

Contact Officer: Jodie Harris

KIRKLEES COUNCIL

AD-HOC SCRUTINY PANEL - REGENERATION

Monday 6th March 2023

Present: Councillor Elizabeth Smaje
Councillor Yusra Hussain

In attendance: Councillor Eric Firth, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Transport
David Glover, Senior Responsible Officer for Economy & Skills
Edward Highfield, Service Director for Skills & Regeneration
Simon Taylor, Head of Town Centre Programmes, Development
Joanne Bartholomew, Service Director for Development

Apologies: Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor John Lawson

1 Membership of the Panel

Apologies were received from Councillor Andrew Cooper and Councillor John Lawson.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the meeting held on the 26th January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

3 Interests

No interests were declared.

4 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public session.

5 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

6 Public Question Time

No questions were received from members of the public.

7 Dewsbury Town Centre Update

The Panel considered a report setting out an update in respect of the Dewsbury Town Investment Plan, which was introduced by Joanne Bartholomew, Service Director for Development. It was explained that the Council were working in partnership with the Dewsbury Town Deal Board on this item, and that the Ad-Hoc Scrutiny Panel had

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been invited to the next board meeting. Simon Taylor, Head of the Town Centres Programmes presented the report that highlighted:

- Town centre regeneration within Dewsbury was under pinned by the Dewsbury Blueprint which was launched early in 2020.
- The Blueprint set out a vision for the town centre and identified a series of key interventions for delivery over a 10-year period.
- The Plan aimed to bring more activity into the town centre, make it more attractive and improve accessibility.
- The Dewsbury Town Investment Plan was submitted in 2021 and agreed by Government. Subsequently, all 9 business plans were completed on time and approved.
- The final plan was given approval in February 2023, and the Town Deal programme would run until 2026.
- The Council was working closely with the Dewsbury Town Deal Board, comprised of local businesses and individuals as well as the local MP and Leader of the Council.
- The core town centre projects, that had the most significant impact, were concentrated on, with a note that smaller programmes were also embedded within the report.
- The key projects were:
 - Dewsbury Market – The Market would undergo a ‘root and branch’ change to create a model market for the 21st century. The project was being re-evaluated to bring it within the original funding envelope. The scheme had been granted planning permission. The start date was still to be confirmed.
 - Dewsbury Arcade – The project expected to deliver a mix of retail and business spaces. Planning permission was in place and an application had been submitted for a grant of £4.5m with a decision due in June 2023. The Arcade was planned to be opened in October 2024.
 - Dewsbury Town Park - The scheme would create an exemplary piece of new public space with the aim of improving the attractiveness of the town centre significantly. The project was under review to bring it within the funding envelope, and Officers were working with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to ensure the business case remained relevant. The start date was still to be confirmed.
 - Fieldhouse and Daisy Hill (Residential opportunities) – Would create a new neighbourhood at the heart of Dewsbury which would help support town centre vibrancy and make the most of the heritage assets of the town. Early acquisitions were completed for Daisy Hill and the others were under negotiation. Planning had been secured for Field House and the enabling works started in December 2022. The commencement of work on site was planned for April 2023 with an estimated 12-month construction period.
 - Creative Culture Programme – There were 2 projects within the programme. Dewsbury would take a central role within major initiatives of WOVEN in Kirklees, Year of Music 2023, Temporary Contemporary and The Festival of Conversations. The second was a creative hub led by Brigantia Creative, who sought to set up a permanent base in Dewsbury Town Centre. It would provide an arts and cultural centre and support a year-round programme of cultural activities and events to animate the town

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centre and bring communities together. There were no confirmed dates for delivery.

- Dewsbury Revival Grant Scheme - The Building Revival scheme was aimed at providing support for the conversion of buildings to both residential and commercial space as well as improving shop fronts to a Conservation Area Standard. It supported 6 live schemes with 6-10 Westgate due to be considered by Cabinet on 14th March 2023.
- Dewsbury Bus Station - Whilst not part of the Town Investment Plan package, a new bus station in Dewsbury was proposed and was a West Yorkshire Combined Authority led scheme. The outline business case was approved, and the full business case was due to be submitted in February 2024. The estimated completion date was September 2025.

Councillor Eric Firth, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Transport, also noted the importance of the 9 projects, and expressed confidence in respect of the bid made to English Heritage for the Dewsbury Arcade.

The Panel noted the presentation and in the discussion that followed asked questions around the following themes and issues:

- Acquisitions; what mix was being looked at with regards to the acquired building and flats?
- Bidding; what was the confidence in securing the bids, such as the Heritage fund?
- Finances; how long will the re-evaluation take, and will all projects be achievable? was it possible that additional funding would be required?
- Outcomes; what would be implemented to bring more people into Dewsbury? How would footfall be increased?
- Target Market; how would people be encouraged into the Town Market? What age group was the target market, and how would the younger age group benefit?
- North Kirklees; how does North Kirklees fit in with the marketing strategy across the whole district, and will smaller towns near Dewsbury be included?
- Town Park; were plans to create dispersed areas around the town centre or a centralised park?
- Decisions; was a Cabinet decision required in respect of any further changes to the business case?

In response to the Panel's questions around acquisitions, Joanne Bartholomew suggested that further information in respect of the Daisy Hill renewal be presented at a later date. It was outlined that the council would acquire a number of buildings for various strategic reasons and Daisy Hill was a long-term project that was not anticipated to be finished by March 2026. Councillor Eric Firth also highlighted the ability to make use of the buildings until plans had been made in respect of the long-term future of the acquisitions.

In response to the question on bidding, Joanne Bartholomew advised that officers were always looking at alternative funding methods. Over the past few years, over £43m of additional funding had been brought in to Huddersfield, Dewsbury and the smaller town centres. With regards to the Heritage Lottery Fund grant, the council

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worked with the Heritage Lottery Fund who had given support and had also met with the Dewsbury Town Board. Early indications were expected in May and a formal answer was expected in June.

Joanne Bartholomew further reassured the Panel that it was not unusual to re-evaluate projects and their funding due to circumstantial reasons (i.e.- COVID-19, inflation and import issues). Officers were confident that the outcomes, as per the Town Investment Plan, could still be met. It was taking some reshaping to be deliverable, but assistance from the portfolio holder and Dewsbury Town Deal Board were appreciated. There was no opportunity to ask for more money from Government but to rework the 9 projects back within the budget. Joanne noted that within the next 2 months, all schemes were expected to be brought back within budget. There was a blend of Council borrowing, from within the capital plan and from Government for the individual business cases. It would not be possible to move funding between projects, and no further borrowing or funding would be sought. Officers had asked for some time, as agreed with the portfolio holder and the Dewsbury Town Board, to reshape the projects instead to bring them in line with the original budget.

In response to the Panel's question in respect of achieving outcomes and increased foot fall, Joanne Bartholomew advised that there was an intention to allow the market to trade more days per week to fully utilise the days it was not trading. The outcomes sought to create a mixed economy of markets to bring in more antiques fayres and different types of market. The accessibility would also be improved with the upgrade to the bus station and the Trans Pennine developments to reduce the journey time between the larger cities and Dewsbury. Officers were also concentrating on the town centre operation, with polices on enforcement, street maintenance, supporting and growing local businesses, to make it a welcoming place.

In response to the Panel's question in respect of benefits to young people, Joanne Bartholomew advised that the Dewsbury Town Board had a youth member, nominated by Kirklees College, who helped provide insight with regards to how young people used the town centre and the restrictions of the current dynamic. Cross working with Kirklees College also helped officers understand how to get more young people into the town centre. The mix of offer for the new market had a higher balance for food and beverage, which would create an atmosphere and increase dwell time. The proposal would encourage young people to spend more time in the town centre alongside creating a family friendly early evening offer to prevent people travelling elsewhere.

Simon Taylor, Head of Town Centre Programmes - Development advised that the small centres team worked closely with the market teams to develop opportunities across some of the small centres such as Batley, Cleckheaton, Holmfirth and Heckmondwike. Cleckheaton had been a success with the farmers market and was to be used as a model to develop other areas. One size would not fit all and therefore the Council had to work with the communities and ward members to ensure the right offer was brought to the relevant small centre. Councillor Eric Firth assured the panel that the other villages had not been forgotten, however it may be a while before officers could bring them into scope due all the other projects currently underway. The catalyst for change was the Arcade project, that will likely be completed first, and increase footfall in Dewsbury.

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Simon Taylor further explained that Officers were in the process of mobilising a people and vehicle movement study to provide an understanding of the key routes through the town and allow necessary improvements to be made. Some of the work would be done in advance of the projects to ensure the routes were clear, safe and accessible. Other elements such as better policing and a suitable enforcement would also be investigated. Councillor Eric Firth highlighted the improvements already completed on the underpass, including fixing the lighting. Security was a key element therefore collaborative work between the police and authority would allow Dewsbury to feel safe, attractive, and vibrant for all. Simon Taylor also added that previous work had been undertaken to improve accessibility and mobility around the railway station to create a more pleasant environment to enter Dewsbury by rail.

Joanne Bartholomew advised the Panel of the key considerations regarding the park. These were that the park should be large enough to spend considerable time there, and there should be offerings for all such as a place to sit, play and meet but to also provide connectivity. There would be a focus to link the park with the arcade, market and town hall when reshaping the town park offer.

In response to the questions from the Panel in relation to decision making, Joanne Bartholomew advised that in all eventualities, there would be a three-way discussion between the Dewsbury Town Board, Government and the Cabinet. If the decisions remained the same, within the business case, there would be no further permission required by Cabinet. If there were changes, then the business case would have to return to Cabinet for approval.

RESOLVED: The Panel thanked officers for the presentation and noted the Dewsbury Town Centre report. It was agreed that:

1. Additional information regarding the regeneration and strategic acquisition of property in the Daisy Hill Area be provided to the Panel including a map of the area along with reasons for demolition or regeneration.
2. A future update in respect of the Town Centre Living Plan be provided to the Panel.
3. An update on the Market Strategy Mix be provided to the Panel.
4. An update on projects following re-evaluation be provided to the Panel.

8 Update on the Cultural Heart, part of the Huddersfield Blueprint

The Panel received an update on the Cultural Heart presented by David Glover, Senior Responsible Officer for Economy and Skills. The report updated on the RIBA stage 3 design, which had been recently completed and also advised that:

- The Huddersfield Blueprint aimed to transform the town centre. As one of six key elements, the Cultural Heart focused on the Queensgate Market area and included regenerating iconic and historic local buildings such as the library/gallery and the market hall.
- Proposed elements of the Cultural Heart included a new library, town park, museum, gallery, food hall, as well as an indoor and outdoor event venues (for live music, theatre, cultural events, and conferences) and more parking.
- One of the major aspects of the scheme, preparing and informing the design, was the consultation.

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- Various methods of consultation had taken place since 2019, including with disabled groups to inform the design.
- External advice had been sought from a disability and inclusivity consultant to advise on going beyond the current best practice, along with other colleagues in Kirklees. This detailed process generated multiple outcomes and design solutions.
- There had been various methods of engagement through digital and non-digital methods, to ensure everybody could be involved.
- The RIBA stage 3 design was now complete, and planning had been granted for the full masterplan.
- The Gateway 3 final RIBA design was planned to be presented to Cabinet in June 2023, along with planning and procurement, and Gateway 4 was expected to be presented to Cabinet during quarter 1 of 2024.
- The library, food hall and event square would have a two-stage procurement of design and build, with an expected start date of March 2024 and completion date of October/November 2025.
- Key priorities of the project were meeting energy and sustainability targets, i.e.- the library design focused on the use of timber to keep carbon figures down.
- There would be an event space on the top of the library. Close collaboration between the Library Team and West Yorkshire Archive Service helped to inform the design.
- The food hall would sit in the refurbished market hall with an event square outside in the public realm. The designs in the paving of the square would reflect the textile heritage of Kirklees and there would also be water features.
- The museum would be housed in the old library building, and there was close collaboration with the Museum and Gallery team to influence the design of the spaces.
- The outdoor public realm would include Gardens which would be highly planted areas.
- The Play zone's design was influenced by the heritage, music, and landscape of Huddersfield. There would be bespoke play equipment and natural play elements that reflected on the influences.
- The Venue and Multistorey Car Park would be erected on the site of the old car park. There would be a high use of timber to support carbon reduction.

The Panel noted the presentation and in the discussion that followed asked questions around the following themes and issues:

- Clarity on the phasing; the Library, Foodhall and Events Square was mentioned in the timeline, but what about the rest of the plan?
- Financials; would the proposed plans be carried out within budget? would additional funding be required from other sources, and was any borrowing still affordable?
- Transport; how would the extra footfall into the town be sustained and how would the public transport and current car parking cope?
- Decision Points; at what phase would the other planned builds generate decision points?
- Accessibility; would there be options for British sign language signs?
- Lighting; what would there be to ensure safety?

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In response to the Panel's question in respect of clarity on phasing, David Glover advised that phasing would be presented to Cabinet as part of the Gateway 3 decision. Cabinet at that time would be able to decide in respect of Phase 1. The available cash had not changed, and since the start of the project, an inflation allowance had been utilised to cope with the inflation and it was not envisaged that difficulties would arise with the budget.

Responding to the questions around transport, Joanne Bartholomew highlighted the layout of the town and a vehicle movement strategy aimed to improve transport and movement around the town centre. Officers were also exploring other options such as the free town bus, taxi pickups/drop offs, accessible and attractive walking routes from transport hubs (i.e., train station) and the expansion of the parking offer at Kingsgate shopping centre. Active travel options would be encouraged, as well as being able to drive into the town centre and park. David Glover advised that the transport assessment in the business case predicted that 70% of visitors would be joint with other visits into town therefore not generating additional traffic.

With regards to the Venue, Museum, Gallery and the Playzone, Joanne Bartholomew reassured the Panel that there would be a focus on the alignment of the projects to ensure minimal impact whilst managing the construction and outcomes. David Glover added that officers were previously prepared to deliver the project in one go but had been asked to create phasing to give a wider scope of options and choices for delivery.

Responding to the questions around finances, Joanne Bartholomew advised that there was an expectation to deliver within the current budget. Options for additional funding would come forward during RIBA stage 3 in June. Officers were consistently investigating sources of additional funding to identify where the Council's borrowing could be supplemented or replaced. The Arts Council previously had investment in buildings, communities, and events for example, and as opportunities presented officers would attempt to make use of them but with awareness that the Council's borrowing was a significant commitment. Joanne stated that all the capital discussed remained in the Council's capital plan and the Council's Section 151 officer would be best to advise on the affordability of the borrowing.

David Glover noted that he was not aware if British sign language signs were already included in the plan and agreed to investigate further. In respect of lighting and safety, Joanne Bartholomew informed the Panel that there were plans for the inclusion of plenty of carbon friendly LED lighting to ensure and increase safety.

RESOLVED: The Panel thanked officers for their attendance and noted the update. It was agreed that:

1. An update on Phasing be provided to the Panel at the appropriate time.
2. The outcomes of consultations around accessibility initiatives be shared with the Panel.
3. Vehicle and Movement Strategies be provided to the Panel at the appropriate time.
4. British Sign Language signage to be included in the design.