

EXERPT FROM CABINET MINUTES OF 9<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020

## 93 PE21: THE NEXT STEPS

<p><b>DECISION</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) be instructed to report back to the next Cabinet on the budget cost of the steps specified under paragraph 9 of the report, which are required to advance this proposal with pace. The report should identify the approach to procurement, which should reflect the particular priority and urgency that is to be accorded to this project.</li> <li>2. That the Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) shall consult with the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) and the Assistant Director – Towns Fund to identify and procure those works that are needed to maximise the prospects of a successful Towns Fund bid, and shall take all necessary steps.</li> <li>3. That the Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) be authorised to communicate to the Principal of Boston College that the Council is minded to enter into an agreement to lease and a lease for the Geoff Moulder Centre in order to facilitate the development of the College’s Mayflower Centre project.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Portfolio Holder and Officer</b></p> <p>NW/TL</p>
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REASON FOR DECISION

The Deputy Leader introduced a report, which described the steps that needed to be taken to deliver PE21, an initiative that was the primary focus of Boston’s Towns Fund bid. The Council had identified a 10-acre site in the vicinity of West Street, Lawrence Lane and Lincoln Lane for the initiative. It had the potential to boost the economic performance and prosperity of Boston town centre, make it a more vibrant and attractive place for residents and visitors, give them access to better educational facilities and help them live healthier lives.

The project had taken shape slowly. It was authorised in 2017 and a masterplan was produced early in 2018. COVID19 had caused it to stall. Critical design work, technical and viability studies had not been carried out. If it was to deliver what was promised, pace and resources needed to be injected, the concept needed to be validated by the market (or developed, so far as possible, to ensure that it did “stack up”) and partners fully engaged.

The project also had to be managed professionally and be subject to rigorous performance management. Primarily, the technical studies that needed to be carried out to support the Towns Fund bid would need to be procured under the Council’s urgency arrangements. Other work needed to be commissioned quickly and progress made, otherwise there was a real risk that the energy that had been generated would dissipate and threaten any prospect of delivery in the short term or at all.

The report set out the work that should be commissioned in paragraph 9, as follows:

- (1) Comprehensive cataloguing of interests in land.
- (2) Plotting of infrastructure within and across the site and assessment of the extent to which it will constrain development by dint of its location, condition and capacity.
- (3) Cataloguing of individual land uses and businesses, including an assessment of the extent to which they are consistent with the objectives of regeneration.
- (4) Systematic and comprehensive cataloguing of vacant and under-used land and land uses and businesses judged to be inconsistent with regeneration.
- (5) Specification of public sector development proposals. These must define precisely what is to be provided, by whom, where, when, at what cost and with what funds. If such clarity and commitment is not forthcoming, alternative proposals for public sector land should be defined and incorporated into a revised (alternative) masterplan(s).
- (6) There should be a rigorous assessment of the demand for alternative uses across the site as a whole and for individual parcels of land. The market must be understood.
- (7) Based on (1) – (6) development opportunities across the site should be identified. Development parcels should be identified and alternative uses specified.
- (8) Infrastructure costs must be identified. This will include the cost of strategic landscaping.
- (9) The viability of alternative uses of individual parcels of land must be rigorously assessed.
- (10) The masterplan should be iterated on the basis of (1) to (9). It should be subject to a final viability assessment.
- (11) A site acquisition and development strategy must be prepared, together with a budget cost and funding strategy.
- (12) A delivery plan must be produced. This might, but will not necessarily require, the preparation of design briefs.

Councillor Welton gave credit to the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) and the Towns Fund team for the huge amount of work they had carried out in order to lay the crucial foundations for this project, which would bring great benefits to the town centre. The Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) was now moving the project on at pace.

The Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) addressed Cabinet and explained that one of the two flagship projects of PE 21 would be the development of the Mayflower Centre by Boston College, which would be a showcase for architecture and education and the gateway to the whole project. The centre would be located on the site of the Geoff Moulder Leisure Centre (GMLC). At a meeting that day, the Principal of Boston College had reported that the college needed confidence to go ahead to spend the significant amount of money it would take to work up the project.

The GMLC was valued as the leisure centre, but the centre for healthy living was a fantastic concept, combining leisure and doctors' surgery facilities. The NHS and the Council had drafted a clear specification of how it would look.

The Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) then recommended Cabinet to give a firm indication, though not a binding final agreement, that the Council was prepared to enter into negotiations for agreement to lease the GMLC to enable Boston College to work up this flagship project to form part of PE 21.

In response to questions, the Deputy Chief Executive (Strategy) confirmed that the land would remain within the ownership of the Council and would return to the Council at the end of life of the centre. It was estimated that to develop the master plan would cost approximately £60,000, which was the going rate and the funding was there to be spent for this purpose. Accelerated funding for the two flagship projects was separate and additional to that previously reported on 23rd of September. The masterplan was excellent but needed developing and resourcing. Accelerated Funding of £90,000 was expected, some of which could be used to instruct consultants to consider how to devise a development proposal with viability for private companies to lever in money and business to turn the masterplan into a reality.

OTHER OPTIONS OR ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

None.

RECORD OF ANY CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

RECORD OF ANY DISPENSATION GRANTED

None.