

OLDHAM TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

WEDNESDAY 2nd SEPTEMBER 2009

THE SALT CELLAR, CHURCH LANE, OLDHAM

PRESENT (BOARD MEMBERS):

Mr A Fletcher	Chair
Councillor D Hibbert	OMBC
Chief Superintendent Caroline Ball	Greater Manchester Police
Mr D Barlow	G Barlow & Sons Ltd
Mr M Berry	Debenhams
Mr S Howell	
Mr S Mitchinson	GMPTE
Mr R Schofield	

PRESENT (BOARD ADVISORS AND OFFICERS)

Mr G Birch	OMBC
Mr A Buklovskis	OMBC
Mrs M Carr	OMBC
Mrs C Chester	OMBC
Mr P Daly	OMBC
Sara Hewitt	OMBC
Mr M Lester	Town Centre Manager
Sergeant Russ Magnall	Greater Manchester Police

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor J Stanton	OMBC
Mr M Flanagan	(Vice Chair) Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre
Ms C Hopkins	Oldham Chamber
Mr J Lake	Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue
Mr G Mitchell	Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre
Ms Sheena MacFarlane	OMBC
Ms E Mclean	OMBC
Mr P Roberts	
Mr J Studholme	OMBC Regeneration Directorate
Ms N Whitehead	Demolition

2. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business submitted.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest received.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th June 2009 be approved as a correct record.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no Public Questions received.

6. UPDATE ON TOWN CENTRE CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN OLDHAM TOWN CENTRE

Sara Hewitt, Regeneration Officer, Economy Place and Skills Directorate, presented a report updating Members on the Town Centre regeneration proposals with specific reference to the following:

- Greater Manchester Town Centres Study

Members of the Partnership were informed that strong concerns had already been expressed over the direction of the study which had yet to be finalised. A meeting had been arranged with the consultants, which it was envisaged would involve representation from the Partnership.

- Britain in Bloom & s106

Members of the Partnership were informed that the judges' decision was still awaited on Bloom and Grow. It was now intended to build on this success and create a greater and longer lasting impact. Officers advised that this would involve work on a Corridors and Gateways strategy, which was about to commence and which would, potentially, include locations within the Town Centre. It was pointed out that there could be opportunities to use Section 106 funding and, in connection with this, officers had started to investigate a number of opportunities which were detailed for Board members.

- Old Town Hall and Coliseum Theatre

The report indicated that initial meetings of the two officer working groups had taken place and a Council members group which would oversee the work of the officers would meet later this month.

The aim of the group for the Old Town Hall was to look at issues relating to the redevelopment of the building and to take forward an agreed option. To achieve this it was proposed to carry out a structural survey which it was envisaged would be completed by the end of October; the aim was then to arrive at an agreed option by the end of the year.

For the Coliseum Theatre group the aim was to work up high level options and to investigate how they could be financed. This initial work would be carried out over the next month and the outcome would be reported to the next meeting of the Partnership.

The following comments/issues were raised:

- Concern was expressed that yet another survey of the Old Town Hall was being undertaken but officers advised that although various studies had been carried out in the past a further survey was necessary in order to provide an up-to-date picture for any future developers. Sara Hewitt pointed out that a number of past developers had failed because they hadn't had the full picture at the outset.
- An Elected Member asked if consideration was being given to re locating the Coliseum Theatre in the Old Town Hall and Sara Hewitt informed the meeting that this was one of the options under consideration.
- An Elected Member advised that in his opinion the Section 106 funding should be used to provide something more permanent than flowers and trees around the Town Centre; he had reservations about using the money for plants and trees which, in his opinion, should come from the parks department. Officers informed the Board that they were looking at planting trees that would have at least a seven year lifespan. It was envisaged that there would be an upgrading of the Town Centre in particular around the Gateway entrance around the Union Street and Yorkshire Street area.
- The Chair suggested that a permanent programme of suggested schemes be drawn up by the Partnership with a view to making businesses in the Town Centre aware of the scheme which would allow for their input. Officers agreed that it was a good suggestion that could be included as part of the Regeneration Update Report as a standing item and at the same time it could be made known to businesses that there was somewhere that they could put suggestions forward to.

Town Centre Regeneration Activity

Information relating to regeneration activity in the Town centre was submitted for Board Members' information and the following issues were highlighted:

- The Town Centre Action Plan – A new Action Plan was being developed which would set out the work to improve the Town Centre's viability and as part of this a review of the Town Centre masterplans would be produced.
- Town Centre Public Realm Strategy – Board members were informed that as part of Oldham's entry in this year's Britain in Bloom competition a number of environmental improvements had been carried out in the Town Centre which were detailed in the report.
- Oldham Alcohol Strategy – The meeting was informed that the Oldham Partnership was in the process of developing a new Alcohol Strategy which would inform partners' work around reducing alcohol consumption. As part of this Make Associates had been commissioned to produce a Night-Time Economy Study which would provide a baseline review as well as recommendations for the management and development of the night-time offer.
- Windsor Works – It was reported that in spite of the current economic downturn, the building had been mostly let; details of which were set out in the report.
- Integrated Care Centre – It was reported that there had been a delay in the completion of construction and fit-out because of design changes which would mean that the building would now be opening towards the end of October 2009.
- Tommyfield Markets Improvements – Details of the proposed modernisation and upgrade of the Borough's market offer were outlined in the report which was discussed under Item 8 of this agenda.
- Street Lighting PFI – Board members were informed that Oldham and Rochdale Councils would be delivering a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) to improve street lighting in the two boroughs. Whilst the schedule of works had still to be agreed, it would appear that the Town Centre would be amongst the first phase of works. Street lighting would be replaced on a like for like basis unless additional funding could be identified for the upgrading.
- Oldham Youth Zone – It was reported that this project was progressing well.
- Metrolink – This item was discussed under Item 7 of this Agenda.

- Players Nightclub site – It was reported that an outline planning application had been submitted in June 2009 to create 12 x 1 & 2-bed apartments on the Bridge Street site.
- The Bank Building – it was reported that a planning application had been submitted in August 2009 to create a pub/restaurant and office space within the building at Mumps. The applicant was also developing plans to create a landmark development on the neighbouring Northern Carpets Supplies site.
- Oldham Sixth Form College's Regional Science Centre – As had been pointed out at the last meeting of the Partnership Board funding was no longer available for this development – In answer to a query from an Elected Member officers advised that alternative funding opportunities were at present being sought.
- Family Leisure Complex – In answer to an Elected Member's query Officers advised that the possibility of developing such a centre in the Borough was still being pursued.
- Old Town Hall – A Heritage Assessment and Conservation Plan for the building was being commissioned as part of the plans for exploring options for the future of the building.
- St Mary's Estate Site – Site investigation works had been undertaken at the site and Oldham Council was also exploring options for remediating the site in preparation for development taking place. An Elected Member asked how the planting of a Wild Flower Meadow tied in with the future development of the site - Sara Hewitt advised that development of the site could be a few years off and so until that time this was a way of keeping the site tidy.

RESOLVED – That the report and comments made be noted.

7. METROLINK UPDATE

Graham Birch, Regeneration, provided a verbal update on the current situation with regard to Metrolink. The Partnership Board was advised that as part of the expansion of Metrolink, Mumps Station would move to Mumps Bridge. The platforms would be cantilevered over Bell Street and Brook Street and would be reached by stairs, ramps or lifts. The Station's relocation would remove many of the current difficulties in accessing it from the Town Centre. GMPTE had submitted an outline planning application for the new station in July 2009. Graham Birch advised that GMPTE had consulted with local businesses about the new station in July and August and the feedback had been very supportive of the plans. He pointed out to Board Members that the application was for outline planning on the site; it had been agreed to significantly extend the red line in the planning application and as a result of this the detailed works within that could be controlled and negotiated on, as reserved matters.

Board Members' comments were as follows:

- There was a need to ensure that the area around the station was made as safe as possible and Chief Superintendent Caroline Ball recommended that a Community Safety assessment should be carried out on 3a.
- In response to a query from a Board Member Graham Birch advised that a set of planning applications to renew the consent for the 3b stops through the town centre may be received and there could be a situation where two concurrent planning applications were being processed.
- Members were concerned that 3b was never going to happen and asked why the preparatory work to ease traffic flow for both 3a and 3b was not being carried out at the same time – Officers pointed out that the traffic implications for 3a were fairly minimal, with alterations to Bell Street, whilst 3b would have a major impact on the Town Centre and there would need to be service diversions along the route; he assured the meeting that officers knew what work/diversions were needed and that work was more or less ready to commence.
- A Board Member asked what the Council's thoughts were on the site of the station and officers advised that the B&Q station was the preferred main station site. The Chair pointed out that only the 3b option provided the stations that would serve the town centre properly and for this reason this option had always been the only acceptable one in the view of the Partnership.
- Graham Birch detailed the reasons as to why access via steps could not be provided on both sides of the track and pointed out that he was still awaiting the detailed works around the Bell Street area.
- Officers pointed out that it would have an impact on the night-time economy and it was the view of the Partnership that this area would become a much more visible gateway to the Borough, signalling more opportunity for change.
- The Chair re-iterated that it was the view of the Partnership that only 3b and its stations would provide the required access to the Town Centre.

In closing Graham Birch informed the Board that funding was now in place for the Transport Study for the Town Centre. Officers were in the process of finalising the Brief and going out to tender in mid September, with consultants being appointed in October.

The Chair thanked Graham Birch for his update.

RESOLVED – (i) That the Partnership reiterates its view that it is only the 3b scheme which will serve the Town Centre in a satisfactory manner

(ii) That a Community Safety Assessment be undertaken of the proposed 3a station at Mumps.

8. THE FUTURE OF TOMMYFIELD MARKET

Mark Lester, Town Centre Manager, outlined proposals for the modernisation and upgrade of Oldham's markets by way of a presentation. He informed the Partnership that the proposals outlined in the presentation were intended to improve the vitality of the markets, both in terms of growing the types of goods sold and the customer base and he advised that over £0.5 million would be invested in the markets in the next 12 months. £200k had already been spent on environmental improvements in the town centre as part of the Britain in Bloom entry. Mark Lester further advised that other investments in the Town Centre had included the reduction of on-street parking charges which had been halved from mid August; a new Metrolink, through the Town Centre, had also recently been announced and another ambitious Christmas events marketing programme was being planned for 2009. Mark went on to detail the commitment that had been made to Tommyfield Markets and emphasised how important the markets were to the Borough.

The Indoor Market was scheduled to undergo repairs and improvements which would enable it to provide a traditional indoor market experience. Alongside this would be the creation of an on-street market which would provide a "fresh" outdoor market experience, which it was envisaged would offer a wide range of quality goods.

The existing outdoor market could provide a site for new themed markets which would increase the number of visitors to the town.

Plans were outlined for the on-street market which would be created on Albion Street and Curzon Street; this market would occupy a high-profile, trading environment which would bring it closer to the High Street and would consist of 35 stalls. Some of the units on the edge of the existing outdoor market site would be removed whilst those to the right of the market would remain.

The car park on the existing outdoor market site would be enlarged, eventually providing 201 parking spaces.

Mark Lester outlined the timescale for the proposals which had commenced in summer 2009 with consultations with traders and shoppers through to April 2010 when it was envisaged that the Speciality Markets would be in operation. It was envisaged that Christmas 2009 would see the Tommyfield Street Markets in operation.

The Partnership Board was advised of the next steps in the process which would include a promotional campaign to attract new traders, the availability of business start-up advice to new traders and further consultation with existing traders.

The Chair thanked Mark Lester for his informative presentation.

RESOLVED – That the content of the presentation be noted.

9. UPDATE ON SECTION 106 PLANNING OBLIGATIONS IN THE TOWN CENTRE

Mr Arnis Buklovskis, Principal Planning Officer, Economy, Place and Skills Directorate provided Members of the Board with an update on all new planning obligations insofar as they related to the Town Centre. The report provided details of schemes that had been developed using resources that had been secured through existing planning obligations in the town centre. It was pointed out that since the last update no further Section 106 agreements had been completed.

RESOLVED – That the report and comments made be noted.

10. PLANNING APPLICATIONS DETERMINED IN THE TOWN CENTRE BETWEEN 1st APRIL 2009 AND 10th AUGUST 2009

Mr Arnis Buklovskis, Principal Planning Officer, Economy, Place and Skills Directorate provided Members of the Board with a brief overview of all planning applications that had been determined in the Town Centre between 1st April 2009 and 10th August 2009. A detailed breakdown of all applications was submitted for Board members' information.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

11. AREA ACTION REPORT INCLUDING THE GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE REPORT

Chief Superintendent Caroline Ball informed the meeting that some problems had been experienced with the report format but hopefully these would be resolved for the next meeting. Future agenda items would have the title of Area Action Team Report and this would include the information from the Police.

She reported that some positive results were being achieved in relation to the work being undertaken on the drugs issue in the Borough. She also advised that the Police Surgeries had been operating well as had the partnership working with Trading Standards and Licensing.

RESOLVED – That the content of the report and comments made be noted.

12. BUSINESS PLANNING

Mark Lester, Town Centre Manager, submitted a report which provided the Partnership with an update on the business planning process.

RESOLVED – That the update be noted.

13. REPORTS OF THE TOWN CENTRE MANAGER AND SUB GROUPS

Mark Lester, Town Centre Manager, presented the following reports, for information:

- (a) Report of the Town Centre Manager – Members were updated on the range of duties that the Town Centre Management Team had undertaken since the last meeting of the Partnership and the current situation and progress set against the projects contained under each Aim of the Partnership's Business Plan.
- (b) Finance Report – Members were informed that whilst Officers had been successful in obtaining additional funding in some areas, budgets had not been set up in such a way as to enable a report to be produced and therefore, at the present time, no figures were available for submission to the Board - discussion on this item was therefore DEFERRED.
- (c) Progress Report on the Business Improvement District (BID) – A report was presented which provided an update on the delivery of the Business Improvement District (BID) within the Town Centre. It was reported that a total of £110,429 had been collected in the 2009/2010 financial year, which represented a collection rate of 70%. A brief update on individual projects was submitted for Board member's information
- (d) Marketing and Promotions – It was reported that the Marketing and Promotions Sub Group continued to meet on a regular basis and details of forthcoming activities were submitted. Particular mention was made of the small campaign that had been put together in support of the Vintage Car Rally which had involved local press advertisements in the week leading up to the event.

Board Members were advised that a full schedule of events for the Christmas campaign had been developed and was currently being finalised. The total budget would be around £120k and would again focus on the Christmas events programme

- (e) Events – Members were presented with a list of forthcoming events that were scheduled to take place as part of the Christmas Programme; starting with the Reindeer Parade which would be held on 7th November

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

14. BLOOM AND GROW – The Chair informed the meeting that a DVD had been produced, which illustrated all the hard work that had gone on behind the scenes to make this project successful. The DVD which had been shown to the judges of the Britain in Bloom Competition was played for those present at the Board meeting. The Chair thanked everyone who had had any involvement in the Bloom and Grow Project, in particular Glenn Dale and his Team.

RESOLVED – That the thanks of the Oldham Town Centre Partnership Board be conveyed to Glenn Dale and his team for all their hard work on this project.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED – That the next meeting of the Partnership be held on Wednesday 28th October 2009 in the Lees Suite, Civic Centre, West Street, Oldham commencing at 8.30am.

The meeting commenced at 8.30am and closed at 10.35am