

CABINET WORKING PARTY - PROJECTS

Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Working Party - Projects held on Wednesday, 18 May 2022 in the remotely via Zoom at 10.00 am

Committee	Mr T Adams (Chair)	Mrs A Fitch-Tillett
Members Present:	Ms V Gay	Mr R Kershaw
	Mr E Seward	

Members also attending:

Officers in Attendance: Corporate Programme & Project Manager, Democratic Services Manager, Corporate Business Manager and Programme & Projects Manager

Also in attendance:

Apologies for Absence:

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr N Lloyd.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet Working Party for Projects held on 23rd March 2022, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

4 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None received.

5 PROJECT UPDATE REPORTS

Updates were provided on each project in turn:

1. North Walsham Heritage Action Zone

The Project Manager said that work was progressing well on Cedar House. The interior had been stripped out and the roof repaired. Heating options were now being considered. She confirmed that it would be an electric system. The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth added that this would incur an additional cost as it was an upgrade on the existing to make it more carbon efficient. The Chairman thanked the officers for the recent tour of the project. He had found it really useful and was impressed by what had been achieved so far.

Cllr R Kershaw said that cultural events were really enhancing the overall project. The recent food fair had been very busy and there was a lot of interest in the upcoming craft market too. Confidence in the town was gathering momentum and it was positive to see.

Cllr E Seward agreed that the project was progressing well but said that he remained nervous. Regarding the Cedars, he said that there were two potential risks which needed to be monitored. There was currently a pause on works and it was imperative that costs and required funding for the replacement electrical system were resolved as soon as possible. The second risk was lack of use of the building once it was finished. It was vital that it was used. The Town Council had agreed heads of terms but no response had been received from the County Registrar, despite the heads of terms being sent to them in February. There had been some private interest too but it needed to be flagged up as a concern as the building needed to be occupied as soon as it was refurbished and available. Cllr Seward agreed that the Street Feast event had been a major boost to the project and he hoped that the popularity of the craft fair would add to the momentum. He welcomed progress on the bus interchange which seemed to be on schedule. Work on the Shambles was a bit behind but the work completed so far looked very impressive. In terms of future planning, he said that consideration would need to be given as to how to manage the car parking situation as the next phase of the project began in June / July.

Cllr V Gay said, that as a resident of the town, she found the progress on the project to be very cheering. It was really good to see the change in emotions as residents noticed the progress being made. Cllr Gay then asked whether there was any indication that the County Registrar was reluctant to agree to signing a lease or whether it was just a delay at their end. The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth replied that the Council's surveyor was liaising closely with all potential tenants of the Cedars and discussions had taken place regarding layout, lighting etc. He added that he believed that the County Council was keen for the Registrar to be based there but agreement needed to be reached on the location within the building. He said that a sub-contractor was lined up to undertake the works and it was just a case of budget reconciliation internally now. Cllr Gay said that having the Registrar based at the Cedars was a positive move for the town as it was a much nicer location.

The Chairman referred to Phase 3 of the project and asked about timescales. The Project Manager replied that the redesign for the space adjacent to the Black Swan pub had been sent through yesterday. She advised that a planning application had been submitted for work on the walls to allow accessing from the car park. It was hoped that work could commence from the end of June.

Cllr J Toye asked whether the Council was seeking to promote active travel / public transport with the new interchange coming into use. The Project Manager confirmed that this was one of the elements of the overall masterplan for the project. Cycle lanes were being installed as part of the public realm improvements and 'way finding' and signage would be put in place to highlight walking trails. In addition there would be more promotion of the bus interchange. Cllr Toye asked whether the cultural events that were planned could be used to promote all the alternative means of travel. The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth said that part of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funding related to active travel, adding that NNDC instigated the cultural events but didn't run them. He said that it was important to ensure consistent messaging regarding sustainable travel across all of the towns in the District. He said that the next milestone was the confirmation of the Traffic

Regulation Order (TRO). By using the town for craft and food fairs, it was an opportunity to demonstrate how it would look in the future. The Chairman asked whether any comments had been received in response to the TRO consultation. The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth replied that he was not aware of any.

The Chairman asked about the overall budget for the project and if there were any pressures. The Project Manager replied that the process was underway for the town centre public realm and highways works. Target prices from the contractors were awaited for the market place and Black Swan Loke areas. Once the costs were available, they would be in a better position to understand which elements of the scheme could be funded and which needed alternative sources of funding. She added that the project was a catalyst for bringing in future funding and opportunities. This was helped hugely by the good working relationship between all of the key partners.

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth said that it was good news that the budget had expanded after year one and then again after year two and the excellent relationship that the Council had with Historic England (HE) had been instrumental in this increase in funding. The main challenge to the budget at the moment was rapidly increasing construction materials costs. Where possible, materials were being purchased in advance and stored. A cautious approach was being taken, however, and only materials for areas that were definitely being improved were being purchased in advance. He added that the budget for cultural activities were sound.

Cllr Kershaw clarified that the major parts of the project would proceed as planned. Only some smaller elements would be adjusted and alternative funding would be sought for these.

The Project Manager then updated the Working Party on the Building Improvement Grants (BIGs). So far, there had been 27 expressions of interest mainly within the Market Place and Kings Arms Street. Three had been approved so far, with two having started on site. A few were currently with HE for review. It was a complex process as it often required listed building consent and priority was being given to projects that would have the most impact.

2. Fakenham Roundabout

The Project Manager (MC) explained that there was due to be a meeting shortly to discuss the 'tri-partite' agreement, which had still not been signed. This was due to some nervousness on the liability for any overspend. It was unlikely that any prices would be available until May or June now. The work on the designs was ongoing and on schedule.

The Chairman asked about the drainage system and if there was any update. The Project Manager said that there had been some discussions between Norfolk CC and Savills but she had no further information at this time. She added that there had been further discussions regarding other issues including the provision of access for the farmer and closing Water Moor Lane and providing a temporary diversion and whether this should be made permanent. She said that she had some concerns that the funding window closed in March 2023 and that it could be challenging to meet this deadline if the additional work required did not take place in a timely manner.

Cllr E Seward asked whether the Council would be required to release more budget for the project. The Project Manager replied that the Council did not want to be liable

for any overspend. The estimated cost of the project was £1.2m - £1.4m and until costs were established, it was hard to predict how much additional funding would be required. Cllr Seward then referred to the residential development which had stalled due to the impact of the recent ruling on nutrient neutrality. He asked whether this would have an impact on the delivery of the roundabout project. The Project manager replied that the nutrient neutrality issue had not had an impact as yet.

Cllr J Toye commented that the materials should be purchased as soon as possible to mitigate against escalating costs. He asked whether the drainage issues were linked to nutrient neutrality or to ease pressure on the site. The Project Manager replied that she didn't know, adding that nutrient neutrality shouldn't affect the scheme as it only required a habitat assessment.

3. Local Plan

In the absence of the Planning Policy Manager, the Director for Place & Climate Change provided a brief update on the local plan. He said that the impact of nutrient neutrality on local plan making needed to be taken into account as it would cause some delay. He added that the Norfolk authorities had appointed a QC to give advice and he hoped to be able to provide an update within the next 2 – 3 weeks. Cllr Seward commented that 89 planning cases had been held up by the nutrient neutrality issue and it would be helpful if this figure could be equated to the number of houses, including affordable homes.

4. Tree Planting

The Climate & Environmental Policy Manager said that there was not much to report on this project as the tree planting season had now finished. The next season would be between October 2022 and March 2023. To date 72,000 had been planted and it was anticipated that all the remaining trees would be planted by the end of March 2023. The project was running on time and within budget.

In terms of risks, there were ongoing difficulties in purchasing large numbers of trees, especially native species. There were also risks associated with landowners dropping out of planned projects. This was usually due to them opting for an alternative scheme which provided an ongoing payment for tree planting.

The Chairman congratulated the team on all their hard work.

5. Net Zero Strategy and Action Plan

The Climate & Environmental Policy Manager said that the Net Zero Strategy & Action Plan now had an established Board in place to oversee the significant range of projects which were being put in place in order for the Council to meet its net zero target. Two projects had been prioritised by the Board. The first was the appointment of a consultant to assess all of the Council's assets (including leased assets) and make recommendations regarding energy efficiency processes to support decarbonisation. This piece of work would also gather data to inform subsequent carbon baseline assessments. The second priority work-stream was to establish an ongoing process for calculating the Council's carbon emissions. It was hoped to bring this work in-house as the process needed to be streamlined. She explained that it was hoped that a graduate intern could be employed to do this work, via UEA. Both work-streams had been allocated a budget.

The Climate & Environmental Policy Manager explained that there was a

communications strategy in place to promote the Net Zero Strategy.

In terms of risks, the focus needed to be on highlighting the level of work needed to achieve the Net Zero target of 2030 and the impact of Council decisions on this target. Wording would be included in committee report templates to address this issue.

The Chairman asked whether a consultant had been appointed yet to assess the Council's assets. The Climate & Environmental Policy Manager replied that the Estates and Asset Strategy Manager was leading on this and she was liaising with APSE to find a suitably qualified consultant.

Cllr V Gay said that she was fully supportive of appointing a graduate intern for the second priority work-stream.

6. The Reef Leisure Centre, Sheringham

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth said that there were still some outstanding 'snags' but it was expected that the architect would make a final visit to the site in the next month. He added that there were no significant outstanding issues. The Council had initiated proceedings to settle the final account and it was hoped that there would be a meeting soon to agree how to progress. He concluded by saying that there was still some internal signage to be put in place. Once this was done then the final grant could be claimed from Sport England. Usage of the Reef remained high and continued to perform above expectations.

6 MEDIUM PROJECTS

Cllr V Gay asked if there was an established review process in place for medium-sized projects. The Project Manager replied that the Medium Project Boards were managed by the Directors and they met bi-monthly and all of the projects were reviewed. The Cabinet Working Group could request to review any project at any time. She went on to explain that once a project was finished, two documents needed to be completed – a sign off document and a 'lessons learned' document. It had not yet been agreed where the 'lessons learned' documents would be reported to. One suggestion was that they came through to the Working Party for review.

Cllr A Fitch-Tillett said that Coastal Partnership East (CPE) was using SCAPE and meeting on a monthly basis to review and monitor all of the relevant projects. It provided a firm structure and control mechanisms all the way through the process.

The Assistant Director for Sustainable Growth said that he supported Cllr Gay's comments regarding feedback on completed projects. This information was crucial and should be included as part of the process for all projects. However, it was important that any lessons were learnt and that resources were put in place to support this.

Cllr E Seward referred to the enabling land adjacent to the Reef. It was worth approximately £1m and it was important that it was included and reported on regularly as it was key to the financing of the overall scheme.

Cllr Seward asked about the solar car port project at the Reef and whether it was progressing. He asked for an update at the next meeting. He then referred to the public conveniences at Vicarage Street in North Walsham and queried the listing of 'no status' for this project as he understood it was progressing. The Project Manager

replied that this indicated that no paperwork had been submitted yet for this project.

7 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The meeting ended at 11.08 am.

Chairman