

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON
22ND NOVEMBER, 2016**

Present: Councillor C Snowball (Chair) and
Councillors Mrs G Bleasdale,
B Burn Snr, B Burn Jnr, S Cudlip,
Mrs S Forster, R Meir, Miss S Morrison,
I Paul, B Taylor, R Whitehead, K Younger.

Apologies: Councillor R Arthur, E Bell, Mrs J A Bell

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

2. PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Tony Forster, Regeneration Manager at Durham County Council to update Members on regeneration within the town and developments at the Marina.

Mr Forster stated that normally he would update Members with regards to developments at the Marina but his presentation today was more with regards to the developments across the town. The presentation will cover what is happening this financial year, looking at the longer term delivery activity and also the development sites.

Mr Forster discussed the recent updates at Seaham Marina and stated that the Activity Centre is now taking shape. It was hoped to be completed by Christmas but it is more likely to be completed by the end of January. Mr Forster noted that Mr Colin Burn has been appointed as the Water Sports Activity Co-ordinator and he has recently been attending schools across County Durham as the Activity Centre will be educational as well as recreational. Mr Forster stated an issue had been raised about car parking in the Marina as some spaces will be lost and parking is already tight. Suggestions have been made to run a park and ride service from Spectrum Business Park along to Seaham Hall with stops in between including the Marina especially in the summer months but this will be looked at later by Durham County Council and the Town Council will be invited to join a Working Group to discuss this matter. The Marina was given £1.7m to carry out the works of the Activity Centre and also have an additional 19 moorings which now takes the capacity up to 77 and to also build a boat hoist which will allow boats to be lifted out and taken to the boat yard. Works are about to start to on building the boat repair sheds and they should be fully operational by the new year.

Mr Forster stated that the works at Seaham Railway Station are nearing completion. The feedback about the works carried out has been very good. The works now give the station more of a sense of arrival and also additional car parking has been provided.

Seaham High School has been completed at a cost of £15m. This is part of a wider development of Seaham Colliery.

Mr Forster informed the Council of pipeline projects. He noted there has been an extension to the Townscape Initiative, there is also a bid with the lottery and should find out in January 2017 if that bid has been successful. There is a £2m project over a number of years which Mr Forster shared from plans which were distributed at the meeting. The high priorities are for buildings in Church Street. A lot of the first floor buildings are not in use and Durham County Council are trying to target those buildings so maybe the first floors can be brought back into use as possible residential properties. Included in the plans as a medium term priority are buildings which are maybe not as much in a state of disrepair. The plan was submitted with the bid and it covers Church Street, the sea front and South Railway Street and includes the Duke and the Golden Lion. Durham County Council are also looking to improve the Clock site (adjacent to Barclays Bank) which is on the plans as boulevard phase 2.

Mr Forster stated in terms of the Retail Grant Improvement a number of things have been completed. An issue which has been raised several times is the blue barrier at the bottom of Church Street which divides Church Street from Byron Place. There is a consultation event taking place in the new year to look at taking some of the blue barriers away to allow better access across the roadway. The Town Council will be contacted with regards to this in due course.

Mr Forster stated that the planning application for the Harbour View will be heard in mid December and if permission is granted this will be an improvement to the look of the Terrace.

Mr Forster discussed the Housing Joint Venture between the old colliery site and the old school site. Discussions started prior to 2008 between Durham County Council and the HCA with regards to the two sites. The new school has been built and Durham County Council are now proposing to demolish the old school. There are security measures in place at the old school at present to reduce any anti-social behaviour. With regards to the housing proposals for the site a developer has been appointed which is Kier Living and they propose to develop 450 houses phased over the next 10-12 years. There is 100 houses proposed for the old school site and 350 houses on Seaham Colliery/Malvern Crescent area. Site investigations have been completed and planning applications will be lodged early in the new year with a view to start on site next Autumn. As part of the agreement there is 10% of affordable housing to be provided. Also the cycleway into town along the old railway line will be improved. All of this is subject to further consultations and it is only indicative until full planning permission is granted.

Mr Forster also discussed a number of for sale signs on Durham County Council land. He stated that the land for sale adjacent to the Snooker Club had received positive responses and will come to Seaham Town Council for consultation and comment in due course.

Mr Forster advised the Town Council that Durham County Council are working with the owners of the Golden Lion and the former Co-op building to bring the whole area back into better use. Durham County Council have tried to acquire the sites from the current owners but to date this has been unsuccessful. One owner is willing to cooperate the other is not. A development brief has been set up which allows for the site to be used for retail, residential, and commercial purposes as the site is in the town centre it is open for a whole amount of uses.

At this point Members were invited to ask any questions and the following comments were made:

- (i) A Member raised the issue of the area between the old beach at the new marina complex and the Featherbed Rock. He stated there is more population visiting this area and there is a distinct lack of lifebelts in that area. Is this part of the agenda to look at and review that as we have tidal surges and some people are not sure as to whether it is a low or high tide. Seaham is receiving more visitors from outside the area who are not aware of the risks at Featherbed Rock it is the most dangerous point on the Seaham coastline?

Mr Forster noted that the issue of the tides is a risk. It is quite right to ask the question from a safety perspective. A lot of the lifebelts are cut and thrown into the sea. It is something that Durham County Council need to look at. With education, security and better policing it is something that will need to be looked at. When the Activity Centre is completed there will be additional life buoys and that whole area will be subject to a safety audit. The County Council do appreciate that there will be more people accessing the water so this will be looked at with signage etc.

- (ii) A Member complemented Mr Forster on the very informative presentation he provided which covered a whole range of things. The Member stated that he was particularly interested in whether he had picked up correctly that planning permission for both the Seaham Colliery and Burnhall Drive sites would be lodged in January 2017 with a potential start in Autumn 2017. He also noted that there were concerns around contamination on the Seaham Colliery site and this could be similar for the old school site. It is particularly helpful for the Town Council to know and also the people of Seaham to know that they can expect the development of both sites. It also puts the County Councils plans on course for the amount of houses required in Seaham.

Mr Forster stated that it is correct with regards to the dates for planning permission and the development of the sites. Mr Forster also stated that he would provide the strategy for the developments to the Town Council. He will also request that the site surveys will be made available to the Town Council.

- (iii) A Member stated that it is nice to see new housing developments but has an impact assessment been carried out with regards to primary education?

Mr Forster was unsure as to whether this had been carried out but he will take this back to Durham County Council and report back to the Town Council.

- (iv) A Member questioned how Durham County Council's dealings with the building owners in Church Street were progressing?

Mr Forster stated that some were good and some not so good. Some of the Tenants are extremely keen but some of the Landlords not so much as it will cost them money. Those who are not party to some of the improvement money will hopefully come on board when they see the developments taking place around them. More properties are coming on board it is very much a drip drip approach.

- (v) A Member questioned whether the Town Council had seen plans for the new Harbour View building. Another Member stated that the sea front is a conservation area so the new building should be in keeping with the area. The Town Clerk stated that he would chase up the planners as the Town Council always get consulted with building plans. A Member stated that due to the sea front being a conservation area there should be notices on lampposts etc but no one has seen that for this development.

Prior to the consideration of this item, Councillor Mrs G Bleasdale declared an interest and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

Mr Forster stated he didn't have the planning information here with him. Planning permission is due to be heard on the 13th December, 2016. He will clarify the dates and report back to the Town Council.

The Chair thanked Mr Forster for a very informative presentation.

Mr Forster left the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 27TH SEPTEMBER, 2016

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of this meeting, a copy of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

4. VISIT COUNTY DURHAM PUBLICATIONS

4.1 Wednesday Grapevine

RECOMMENDED the copies of the Wednesday Grapevines dated from 28th September 2016, 5th, 12th, & 19th October, 2016 and 2nd & 9th November, 2016 which had been published by Visit County Durham, be accepted.

5. FUTURE SPEAKERS

The Town Clerk requested suggestions from Members for speakers to attend future meetings. A Member suggested that Mr Colin Burn be invited to attend so the Town Council can hear his vision, timescales and progress at the Marina's new Activity Centre.

RECOMMENDED that Mr Colin Burn be invited to a future meeting.

6. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.