

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 2 July 2009, 6.30pm
Civic Centre, Harlow

Board members present:

Steve Cox	EEDA	John Keddie	Independent Director
Steve Hammond	Independent Director	Chris Millington	Harlow Council
Andrew Johnson	Harlow Council	Martin Reynolds	Independent Director
Eddie Johnson	Essex County Council	John Spence	Chair
John Jowers	Essex County Council	Jackie Sully	Independent Director

Apologies:

Nicholas Falk	Independent Director	Paul Hersey	GO-East Observer
Naisha Polaine	Homes & Communities Agency	Mark Wilkinson	Harlow Council

Others present:

Andrew Bramidge	Chief Executive	Louisa Martland	Office/Project Manager
Graham Branchett	Harlow Council	Bryan Raine	Essex County Council
Dianne Cooper	Harlow Council	Cath Shaw	Harlow Council
Daniel Grindey	Essex County Council		

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

The Chairman welcomed several new members to the Board. Councillor John Jowers, Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Localism and Planning, has replaced Cllr Castle. Bryan Raine, Assistant Director for Regeneration, has replaced Richard Waterhouse as the Senior Essex County Council Officer.

In addition to the new board members present Naisha Polaine has replaced Simon Bishop as the Homes and Communities Agency representative and Paul Hersey has replaced Richard Inman as the Go-East representative.

2. Declarations of conflicts of interest

Cllr John Jowers declared that he is a member of the Regional Planning Panel and the Urban Commission.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

All agreed that the minutes of the last meeting were a true record.

4. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

Harlow Town Station – National Express East Anglia have secured £195,000 towards the cost of refurbishing the station. Following a discussion with Essex County Council Highways, £205,000 match funding has been secured to enable the works to proceed. It is hoped that works will be completed in time for the stations 50th Anniversary celebrations next year. By the end of the September the final specification of the works will be agreed. Part of the proposed refurbishment will be to give public access to the lifts. Additional funding may also be secured from the Railway Heritage Trust. The Chairman extended his thanks to Essex County Council and National Express.

As the refurbishment is only concerned with the inside of the station there will be no conflict between this work and the Supplementary Planning Document that is being produced. The planning document has yet to be completed as the Environment Agency has requested that a flood risk assessment be undertaken. This work is currently out to tender and should be completed in the next couple of months. Pearson Publishing are likely to part-fund this work.

Harlow's Green Spaces – It is likely this study will be called 'Harlow's Green Network Study' so there is no confusion between this and previous pieces of work.

5. Priority Estates – setting the brief and delivering in the recession

Background – When Harlow Renaissance was established one of its tasks was to focus on the regeneration of housing stock as well as taking forward the growth agenda. Harlow Council has identified housing estates in need of significant investment to bring them up to the government's sustainable communities standards.

Four estates have been selected for the programme:

- Northbrooks, adjacent to the town centre;
- Lower Meadow, in the Staple Tye area;
- Barley Croft, a similar estate also in the Staple Tye area;
- Three Hills, adjacent to the previous two estates and comprising The Briars, Copshall Close and Aylett's Fields.

The Property Advisory Group met recently to discuss their ideas for the estates, following which a report was produced for Harlow Renaissance, circulated with the Board Papers.

Harlow Renaissance aims to hold consultation workshops with elected members and then members of the public in the New Year.

Key points from the Board discussion:

- The board welcomed the report and felt in particular that the following points were important:
 - Use of balconies to create outside space
 - Different style properties including self-builds on an estate
 - Community Champions
 - Mixed tenure
- Community representatives/champions to visit other successful re-developments – e.g. Almere. We should bring to Harlow what has worked well elsewhere.
- Caution was advised over the transfer of land and boundaries.
- Essential that owner-occupiers are on board, and that the wider area around the estates – not just the estates in isolation is looked at. Important that this work is done *with* the residents and not *to* the residents.
- Boundaries must be pushed to achieve innovation.
- Northbrooks could be broken up into smaller cohesive communities. It will be more of a challenge because it is a bigger estate than the others and is the closest to the Town Centre North Development, which also provides opportunities.
- In a wider context the Regeneration Strategy has identified the Staple Tye area as high priority. The Council is about to start work on an action plan for the area with the local community. Head teachers from local schools have pledged their support.
- One estate should not be treated as a pilot - work should be undertaken in an area because it has the highest need.
- Information/mis-information has to be managed carefully.
- These developments give Harlow the opportunity to complement and not just follow in the footsteps of Gibberd. A vision should be created that unites the estates and articulates their unique characters. This will be supported by the Design Guide that is currently being created. Regenerating these estates will allow Harlow to continue its tradition of innovation and quality of design. Newhall has set a benchmark and allowed a local debate about design. This is the opportunity to improve the quality of life for the residents on these estates and create better places that people want to come and live in.
- To achieve success we must bring the existing communities with us.

Action – Harlow Renaissance to organise small group visits for Board members that wish to see the estates in more detail.

Action – Progress reports to be brought to the Board at future meetings.

6. Inward investment – agree campaign proposals

The newly formed Enterprise Advisory Group has met three times to discuss the inward investment campaign.

They advised:

- The key message should be about: geographic location; value for money; availability of land and premises and what Harlow has to offer *now* and not just in the future.
- The campaign should be targeted at key intermediaries: Property agents; Accountants; Solicitors etc. as well as influential business people.
- A local response service be established to ensure an effective message is well co-ordinated.

The board were asked to consider these recommendations.

Key points from the Board discussion regarding the 'message':

- Highlighting value for money is vital as this is a key driver for businesses.
- Highlighting our strategic location is advantageous as our proximity to London, Stansted Airport, the motorway network and ports means that Harlow could become a major distribution point.
 - We should change the wording slightly to say we are *on* the M11 and include proximity to Stratford via rail, and City Airport.
- If we are going to use the 'see something different' branding then we need to be clear what exactly is different about Harlow in terms of inward investment.
 - Greenness – Town meets country – quality of life (a secondary message).
- We need to show that we are better than other places. This includes ensuring areas such as River Way look at their best. Currently this area looks quite derelict, putting off potential investors.
- It will be a challenge to find a balance between promoting what Harlow is today and what it could be in the future.
- Good quality testimonials are essential.
- Working with Invest Essex is important to ensure a collective effort.
- The Local Authority's positive attitude to bringing new people into Harlow will be vital to ensure the success of the inward investment activities.

Key points from the Board discussion regarding the 'campaign':

- The starting point should be influencing the influencers so that they are clear about the message and can act as ambassadors.
- Essex and London based growing businesses should be targeted.
- With a tight budget it is important to make sure that each action has an impact. Better to do fewer things and do them well.
- As the regional assemblies are being abolished on 31 March it is essential that Harlow has a clear idea of what it wants to achieve in order to maximise the potential for continued funding.

7. Business Plan update

Following discussion at the May Board meeting, it was agreed to adjust the company's objectives and milestones for the current financial year to identify that is realistically achievable and to focus on core priorities. Revised milestones were circulated with the papers for the meeting. The Board agreed to all suggested priorities.

Key points from the Board discussion:

- A change of terminology was requested regarding the proposed LDF event in that it will not be a 'visioning' event as stated in the paper, but would be more practically focussed. The Board felt that there should only be an event if it adds genuine value to the LDF process.

Action – Andrew Bramidge and Dianne Cooper to meet to discuss an LDF event.

8. GAF II Project Update

A report on the progress of the GAF II projects was circulated with the Board papers. Following the appointment of Moat Homes earlier this year, all projects are on course to begin construction work by the end of the financial year.

9. Audit Committee Report

The Board expressed its thanks to Philip Chamberlain and the members of the Audit Committee for their ongoing work. The annual accounts for 2008/09 were presented at the Annual General Meeting and were approved. The Board agreed that the Risk Register should be reviewed on a half-yearly basis.

Key points from the Board discussion:

- The level of risk associated with the Town Centre North Scheme and A414 projects should be looked at again to take into account the impact felt if these schemes fail.
- Other areas should be included into the Risk Register or the level of risk associated with existing risks reviewed:
 - The impact of the Chief Executive leaving

- The difficulty of attracting/retaining staff as the company heads towards the end of its secured funding in 2011
- A general election and the possibility of a change in policy

Action – Andrew Bramidge to review the ratings given to risks in the Risk Register.

10. Chief Executive's Report

Staffing – Chris Beasley is currently very ill, but is recovering. It has been agreed with Chris that he will be leaving the company very soon, and we will begin a recruitment process. Currently Andrew Bramidge is picking up much of Chris' workload.

Note: Following the Board meeting Andrew Bramidge met with Chris Beasley and it was agreed that he would formally be leaving the company at the end of September 2009.

Action – John Spence to write to Chris Beasley on behalf of the Board thanking him for his significant contribution to Harlow Renaissance.

Town Centre North – An excellent response to the TCN scheme was received at the exhibition launch. Public comments are currently being reviewed. The exhibition will be on display in the Harlow Renaissance marquee at the Town Show on Sunday and members of the development team will be present to answer any questions that members of the public may have.

Essex County Council will also be hosting the exhibition at the end of September. A presentation of the scheme will be made to members and senior officers. This is unique opportunity for Harlow and we thank Essex County Council for their support. In addition EEDA is holding its October Board Meeting in Harlow at the Harlow Enterprise Hub. This will provide another opportunity to showcase the scheme to a wider regional audience.

Action – a meeting is to be arranged with the parent board of Stockland.

GAF III – Earlier this year the Government announced proposed cuts to the Growth Area Funds which is likely to result in a £3m reduction to the Harlow allocation, subject to a consultation exercise. This will have a significant impact on the deliverability of the programme. Six areas have been identified where we think we can make a saving.

The partnership board has requested Andrew Johnson, as Leader of Harlow Council, write to the DCLG protesting the level of cuts. EEDA have already written stating they believe the south east of the county will suffer most from these blanket cuts.

Town Centre Partnership – An artist has been commissioned to transform the windows of approximately 5 empty retail units. Work is currently being undertaken and the finished installation should be in situ by the end of October.

Harlow has received money from CLG through their Empty Shops Initiative. This is an un-ring fenced pot of money and discussions are currently taking place to discuss its use.

Trees in the Town Centre – Progress is being made with this initiative. A quote has been received for supplying 10 trees and discussions are currently taking place regarding the production of large-scale planters and ongoing maintenance.

Waterspace Strategy – It is hoped that work can commence in October ready for completion in January/February 2010.

11. Rolling Agenda

A revised date will be circulated for the May meeting.

12. AOB

Essex County Council have just appointed Sarah Richards as the new Head of Planning.

GlaxoSmithKline will be building new clinical trial facilities in Harlow worth c£25m to replace existing facilities. When complete, this will deliver 60% of GSKs world-wide clinical trials. It was noted that this was a significant point in promoting Harlow's attributes.

Approved by the Board of Directors

Chairman:

Date: