

Executive – 8 September 2016

Present: Councillor Williams (Chairman)
Councillors Beale, Berry, Edwards, Habgood and Parrish

Officers: James Barrah (Director – Housing and Communities), Ian Timms (Assistant Director – Business Development), Jo Nacey (Finance Manager) and Richard Bryant (Democratic Services Manager)

Also present: Councillors Aldridge and Coles.
Andy Clancy, MACE Cost Consultancy Limited

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm.)

43. Apologies

Councillors Mrs Herbert and Mrs Warmington.

44. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 4 August 2016, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and were signed.

45. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Beale declared personal interests as a Board Member and Director of Tone FM and as a Governor of the South West Ambulance NHS Trust. Councillor Edwards declared a personal interest as the Chairman of Governors of Queens College. Councillor Parrish declared a personal interest as the District Councils' representative on the Somerset Pensions Committee.

46. Coal Orchard Development, Taunton – Update on Progression of Delivery Strategy

Reference Minute No. 52/2015, considered report previously circulated, which updated Members on progress in delivering the regeneration of the Coal Orchard, Taunton.

The Executive had approved a Delivery Strategy last year to move forward the regeneration of this site which aimed to create a “new place on the river”. The site was a key component of the Council’s adopted Taunton Rethink.

The planned development would increase the role of the Coal Orchard in the town centre. It would enhance that area improving the ability of people to interact with the River Tone by providing a quality environment linked to the existing streetscape and the Brewhouse Theatre.

An outline planning application to progress the Delivery Strategy had been worked up over the past months and was now ready for submission. The application, even in outline form, would contain a significant quantity of detailed information due to the important nature of the site in the town's regeneration plans. If approved, this would provide a very strong foundation for the reserved matters application which was likely to be submitted in the delivery phase of the project in late spring 2017.

Noted that the current application was supported by a detailed viability assessment which had taken a range of factors into account which affected the development. This in turn had enabled the creation of the outline business case for the regeneration of the site which had been circulated for the information of Members.

A key element of this business case was an analysis of the delivery options. The original intention had been to develop a joint venture (JV) partnership, an approach which the Council had some experience of. This would create clear boundaries around the risks that the Council would be exposed to in developing the site.

Whilst JV remained a strong proposition, the work on the business case had indicated that direct delivery by the Council was also a viable option. Although there was a different risk profile associated with the approach, the proposed development did have the potential to be a key element in the Council's emerging approach to commercialism.

Further reported that the St James Street Swimming Pool lay within the development site and was therefore an element of the development project. The decommissioning of the building was currently underway following the surrender of the lease by Tone Leisure and work to secure the demolition of the site would be continued.

In parallel with the work outlined above the Council had been supporting Arts Taunton with the production of its new venue study which had focussed on the Brewhouse Theatre. The study had concluded that a significantly enhanced, restructured and enhanced building would deliver on the aspirations of Arts Taunton.

The Council was now working with the Taunton Theatre Association as the leaseholders of the building to explore the detailed business case for this proposition. Noted that any expansion and enhancement would therefore represent an additional phase of the development of the Coal Orchard area and would also support further the current resurgence of the theatre.

Reported that the Community Scrutiny Committee had considered the proposed Coal Orchard regeneration at its meeting held on 30 August 2016. The main views of Members were submitted although generally the regeneration was supported.

Resolved that:-

- (1) The submission of an outline planning application by the Council, acting in its landowner role, be supported. The application would be based on the design information within the Design Access Statement appended to the Executive's report;

- (2) The business case and associated viability assessment which underpinned the application be noted;
- (3) The progress in creating the delivery mechanism outlined within the report and the direction of travel be also noted; and
- (4) Officers be requested to carry out further work including due diligence and a 'worked up' business case to arrive at a preferred delivery route for consideration by the Council.

47. **Executive Forward Plan**

Submitted for information the Forward Plan of the Executive over the next few months.

Resolved that the Forward Plan be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.02 p.m.)