

Full Council Meeting – 27 July 2021

Report of Councillor Marcus Kravis – Asset Management and Economic Development

Major and Special Projects

Coal Orchard

Marketing of the residential properties has started in earnest and bookings are now being taken by Connells, our agent, for the show flat, with several reservations made in the first few weeks. Potential homeowners can now browse a sales brochure and website for Taunton's prime riverside quarter - www.riversidecoalorchard.co.uk.

Work continues on the project, with significant progress made on all buildings, with the construction of those expected to be completed in late July / early August, with the public realm works following shortly afterwards. Nationwide material shortages have had an impact on the finishing programme, with plasterboard, cement and ceramic tiles being affected. A revised completion programme will be issued once the material issues can be assessed and resolved. The contractor has started to demobilise their site cabins from the centre of the site to allow work to start on the car park (including EV charge points).

Terms are agreed with two of the eight commercial tenants with active negotiations continuing for the other units. Fit out of the units will commence by the tenants as soon as practicable, subject to access and completion of legal agreements.

Firepool

GWR building / cycle path

The GWR refurbishment work has now completed, securing the building for active use as a site office. Plans for the cycle path are being adapted to allow for the build programme and construction footprint of the Innovation Centre which overlaps with the original temporary route. SISK (contractor for the station MSCP) have now demobilised, allowing the site to be assessed for the temporary cycle route.

Digital Innovation Centre

SWT are continuing to work in collaboration with SCC on delivery of a 2400m² Digital Innovation centre on the Firepool site. The project teams are continuing to work up the detailed infrastructure and services plans and aligning respective build programmes to allow delivery of the Innovation Centre alongside the key infrastructure work. SWT are aiming to deliver key utilities to the site in Summer 21.

Changes in response to feedback from the Design Review Panel have been integrated into the design.

Special Purpose Vehicle

SWT have been exploring the most efficient delivery route for large projects such as Firepool and a dedicated development arm which will be solely focussed on delivery of key regeneration projects was approved a Full Council on 3rd November. The

detailed work to progress this key component has progressed, with formation likely to take place prior to start on site for infrastructure and engineering works.

Infrastructure, Utilities and Flood work

In response to the constraints of the Phosphate issue on submission of a site wide LDO, officers are working to agree a Planning Performance Agreement (a project management tool) between the Council as Local Planning Authority and the Council as Developer to find the most appropriate planning route to delivering the Firepool scheme.

Procurement for the specialist work to support the detailed studies necessary for these applications is underway.

A preliminary ecological appraisal has been completed on the weir and green space between the canal and river up to Obridge, which will inform the final design of any flood mitigation works.

Future High Streets Fund

On 2 June SWT received its official offer letter from MHCLG confirming its award of £13,962,981 of Future High Street Funds for work in Taunton on Coal Orchard, Firepool and Active Travel. With it came the first payment of £4.75m for the financial year 2021/22. £1m will be used to contribute to the Coal Orchard Development, £3m to support infrastructure around the boulevard and development of Block 3 at Firepool, and £750k to begin work to create a cycle route that will connect the Train Station to Vivary park and East Reach. Next steps include working on details for each project, beginning procurement work and developing a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for MHCLG.

Bus Station

Design progress prior to seeking planning permission to convert the Bus Station to a car park has been delayed slightly to allow for further consideration of the infrastructure requirements of equipment and car park layout, including the potential for electric vehicle charging points. Detailed surveys of the bus station buildings are underway and preliminary discussions have been had with potential end users.

West Somerset Employment Land Sites

Work has begun to tackle the longstanding challenge of identifying new employment land in the West Somerset area to meet increased demand by local businesses to expand and develop. Consultants have been engaged following a procurement process and are now looking to assess various sites to determine their suitability and establish what needs to be done to bring something new to market. Work is taking place over a 12-week period, with a report being drafted for publication to members in August.

Heritage

Tonedale Mill

The S48 Repairs notices have been served and discussions continue with the owners on their response to the notice and the emergency works required on site.

Assets

Toneworks

Following completion of the first phase of repair works, SWT have applied for further grant funding from the Government's Levelling Up fund and Historic England to enable further targeted works, and a business case that will bring Toneworks back into use for community and cultural purposes.

Fox's Field

Lease discussions continue with the WMCIC for the site at Fox's Field to deliver community amenity space as a community forest garden.

Dulverton Weir

SWT continues to work with the Dulverton Weir and Leat Conservation Trust and other stakeholders to investigate future options for the repair and long-term future of the site. We received SRA funding for technical work and the Trust have organised an event in the summer.

Norton Hillfort

The site has now been transferred to the South West Heritage Trust for long term guardianship. Both organisations will be meeting on site to make sure all the final bits of work are complete until the autumn programme. The SWHT are hosting an event on the 31st July to formally hand over the site and celebrate the removal from the Heritage at Risk Register.

Hinkley Point C

EDF have now submitted their official proposals to local councils for increasing their workforce from 5,600 to 8,600 workers at peak of construction in early 2023. SWT is working with other local authorities to assess these proposals and work through the potential impacts that this change could have on a range of areas, including in housing, skills, community safety, transport, health and the environment. Next steps include responding to EDF and discussing key issues with them during June and July.

Watchet

Good progress is being made on the wall reinforcement. The £740k capital improvement scheme.

The Marine Property Group is on course to complete the works necessary within the Marina prior to Christmas 2021.

Flook House.

The working Group has met and the report is being presented to the Executive on the 21st July.

Deane House

Work is underway to the second floor of Deane House to accommodate the new tenants.