away from the car with traffic calming measures to reclaim the town centre for pedestrians.

In opening up the debate, the Chairman expressed his thanks for the extremely interesting and informative presentation that have been given on the principles behind the design.

The Subcommittee participated in a lengthy question and answer session with the consultants, during the course of which a concern was raised with regard to The Arcade and the need for the surface there to be upgraded. The Group Head of Economy advised that that was outside of the remit of this scheme as it fell under the responsibility of West Sussex County Council. However, discussions could be undertaken to explore with the County Council whether something could be negotiated to enable improvements to The Arcade.

Further matters raised related to disability issues; disabled parking; traffic flows; cycling racks; the link between the High Street and East Bank; signage; events infrastructure; and street furniture, all of which were addressed at the meeting. A

question was asked relating to the economic benefit of such schemes and the Group Head of Economy stated that could be provided to Members as the information had been included in the bid documents covering outcomes and impact on the local economy.

A concern was raised in respect of unauthorised changes being made to the scheme by the contractor during the course of work. An assurance was given that it would be a Design and Build contract so if the contractor wished to make changes for technical reasons or such like, any such changes would require the prior approval of the Council.

With regard to the proposals put forward for street furniture, a request was made that the Subcommittee indicate its preference to give a steer to the consultants. An informal vote was taken and an overwhelming majority indicated that their preference would be for the natural finish suite to be installed as that would be a better match with what was at the East Bank.

It was emphasised that, under the terms of the funding agreement, work had to commence in January 2021 in order to ensure the project was delivered on time.

The Chairman closed the debate by thanking Mr South, Mr Barnes and Mr Newman for their attendance and contribution to an interesting and informative presentation.

8. ST MARTINS CAR PARK

The Group Head of Economy presented this report which simply sought Members support to enable officers to investigate development options for the St Martins car park site. On clarity being sought, it was agreed that the wording to be voted on would be that as set out under Section 2 of the report as that recommendation was more comprehensive of the way forward.

In discussing the matter, it was agreed that it would be useful for Members to be appraised of previous studies that had been undertaken for this site and the Group Head of Economy stated that she would forward the relevant information to the Subcommittee.

It was confirmed that no costs would be incurred by the Council at this stage as officers would only be having discussions with developers to ascertain what would be a feasible and viable mix for this site, taking into account the changes facing the country's High Streets.

Following general discussion about the site and before turning to the substantive recommendation, it was formally proposed and seconded that the words "within 9 months" be added. Having been agreed, the Subcommittee then

RESOLVED

That officers investigate potential development options for the St Martins Car Park, Littlehampton, and that a further report be brought back to Members with conclusions and recommendations for options for a way forward for the development of the site within 9 months.

9. BUSINESS SUPPORT ENTERPRISE UPDATE

The Subcommittee received this regular update report from the Business Development Manager on the services provided to local businesses by the Council.

Due to the current emergency of the pandemic, she informed Members in particular that

- (i) The Business of the Year Awards due to be held for 2020 had been cancelled but that a future event would certainly be organised; and
- (ii) The discretionary business grants would be suspended from 23 June 2020 but the situation would be reviewed.

The Chairman thanked the Business Development Manager for her comprehensive report, which the Subcommittee duly noted.

10. SUMMARY OF TOURISM SUPPORT CURRENTLY PROVIDED BY ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Having received this report from the Tourism Business Development Officer, the Subcommittee focussed on the impact of the pandemic on local tourism businesses due to the importance of this sector to the local economy.

Members were advised that as a result of the current situation, there had been even more positive collaboration between the various tourism organisations and local businesses to establish a recovery plan for the sector.

In the course of discussion a number of issues were raised, including :-

- Disparity of the figures included in the report – the Tourism Business Development Officer stated that these had been provided by Tourism South East and she would look at them and send out further information following the meeting
- Sussex by the Sea website and the use of social media – it was recognised that an overhaul was required of the website to present a much more attractive view of the local area and the offer of Member engagement and involvement was welcomed. It was also suggested that more analysis of social media information should be included in future update reports.
- It should be recognised that there was a need to develop a strategy for the District, not just relying on a website.

- Action must be taken to ensure that the South East (to include Arun) took a bigger share of tourism away from the South West, North West and Scotland as the country comes out of lockdown.

The Chairman thanked the Tourism Business Development Officer for a weighty and comprehensive report, which the Subcommittee duly noted.

11. LH POSITION STATEMENT FOR JUNE 2020

In considering the Position Statement, a Member view was expressed that it was disappointing that parts of the information provided was out of date and a request was made that this be rectified for the future. Further particular comment was made in respect of the following:-

Business Support Grants – thanks were expressed to all those involved in getting these out in a timely manner and the huge effort made was recognised.

Look & Sea Centre – a very recent decision at the Development Control Committee had approved the change of use of the two top floors to tourist accommodation.

Following general comments relating to signage for car parks and The Arcade, the Subcommittee noted the Position Statement.

(The meeting concluded at 9.49 pm)