

ILFRACOMBE REGENERATION BOARD
Notes of the Meeting

Wednesday 13 March 2024, 14.00 – 15.30, Ilfracombe Centre / MS Teams

Present: Councillor Paul Crabb (Chair), Councillor Daniel Turton, Councillor, Councillor Malcolm Prowse, Councillor June Williams, Geoffrey Fowler, Rod Donovan, Councillor Sara Wilson, Mike Edmunds

In Attendance: Laura Donovan, Keir Duffin, Georgina Carlo-Paat, Helen Bond, Dominie Dunbrook, Matthew Brown, Clare China (notes) , Councillor Marc Newland

Apologies: Councillor Jonathan Quinn, Matthew Collins, Councillor Val Gates, Councillor Malcolm Wilkinson, Katalin Fulop, Alison Mills, SarahJane Mackenzie-Shapland, Steve Seatherton

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr. Crabb opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

2. Agree notes and actions from last meeting (31.01.2024)

There were no matters arising.

3. Ilfracombe Town Council updates

Informal young people's recreation space location

The Board discussed sites and the context of the previous discussions around an informal recreation space rather than a MUGA requirement for young people in Ilfracombe. A ball games area was not included in the master plan for the Sea Front due to safety concerns and not in keeping with the existing infrastructure and context of the area. The Board agreed locations for consideration were:

- Greenways play area
- Behind the Landmark Theatre
- Skate Park
- Bicclescombe Park

There was a consensus that young people should be further consulted on the location. The idea came about because young people were playing ball games on the sea front and caused problems with the surface area and safety due to proximity to the road with no fencing. Young people talked to at that time said they would like more facilities at the skate park. It was agreed this could be the most appropriate location. It was suggested a note on the Ilfracombe Academy notice board to find out what would be most popular could be one form of informal consultation.

ITC are working on a project with young people and could pick up this agenda item as part of those discussions.

Action: ITC to organise consultation with young people on recreation area location.

Update on Town Strategic Plan

Continued work in progress, there are two meetings left until the final updated draft, which will be distributed to the board.

Benches/street furniture in High Street

Bench/planter designs were presented to the Board, along with the quotes for works. Option 2 design was preferred (refer to quote documents distributed to the board prior to the meeting). The board agreed creating a uniform look across the town would be more attractive and that quotes for further designs to accommodate more across the High Street area would be useful.

- It was noted that the proposed designs were similar design to recently installed benches at Barnstaple Library Square, and it was suggested that the cost/supplier for these were investigated
- ITC highlighted that there are resin benches available which had been donated to ITC as were no longer needed for their original purpose

Action: ITC to source further quotes

Action: NDC to follow up with Parks Team regarding similar bench purchases in Barnstaple and the cost of these and supplier

4. Devon County Council Updates

Urban Renewal Project

A benchmarking process is underway, working with Minehead who, as a seaside town, face similar challenges to Ilfracombe. As an area reliant on tourism, 'out of season economic activity' is a particular issue and they are exploring methods to generate the local economy during these periods of the year by maximising on key assets. A dashboard is being developed to show findings and comparisons. This will be presented to the board at the next meeting.

- It was asked if other towns are going through the same processes like Ilfracombe with regeneration boards and action plans. Keir confirmed the same activity is taking place in other Devon towns and their strategies/action plans flag up similar content to IRB.

Action: Re-send the Urban renewal action plan to board members

Ilfracombe Task Force

The Task Force was established to enable key partners to gather intelligence and present an 'exception case' to government for resources to tackle some of the entrenched deprivation issues in Ilfracombe.

- The board were reminded about the case for special measures for Ilfracombe relating to the national indices of deprivation. This is being done in line with the 'Levelling Up' metrics that Government use for delivering funding to areas that are most deprived – typically this is done at a District level.
- In North Devon the data covering the overall district disguises the level of deprivation in Ilfracombe. NDC have been working with civil servants which included a walk-about designed to demonstrate the deprivation within the town as part of an evidence gathering exercise. Following an internal departmental validation process, the exceptional case was put to Minister Young. Now awaiting feedback and an outcome on this.

Transport Needs for Ilfracombe

A re-cap was provided of the previous presentation that DCC had given outlining the travel infrastructure plan for Ilfracombe, which includes sustainable travel/walkways around the town. The suggested projects within the plan do not have funding attached to them, and it would be helpful for DCC to have a prioritised list in case any resources become available.

- It was highlighted how the ongoing issues with potholes could counteract the regeneration efforts/improved cycling routes.
- Ilfracombe Mayor will write a letter lobbying for improvements to roads.
- It was noted that the Tarka cycle route is being delivered between Willingcott to Knowle.

Action: Board to review the travel infrastructure plan and provide their priorities – also to suggest any proposals they feel should be discontinued

5. North Devon Council Updates

Publishing IRB notes – transparency of the Board

To aid transparency and broaden understanding and knowledge of the work of the IRB, the Board discussed the publishing of the Action Notes on both NDC and ITC websites. It was agreed this would be a positive action for future meeting notes.

Action: NDC and ITC to create pages on organisational websites to accommodate the future publication of IRB notes

Proposals for an indoor space for young people's activities – including possible climbing wall

ONE Ilfracombe, through its young people work strand, identified the need for provision of an indoor space for young people. The board identified three existing youth organisations/venues that could provide facilities such as a climbing wall, rather than creating another new venue/organisation. The Board identified other constraints to this provision:

- Staffing is difficult to find/fund for youth provision of this nature
- Combining creative/indoor needs under the culture action plan could be a way of taking forward new provision
- Trinity Church has a successful Climbing Wall which could be reviewed as a good case study to get something up and running in Ilfracombe
- Indoor facilities cost a lot to maintain, not just the upfront capital to consider

Action: Cllr. Turton and Cllr. Crabb will approach existing youth clubs to consult about the additional indoor recreational facilities that One Ilfracombe have identified as a need

Sea School/Harbour updates

- The training room at the Harbour is being used and talks are taking place with Petroc to ensure complementarity with their offer
- Still looking to secure a firefighting training location – Mullacott Cross and Chivenor being pursued as options
- SWTC training can be delivered once the firefighting facility is in place

- Sea Pool opening works are progressing. Health & Safety experts are working through clarifications to ensure everything is in place for opening. No date for this confirmed as yet.

Action: Cllr. Crabb to follow up contact at Mullacott regarding possible site for firefighting training facility – Harbour Master to pursue Chivenor contacts/option

Flourishing Culture update and CDF Round 4

Consultants, Things Made Public (TMP), have provided a final draft Culture Plan for Ilfracombe, and the Board have received this and are invited to provide comment/amendments before a final version is produced for sign-off. The Culture Plan will provide the vision for bringing forward creative and cultural activity within Ilfracombe, to act as a key regeneration driver. A town team for culture will be the next action to flow from this work – and be the body that will help deliver the Cultural Plan ambitions. This group will feed into IRB.

TMP are also carrying out a related piece with the Ilfracombe Museum board. The Museum building lease runs out in Dec 2025, at the very least the collection must be stored safely or re-housed. The Museum board have pursued the idea of a new building on the seafront – at an approx. cost of £8m. TMP have been working with them to look at alternatives, such as existing buildings that could be renovated on the High Street or seafront area.

Funding for museum relocation and projects within the Cultural Plan will be required, and the town team for culture will look at this once they are formed – a possible source of funds could be from the Arts Council under their ‘Place Partnership Funding’.

A Cultural Development Fund expression of interest will be submitted for the fourth and final round of the programme. This will be a capital ask for the creation of a cultural hub which will focus on youth development in the creative industries and link to the NPO activities of the Landmark. This will be a very competitive programme as there is only £15m available and the fund is open to London bids this time – Arts Council only expect to fund 4 projects nationally. We have also been advised that it is highly unlikely North Devon will receive further funds due to our success in the last round.

Action: Board to feedback on Culture Plan

Seafront Projects

- Play area under construction, to be completed and opened before Easter break. There will be a ribbon cutting ceremony to formally open the facility
- Planning permission approved for toilets and shelter. The bus stop will remain in its current location. Procurement process will go live imminently to secure contractor for the works
- Crazy golf will remain where they are
- Building services are carrying out the Landmark Theatre cones cleaning before the Easter Break

National Express Bus Service

The Company have not responded to more recent contacts around what their requirements would be for reinstating the bus service to Ilfracombe. The Board considered this to be a signal that National Express are no longer

considering Ilfracombe as a viable stopping point, which would be a huge loss for the Town. Following contact with Parking Colleagues, Torridge District Council confirmed they do not have any arrangements with National Express for the service that operates in Bideford.

ITC has approached Megabus but no response as yet to that enquiry, but it will be followed up.

6. Any Other Updates

- The Board received an update on a few key planning developments, including ongoing enforcement cases:
 - Grosvenor - currently working with multiple owners
 - Golden Coast – changing graffiti on hoarding to a mural. There is subsidence in the area of the hoarding and the team are working with environment agency and DCC to consider options for the culvert
 - Southern Extension – alterations to designs and investigating medieval archelogy
 - The Shields – with regard to the 11 affordable homes (out of 51), the developer viability study means they can no longer afford these, awaiting further details/confirmation – Board will be updated at appropriate time
- Concern was expressed by the Board around a national trend of not completing on the affordable homes. It was asked if the local plan could include a section to ensure affordable homes are not scheduled to later phases. The Board were told that viability studies are mandatory and can prevent affordable homes being delivered. Worth Meadows is an example of this, with affordable homes being pushed back to phase three. Planners are working with the developers to try and prevent this from happening.
- The question was raised as to whether it would be possible to include the Town Strategic Plan as a supplementary document to the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan.

Action: NDC Policy Team to consider recognition of the Town Strategic Plan by the Local Plan

- An update on the progress of the Premier Inn development was given in response to a question raised by a Board member. The company are still not progressing due to difficulties with the site and contracting with a suitable construction firm.

Action: NDC to contact Premier Inn again and discuss current position and any help – such as a possible soft market engagement day with construction companies

7. DoNM – 24th April 2024