**Old River Lane Delivery Board Meeting**

**Teams/ Room 1.15**

**Thursday, 21 August 2025 15:30 – 16:30**

**Minutes of the meeting**

**Present:** Cllr Ben Crystall (BC – Chair) Cllr Mione Goldspink (MG), Ben Wood (BW), Cllr Miriam Swainston (MS), Helen Standen (HS), Cllr Carl Brittain (CB), Cllr Sarah Hopewell (SH), Cllr Sarah Copley (SC), David Falco (DF),

**Also in attendance**: Andrew Sanderson, Cityheart (AS)

**Apologies:** James Ellis, Brian Moldon

**Declarations of interest:** MS, SC and MG noted their roles on the Town Council.

**Item 1: Minutes from the last meeting**

Agreed.

**Item 2: Cityheart update**

AS updated the Board in regards to Cityheart’s position. Masterplanning has now been completed and some very useful feedback came out of this process which needs to be taken on board before the final planning application is made, especially in regards to massing, materials and integration of the public square with the overall site and town character.

A design review panel is also scheduled for next week where independent feedback and views will be shared on the development – this is another requirement of the planning process.

Cityheart want to ensure the final planning application reflects local feedback as much as possible within the confines of what is viable and will therefore be undertaking another round of pre application consultation with residents in October on the final scheme before submitting an application in November. In the meantime Cityheart are actively engaging in pre-application discussions with East Herts, HCC and other statutory consultees (eg. the Environment Agency) about expectations and requirements. Discussions also continue with potential occupants of the commercial space.

MG asked how the October consultation will happen. MG noted that the masterplanning promotion was good in terms of using different channels however some partners had suggested a leaflet drop to all households would have been ideal. AS confirmed there would be another leaflet drop however the cost of doing it to all households would make it prohibitive. However he expects LCA to promote over a variety of channels as they did last time to try and reach as big an audience as possible.

MG also asked about the traffic assessment as this had come out of the masterplanning conversations. AS confirmed this would be done prior to the planning application submission but also after they have finalised the scheme to make sure what is being assessed is correct in terms of proposals.

BC asked if AS was confident that a planning application would be submitted in November. AS confirmed that Cityheart have been working on this for 7 years and keen to move as quickly as possible, however want to ensure that the planning application is robust. Continuing with the pre-app dialogue, getting more feedback from the public and awaiting the outcome of the design review panel are key parts of this.

MS and SC asked AS whether he felt there any issues which the Board needed to be aware of that could impact on timescales. AS noted the development is of course complicated in terms of trying to balance all the requirements. He was optimistic that the design review panel would take on board all progress to date on the scheme including all the planning policies to date (the district plan, the 2022 SPD and now the masterplan) and provide constructive feedback. Equally there are still issues being discussed with statutory partners such as road layouts and flooding mitigation. This is no different to any large scale development however.

The Board thanked AS for his attendance and update. Before he left, AS added that, as a local resident, he has had no issues with the change of the waste collection arrangements.

**Item 3: Public Square**

DF met with the landscape architects yesterday to discuss the final designs and will be in a position to share with the Board at the next meeting. Currently the pavilion is the least developed part of the site in terms of size, layout and function. DF appreciated there were lots views on how it could be used, how it could be managed and the risks of it becoming a focus for asb and other activities. The best approach is to present the Board with some options for its design which can then be discussed in terms of uses which came out of the public consultation.

**Item 4: Water Lane Hall**

The Board discussed feedback and themes emerging from the two public workshops held in July. Each session had around 25 attendees and the Board was represented by MG, MS, BW, SC, SH and BC. Other District councillors had also attended including Cllrs Marlow, Townsend, Estop, Jacobs, Hollebon, Wyllie and Horner.

MG, MS and SC all agreed there is a great deal of enthusiasm and passion from some members of the community about the future of the hall. In particular they wanted to thank Graeme Smith and Debbie Munro for their input and proposals.

BW noted some strong challenge had come from these meetings in terms of wanting to know why

MG asked about some specific requests that had emerged from the meetings. This included whether the URC could continue to act as leaseholders for a bit longer whilst the Council decides what to do next. MG also asked about investing in some of the recommendations from the AECOM survey in regards to stopping further damp and understanding more about the subsidence. MG also fed back a request from Paddy Lennox in regards to on-going storage.

SC asked about the options paper, when it would be ready and the need for it to be transparent about where we are and be able to address questions being asked at the community meetings. This includes what the cost is to hire the venue, not just let it out under a new lease. CB also added we need a timescale on the options paper, which needs to include all the options available to us. This could include similar facilities elsewhere in the country (examples of which came up at the meetings) or more local examples such as Southern Maltings in Ware.

MS noted the Friends of Water Lane Hall had asked for guidance or some indication of what information would be needed to submit a business plan. SH noted there were some parallels with the community group interested in taking over Ward Freman swimming pool in terms of us needing to be clear and transparent on what criteria we are looking at in within these options. SH offered to put the groups in touch with each other. MS also added the paper needs to pick up the asset of community value issue, which MS felt is overplayed, but also be clear about the planning policy framework which mitigates change of use.

DF confirmed he had spoken to URC elders to say there were not inclined to carry on leasing the hall when their extension is complete (this had also been confirmed directly to Graeme Smith). The elders had also extended an invitation for the Board to look at the new facilities in the URC once the extension is complete. The Board agreed they would like to do this.

BW confirmed the options paper will cover as much of this as possible and committed to sharing the paper with Members by the end of September.

BW noted that, at this stage, we would not be in position to grant Paddy any agreement for storage until we have decided on the future of the building. Arranging an agreement for storage and entry automatically means we need to have relevant health and safety measures in place along with insurance. At this stage we haven’t committed to spending any money on the building.

**AOB**

None