

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
DATE:	Tuesday, 4 June 2019
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	Meeting Room 1 - Barnsley Town Hall

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Clarke, Felton, Fielding, Gollick, Green, Hayward, Hunt, W. Johnson, Leech, Lodge, Lofts, Mitchell, Noble, Phillips, Sumner, Tattersall, Williams, Wilson and Wright.

1 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies for absence were received in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

2 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor W. Johnson declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 5 on the agenda as he is a former market trader.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th April were approved as a true and accurate record.

4 Exclusion of the Public and Press (due to commercial sensitivity)

RESOLVED that the public and press be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

5 Barnsley Town Centre Redevelopment

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting:

Andrew Frosdick, Executive Director, Core Services
David Shepherd, Service Director, Economic Regeneration, Place
Andrew Osborn, Regeneration Projects Group Leader, Place
Steve Loach, Head of Finance, Core Services
Cllr Tim Cheetham, Cabinet Member Place (Regeneration & Culture)
Nick Jones, Director of Project Management, Turner & Townsend
Chris Stone, Associate Director of Cost Management, Turner & Townsend
Paul Sargent, Chief Executive, Queensberry

The Service Director updated the Committee regarding progress of the Glassworks scheme since the last report in November 2018. It was highlighted that one key aspect of the redevelopment has been to keep the Town Centre going through the period of significant change. People in Barnsley are at the heart of the redevelopment and deserve a town centre to be proud of. The level of disruption has been minimised wherever possible, but there has been some unavoidable impact. It was also pointed out that there has already been a significant increase in footfall, which it is hoped can be maintained over time.

Phase 1 of the project is nearing completion, including the opening of the new Library at the Lightbox planned for early July 2019. It is expected that Phase 2 will be completed in 2021, delivering a range of shops, restaurants and leisure facilities. This is on track in terms of leasing but it must be acknowledged that this is a very difficult period for the High Street, particularly around retail and leisure, as reported in the national media. There are increased requirements from potential lessees coupled with ensuring that existing businesses are taken care of. This also applies to businesses in town centres across the whole of the Borough, which are also being effectively supported. Robust governance arrangements and audit processes are in place to effectively manage commercial risk.

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to detailed questioning and challenge, the following matters were highlighted:

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) recognised that the outcome of Brexit may have a major impact on this and other projects, thus provision has been made within the strategy to provide comfort going forward – for example, using local suppliers wherever possible.

There has been increased footfall from other areas such as Wakefield, Sheffield etc. There will likely be an increased footfall on match days due to Barnsley FC's recent promotion, but work is ongoing with the football club around safe travel/walking arrangements which will include the Market Gate Bridge.

The scheme will act as a catalyst for wider private sector investment in the town centre and borough, including a mix of 544 new housing units across various sites. There is evidence that there is an appetite for this as demonstrated by the Churchfield retirement development and the high quality private rented scheme at Gateway.

The market development is progressing well, with a number of existing traders brought along. Some are not happy about 6 day working and there are a number of vacancies. Members were concerned that Thursday trading is poor but were reassured that this may be mitigated by the introduction of new traders/retailers/leisure/food and drink and also the opening of the Lightbox.

Arrangements, flexibility and incentives will be continually reviewed to ensure progress continues, with open, honest and challenging discussions with both new and existing traders. It was pointed out that rents for market traders have been subsidised for many years but have now moved to a commercial rent basis. Pride of place has been given to market traders as the location of the market is crucial to success, as evidenced in neighbouring authorities.

The developers have experience of delivering similar schemes elsewhere, using flexible building and design solutions, such as the one in Guildford. This was initially retail led and then progressed on to food and beverages. Similar challenges existed around costs, existing retailers and attracting new businesses. Capital incentives and rent subsidies became part and parcel of any standard commercial leasing deal and were individually negotiated to secure a successful outcome.

Transport links and car parking arrangements will be improved as part of the scheme, including active travel. Significant transportation funding has been applied for through Sheffield City Region (SCR), including arrangements to connect to Doncaster and Rotherham, incorporating the Market Gate Bridge. Work around bus services with the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (SYPTTE) and Stagecoach is ongoing. The carbon footprint is taken into account, not just around travel but also when obtaining goods and services. Electric charging points are to be part of the scheme. Park and Ride has been considered a number of times but at the present time bus operators are unwilling to do this.

Despite the difficult situation around retail at the moment, the lettings strategy is on track to deliver 95% at the end of the term as there are 3 years left to secure lettings.

Public safety and engendering a sense of safety and security is paramount, with a new suite of CCTV cameras, co-location of South Yorkshire Police (SYP) in the management suite and a wider town centre team. This will include enforcement officers in the same uniform so they are readily identifiable. Although there will still be a 'wet' offer, there will be a more family orientated 'feel' to the night time economy so that residents are not afraid to come into town centre throughout the day and into the evening.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) Members note the update and
- (ii) Witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution.