



NOTES of the **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT KEY AREA GROUP MEETING** held in the Council Chamber on **24th February 2025 at 19.00hours.**

Committee Present:

Robert Eggleston	Chairman
David Eggleton	Vice Chairman
Cedric de Souza	
John Orchard	
Janice Henwood	
Bob Foster	
Andy Stowe	

Also Present:

Cllrs;
Anne Eves
Matthew Cornish
Adam White
Brenda Williams
Peter Williams
Dianne Black

Others: Julie Holden (Chief Executive)
9` members of the public

**denotes non attendance*

50. Open Forum

The Chairman opened the meeting and invited any questions from the public gallery. He explained the public speaking process. There were no questions therefore the Chair moved to the substantive agenda.

51. Apologies for Absence

The Committee were fully in attendance

52. Substitutes

There were none

53. Declarations of Interest

Cllr de Souza declared that he was a Trustee of the Beehive CIO, he did not partake in the discussion or vote regarding the Beehive.

54. Chairmans Announcements

The Chairman advised that further to the last meeting, under minute 49, Jackson Coles had not provided an estimate due to time restraints, but Greenwoods had agreed to provide the costings at no cost (absorbed into the project). If, however, the project does not go ahead a cost of £1500 plus VAT would be charged.

55. Notes of the Strategic Development Meeting

RESOLVED:

The notes of the meeting of 4th November 2024 were accepted as a true record and the chairman authorised to sign them as such.

56. Notes from the Community Buildings Development Group Meeting 3rd February 2025.

The recommendation was noted that Council would be asked to amend the name of the group to the Community Land and Buildings Development Working Group and that the changes to membership would to be put to the May Annual Council.

The chairman advised that items concerning the Beehive would be addressed under the next agenda item. It was suggested that the noted recommendation regarding the Beehive may need rephrasing to ensure that there was no misunderstanding regarding the role of the stakeholders, that their support was necessary for the recommendation to proceed to Council. The chair said this could be discussed in the next item on the agenda.

It was queried as to why the Terms of Reference for the working group were not included in the agenda for the KAG, as Councillors who were not on the group had not seen them. It was advised that they had been circulated to all Councillors previously. *(post meeting note; the Terms of Reference were approved at Council on 18th November, the working group accepted them at their first meeting)*

It was asked that the working group please consider the position of St Johns Pavillion, as to whether it was feasible that the Council make a financial contribution as had been previously discussed, as the project and problems encountered had changed the situation.

RESOLVED: To accept the notes of the working group meeting

57. The Beehive

The Chair introduced the item by referring to the history of the project. To come up to date the scheme sat at RIBA stage 1, this is a sketch drawing and provisional costings for a scheme. It was clarified that at stage 1 there was no potential to seek promises of funding nor grants as the scheme is not complete enough.

The vision is for the centre to have rear access for loading and drop off, as well as a daytime entrance from Cyprus Road. The Museum artifacts would no longer have a dedicated room but could instead be displayed throughout the centre.

It was clarified that the current scheme would remove the upstairs meeting room at Cyprus Hall, but as additional and more flexible and accessible rooms would be available overall, there would be a gain.

It was clarified that Greenwoods as QS and project manager have quoted £4,950 to move the project to RIBA stage 2, the architects fees are not yet known (they have been requested) but are thought to be around £27,000.

There was concern expressed about spending an additional £30,000 plus and still the project may not go forward, or if delayed for a period of time would need the QS costing revisited later.

It was commented that if the costs are believed to be at £5m and that significant grants must be found, was it realistic that the Council continue to spend money on a project that it has no prospect of affording.

It was stated that RIBA stage 2 will afford for provisional identification of grants and donations. That the stage 2 gives greater clarity to the final scheme and project as a whole.

It was asked as to the position of the RBL site and whether the current provision for the project will cover the costs for this next stage, also how much would then be left in the community building fund to put towards this project?

The Chair explained the current reading of the overage agreement and that a meeting was to be sought with the trustees to revisit this. There is approximately £400,000 in the Building Fund and £47k per year goes into this. There are calls on the fund from the Park Centre at this time so the full amount is not available to this project. There is funding to cover this next stage. There is also £252,000 in S106 available to the Beehive at this time. (The papers may have stated an old figure, the £252,000 has been confirmed as the position as at August 2024).

It was stated that Interest Rates are currently too high to entertain borrowing from the public works loan board now.

It was asked why take the next step to RIBA 2? Why not simply wait until the interest rates drop so that the scheme can be afforded?

The Chair replied that taking this step now will put the Council in the best position, delaying this means that this step will need to be done later, when costs will potentially be yet higher.

It was stated that it would be better to undertake more public and stakeholder consultation before spending more funds. It was confirmed that a meeting with stakeholders was taking place the following day.

There were several comments as to the public support and Councillor support that a venue was needed in the town and would be well used. It was also stated that there was support but would not be “at any cost”.

It was clarified that the RIBA stage 2 plans would not fall out of date, once they were provided if the scheme then stalled to wait for more favourable finance options, the only change would be revisiting the build costs, but the more expensive architect work would not necessarily need changing if the design was approved and supported.

There were some specific design comments that were noted:

Does the proposed toilet block exceed the current building line?

Can photovoltaic and other sustainable energy options be included in the design?

Some of the existing items from the museum and historic society are not necessarily suitable for display (such as books), the current users of the Cyprus Hall have a degree of storage and fittings, these would need considering too.

It was commented that artifacts need to be cared for properly and future projects may be needed regarding digitalising of books should be considered.

There were concerns that this facility will duplicate the offering of the Park Centre, it was clarified that the Park Centre was principally aimed at youth provision and this would generally be a different market.

There were concerns as to the ongoing costs that the finished project may still seek support for. This would be necessary to factor this into decisions, a revenue and cost benefit analysis would be necessary.

It was clarified that the revenue plan and the operation plan had yet to be considered, they were bodies of work that would be necessary to give a realistic ongoing costing.

A member of the public commented that the current sketch diagram didn't show a large enough stage, wings which are necessary for pantomime and sufficient backstage facilities, these would need revisiting.

The Chair advised that RIBA stage 1 is a concept design and it is at stage 2 where these items would be finalised.

There were concerns that the current design was not fit for purpose. It was clarified that the stakeholders meeting would no doubt also provide ideas for changes to be

included. This is necessary before moving to RIBA stage 2, in order to not incur additional re-design costs later.

RESOLVED:

1. **to carry out consultation with key stakeholders for the proposed Beehive to determine appetite for the scheme *and if still supportive* ;**
2. **to recommend to Council that the project proceed with the previously appointed architects and project managers to RIBA Stage 2.**

There being no other business the meeting ended at 20.17.