

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

25 February 2016

COUNCILLOR ALISTAIR BEALES - CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION

For the period 29 January to 16 February 2016

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

The acquisition of land formerly belonging to Morston Assets that forms part of the NORA site is progressing and I look forward to updating Council on the detail in due course.

The Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme (THI scheme) is moving forward and the THI board recently met and agreed grant funding in principle to some of the most important buildings in the scheme including the former Courts building on St James' Street. That building is a good example of what the THI scheme seeks to achieve by offering grant funding (in that case at around 46%) to enable renovation of buildings of significant historical interest that have fallen into disrepair. The THI board meeting was a very positive affair with a lot of knowledgeable and constructive comment from Members including our colleague (and ward councillor) Cllr. Lesley Bambridge. I would like to thank those that took part, including the THI officer Steven King. (For new members, the £2 million scheme budget is funded 50/50 by the Borough and the Heritage Lottery Fund and covers the traditional shopping streets of Tower St, St James' Street, Saturday Market Place and the south end of High Street).

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

A site of significant strategic interest has come onto the market and the Council has expressed an interest. Such opportunities highlight the difficulties of balancing the commercial approach that is essential in acquiring such sites at good value with the need to demonstrate transparency and accountability through the democratic process. There is no doubt that sellers are sometimes scared off by the delay in putting proposals to Cabinet and then if approved, often to Council for final approval. On occasion, a lower price will be accepted from a buyer who can move quickly and this causes obvious difficulties for the Council on occasion.

Nevertheless, whilst it would be possible to put a proposal to Cabinet and Council seeking approval of an "opportunity budget" to cope with such

circumstances, I think the current situation is probably preferable. The purpose of highlighting this issue is both to inform members of the current opportunity and to stimulate thought on how best to deal with such circumstances.

3 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled

1/2/16 – meeting with Corporate Project Officer at Lynnsport.

2/2/16 – Cabinet

8/2/16 – Cabinet sifting

8/2/16 – Gayton PC

10/2/16 – Leziate PC

11/2/16 – THI board meeting

14/2/16 – meeting with Downham Market Town Council

16/2/16 – meeting with Leader & Chief Exec (update as Deputy Leader).

16/2/16 - meeting with Leader & Chief Exec to discuss budget savings.

16/2/16 – Scrutiny Task Group

23/2/16 – R&P

24/2/16 – joint panels