

LEISURE COMPLEX AND BUS STATION PROGRAMME BOARD

Wednesday 22 March 2017

Present:-

Councillor Bialyk (Chair)
Councillors Denham, Edwards, Gottschalk, Mrs Henson and Wardle

Apologies:-

Councillor Prowse and Deputy Chief Executive

Also Present:-

Chief Executive & Growth Director, (Client Lead Build), Corporate Manager Property, Principal Project Manager (Development), Rob Sims, Project Manager - Leisure Operations and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (SLS)

Also Present:-

Justin Pickford – Baker Ruff Hannon

1

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2016 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

2

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interest were made.

3

LEISURE COMPLEX AND BUS STATION UPDATE

The Client Lead (Build), Emma Osmundsen, provided a brief update on the tender process and subsequent cessation of the interim arrangements for the Bus Station that had taken place since the last meeting of the Programme Board on 7 November 2016. She reported that tenders for the project contract had not met the approved budget, and due to the complexity of the tender documentation supplied they were currently being evaluated. The team continued to work through the detail and were carrying out a full tender analysis to be in a position to identify the appointment of a contractor, and report back to Members. The Chair noted that a planning application for the redevelopment of the Exeter Bus and Coach Station redevelopment area on Paris Street would be presented to the Planning Committee on 27 March 2017.

Justin Pickford provided a brief update on the interim bus arrangements work and confirmed that the public realm in Sidwell Street was in the process of being reinstated. He responded to a comment by the Chair who said that he had visited Sidwell Street and found elements of the interim works had been left in an unsatisfactory state, and confirmed that the City Council's contract cleaners had subsequently tidied and cleaned the area. The Chair also referred to the state of the pavement in Sidwell Street, and was concerned that the footpath was now made up of a mix of tarmac and paving slabs, resulting in a patchwork surface, which was not aesthetically pleasing. He felt that this was less than the city deserved. He

sought some assurance that the works associated with the interim arrangements would be completed satisfactorily and he suggested that Devon County Council also had some responsibility over the footpath. Justin Pickford reassured Members that the interim works had not resulted in the overall removal of paving slabs rather that, the installation of the temporary bus shelters had created an increase in the footpath and the removal of brick planters had created areas of the footpath which were not previously paved. The tarmac would be retained, but no further slabs would be removed. He responded to a Member's comment on the return of Sidwell Street to its former traffic order condition and confirmed that the public access, provision of parking and the original Traffic Orders would all be reinstated. He also confirmed that the interim arrangement proposed for Paris Street, which had also included an amendment to the Traffic Orders, provision of temporary bus shelters outside of the Civic Centre and up Paris Street, white lining and signage had been put on hold until nearer the time of the closure of the existing Bus Station.

Communications

The Communications Officer, Rob Sims presented a communications update and circulated a note outlining the main work carried out by the communications team, which would be attached to the minutes. He also directed Members to the quantity of information on St Sidwell's Point and the Bus Station included on the Exeter City Council web site. He outlined the activity which continued to focus on:-

- communicating all key decisions
- communication with shops and businesses
- communications with stakeholders
- communicating directly with Exeter residents and the wider public
- communicating with the media
- future communications

A Member stated that she was concerned about how Members of the Programme Board were kept informed of developments. The Communications Officer referred to the parameters of the Communications Strategy and the urgency to disseminate the information, whilst all of the time being conscious of the importance of ensuring that Members were updated. They had worked closely with their commercial partners, Crown Estates, to ensure an agreed statement was signed off, communicated the information by email to Members, followed by stakeholders, Stagecoach, bus user groups, the BID, Princesshay and Sidwell Street businesses, and at that point, they informed the media.

The Communications Officer advised that they had also carried out work behind the scenes at a number of locations to ensure there was information for those effected by the works, and particularly those businesses and residents on Sidwell Street were fully aware of all the changes to the interim arrangements for the Bus Station. He referred to the more traditional media methods using the local paper and TV stations, and he welcomed the Chair's social media contribution which had provided the opportunity to measure the demographic and age profile. The Chair added that he was available to speak with any of the stakeholders or voluntary groups at their meetings to update them on any aspect of the project. A Member asked if a notice with details of the Bus Station arrangements could be placed at the Bus Station, as not all passengers used social media. The Communications Officer, appreciated that all forms of communication were important including face to face contact and he would go back to Stagecoach and make the suggestion. He provided a reminder of the Project's Helpline number of 01392 265880.

The Chair responded to a Member's comment about ensuring the public were particularly aware of the latest information in relation to the Bus Station, and

referred to the Communications Team who had been working hard trying to pass on the message to the shops and businesses. He had also spoken to the owners of a number of shops and had a first-hand account of their concerns. He added that when the project came on stream it was important to make sure the new timetable was properly communicated. Councillor Mrs Henson enquired if a business could claim for some compensation. The Corporate Manager Property said that businesses that felt they had suffered losses consequent on the works could submit claims but would have to clearly demonstrate loss of trade.

Long Distance Coach Passenger Waiting Room

The Chair referred to an application for the redevelopment of the existing British Heart Foundation building on Cheeke Street to provide student accommodation, with the inclusion of a new coach passengers' waiting room on the ground floor. As a member of the Planning Committee, he was aware that the application had been properly advertised and responses received, and he asked to be kept apprised of the feedback to date from any interested parties. Although the Programme Board had no authority in respect of the planning application, waiting room facilities for coach passengers was an important part of the facilities to be offered as part of the Bus Station development. Mr Brownbridge of the Exeter & District Bus Users Group had attended the City Council's Planning Committee meeting and had requested the opportunity to submit comments in writing in relation to the waiting room, and their aspiration to ensure the space was 'fit for purpose'. The Group had suggested that the space did not match the current provision, and he proposed an increased provision to 35 passengers, plus luggage. He also included the approach for an alternative toilet provision proposing a 'pay to use' free standing toilet in the nearby Stover Court car park area.

The Chair referred to discussion with National Express over their responsibility to accommodate their passengers, and was aware there was a wide variation of waiting facilities around the country. He welcomed the inclusion of a passenger's waiting room in the BHF redevelopment proposals, but it was important to keep this in perspective, as there had already been a reduced support offered to waiting passengers at the Bus Station over the years. He had requested that further discussion take place to discuss the provision of toilet facilities, particularly important when the facilities at the Bus Station were likely to be closed overnight. He acknowledged the potential use of Stover Court car park, which was owned by Devon County Council, as a likely late night or very early morning departure pick up point for passengers. The Corporate Manager Property referred to the offer by the developer to provide coach passenger waiting room accommodation, and the space identified of 32sqm plus wheelchair space which was deemed adequate.

A Member wanted to ensure that there was adequate toilet provision as she felt this was a very important consideration. A Member was also aware that the stance of National Express was that there was a toilet on board the coaches. He did not wish the City Council to bear a sole responsibility for the provision of toilets as they had to be mindful of ongoing maintenance costs or dealing with any anti-social behaviour. The Chair reminded Members that acknowledgment of an ongoing cost attributed to maintenance for these facilities would have to be identified. He welcomed the provision but pointed out that the whole passenger experience for the majority of the Bus Station's operating hours would be completely different. It was necessary to keep our ambition in check and wait until after the consultation and negotiations of this matter were finalised. The Principal Project Manager (Development) added that the inclusion of the proposed coach passengers' waiting room was not a planning requirement, and that any subsequent variation in size or other similar internal alteration was not a material change in planning terms and therefore not need delay issue of the consent. The Planning Committee of 20

March 2017 had resolved that the Assistant Director City Development or his successor, subject to prior consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chair of the Leisure Complex and Bus Station Steering Group and the Chair of the Planning Committee, be authorised to approve the planning permission following appraisal of this Board and subject to conditions and completion of a Section 106 agreement.

The Leisure Complex and Bus Station Programme Board noted the updated position.

4

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair anticipated that allowing for the ongoing work by the Design Team to address the complexities of the tender returns and the ongoing commercial sensitivity, a further meeting of this Board would be arranged as soon as possible and certainly to coincide with the revised programme gateway.

In addition, he suggested a Members' Briefing session should also be arranged, specifically on the various aspects and benefits of passivhaus energy to ensure that Members had the necessary background information.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.35 pm)

Chair

Leisure Complex and Bus Station Programme Board: March 22

Communications Update

The communications team continues to work within the scope of the bus station communications strategy, which is committed to providing clear, transparent and timely information about all aspects of the redevelopment project. Activity continues to focus on:

1: Communicating all key decisions

We ensured key stakeholders, passengers and the wider public were fully aware of the decision to temporarily suspend plans to close Exeter Bus Station.

A co-ordinated approach was taken with our development partner, the Crown Estate, as well as Stagecoach, Exeter BID and others to ensure passengers and the wider public were fully aware of the decision and the reasons behind it.

The information was distributed through social media, the council's website and the local media, with a series of interviews with the lead councillor on TV, radio and in print.

The council's short video highlighting the decision and the reasons behind it was viewed by thousands of people on Facebook and Twitter.

All key information is made available on the council's website.

2: Communication with shops and businesses

Several businesses in Sidwell Street recently expressed concerns about the length of time work was taking on the temporary bus facilities in the city centre.

The communications team were able to provide regular updates on the progress of the work and speak to those affected, by liaising with contractors and the project team.

Information is being provided for business directly affected by the wider redevelopment plans wherever possible. We will help to highlight and give publicity to businesses in Paris Street who are relocating.

3: Communication with key stakeholders

We are working closely with key stakeholders including the Crown Estate, Stagecoach, Exeter BID, Princesshay, passenger and transport user groups over all aspects of the redevelopment.

The Crown Estate continues to make good progress with its plans for the redevelopment and communications are being coordinated with them to highlight key milestones.

4: Communicating directly with Exeter residents and the wider public

Information is being provided and distributed through social media, the council's website and the local media.

The council ensures timely and accurate information is distributed about key events like the Emergency Meeting at the Guildhall on Tuesday night, using social media and the council's website.

The communications team also assisted in ensuring residents with disabilities were able to attend the event by prior arrangement.

Through the dedicated phone line for questions about the project – 01392 265880 – the communications team continues to deal with queries concerning all aspects of the development from the public and businesses.

5: Communicating with the media

Key information is provided to the media and has helped to contribute to widespread coverage, particularly of recent events.

There is a huge appetite for information about the project from the local media and they are assisted in providing that coverage as much as possible.

The Express & Echo recently published a lengthy open letter from the Council Leader highlighting the current issues surrounding the project.

The media remains a key communications partner and their continued interest in this key development is appreciated.

6: Future communications

We will continue to ensure the public and key stakeholders are kept fully informed of all the latest developments in a timely and transparent manner.

A coordinated approach with our development partner the Crown Estate will continue, to highlight and promote this hugely important redevelopment and the work being done to ensure its successful delivery.