

BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION SUB-COMMITTEE

17 June 2020 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Stanley (Chairman), Brooks (Vice-Chair), Mrs Daniells, Dixon, English, Mrs Madeley, Oppler, Roberts (Substitute for Mrs Stainton) and Mrs Warr

Councillors Charles, Coster, Dendle, Edwards, Goodheart, Gunner and Mrs Pendleton were also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs Stainton.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Brooks – Personal as (i) voting member of Arun Arts which runs the Alexander Theatre; (ii) had made a submission to Arun District Council on elements of an informal scheme on the Regis site; and (iii) Premier Inn cardholder.

Councillor Mrs Daniells – Personal as (i) voting member of Arun Arts; and (ii) Whitbreads shareholder but under £25,000 threshold as stipulated under the Council's Code of Conduct.

Councillor Dixon – Personal as a member of Bognor Regis Civic Society.

Councillor English – Personal. He stated that some of the questions he was asking were from supporters of the Sir Richard Hotham Project and he saw no reason to treat them any differently from any other residents of the Arun District. He saw that as the best way forward. As there were a number of questions which were being asked on behalf of lobbying groups and to which he did not know the answers, he had sent those to the Director of Place in advance of the meeting. On reflection, he was concerned that the questions might or could now be treated by some in a prejudicial way rather than as straight forward questions to be answered factually or clearly. He was not in any way connected to or part of any lobbying groups with regard to regeneration but, if asked, would make his own decision to pursue an answer or question or not. He had not attended any meetings, Council or otherwise, of any lobbying groups in respect of regeneration to the best of his memory.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2020 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and would be signed by the Chairman as soon as possible following the Council's resumption of normal working.

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4. START TIMES

The Subcommittee

RESOLVED

That the start times of meetings for the remainder of 2020/21 be 6.00 p.m.

5. BID UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Jason Passingham, who was in attendance to provide the Subcommittee with an update on the work of BID.

Mr Passingham provided a comprehensive outline of the work he and his team had undertaken to assist businesses in a variety of ways to navigate the very serious effects of the pandemic and resultant lockdown that had been put in place by the Government. He thanked the Group Head of Economy and the Senior Regeneration Officer for their contribution to the partnership working that had taken place, particularly with regard to the signage that had been prepared and which had been designed uniquely for Bognor Regis and its surrounding area.

Following a brief question and answer session, Members of the Subcommittee commended Mr Passingham and his team for the huge effort they had made in assisting businesses in the town, and the Chairman also expressed his thanks for the way they had passed on all the information and guidance from the Government, which had been extremely beneficial for the business community.

6. UPDATE ON OPTIONS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE REGIS CENTRE AREA

The Director of Place presented this report which provided the background to the Council's development strategy for the potential redevelopment of the Regis Centre but which might now be severely impacted in light of the challenging economic conditions that would be experienced as a direct result of the corona virus pandemic. A number of recommendations to Full Council had been set out in the report in order to facilitate an amended scheme which could be delivered commercially without resorting to any significant public subsidy.

In participating in a full debate, there was an overwhelming concern expressed by Members that they were being asked to make recommendations on a matter which they did not feel fully informed about. The previous administration had agreed a strategy but it was felt that far more detail was required, particularly with regard to the financial aspects relating to negotiations with Whitbreads and the future of the Alexander Theatre. There was also a certain disquiet that what was being proposed was piecemeal development and was not regeneration.

The Chairman, having picked up on the concerns being raised, proposed that the matter be deferred to seek further information around the financial implications, with a further report to be brought back by the Director of Place to a future meeting. This was duly seconded.

Further comments were made indicating that the development plans of the Sir Richard Hotham Project should be revisited and that the feasibility of opening the Royal Hall should be explored.

The Director of Place, in confirming that he would present a further report to a future meeting in the event the matter was deferred, advised that that report would set out the basis of the negotiations undertaken previously and also include other issues raised in the debate relating to, for example, the condition of the buildings. Due to the nature of its content, much of the report would necessarily have to be of a confidential nature.

The Director of Place also took the opportunity to remind Members that in 2018 the Council did have a redevelopment strategy for the Regis site, known as the Winter Gardens Project. It had been agreed at that time that, in order to deliver a complex and overall package of proposals, that would be best achieved through a series of individual developments. The report on the table was inviting Members to approve the first phase of that strategy to build a hotel and to bring back into the Council's full control the public house and theatre to allow the Council to move forward on developing the site. The Subcommittee was reminded that there was therefore a strategy, there was a plan, and the report was inviting Members to commence the delivery of the scheme. However, he did request that if Members now wished to deliver something completely different, officers be provided with clarity around what they wished to see delivered.

A further proposal was put forward that a recommendation be made to Full Council that the Sir Richard Hotham Project, proposals for a water feature and all other options be explored to deliver the best possible outcome for the people and businesses of Bognor Regis and to ensure that all Councillors were brought up to date to understand all the options available.

In line with the Council's procedure rules, the Subcommittee turned to the first proposal to defer and, having been voted on with an overwhelming majority,

RESOLVED

That the matter be deferred to enable the Director of Place to present a further report to a future meeting setting out the detail of previous negotiations and other matters.

7. BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION POSITION STATEMENT

In receiving and noting the Position Statement, the Subcommittee received/made particular comment on the following:-

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Enterprise Bognor Regis: An update was requested on the A29 realignment which was provided by the Director of Place who was able to advise that the County Council would be submitting a planning application in July/August for the northern section and a planning application for the whole of the road and the northern section of the strategic allocation would be coming forward at around December. Advice was also given that the Advisory Group was involved in discussions and there would be opportunities for public engagement.

Mention was made that a sign at Rolls Royce had still not been installed.

Town Centre Initiatives: A question was asked with regard to experimentation for improving pedestrianisation and cycling in front of the Arcade and the Station. The Subcommittee was informed that the Senior Regeneration Officer was working on that so that if money became available a bid could be submitted.

Seafront Regeneration: The Chairman advised that, in his role as Cabinet Member for Technical Services, a confidential mediation meeting had been held with the suppliers of the new toilet block. Good progress had been made and a satisfactory outcome had been reached. In the meantime, temporary toilets would be provided for use from 10 July to 3 September 2020. He expressed his thanks to officers for their work on this matter.

(The meeting concluded at 8.08 pm)