

Cabinet

Monday 18 March 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor Evans OBE, in the Chair.

Councillor Laing, Vice Chair.

Councillors Aspinall, Briars-Delve, Coker, Cresswell, Dann, Haydon, Lowry and Penberthy.

Also in attendance: Paul Barnard (Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development), Sally Farley (Strategic Transport Manager), Jackie Grubb (City College Principal), Philip Heseltine (Head of Transport, Planning and Strategic Infrastructure), Tracey Lee (Chief Executive), Anthony Payne (Strategic Director for Place), Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor), Richard Stevens (Chair of City College Board), Matt Ward (Head of Strategic Development Projects), Gary Walbridge (Head of ASC and Retained Functions).

The meeting started at 9.30 am and finished at 10.20 am.

Note: The full discussion can be viewed on the webcast of the City Council meeting at www.plymouth.gov.uk. At a future meeting, the Council will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

137. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

138. **Questions from the Public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

139. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

140. **Woolwell To The George Transport Improvements: Compulsory Purchase Order & Side Roads Order Resolution**

Councillor Coker (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport) introduced the item and highlighted the following points:

- a) The report sought formal approval for the final land requirements for The George Scheme which would enable the Council to progress with the necessary compulsory purchase order (CPO) and side road order to complete the project;
- b) The funding for the scheme was already in place;

- c) The goal was to reach an agreement with affected land owners through negotiation;
- d) The CPO was a last resort;
- e) The scheme would have a direct impact on a number of residents;
- f) Plymouth City Council had received representations from land owners opposing the CPO which had been distributed to Cabinet;
- g) After reviewing the scheme and producing further design work, four properties previously affected by the scheme had been removed and the amount of permanent land required for the scheme had been reduced by a further 21 properties;
- h) The decision Cabinet would come to in this meeting would be carefully considered to ensure that the Council were satisfied that the benefits of the scheme outweighed the interference of the land owned by third parties, and therefore justified the CPO to proceed;
- i) The benefits to the scheme included:
 - i) Transport improvements which would make a difference to everyone who relied on the route, including local businesses, bus passengers, pedestrians and cyclists;
 - ii) More than 30,000 vehicles used Tavistock Road every day and it was regarded as a pinch point in the network; the scheme would help improve this;
 - iii) Journey times for buses and general traffic would be improved which would help improve bus service reliability;
 - iv) Pavements and cycle paths would be new and improved which would ensure the public considered alternative active and sustainable transport options;
- j) The scheme was a critical part of the programme to provide better links to and from the north of Plymouth as it grew and would complement the Derriford Hospital Interchange, the Derriford Hospital Transport Scheme and the Forder Valley Link Road;
- k) The scheme was part of the Council's adapted Statutory Planning Framework for the city;
- l) The Joint Local Plan (JLP) identified the Northern Corridor as one of the three priority growth areas due to its potential to deliver a regionally significant number of new jobs and homes;
- m) The scheme would provide part of the critical infrastructure needed to deliver the new homes that had been identified for the Derriford and Northern Corridor growth area, around 2000 of which would be part of the Woolwell Urban Extension;

- n) The JLP delivering growth in Derriford and the Northern Corridor specifically supported the provision of the transport infrastructure and the scheme directly supported a number of other JLP policies.

Sally Farley (Strategic Transport Manager) added:

- o) The fourth recommendation delegated powers to Paul Barnard (Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure) the ability to negotiate and make minor amendments;
- p) The scheme had worked to 'design out' four land plots, altogether reducing land plots as a value for money exercise.

Cabinet agreed to the following recommendations:

1. To authorise the making of a compulsory purchase order to be known as The City of Plymouth (A386 Tavistock Road) Compulsory Purchase Order 2024 (CPO) under sections 239, 240, 246, 250 and 260 of the Highways Act 1980 and the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 to secure the compulsory acquisition of the land shown within the red boundary on the CPO Resolution Area plan and shown on the plot plans shaded blue and the new rights over the land shown hatched blue at Appendix E of the report;
2. To authorise the making of a side roads order to be known as The City of Plymouth (A386 Tavistock Road) (Side Roads) Order 2024 (SRO) under sections 14 and 125 of the Highways Act 1980 to construct new highways and public rights of ways, stop up, divert, improve or otherwise deal with a highway including public rights of ways and the closure and creation of private means of access as shown in the SRO Maps at Appendix F to the report;
3. To note, and have due regard to determining whether or not to authorise the making of the Orders, the public sector equality duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998, as detailed further in section 2.4 of the report;
4. That the Service Director for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure be authorised in consultation with the Head of Legal Services to:
 - i) Finalise and make, if necessary, any minor or technical amendments, modifications and deletions to the CPO Maps and SRO Maps should this be considered appropriate;
 - ii) Agree the precise scope of rights to be acquired over properties that surround the Order Land;
 - iii) Finalise the CPO and SRO (collectively referred to as The Orders), and the Statement of Reasons;
 - iv) To take all necessary steps to make (including any associated or ancillary applications to the Secretary of State under the Acquisition of Land Act 1981) publish, and obtain confirmation of the Orders including (but not limited to) the publication

and service of all statutory notices and presentation of the Council's case at any Public Inquiry or through written representations, to secure the confirmation of the Orders (with or without modifications) by the Secretary of State for Transport and implement the Orders associated with the Scheme;

v) Continue, in accordance with the Cabinet authority dated 9 November 2021, discussions and negotiations with landowners and stakeholders with a view to reaching voluntary agreements with landowners and to purchase and/or reserve land and rights by agreement for the scheme;

vi) Negotiate, agree terms and enter into agreements with affected parties including agreements for the withdrawal of blight notices and/or the withdrawal of objections to the Orders and/or undertakings not to enforce the Orders on specified terms, including (but not limited to) where appropriate seeking exclusion of land from the Orders, making provision for the payment of compensation and/or relocation;

vii) In the event the Orders are confirmed by the Secretary of State or an Inspector in the case of delegation, to advertise and give notice of confirmation and thereafter to take all steps to implement the Orders including, as applicable to execute general vesting declarations and/or to serve notices to treat and notices of entry in respect of interests and rights in the Order Land; and

viii) Take all steps in relation to any legal proceedings relating to the Orders including defending or settling claims referred to the Upper Tribunal and/or applications to the courts and any appeals.

5. To allocate an additional £3,916,433 into the capital programme for the scheme funded by the identified £1,957,433 Section 105 contributions and £1,959,000 Integrated Transport Block grant and remove £755,000 Capital receipts previously anticipated.

141. **City Centre Skills Hub**

Councillor Lowry (Cabinet Member for Finance) introduced the item the highlighted the following points:

- a) It had been 10 years since the Council had left the Civic Centre and relocated to Ballard House, during which time work had been underway with Urban Splash to find a way to bring the listed building back into use;
- b) Urban Splash had secured the planning consent for the conversion and reuse of the Civic Centre for apartments, which aligned to the Council's vision to build 5000 new homes in the city centre;
- c) The Civic Centre opened in 1962 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II;
- d) In 2021, the estimated cost of the development of the 114 new homes in the Civic Centre was £35 million, but due to inflation the current budget estimate was over £50 million, which meant a further £10 million of High Street Finding for the

regeneration would be used for this project;

- e) The Council had secured a further £8.5 million Levelling Up Grant for the regeneration of the Civic Centre which meant the regeneration was now largely a public sector funded project, meaning it was appropriate for the Council to recover the building from the current owners and take on the works;
- f) The Council would now oversee the project and had appointed a consultancy team;
- g) Concrete stabilisation works would commence shortly and needed to be complete by March 2025;
- h) The funding for the external renovation works would, in part, be met by funding secured and income generated from the new leave and the car park;
- i) A report would be brought to Cabinet in Autumn 2024, clarifying the programme and options of the projects going forward, including the conversion and fit out of the internals of the tower.

Councillor Cresswell (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Apprenticeships) added:

- j) Through shared vision the Civic Centre would not only be a city centre regeneration project, but a transformational skills project;
- k) Nearly 60% of all employment in Plymouth was in STEM sectors;
- l) Investment in the Freeport and Naval Base would continue to see the growth in highly skills and highly paid roles;
- m) There was an estimate of 8000 new jobs by 2023, 70% of which would require higher level educational qualifications;
- n) The Civic Centre investment would enable City College to have a new city centre campus, focused on blue and green skills;
- o) The Civic Centre investment would also allow City College to deliver 60 new courses to 2000 New Learners per annum, as well as 2500 apprenticeship starts;
- p) At its heart, the Civic Centre project was about inclusive growth; ensuring all residents in St Peter and the Waterfront, Stonehouse, Devonport. Keyham, Ernesettle, Whitleigh, Honicknowle and Ham had the opportunity to get the high value jobs created by Babcock, Oceansgate, and the Freeport;
- q) The investment in the Civic Centre would ensure the workforce is fit for the new jobs of the 21st century, that citizens would have the opportunity to get a job, and it would be a national Centre of Excellence for blue and green skills.

Jackie Grubb (Principal of City College) added:

- r) In terms of deprivation, attainment, and having a civic responsibility to change people's lives, the blue and green skills hub would achieve this;
- s) There would be a positive economic impact on Plymouth by developing and nourishing low level, and higher technical skills in young people;
- t) City College Plymouth was the Anchor Institution for skills;
- u) The introduction of the blue and green skills Hub would make a difference to employers and bridge the skills gap.

Richard Stevens (Chair of City College Board) added:

- v) The vision for the city centre location was born out of an assessment of what City College Plymouth and the city needed;
- w) The Hub would be at the centre of the transport network;
- x) One of the biggest assets in Plymouth was the underutilised work force, and the Hub would equip this work force with opportunities.

Matt Ward (Head of Strategic Development Projects) added:

- y) The Civic Centre Project was part of a much wider regeneration project for the city centre;
- z) The regeneration would have a direct impact on local communities.

Councillor Briars-Delve (Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change) also added:

- aa) Achieving Net Zero would be impossible without green skills and jobs;
- bb) There were jobs in the pipeline that would require green skills such as installing heat pumps, transitioning from gas boilers, work being done on EV charging and working on floating offshore wind.

Councillor Laing (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, Culture, Events and Communications) added:

- cc) The Civic Centre was iconic and associated with Plymouth's past.

Councillor Penberthy (Cabinet Member for Housing, Cooperative Development and Communities) added:

- dd) Plymouth Energy Community (PEC) had been constrained by local supply chain as there were not relevant skills in the city to deliver solar and retrofitting, and the skills Hub would provide these skills from within the city;
- ee) Skills development for local residents would help tackle poverty in Stonehouse.

David Parkes (Principle Surveyor) added:

- ff) The Civic Centre would be wrapped in thermal blanketing to ensure energy efficiency;
- gg) The use of private cars would be discouraged and the bus network and the Adopt a Car Club Scheme would be promoted.

Councillor Evans OBE (Leader of the Council) added:

- hh) The new Economic Plan was talked about at the Plymouth Area Business Council and highlighted how the training and skills element was underpinning green jobs and green skills pillar;
- ii) The Civic Centre was a statement to the citizens of Plymouth after the devastation of World War II;
- jj) The Civic Centre Project would aid young people train for apprenticeships, and would drive economic activity in the city centre.

David Draffan (Service Director for Economic Development) added:

- kk) Nationally, not much of the Levelling Up Fund had been spent due to councils not having retained capacity and capability to undertake levelling up projects and not many councils were in a position to take risks and co-invest;
- ll) The Civic Centre Project was a £55 million project that required care and due diligence;
- mm) The Civic Centre Project would be undertaken in three phases.

Cabinet agreed to the following recommendations:

1. To approve the Council entering into an agreement for lease with City College Plymouth in relation to parts of the Civic Centre;
2. To approve the allocation of £8.5 million of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) received (L44 23/24) to support future capital works that would enable the occupation of the lower floors of the Civic Centre by City College Plymouth;
3. To note that a further report would be submitted by Autumn 2024 outlining agreed terms for a lease to City College Plymouth and a capital budget, programme and funding options for stage 2 of the works including cladding the building;
4. To approve the strategy as set out in the briefing at Appendices 1 and 2 for the Council to take back ownership and control of the Civic Centre to able the first stage of restoration works to progress within the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) grant window;
5. To approve the freehold purchase of the Civic Centre from Urban Splash for £1.00;

6. To approve the virement of £2.45 million of FHFS grant from the Civic Centre project to the Guildhall project, therefore releasing corporate borrowing of £2.45 million to be earmarked for a future programme of works at the Civic Centre;

7. To note the financial appraisal at Appendix 2i and the requirement for the Council to provide a financial underwrite until additional gap funding and/or investment has been secured;

8. To grant authority to the Service Director for Economic Development in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer to approve the terms of the property agreements and associated hand over arrangements, as well as any contracts for works, consultant appointments, warranties and any other legal agreements required to progress the skills hub and other works associated with the refurbishment of the Civic Centre, and to seek the most economic funding arrangement from agencies and other relevant partners to support project delivery which would reduce the Council's exposure to financial risk.