

BOARD MEETING
Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11 June 2008, 4.30pm
Harlow Study Centre

Board members present:

Simon Bishop	English Partnerships	Chris Millington	Harlow Council
Steve Cox	EEDA	Martin Reynolds	Independent Director
Nicholas Falk	Independent Director	Jackie Sully	Independent Director
Steve Hammond	Independent Director	John Spence	Chair
Eddie Johnson	Essex County Council		

Apologies:

Stephen Castle	Essex County Council	John Keddie	Independent Director
Tony Durcan	Harlow Council	Dearbhla Lawson	GO-East Observer
Andrew Johnson	Harlow Council		

Ian Hatton	Essex County Council	Richard Waterhouse	Essex County Council
Malcolm Morley	Harlow Council		

Others present:

Chris Beasley	Development Director	Mike Seager	Transport & Enterprise Programme Manager
Andrew Bramidge	Chief Executive		
Jennifer Burns	Harlow Council	Jon O'Connor	Harlow Education Consortium
Sunil Modaley	Harlow Council	Cath Shaw	Harlow Council

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Apologies are noted above.

2. Declarations of conflicts of interest

Steve Hammond declared an interest in item 7 through his membership of the HALO Trust which has landholdings to the north of the Station. Jackie Sully declared an interest in item 8 with Rainbow Services re-location to The Latton Bush Centre as part of the Prentice Place project.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true record.

4. Matters arising not covered elsewhere

Meeting with Henry Cleary, DCLG - The following points had been made by Henry Cleary at the meeting with Harlow Renaissance and Harlow District Council:

- The focus must remain on delivery. Whilst recognising the current economic climate, this must not stand in the way of delivery. Creative thinking would be required;
- Acknowledged that the GAF II projects were underway. Priorities for GAF III should be clarified and it will be necessary to keep the delivery momentum going;
- Following the publication of the East of England Plan and confirmation of the wider role of Harlow in the sub-region, there was a clear and continuing role for Harlow Renaissance after

March 2009. Government want Harlow Renaissance and Harlow Council to work with adjoining local authorities to determine the plan of action and scope of works required to meet the housing and employment targets in the Plan.

The Harlow Renaissance Chair and Chief Executive had already met with the Leader and Chief Executive of Epping Forest District Council. The role of Harlow Renaissance had been acknowledged and welcomed and Epping Forest District Council had expressed interest in working with Harlow Renaissance to take this agenda forward.

Action: Andrew Bramidge and Malcolm Morley to meet and discuss how to take this forward with the other adjoining local authorities.

Education - Eddie Johnson provided an update from Essex County Council; the County Council are keen to work with partners to assess current schools performance and develop a strategy for future investment, including Building Schools for the Future. He also confirmed the closure of Brays Grove School this year and the re-location of Passmores school on that site by 2011.

Branding - It was confirmed that the Harlow brand campaign would be launched at the Town Show on 31st August.

Audit Committee - The Chair and Chief Executive were still pursuing potential appointees to replace Ian Luder as Chair of the Committee. Essex County Council will consult internally to identify a suitable officer with an accountancy background to join the Committee.

Action: Board members were requested to submit the names of potential nominees to Andrew Bramidge as quickly as possible. The intention is to have the vacancies of the audit committee filled from July.

Board Meeting Times - Following consultation with Board members, it appeared that the majority wished to keep to the same times (5.00pm to 7.00pm). Andrew Bramidge is meeting the Leader and Deputy Leader of Harlow District Council next week and will raise the issue with them. It was agreed that a decision would wait until after this meeting and the forthcoming review by Harlow Council of its membership.

5. Ecotowns

A draft response to the DCLG consultation regarding the proposed Ecotown at Elsenham had been prepared and circulated to Board members. Comments were invited from the Board.

Key points from the Board discussion:

The existing plans for Harlow North met the criterion for an Ecotown – except that it was seen as an extension to Harlow, rather than a stand-alone, new settlement. Henry Cleary had confirmed that Harlow North had not been included for this reason. He had also confirmed that a new junction on the M11 for the Ecotown at Elsenham would not be pursued.

Essex County Council members had debated their response and had decided to oppose the scheme. Although Harlow District Council had not formally considered its response, it was unlikely to support the Ecotown as it was likely to divert resources from Harlow for necessary infrastructure.

Action: Andrew Bramidge would enhance the draft response to emphasise the proximity of Harlow North and the need to avoid ensure that resources are not diverted from Harlow.

6. Economic climate

The paper had been prepared to prompt discussion of the possible impact of the downturn on the Harlow Renaissance programme and what might be done to mitigate the effects. It would be important to ensure that preparatory work continues to enable future development when the upturn comes. This could include, for example, strategic land acquisition, interim use of town centre units, etc. The views of the Board were invited.

Key points from the Board discussion:

English Partnerships considered this to be a severe downturn, with their land disposal programme particularly affected and attracting up to 80% of land value in bids compared to a year ago. The organisation was looking at different ways of disposing of land, for example, using joint ventures.

Freehold purchase is difficult at present and option deals with overage now appear to be popular.

The present situation may force reassessment of the housing that can be provided and may result in a resurgence of the private rented sector. Developers could provide necessary infrastructure on a piecemeal basis, as smaller developments are taken forward.

The provision of infrastructure is crucial in stimulating the market, as developers need certainty.

Stockland Halladale had confirmed their commitment to redevelopment of the town centre, (n.b some other town centre developments in the country have halted) but were examining the housing elements of the scheme more critically. This may, however, be a good time to purchase the necessary land for the scheme.

A mechanism was required to release funds to keep the momentum going in Harlow. The GAF III re-submission in the autumn was a potential opportunity to bring forward infrastructure projects and the GAF II projects which had been advertised via OJEU would be a good test of capacity within the construction industry.

Action: The Property Advisory Group and other experts on the Board would consider how to construct a model to keep the momentum going with a further paper to be brought to the July meeting.

7. Harlow Town Station

The visioning work will now be commissioned following a meeting with the landowners to be held early in July.

8. GAF Projects

GAF II: Old Harlow – A meeting with the PCT had been held to discuss health care provision in the Old Harlow area, given the likely expansion of the town to the East. The PCT had decided that it needed to consider further what this meant for the Trust.

GAF III: The transport modelling work was now underway with the traffic counters in place on key roads around Harlow. Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras would also be used to help determine the number of cars on the roads in the town.

The Chief Executive had attended a workshop at the Department for Communities & Local Government on GAF III guidance. A consultation had also been launched on the guidance prior to funding requests being launched for 2009-11.

Action: Harlow Renaissance would submit a response to the consultation to emphasise the importance of economic development criteria.

9. Harlow Business Incubation Centre

A further report had been received from the contractors which indicated that the external refurbishment was slightly behind schedule, although the internal works were ahead of schedule. The contractor is confident that the Incubation Centre would open on time in November.

The Chair announced that, subject to progress with the refurbishment works, it was hoped to hold the October Harlow Renaissance Board meeting in the building.

10. Chief Executive’s Report

Old Harlow: A site visit with English Heritage had been held to determine the feasibility of a partnership scheme for the High Street area. English Heritage has confirmed that it would be interested in taking forward a scheme, which would release match funding to help restore the area’s heritage and help revive the local economy. A funding application has to be submitted by 1st July.

Town Centre: As mentioned earlier, Stockland Halladale had confirmed their commitment to the Town Centre North development in the letter that the Council had received. The letter was worded cautiously, with some concerns about the phasing of the residential component, but overall there is still positive engagement and a commitment to the original timetable.

Theatre Study: An interim report had been received. The final report was due at the end of June and would be shared with Board members as part of the three month review of the Collaboration Agreement with Stockland Halladale.

11. Rolling Agenda

The main items for the July Board meeting would be: the potential of waterside developments, infrastructure and employment land studies; Town Centre North Review; and the findings from the Stansted Airport study.

12. Any Other Business

None.

13. Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 9th July, 5-7pm, Day Barn, The Study Centre.

Approved by the Board of Directors

Chairman:

Date: