

Notes

Kirkham Futures Steering Group

Date:	Tuesday, 12 April 2022	
Venue:	Remote Meeting Via Zoom	
Present:	Councillor Liz Oades (Chairman) Councillor Karen Buckley - Leader Tracy Manning - Deputy Chief Executive. Mark Evans - Head of Planning. Paula Huber - Economic Development & Regeneration Manager. Melissa Thorpe - Town Centres Manager & Acting Project Manager. Derek Appleton - Corporate Finance Manager. Carly Smith - Legal Officer. Erin Coar - PR & Communications Officer. Gemma Broadly - Head of Corporate Services.	
Note Taker:	Lyndsey Lacey-Simone	Principal Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Marie Percival and Andrew Chatterjee.

2. Welcome and Introductions

Following introductions, the Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting.

3. Terms of Reference - Kirkham Futures Steering Group

Members were invited to consider the proposed Terms of Reference of the Kirkham Futures Steering Group (previously circulated)

It was AGREED: to recommend to the Planning Committee the Terms of Reference as set out on the agenda.

4. The Project so far and Current Challenges

To provide some context, **Tracy Manning (TM)** introduced this item. In doing so, she highlighted some of the past key resource & communication challenges of the project and actions taken to address some of these including the recent appointment of Charlie Richards as Head of Regeneration & Housing.

Shop Front Improvement Scheme - Melissa Thorpe (MT) introduced this item. She advised that 25 applications (15 within the HAZ area and 10 within the Future High Street fund area) had been received since its launch in November 2021. A Design Team (made up of NWDC and DC & MG) had been appointed. Matters associated with the planning and tendering arrangements were highlighted. **MT** reported that a Grant Panel has been established to look at the tenders received and allocate/award grants and that this body will meet on 19 April 2022. Details regarding this were outlined at the meeting.

MT went on to say that it was hoped that works on the first 4 shopfront projects would commence in 4 to 6 weeks albeit the demand for the scheme had been higher than the fund allocation.

Cllr Oades (EAO) commented that she was aware that some interested applicants had suggested that they had not had a response from the Council about their enquiry and sought reassurance that this would be addressed. **MT** stated that the Design Team would pick this up.

Cllr Buckley (KB) asked about the funding arrangements/criteria used and the associated planning/tender requirements. **MT** addressed this point and in doing so, confirmed that projects with planning permission could be eligible for up to a maximum of 90% grant dependant on the nature of the application.

KB asked about the total amount of the fund allocation. **MT** suggested that in the HAZ budget including match funding, there was £380,737 and approx. £480,000 in FHSF for the remaining 2 years for the shop front scheme. **MT** expanded on the anticipated delivery of the spend, given significant contractor/materials cost increases since the project's inception.

Public Realm Improvements - ME reminded the Group that the scheme had been designed and had the benefit of planning permission. He added that the tenders for the works came in considerably over the budget allocation. As a result of this, it had been necessary to look at how the project can be moved forward with the funding available. The 4 bidders had been contacted and had been asked to reduce the geographical area of the works. He explained that as it was still a live tender situation, the matter was deemed to be confidential and in view of this, the lowest tender figure was reported at the meeting. The preferred option highlighted at the meeting to address the challenge was to reduce areas by taking out the Preston Street and Freckleton Street arms of the scheme. **ME** went on to expand on the phasing of the scheme /rationale behind this approach.

ME further reported that another element of funding secured was the LCC grant (Lancs Economic Recovery Fund) which had been agreed in principle by LCC's Cabinet. He added that discussions are currently taking place with officers at County to finalise the business case to allow the Council to draw down the funding. Once concluded, the intention is to bring a report to cttee and add to the Capital programme at the earliest opportunity.

EAO asked about the materials removed from Poulton Street and whether it would be retained/ recycled in Freckleton Street & Preston Street. **ME** confirmed that the intention was to re-use material where possible to make the wider project more sustainable.

KB asked for an update on the status of the business case to LCC. In response, **ME** advised on the position to date.

KB sought clarification on the committee reporting arrangements. **Action: ME to review the committee reporting arrangements/timetable and come back to Councillors Oades and Buckley at the earliest opportunity.**

Purchase of Hillside - ME reported on this item. The Council had acquired the building and carried out some publicity on the purchase. In addition, an Architect, Jubb Clews (an established heritage practice) had been appointed to oversee the initial repair works /refurbishment. They had prepared a schedule of immediate repair works required to the building. The Company had in turn, appointed a company which specialises in restoration. **ME** explained that the next stage was to develop a site compound/ secure the building/ install scaffolding etc and management of the car park before commencing on site.

ME further reported that one of the key issues relating to the acquisition of the building was the retaining wall at the rear part of the site. He advised that the recent court case concluded in the Council's favour and there was no immediate requirement for expenditure to be incurred.

In terms of progress regarding the future use of the building, **ME** indicated that a recent meeting had been held with Heritage Trust for the NW, and that interest from other parties including Groundwork; UCLAN; Blackpool & Fylde College; and the NHS, had also been investigated in the early stages of the project.

The Chairman invited question and these related to the following areas: shared arrangements for the wall; parking arrangements; comms; interest shown from the various parties; viability of the project/ leases etc; lead for the project; future plans for the building & cttee reporting arrangements. **ME** addressed these points including proposed opportunities for the site to secure revenue income.

TSB Building - **ME** reported that the acquired the building had been a more straightforward project in that, the previous owner had commissioned some works in the past and there was an opportunity to appoint the same company as they had already undertaken some background data/ survey work of the building. **ME** added that the Council was in the process of appointing that company.

ME went on to explain that the plan of action was that during May/June period, the revised details of the scheme would be looked at with a view to tendering the contract in August/Sept and a proposed contract start date of October 2022. It would be a 9-month contract which proposed a cinema / restaurant opportunity with the aim of it being community focused. **ME** explained that there was some leeway on the budget, and he expanded on that.

EAO asked about the outcome of the consultation has there been support for the cinema. **ME** confirmed this to be the case and went on to further clarify the position.

Kirkgate - **ME** stated that this had been a challenging project. Registered providers had looked at this scheme and none could make it financially viable. The initial project was to acquire the building and pass on to a registered provider. The Council had been back to the Dept for the Levelling Up Fund to establish whether the fund could be reallocated/redistributed for other purposes such as works to the frontage of the building or the shop front scheme.

EAO referred to the loss of car parking spaces in the Market Square and enquired whether some of the monies could be used for this purpose. She highlighted those 25 spaces had been lost in Market Square. In response, **ME** provided some options and gave an undertaking for this to be looked at. **Action: ME**

5. Mid-Term Review – Growth Lancashire

Paula Huber (PH) introduced this item and in doing so, provided some background to Growth Lancashire (GL). The Group was advised that the Council had recently become a member of Growth Lancashire. An overview of the specialist services provided by GL was given. **PH** stated that as the Kirkham programme is 2 years into a 4-year programme, it was an ideal time to review the status and challenges to determine how the Council is equipped to move forward over the next 2 years to deliver the project.

PH further reported that she had arranged an inception meeting with GL. They will undertake a mid-term review and look at key aspects of the programme with a view to reporting on the matter to a future meeting of the Steering Group.

KB asked about the Council's experience of working with GL. **PH** addressed this point.

TM gave her support to the proposed review of work to be undertaken by GL.

6. Quarter 4 - HAZ and FHSF Funding Report

Derek Appleton (DA) provided some headline financial figures re HAZ and FHSF.

Kirkham HAZ scheme – It was reported that the claimable total expenditure at Quarter 4 was £635k against a forecast budget of £859k resulting in a loss of grant of £224k from Historic England. Historic England had stated that there is no slippage available. Mark Evans provided an update on the letter / correspondence from the MP.

Kirkham Future High Street Fund – It was reported that there is no loss of grant as the awarding body allows us to roll over any underspends into subsequent years.

ME went on to expand on the letter received from the MP for Fylde in that, there appeared to be a different message from Historic England and the MP. The information provided by the MP suggested that “the programme will not be at risk”, which was initially interpreted as the Kirkham programme and not the overall programme across the country. **Action: ME to further clarify the position with the MP and report back to the Group.**

7. Community Engagement Programme Review - Year One

MT introduced this item. A copy of the end of year summary of the Year One Community Engagement Programme was circulated with the agenda. **MT** went through the detail contained in the summary and highlighted the main successes. Members were advised that the Project was very well received.

MT went on to confirm that Years 2 and 3 of the Community Engagement Programme were now in draft form.

8. Project Communications

By way of introduction, **EAO** referred to some communication challenges that she had experienced in recent times and looked for some improvement in this area. In response, **Erin Coar (EC)** confirmed that the contract with the external company responsible for external communications came to an end on 31 March 2022 and as a result, this would now be brought back in house. She added that as the Team had recently grown, there were now more resources available to accommodate the comms requirements.

TM emphasised the importance attached to both internal and external project communications. She went on to say that regular meetings of the Steering Group would go some way to address this and the knowledge base of what is going on with the project generally.

KB asked about what positive comms could be taken from the meeting. In response, **EC** stated that this was a significant point of the project and a roundup of what has been done so far /plans would be helpful. It was also acknowledged that a review/update of the content of website would be timely to strip out outdated information and refresh with updated information. **Action: EC/MT**

ME referred to the opportunity for visuals to engage with the community by putting up posters/ banners up in Kirkham town centre to highlight the current/ongoing works/car parking etc. **Action: MT**

KB asked that a comms plan be put in place highlighting the shop front scheme in particular. **Action: MT/EC**

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and contributions. It was suggested that the next meeting be held w/c 9th May 2022 onwards. Date TBC.
