

# Place Shaping Working Group Minutes

## Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

### Tuesday 12 January 2016

#### **Councillors Present:**

Councillor JW Boyce (Chair)  
Councillor LA Bentley  
Councillor GA Boulter  
Councillor DM Carter  
Councillor L Darr  
Councillor J Kaufman  
Councillor SB Morris

#### **Officers Present:**

Adrian Thorpe (Planning Policy and Regeneration Manager)  
Anne Court (Director of Services)  
Daniel Britton (Economic Regeneration Officer)  
Ed Morgan (Planning Policy Officer)  
Mark Hryniw (Town Centre Manager)

#### **1. Apologies:**

1.1 None received.

#### **2. Minutes and matters arising**

2.1 Councillor Boulter asked for an update on the progress of the Information Boards that are to be installed on Bell Street, Wigston. He requested that they are in place by June 2016, in time for an event he is involved with to commemorate an historical event in relation to the Victoria Cross.

2.2 Councillor Boyce requested that Adrian Thorpe draws a plan together over the next two weeks to ensure that all necessary snagging jobs on Bell Street are concluded well before June 2016.

#### **3. Town Centre Managers Update**

3.1 Mark Hryniw updated Members on each of the three centres, covering a range of topics, including:

- Empty retail units
- Digital display screens
- Recent and forthcoming events
- Markets
- Festive lights

3.2 Overall, all three centres are performing well, although the number of empty units is starting to increase. Councillor Boyce requested that Mark Hryniw liaises with Finance Officers to understand what the regulations are for National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) for vacant

units in town centres and to consider how the Council can assist landlords in reducing the number of empty shops in the Borough's centres.

- 3.3 Also, the imminent loss of the Co-op from Bell Street, Wigston, as well as the associated traders including the Post Office, is a big loss. Mark Hryniw confirmed that the Officers are doing all that they can to liaise with the key stakeholders involved, in a bid to achieve the best outcome for the town centre.
- 3.4 Mark Hryniw advised Members that the digital display screens have been well received in both Oadby and Wigston. There have been numerous enquiries to advertise on them, and recently, an application was received with a local firm that will enable them to advertise for twelve months.
- 3.5 The monthly Farmer's Market in both Oadby and Wigston has proven to be successful for both towns in 2015. Unfortunately, Leicestershire Food Links will no longer be able to run these events in 2016-17, and an interim arrangement has been put in place. However, this provides the Council with an opportunity to consider its options going forward.
- 3.6 Councillor Boyce requested that a report should be taken to Place Shaping Member Working Group around September 2016. The report should set out what management arrangements are in place and what the costs of running the markets will be, as well as include a detailed breakdown of each element.
- 3.7 All Members agreed that the Festive Light Switch-On events in each centre were a success. In particular, the closure of Blaby Road in South Wigston saw a record number of people attend the Christmas Capers event.
- 3.8 Mark Hryniw presented on the successful elements and the outstanding issues that have emerged from this year's festive lights in each town. In response to the comments of Councillor S Morris, it was agreed to plot a plan of where the entire existing infrastructure supporting the lights is located in each town and to assess the quality of each electrical connection as part of the planning process for next year's festive lights.
- 3.9 Mark Hryniw agreed to work proactively over the coming months with the contractor that supports the Council in delivering the festive lights and to identify potential improvements that can be made. Once these have been identified, infrastructure and lighting plans for each town will be plotted, as well as procedures to monitor and respond to issues relating to the lights, more efficiently and effectively.
- 3.10 It was acknowledged that this year's extreme weather conditions throughout December and January did not help matters. There were a number of lights that failed that are still under warranty and therefore, they will be sent back to the manufacturer and will be replaced / repaired for 2016.

#### **4. Oadby Grange Country Park**

- 4.1 Anne Court verbally updated Members on the latest position regarding Oadby Grange Country Park. Members agreed that Officers need to do further work and to report back to a future meeting of Policy, Finance and Development Committee.

## **5. Local Plan Key Challenges Consultation**

- 5.1 Adrian Thorpe presented his report to Members, identifying a summary of the 'key challenges' that had been identified by stakeholders that submitted comments to the draft consultation document.
- 5.2 Looking forward to the next consultation period, the Council hopes to consult on the Preferred Options document in autumn 2016. However, Adrian Thorpe acknowledged that the Council's progress is likely to be dictated by the progress of the necessary strategic evidence base work that is needed to support and underpin each district's Local Plan.
- 5.3 Councillor Boyce updated Members on the latest position regarding the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Review, as well as the emerging Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA). Due to the complexity of these pieces of work, as well as the requirement placed upon all districts under the Duty to Co-operate and the potential need for a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be agreed and signed, it is becoming increasingly likely that the Borough's Local Plan preparation will be delayed by the need for this strategically agreed position to be established.
- 5.4 Should everything go to plan, it is anticipated that the Council will be looking to adopt the new Local Plan by approximately February 2018. It is difficult to achieve adoption any sooner because of the need to ensure that the necessary strategic evidence base is in place first. Adrian Thorpe indicated that there was a risk to this approach because Government has advised all local authorities that should they not have an 'up to date' Plan by early 2017, government intervention is likely, as are implications including those local authorities being put into 'special measures'. However, Government has still not published any further information to define 'up to date'.
- 5.5 Members agreed that although the risks are of concern, the Council is in a strong position because it has an adopted Core Strategy (2010) and Town Centres Area Action Plan (2013) in place and that in order to accord with the Duty to Co-operate, the Council has little choice but to wait for the necessary strategic evidence base and associated work to be complete.
- 5.6 Adrian Thorpe summarised some of the 'key challenges' that have emerged from responses to the recent Local Plan consultation. One issue for the Council to consider is the future demand for cemetery and / or burial grounds in the Borough. Other than an existing allocation in Oadby, there has not been any suggestion for further sites to be allocated elsewhere in the Borough. Members agreed that it would be necessary for Officers to do some more work on this matter and to consider what existing and future demand there may be for this infrastructure in the Borough, as well as to explore options for how any demand may be met.
- 5.7 Adrian Thorpe acknowledged that more work will need to be done on this issue as the Local Plan emerges. He suggested that Officers would welcome input from Members should there be any land that they feel may be suitable for consideration.
- 5.8 Councillor Boyce also suggested that another key challenge for the new Local Plan is to ensure that Planning Policy and Development Management work collaboratively on the development of locally robust policies to ensure that they are able to deliver high quality design and construction in the future.

## **6. Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership Sector Growth Plans**

- 6.1 Daniel Britton presented this report to Members and outlined details of the sector growth plans created in 2015 for the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership's eight priority sectors. He also outlined the emerging ninth sector growth plan for Sport, Health and Wellbeing.
- 6.2 Councillor Boyce updated Members on the latest progress of the development of a Combined Authority and explained that the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) will take responsibility for the delivery of a significant amount of strategic regeneration issues in the future.

## **7. Response to Government Consultation: Review of the Community Infrastructure Levy**

- 7.1 Ed Morgan presented his report to Members and explained that the deadline to submit the draft responses to the consultation is on Friday, 15 January 2016.
- 7.2 Members approved the content of the submission, although one minor amendment was suggested by Councillor Boulter.
- 7.3 Ed Morgan explained to Members that it is becoming increasingly difficult for local authorities to negotiate planning obligations as part of section 106 agreements due to the constraints placed upon them by the existing Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations.
- 7.4 However, unless there is to be a significant reversal of the Regulations, it is unlikely to become any easier for the Council and therefore, Officer's will be doing further work to explore what the best options to deliver new infrastructure to support growth in the Borough will be in the medium to long term.

## **8. National Planning Policy: Consultation on Proposed Changes**

- 8.1 Adrian Thorpe gave a verbal update to Members on the latest Government consultation that is taking place and highlighted the key issues that the Council needs to respond to, also in relation to the consultation on New Homes Bonus.

## **9. Date of Next Meeting**

- 9.1 Wednesday, 9 March 2016, 6:30pm, Committee Room.