

CINDERFORD REGENERATION BOARD

MINUTES

Wednesday 3 July 2019

Meeting minutes of the Cinderford Regeneration Board held on Wednesday 3 July 2019 at the Belle Vue Centre, Cinderford

PRESENT:

Chairman:	Councillor Graham Morgan – Cinderford Town Council
Board Members:	Simon Excell – Gloucestershire County Council Councillor Terry Hale – Gloucestershire County Council Councillor Tim Holder – Cinderford Town Council Nigel Johnson – Forest High School Garry King – Two Rivers Housing Councillor Richard Leppington – Forest of Dean District Council Dave Wildin – Steam Mills Primary School Peter Williams – Forest of Dean District Council
Ex-Officio:	Wendy Jackson – Forest of Dean District Council Louise John – Forest of Dean District Council
Critical Friends:	Mike Price – Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (arrived 2.30pm)
Observers:	Matthew Green – Regeneration Intern, Publica William Llewellyn – Work Experience, Publica James Stubbs – Work Experience, Gloucestershire County Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from: Tim Davis (Homes England) and Claire Giles (Homes England)

2. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Councillor Graham Morgan welcomed everyone to the meeting, including the student observers Matthew Green, William Llewellyn and James Stubbs.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Graham Morgan noted that he had just been to the King's Lodge site for a photo call to mark the installation of a plaque celebrating the CPRE Award won for the development. Graham again re-iterated his support for the quality of the development, and noted how pleased residents were who lived there.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- Simon Excell – Lead Commissioner (GCC), involvement with Gloucestershire Infrastructure Investment Fund and Growth Deal projects.
- Garry King – Two Rivers Housing Chief Executive, involvement with multiple housing projects within Cinderford and the Forest of Dean. Potential interest in sites at the Cinderford Northern Quarter.
- Councillor Richard Leppington – Cabinet Member, Forest of Dean District Council, Landowner within the Northern Quarter and related sites.
- Peter Williams – Head of Paid Service, Forest of Dean District Council, Landowner within the Northern Quarter and related sites.

5. MINUTES OF MEETING ON 27 FEBRUARY & MATTERS ARISING

Garry King noted that his Declarations of Interest were not reported in the minutes and asked that these be included.

Wendy Jackson noted in the action tracker that the Northern United site is currently owned by Homes England. The intention is for Homes England to market the site, and not to transfer this to the Forest of Dean District Council as previously indicated.

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

6. TOWN CENTRE UPDATES

Future High Street Fund

Wendy Jackson provided an update. The Future High Street Fund was launched last year. The fund is for £675m to revive high streets. The deadline for the first call for sites was in March this year. Forest of Dean District Council was only allowed to submit a bid for one of the four towns in the District. Following a 'mini-competition', Cinderford was selected as the town to progress to the application stage. Forest of Dean District Council submitted a bid on behalf of Cinderford Town Council. The outcome of the bid was awaited.

The bid included five projects as follows:

- Cinderford Methodist Church – Purchase the church (which is now closed) and seek to maintain activities that are run within the building. Plans also include designating the Church as an Asset of Community Value.
- Triangle – Fully pedestrianise the triangle to increase open space and market space.
- BT Exchange Site – Create a long stay car park adding 20 extra car parking spaces to the town centre.
- HSBC Bank – Cinderford Town Council have already purchased the buildings. Plans would see the building bought back into use as a retail space.
- Acorn House – Seek to acquire the building and bring back into use as housing.

Councillor Tim Holder noted that Councillor Chris Brown (CTC) had encouraged different generations to put forward their ideas for the bid. The projects were generated with input from younger people; through consultation with local schools.

Councillor Graham Morgan noted that there is an issue with speeding in the town centre and general road safety.

Nigel Johnson asked if there was a cap on the funding request. The cap was £25m per project.

Garry King asked if the projects were ranked in any particular order of priority if only partial funding was received. No particular projects were more significant than the other.

Simon Excell asked where the match funding contribution was coming from. It was confirmed that the Town Council purchase of the HSBC bank was considered as match funding. Simon enquired whether GCC staff time could also be considered as match funding for highway work. Wendy noted that the bid had already been submitted, but this would be a learning point for next time. If the expression of interest is supported, all GCC/FoDDC/CTC staff time should count as in-kind match funding for the detailed business plan stage.

Councillor Richard Leppington asked what type of accommodation would be provided at Acorn House. Wendy noted this would be single person market rental, with no age limit. Tim noted that at the time of the bid submission Acorn House was being actively marketed, however the property is now not being marketed.

Post Meeting Note: Unfortunately the bid has been unsuccessful. Only 17% of the total applications submitted were asked to progress to Stage 2 of the application process. No other bids within Gloucestershire were successful.

Town Centre Audit Reports

Wendy provided an update on the Town Centre Audit Reports. The reports for this year were underway, and as per previous years they will follow the GFirst Retail Pathfinder Toolkit Methodology. Matthew Green, the Publica graduate intern observing the meeting today will be completing the town centre work. The footfall counts for Cinderford were completed on 19/21/22 June.

7. FODDC LED DEVELOPMENT

One Public Estate

Councillor Richard Leppington provided an update. As updated at the previous Board meetings, the District Council is a member of the One Public Estate Gloucestershire partnership.

Whilst the first grant submission of £275,000 was unsuccessful, the District Council was subsequently awarded a 'One Public Estate Sustainable Grant' of £100,000 to undertake pre-construction works for plot development at the Cinderford Northern Quarter site. This will focus on the extension of the spine road and access to some of the housing/employment sites.

Pre-construction works include, surveys, statutory planning approvals and licensed ecology works. The funding is a recoverable grant, which will be repaid at the end of the 3 year grant period in April 2022.

Northern Quarter Spine Road Phase 2 and Development Plots

Councillor Richard Leppington provided an update. Last year, consultants WSP completed a confidential report reviewing the planning conditions linked to the hybrid planning approval for the Northern Quarter site. In addition, Gloucestershire County Council undertook work to assess how the road network would be impacted by construction of the development plots; prior to full completion of the spine road. Under the existing permission the whole spine road must be completed prior to any further development coming forward.

Following the awarding of One Public Estate funding it has been decided to progress with an application to vary the planning condition linked to the spine road phasing, otherwise known as a Section 73 Amendment. The One Public Estate funding will fund this work.

This application will seek to allow the development plots to come forward without the spine road being completed as a whole. It is still the ambition to complete the spine road, however this will allow for the development plots outputs and benefits to be realised sooner.

The District Council are currently preparing tender documentation to run a procurement exercise, in order to appoint a consultant to complete the planning submission.

The consultant will need to review the existing Environmental Statement, as well as complete additional ecological reviews and provide detailed design on access points for the development plots.

The tender process will start later this month, with a consultant being appointed at the beginning of September. It is anticipated that the majority of the planning documentation will be prepared by the end of the year. Dependant on the outcome of the ecological work and the requirements for surveys, the planning application will either be submitted early 2020 or Summer 2020.

The District Council will also be running a tender process to commission an architect to design commercial units for Plots F1 and F2. The units will be designed to be flexible and allow for either multiple or single occupancy. The tender process will begin late Summer this year, with an architect appointed in Autumn. Construction work cannot take place on plots F1 and F2, until the planning permission to vary the original permission has been granted.

Simon Excell asked whether the Section 73 Amendment will be submitted by the District Council to the District Council. Louise John confirmed that this would be the case. Simon asked that the GCC Highways team are included in pre-application discussions at the earliest opportunity. Simon also noted that there have been significant changes in the Development Management Team at GCC; therefore discussions with the team were imperative.

Garry King asked whether there were likely to be objections on ecological grounds as per the previous applications. Louise noted that objections were anticipated, however the District Council have been liaising with Natural England through their Discretionary Advice Service and feedback to date has been positive. Peter Williams noted that the District Council will continue to liaise with the statutory agencies, and noted that it would be advantageous to discuss the proposals with the Environmental Forum. Louise noted that an Environmental Forum meeting would be organised for September.

8. LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

No update provided as LEP representative not in attendance.

9. CINDERFORD AAP PROJECT UPDATES

Northern Quarter Spine Road Phase 1 – Adoption & Lighting

Simon Excell noted that work was in progress on the adoption of the first phase of Northern United Way. Due to significant changes in the Development Management Team the adoption process had been delayed.

Wendy noted that the spine road lighting, whilst installed to the correct specification, was too bright for bats living in the area and alternatives were being sought. Brian Watkins (GCC Highways Team) was investigating alternatives.

Homes England Site Marketing and Disposal (Plot G2)

An update had been sent by Claire Giles (Homes England).

A sign board has been up at the site for some time, which has generated interest. Homes England wanted to complete some works on the Mill building before full marketing of the site is launched.

Homes England anticipates launching the marketing at the end of August and will run the process until the end of September. A data room will be available which will allow access to all documentation related to the site such as plans, topography surveys and ecological surveys. They will contact various people on their marketing list who may also be interested, and the Forester newspaper will be asked to run an article on the site marketing.

Cushman and Wakefield will be marketing the site on behalf of Homes England. It will be a sealed bid process, moving to an unconditional contract in October this year.

Councillor Richard Leppington asked how attractive the site is to a Registered Housing Provider. Garry King noted that it is challenging to have one single approach to housing within Cinderford, therefore a varied approach needs to be considered. In addition, as it is a former Coalfield site there is some risk associated. Garry felt that a partnership approach to development would be more beneficial.

Gloucestershire College Formal Opening Ceremony

Louise John provided an update. Louise has received a message from Sandra Tyrell that after careful consideration the College had decided not to have a formal opening ceremony, following the smaller opening on enrolment day. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Members felt that a formal opening would allow the whole community to celebrate the development [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Garry King suggested that the College consider putting on an 'Open Day' event which allows students to show how the College has benefitted them. Councillor Graham Morgan also suggested inviting one of the former mine workers to open the College.

[REDACTED]

Ecological Monitoring Work

Wendy Jackson provided an update. Specialist consultants continue to undertake monitoring work at the Northern Quarter site. All data and results are available on the District Council Regeneration webpages.

The replacement bat roosts are now both occupied by bats. Work is continuing to be completed on the smaller roost to encourage larger numbers of bats to occupy the building.

Recent grassland surveys have been undertaken – again the results will be available on the District Council webpages.

We intend on organising the next Cinderford Regeneration Environmental Forum meeting in September.

As previously mentioned the District Council are liaising with Natural England (NE) through their Discretionary Advice Service. As part of this Alastair Chapman (Sustainability Team Leader) recently took NE team members to visit the Northern Quarter site and to see some of the mitigation works first hand. Feedback was positive. In addition, conversations were ongoing with Forestry England regarding a revised species masterplan for the site; again these discussions were positive to date.

ACTION: Louise John to liaise with Alastair Chapman to organise the next Cinderford Regeneration Environmental Forum.

Wildtowns Project Funding

Councillor Tim Holder provided an update. The aim of the Wildtowns project is to allow residents of Cinderford greater access to nature, as well as create and improve the habitat for some of the rare species in the area – particularly Linear Park.

Wildtowns will create, connect and enhance green spaces for wildlife across 7 towns in Gloucestershire, and will be delivered over 3 years.

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust is working with local landowners - Forestry England, Forest of Dean District Council and Severn Trent Water to deliver the project.

Projects include:

- a new bridge in the Linear Park;
- Habitat creation and restoration for butterflies, newts and other reptile species;

- Restore Cinderford Brook by creating features such as meanders and diversifying the flow rates;
- Improving oxygen levels in Cinderford Brook by creating a new reedbed. In addition, three weirs downstream of Cinderford will have fish passes installed so that fish will be able to migrate upstream.

10. CRB GOVERNANCE

MOU and Register of Interest Forms

Louise John noted that the Memorandum of Understanding needed updating for the year. The following changes were suggested and noted as track changes:

- Page 6 – Remove ‘in writing’ when requesting observation of Board meetings, quite often this is via multiple methods of communication. Also add that requests need to be made at least one week prior to the meeting.
- Page 9 – Change of Board representative. Added Regeneration Officer to the notification list. Also noted that Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected at the Autumn meeting rather than specifying month.
- Page 10 and 11 – Changes made to reflect the Regeneration Manager and Regeneration Officer’s change in employer to Publica.
- Schedule 1 and 2 – Updates to Board members over the past year.

Louise asked members to submit any further amendments to her within the next week. Simon Excell noted there were two date changes to make at the end of the MOU.

ACTION: Louise John to make changes to the MOU as proposed and suggested.

Louise noted that she would be sending the Register of Interest Forms to all members in advance of the next meeting and requested that members send these back to her as soon as possible.

ACTION: All Board members to complete the Register of Interest form.

Communications

Louise John provided an update. As Councillor Graham Morgan had previously noted there has been a photo call at the King’s Lodge site to mark the installation of the CPRE Award plaque. A press release would be issued in the next couple of weeks.

Risk Register

Louise John provided an update. Some minor changes had been made to the Risk Register as follows:

- Added that the planning variation work will be funded through OPE Sustainable Grant funding.
- The probability risk of a change in Government has been increased to 2 (2%-10%)
- Added that following the May elections, there has been no change in Cabinet priorities.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

12. 2019 MEETING DATES

Wednesday 16 October 2019

MEETING END: 15:50