

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **South Oxhey Initiative Steering Committee** held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Monday 20 April 2015 from 7.30pm to 8.29pm.

Present: Councillors Ann Shaw OBE (Chairman), Matthew Bedford, Martin Trevett

Councillor Joan King - Herts County Council
Councillor Pam King - Watford Rural Parish Council.

Officers in attendance:

Steven Halls - Chief Executive
Alan Head - Head of Major Projects
Helen Wailing - Committee Manager
Mike Simpson - Committee & Web Officer

Also in attendance:- Councillors Len Tippen, Terry Dos Ramos and Parish Councillor Stephen King

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Stephen Cox.

SO10/14 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the South Oxhey Initiative Steering Committee held on 26 January 2015 were confirmed as a correct record.

SO11/14 PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a progress report on the South Oxhey Initiative by the Head of Major Projects.

At the end of March 2015 the shortlist for tenders had been reduced to two bids, from United House, comprising Thrive Homes and the Watford Community Housing Trust, and Countryside Properties which included the Home Group Housing Association Scheme. The Head of Major Projects then showed the group plans and artist impressions of both bids, with particular emphasis on proposals for providing housing, retail and car parking (600 spaces).

As financial details were still being evaluated, and the process was still commercially sensitive, details of costs were not divulged.

It was asked who was responsible for deciding the winning bid. The Group was informed that both bids would be assessed by a panel which included Council officers, Architects, Deloitte and Legal representatives of the Council using a point-scoring process, after which a recommendation would be made to the Policy and Resources Committee.

The Head of Major Projects said that he would check when the scores could be made public. Action: AH

It was stated that a formal decision regarding the successful tender would be made in May.

On the provision of rubbish removal and recycling facilities in either scheme it was stated that bin stores would be provided in the main blocks, but an in-depth level of detail regarding recycling was unavailable at this stage although it could be safely assumed that such matters would be addressed and suitable provision made.

The Head of Major Projects explained that the two remaining bidders had been required to clarify certain elements of their tenders for legal clarification by 21 April in what was a 'marking-up' process. More detailed information would be available in May 2015.

A Councillor expressed concern that existing facilities in the South Oxhey regeneration area were in danger of being removed but not replaced, and questioned why one tender advocated removal of *The Ox* Public House, while the other tender left it in, citing cost as a reason for not redeveloping it. The Head of Major Projects stated that a plot's size did not represent its value, and other factors, including turnover and length of lease applied. Issues relating to amenities would be addressed with the company submitting the winning bid, and the Head of Major Projects had confidence in the accuracy of the figures.

A Councillor said that neither developer appeared to be aware of the existence of Kingdom Hall, but the Head of Major Projects confirmed that both parties were.

A Councillor stated that at some stage a formal decision would be needed regarding a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). The Head of Major Projects responded that a decision regarding CPOs would not be taken until planning consent had been granted.

Following the announcement of the winning tender, the scheme would be referred back to the Policy and Resources Committee in September 2015 for a Developer Agreement, after which a planning scheme could be expected by the end of the year.

In reply to concerns regarding the commitment of the company submitting the winning tender to meet its obligations, the Head of Major Projects assured the group that both companies had invested time and money getting to this stage of the process and were committed. The Chairman asked whether the successful company would be tied into a contract. It was stated that at the time of the Developer Agreement – hopefully in September – obligations would apply. If it was felt that obligations were not being met, the Council had the power to step in and take the development back. However, the successful company was not likely to walk away from the project given its investment to date.

A question was asked in relation to how the developer would receive payment i.e. staged or in one block. The Head of Major Projects stated that the developer was not paid by the Council, but would receive money from the sale of houses and retail space etc. A Councillor added that the developer would only be paid on completion of each phase, and the Head of Major Projects added that TRDC would receive payment from the developer once a certain level of completion had been achieved.

With regard to social and affordable housing, it was asked what was known of the Home Group (Countryside Properties). The Head of Major Projects replied that he had taken up a specific reference from the London Borough of Harrow and would endeavour to obtain annual reports and customer surveys from the Home Group.

It was asked how long after the Committee meeting on 20 May 2015 would it be before people living in the affected properties were told of the plans. The Head of Major Projects stated that a press release would be issued the next day, and one of the first exercises would be to arrange design workshops would be organised in order to familiarise local people with the scheme.

RESOLVED:-

It was agreed that the Steering Committee had no objection to recommending either tender to the Policy & Resources Committee based on the information available.

SO12/14 MEETING SCHEDULE

The Chairman suggested the matter be discussed further after 20 May 2015.

SO13/14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

CHAIRMAN