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## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Thursday, 11 January 2018 from 7.00pm - 8.27 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Cameron Beart (substitute for Derek Conway), Monique Bonney (substitute for Mike Henderson), Andy Booth (Chairman), Mike Dendor, Mick Galvin, June Garrad, Ken Ingleton, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams and Ben Stokes.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Peter Binnie, Jo Millard, Bob Pullen, Dean Radmore and Emma Wiggins.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Councillor Mike Cosgrove (Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Huw Evans (Quinn Estates), Kevin McEveer (Lowick Communications) and Simon Western (Quinn Estates).

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Derek Conway, Mike Henderson and Lesley Ingham.

### 429 FIRE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the fire evacuation procedure.

### 430 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 15 November 2017 (Minute Nos. 327 - 338) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 431 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### 432 SITTINGBOURNE TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, the Director of Regeneration, the Special Projects Manager, the Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration Scheme Manager, Huw Evans and Simon Western from Quinn Estates and Kevin McEveer from Lowick Communications to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration introduced the update report and advised that, due to deadlines, the report had been produced before Christmas and further updates would be discussed during the meeting.

In response to questions from a Member, the Special Projects Manager advised that the revised floor plans and elevations for the Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) would be available to view imminently and that the licence for alterations to the

Forum Car Park was necessary as the Council leased the land from Tesco. He added that there would be 318 car parking spaces although this might change if more disabled spaces were required.

There was a discussion on the complex measures required to complete the land swap and Huw Evans stated that good engagement with Network Rail was continuing in order to complete the Land Disposal Policy Condition 7 (LC7) process. The Chairman applauded the good communication with Network Rail.

A Member asked about the current risks of the project. The Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration Manager advised that a strategic risk register was available and gave examples of non-operational risks such as failure of the partners to deliver or the loss of tenants. The Director of Regeneration added that measures were in place to minimise risk and reminded Members that Swale Borough Council's (SBC) risks had reduced since the scheme went unconditional on 29 November 2017.

The same Member asked about costs of the project. The Special Projects Manager explained that the costs of the MSCP were fixed and were no longer affected by the exchange rate. He added that a Quantity Surveyor had been appointed for the MSCP and costs were all within budget.

The Chairman was pleased that the completion date of 8 December 2017 for the first phase of the highways works had been met and referred to future target dates highlighted in the update report. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration explained that there might be enforced winter weather delays and that an exact date in May for work to the leisure units was still to be confirmed. Huw Evans added that work to Units 1 and 2 had gone well, and preparatory works to the leisure units could commence before May 2018.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Regeneration advised that all the retail units had been let.

There was a discussion on the impact of moving the Sittingbourne Market to the High Street to allow access to the Forum Car Park for the scheme, and the Director of Regeneration apologised for the lack of communication to traders and public, and advised that the team were working to find a solution for issues raised by traders. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration referred to the meeting with 33 traders earlier in the week and advised that there would be a further meeting. He spoke about the complicated Road Traffic Orders and the Director of Regeneration added that the Sittingbourne Town Centre Scheme Manager would send a separate update to Members of the Scrutiny Committee on the subject as the issues were not part of the Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration update being discussed.

A Member congratulated the team on progress of the STC Regeneration scheme and suggested that there should be more narrative on the photos and plans in the report so that the public could see how much progress had been made. Kevin McEveer advised that the information was on the Spirit of Sittingbourne (SoS) website. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration referred to the photo of the fuel storage tank that had been buried underground and caused delays at the beginning of the scheme.

The Director of Regeneration confirmed that there would be a further Member Briefing on Phase 2 and continued communication with the public.

The Chairman referred to the Utility Services on page 2 of the report and asked whether there would be joined up working with the Utility Companies? Huw Evans stated that it was very complicated but all was going well and whilst there was an obligation for SoS to arrange installation of the services, it was a Kent County Council approval process, and services would be installed before any new tarmacking took place. He drew attention to the possibility of additional costs involved and unsightly appearance if this was not achieved. The Sittingbourne Town Centre Manager added that if there was any emergency repair work required by a utility company, the highway could be dug up.

A Member requested details of timelines and future target dates, even if dates changed, for subsequent updates for the Scrutiny Committee.

The same Member asked the Director of Regeneration what she considered were the 2 main risks currently? In response, the Director of Regeneration advised that since the project had gone unconditional in November 2017, the focus was on the processes and the team could now look forward to what residents wanted to see. She added that working with Network Rail had also been problematic but a change in staff had facilitated this so her concern was that relationship building might be lost if staff changed at other organisations. The Director of Regeneration added that all organisations were currently working well together but some issues were out of their control. In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Regeneration confirmed that the relationship with Tesco was much more positive.

A Member asked about the footpath connectivity from the High Street and the Special Projects Manager advised that Kent County Council's contractors Amey were currently working on the design and it would be funded from Section 106 money due, which would not be paid until work on the MSCP commenced. He confirmed that the footpath would be disability compliant.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration said that the focus had been on the large parts of the scheme but updates on the smaller issues would be provided at the next Scrutiny Meeting.

In response to a Member's question around the cash flow of the contract, the Chairman advised that the financial implications of the scheme were dealt with separately and delivery of the scheme was the priority of the Scrutiny Committee. Huw Evans added that the trigger payments for the Section 106 payments were all fully budgeted for and since the contract went unconditional in November 2017, it was a fixed price contract and SoS were taking all the risk.

In response to a question, the Special Projects Manager advised that 'rights of light' were considered as part of the planning application process and compensation was available for rights of light issues.

The Chairman thanked all the visitors for their attendance.

**433 REVIEWS AT FOLLOW-UP STAGE AND LOG OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Policy and Performance Officer introduced the report and drew attention that the Visitor Economy Strategy would be discussed at the Policy Development and Review Committee on 17 January 2018 and invited Members to attend.

In response to questions from a Member, the Policy and Performance Officer confirmed the information in the report that several recommendations in the Leisure and Tourism review were still ongoing.

**434 OTHER REVIEW PROGRESS REPORTS**

The Chairman advised that he had agreed with the Head of Planning Services to delay his report back to the Scrutiny Committee until the meeting in March 2018 as work was progressing.

A Member sought assurance that the work of the part-time Tree Officer would be covered in his absence.

A Member praised the improvement in the Planning Enforcement service.

The Chairman thanked the Policy and Performance Officer for the Development Management report circulated to Members of the Task and Finish Group prior to the meeting and suggested that the Policy and Performance Officer should confirm dates with the Development Management Task and Finish Group to formulate an action plan. The Policy and Performance Officer agreed.

The Policy and Performance Officer reminded Members that the draft Visitor Economy Strategy would be considered at the Policy Development and Review Committee on 17 January 2018 and then at the Cabinet Meeting on 7 February 2018.

The Chairman referred to the Regeneration Member Briefing held earlier in the week and a Member stated that the information gained from the briefing was a good starting point. A discussion on Regeneration projects took place and the following points were made:

- many projects have stalled;
- some areas of the Borough were being left out;
- majority of regeneration projects were at SBC's arm's length;
- High Streets in Sheerness and Sittingbourne were being neglected;
- a clean up of townscapes was required;
- local authority as well as commercially led schemes were required; and
- what had previous grant money awarded been spent on and what had it achieved?

The lead Member for Non-Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration projects advised that a meeting of the Task and Finish Group would be arranged within the next month.

**435 CABINET FORWARD PLAN**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer advised that there had been an addition to the Forward Plan since the Scrutiny Agenda had been printed and advised that updated paper copies of the Forward Plan were available and the plan was on the Council's website.

A Member referred to the item on Landholdings Review – Sale of Various Sites – and expressed his concern that SBC should balance maximising income but not at the threat of quality of life.

There was a discussion around the location of the sites referred to on the Forward Plan, on page 8 of the Agenda, and Members requested plans and further information from the Estates Surveyer.

In response to a Member's question, the Policy and Performance Officer clarified that the Economy Strategy had been re-named the Swale Regeneration Framework.

A Member referred to the Digital Strategy on page 15 of the Agenda and the Policy and Performance Officer advised that the Policy Development Review Committee would be considering that item.

**436 URGENT BUSINESS REQUESTS**

There were no urgent business requests.

**437 COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Policy and Performance Officer reminded Members that the Budget Scrutiny meeting would be held on Thursday 25 January 2018 and all Members had been invited to attend. He further advised that the Waste and Recycling Team would be invited to attend the Scrutiny meeting scheduled for 28 February 2018.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel