

TOWN DEAL

5 JULY 2023

In attendance		Absent	
Coral Harding	HBC	Allison San Diego	HBC – Prog team
Carole Dixon Co-Chair	Hastings Community Network	Carole Crathern	NHS – Primary Care
Graham Peters Co-Chair	Team East Sussex	Jane Hartnell	HBC
James Harris	ESCC	Francis Brown	Hastings Youth Council
Cllr Maya Evans	Deputy Leader, HBC	Ian Sycamore	HBC – Prog Team
Ruth Kynoch	HBC – Prog Team	Justin Thomas	NewRiver REIT
Kit Godfrey	Hastings Commons	Kate Adams	Project Artworks
Victoria Conheady	HBC	Liz Gilmore	Cultural Leaders Group, Hastings Contemporary
Pranesh Datta	HBC – Prog Team	Jess Steele	White Rock Neighbourhood Ventures
Andrew Harvey	NewRiver REIT	Marc Moore	The Source Park
John Bownas	Hastings Business Improvement District	Nigel Stewardson	DLUHC
Lourdes Madigasekera-Elliott	Public Health East Sussex	Liz Coleman	Hastings and Rother Interfaith Forum
Hannah Collins	HBC – Prog team	Richard Dawson	ESCC
Nathalie Tulip	Freedom Works	Richard Moore	The Source Park
Jon Trigg	Freedom Works	Sally-Ann Hart (MP)	MP for Hastings and Rye
Ellie McDaniel	ESCC	Sean Dennis	Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce
Nicola Collomb	Garden Town	James Robson	HBC
Nathan Haffenden	ESCG	Danny Saxby	HBC
Darrell Gale	Public Health ESCC	Hannah Caldwell	ESCG

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Jane Hartnell, Mark Moore, Hannah Caldwell, Liz Coleman, Sean Dennis, Sally-Ann Hart, Jess Steele, and Ian Sycamore

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2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Maya Evans declared that she is the Hastings Borough Council (HBC) champion for the Public Realm and Green Connections project.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (27/04/23) AND MATTERS ARISING

Accepted as an accurate record.

Matters arising:

- Page 3, Terms of reference for Garden Town, HBC and the Public Realm Project. First draft completed and initial meetings held. Further updates to be given under section 5. Project Updates
- Page 3, Public Realm, dialogue and design. The brief to the consultants includes drawing in key stakeholders, including HBC ground maintenance, to ensure local community engagement and future maintenance and development. Key stakeholders to include Education Futures Trust, Plumpton College, Garden Town and local businesses
- Page 4 – Actions. An email has been sent to all the projects to request project documentation that may be shared publicly, and the responses are being collated. The sharing of the information will be via the Website but is pending the recruitment of the new Communications Officer
- Kit Godfrey (Hastings Commons) requested that any materials potentially impacting the Hastings Commons sites and projects be shared with him.
Pranesh to arrange a meeting to discuss.

4. PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE

4.1. Town Deal Programme Update

Confirmation of the increased budget to the Public Realm and Green Connections project was received from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) at the end of May and work is continuing completing the Grant Funding Agreement.

Pranesh highlighted five projects that have completed their capital build, confirming that monitoring continues for the project outputs and impact.

It was brought to the attention of the Board that the ground floor offices provided by the Town Centre Core Project 1a, Priory Meadow (Fast Track) have been vacated by Jobcentre Plus (JCP). The Gym Group continues to occupy the upper floor.

Andrew Harvey from NewRiver REIT provided an update. The offices were and continue to be let to a third party, The Instant Group, who facilitated the occupation of the JCP. They will be seeking new tenants.

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Pranesh also reminded the board of the four accelerator projects, also completed. These consisted of the White Rock Courtyard Project, Improvements to the Alley Way behind the Observer Building, a Conference venue at the College and several EV charging points. These were enabled by the first £1m accelerated fund provided under the Towns Fund.

Pranesh advised that the business case phase of the programme is now complete and that the programme is now fully in implementation and delivery phase.

Regarding the programme team, Pranesh advised that the Investment Manager role had now been filled by Joseph Brown. He has a background as an architect, in surveying, cost consultancy and project management. He will start in September and will be engaging with the Public Realm project and other projects that HBC is heavily involved in.

Following the departure of the communications officer in January, the team has been trying to recruit a replacement. The delay has resulted in the blogs and website being slightly out of date. Pranesh indicated that this role would be filled shortly following the final interviews and an offer being made to one of the candidates.

Pranesh also announced the team had lost Ian Sycamore with his move to a different department. Carole Dixon, Co-Chair echoed the thanks offered by Pranesh and re-iterated how Ian's support and input had been fundamental to the success of the programme and wished to formally record the thanks of the board. Graham Peters, Co-Chair, re-iterated the board's thanks for all he had done, and in particular, the calm and measured manner in which this was approached. Both wished him good luck and many thanks.

4.2. Communications Update

The update was brief with a request to project leads to update the team with items to be shared. Hannah Collins also highlighted that the communications officer role had been offered and would, hopefully be recruited soon. She re-iterated that it was known the website and blog were slightly out of date and asked to be advised of any updates by the project leads, pending the start of the new communications officer.

4.3. Programme Finance Update

The latest funding position was shared via the agenda pack. There were no queries.

4.4. Homes England Update

Pranesh advised that there had been an update meeting with senior officers from HBC and Homes England on 12th June 2023. The next steps are under discussion, but no clear timeline or approach agreed.

Homes England has published its new strategy – link provided in the update report. The key point being adopting the whole 'regeneration' and place making agenda. They have recognised the need for a broader regeneration ambition so that housing developments supports sustainable communities.

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Pranesh indicated that the strategy fits well with Hastings and further meetings are planned to discuss how Homes England might engage with HBC, although nothing has been formally agreed.

5. PROJECT UPDATES (10 MINUTES EACH + QUESTIONS)

5.1 Hastings Town Centre Co-Working – Presenter Nathalie Tulip

A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

- Key points
 - First to complete, including delivering all the outputs
 - 9 Spaces with 3000+ active members across the Southeast. Hastings' capacity is 150 members
 - Renovations to an iconic town centre building
 - Delivered additional Office space with the opportunity for more, with additional funding
 - Open 24/7 with “no fuss” offering to members
 - 60% occupancy confirmed prior to the doors opening for business
 - Green retrofit

Nat Tulip advised they received great feedback from the environmental impact assessment carried out at the end the project, this praised the physical accessibility, affordability and friendliness. So far, attracting only five-star reviews on Google.

Nat also advised that the future plans were to extend to the fifth floor and extend Barclays Eagle Lab to the Hastings membership having signed a 2-year partnership agreement for the West Sussex locations. This will bring Hastings members access to a Barclays ecosystem manager and all the support that Barclays offers in terms of mentorship and access to funding.

Freedom Works is also planning to bring additional sites into the portfolio, extending the space available to their membership.

In wrapping up the presentation, Nat re-iterated the need for additional funding to renovate the fifth floor.

Q&A

Q. James Harris asked what the occupancy level was post the opening and what who forms the membership.

A. Occupancy was confirmed as 80%. The membership is made up of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), start-ups, freelancers, and solo entrepreneurs who cover a wide range of industries and services. There are many creatives, designers and tech businesses.

Jon Trigg related that one of the founding members was a Hastings resident who had offices in Brighton and London to attract the right talent base. Having a facility such as

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Freedom Works allows him to attract talent locally, which is great for the local economy. Their team has grown from 3 to 9. Additionally, a new start-up between a food critic and a wine buyer to promote local produce is another example of the wide industry base supported by the facility.

Q. Victoria Conheady asked if there was an opportunity to work closer with both East Sussex College Group and Plumpton College to look at support around recruitment and skills development.

A. Jon confirmed that Freedom Works already works with apprentice agencies and some colleges and would welcome an introduction to the Chief Executives of ESCG and Plumpton.

Q. Victoria also asked if the Freedom Works membership would be interested in helping with the Youth Futures Programme research in terms of what they see as barriers to young people accessing the workforce.

A. Jon confirmed he was happy to facilitate introductions to the membership.

Q. Cllr Maya Evans asked what reductions or incentives may be available to projects that are of social community value.

A. Jon responded that discounts were offered to non-profit organisations and Community Interest Companies, CICs. This is offered on events space and hot desking. An example was given of a mental health support group for Dads, out of Worthing and Hove, who have benefitted from discounted spaces. He also advised that Freedom Works acts as a facilitator in connecting these groups with local businesses within the Freedom Works ecosystem.

In conclusion to the presentation, Darrell Gale, offered to connect Freedom Works with the Public Health Team to help promote good health in the work force and the consequential benefits for their home life and further into the community.

5.2 Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections - Presenters Ellie McDaniel and Nicole Collomb

A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

- Key points
 - Contractor for the Design phase, Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) stage 3 and stakeholder consultation are about to be confirmed
 - Close engagement with the Garden Town
 - Project inspired by the Great Dixter philosophy of creative ecology
 - Creating a much better quality urban environment for people to spend time in the Town Centre as a healthy, robust and resilient place.
 - ESCC, HBC and Garden Town acting as advocates for the Garden Town vision, making sure it remains embedded in this project, which is a major council-led infrastructure project.
 - Garden Town acts as expert advisors in green infrastructure and water culture aspect of the project

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- Garden Town will be supporting community engagement and is seeking funding to facilitate these activities
- Anticipated commencement of construction is spring 2024, completing in 2026

Q&A

Q. Victoria asked what the process would be around the public consultation, specifically the timing, and considering any pre-election periods and the Reg 19 local plan.

A. Ellie advised this would be confirmed once the consultants were appointed. The expectation being public consultation would begin before Christmas 2023 and would accommodate any dates that were of issue.

Q. James asked how the planting would look during the winter and what impact the types of planting would have on the water management ambitions of the project.

A. Nicole advised that the planting would not be the traditional planting more commonly seen in public realm. To ensure more sustainable urban drainage systems, biodiversity and other kinds of wildlife, the planting will be a mix of herbaceous plants and grasses, the aesthetic moving toward meadow and prairie planting. An example of this is the Sheffield Greater Green project <https://www.greytogreen.org.uk/>. She also advised that the maintenance of the public realm needed to be appropriate for this type of planting, ensuring the beds are maintained and litter is collected.

Q. Cllr Maya Evans asked, given the recent flooding, and the anticipated report into the flooding not being conclusive as to the cause, how might this impact the project.

A. Pranesh advised that Southern Water had been contacted as a key stakeholder. Discussions will continue particularly around Southern Water's long-term plans for the town centre, so they align to the project.

5.3 Green Construction, Energy and Vehicle Centre of Excellence – Presenter Nathan Haffenden

A copy of the presentation is appended to these minutes.

- Key points
 - The project is to deliver a Green Centre of Excellence
 - The project will provide new training and skills opportunities for students from 16 all the way up to adults in higher education
 - The College organisation is already working with a number of businesses and local organizations to help strengthen the offering
 - The construction element will be partly new build and partly enhancements to the existing building. These include significant mezzanine floors in void spaces
 - Courses currently outside the College campus will be bought in house, which in turn, will enhance the student experience

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- The completion date is shifting to accommodate a working college environment and the academic year
- RIBA 3 design is underway
- The project addresses a clear skills gap within the industry, specifically within the construction and built environment. Future proofing the courses and the education offering ensures people of all ages can train, re-skill and find employment
- A number of commercial courses will also be available to local businesses and short courses that can be managed around other student commitments

Q&A

Q. Kit Godfrey asked about the construction timetable for the college project as there could be competition for resources if several projects were scheduled to commence construction around the same time.

A. It was agreed that this topic be discussed further, outside of the board meeting.

Q. Darrell Gale asked, given the retrofit aspects of the construction, if the indoor air quality was being considered and offered the support of the public health and subject matter experts to assist in further discussion.

6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Victoria Conheady advised that HBC, East Sussex County Council and Rother had received engagements packs regarding Levelling Up Partnerships and would provide an update at the next Town Deal Board meeting.

Graham Peters announced that Carole Dixon would be retiring from chairing the Town Deal Board meetings and he would be stepping down from chairing Team East Sussex. Consequently, the opportunity would be taken to review the shape of the board and other boards relating to regeneration and Hastings.

7. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

Wednesday, 25th October 2023 via Microsoft Teams