

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Monday 12 October 2020 at 5.45pm

Present: Councillor L Giles (Chair);
Councillors E M Giles, Moore and Rollins.

In Attendance: Councillors Piper and Preece.

Officers: David Stevens (Chief Executive), Surjit Tour (Monitoring Officer and Director – Law and Governance), Rebecca Maher (Interim S151 Officer), Tammy Stokes (Interim Director – Regeneration and Growth), Rebecca Jenkins (Towns Fund Programme Manager), Alexander Oxley (Planning Regeneration Support Officer), Alan Reynolds (Senior Planner), Hayley Insley (Planning Regeneration Team Leader) and Santokh Singh (Neighbourhood Engagement Manager).

38/20 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor L Giles declared an interest in Sandwell Towns Fund (Minute No. 40/20) as his father worked for Sandwell Adult and Family Learning service.

Councillor E M Giles declared an interest in Sandwell Towns Fund (Minute No. 40/20) as her husband worked for Sandwell Adult and Family Learning service.

Councillor Piper declared an interest in Birmingham Airport Update (Minute No. 42/20) as he was formerly the Council's nominated representative on the Birmingham Airport Shareholders Committee.



39/20 **Matter of Urgency**

The Chair advised the meeting that an urgent item had been submitted for consideration by the Board in relation to Birmingham Airport. This was due to the timescales involved for decisions to be made on the matter.

40/20 **Sandwell Towns Fund Update**

The Board received a presentation on the process used to identify Towns Fund project proposals. The Towns Fund was established by the Government and it had also identified the towns that were included - in Sandwell the towns of Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich had been selected.

As part of the Towns Fund there was an opportunity for accelerated funding to bring quickly deliverable projects to fruition – all three Sandwell's towns had been successful in putting forward bids for the full amount possible.

Local Boards had been established for each of the towns, these were independently chaired, but Town Chairs and Cabinet Members were included on each Local Board. Members highlighted that wider engagement with local ward councillors, particularly at the start of the Towns Fund process, was lacking. The Board stressed the importance of engaging local members as projects proceeded to ensure they could communicate progress effectively with their constituents.

A Superboard had also been established which considered the shortlisted projects by the Local Boards and would agree the final Town Improvement Plans for submission to the Government. An overview of the process for the Plans, and the projects, to date was presented to the Board.

Members suggested ways in which engagement with councillors and local communities could take place as the Towns Fund process continued:-

- Town Board meetings offered an opportunity to engage and communicate;
- Clear and specific updates on individual projects in each town should be provided to members along with what next steps should be expected.

An overview of the different projects in each town was provided to the Board. These were as follows:-

Rowley Regis

- Britannia Park Project;
- Rowley Regis Education Facility;
- Canal Network Improvement: Dudley No2;
- Canal Network Improvement: Old Mainline;
- Rowley Regis Travel Scheme;
- Energy Efficiency Scheme;
- Blackheath Bus Interchange and Social Space.

Smethwick

- Smethwick Travel scheme: Cycle and Walking Provision;
- Grove Lane Regeneration: Housing Development;
- Sandwell Adult Family Learning: Ron Davis Centre;
- Youth, Community and Sports Smethwick: Albion Family in the Park;
- Centre for Health Education;
- Rolfe Street Regeneration.

West Bromwich

- West Bromwich Digital Den;
- West Bromwich Green Corridor;
- West Bromwich Town Hall Quarter;
- West Bromwich Travel Scheme;
- Securing Sandwell's Engineering: The Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre;
- West Bromwich Town Centre development.

Other projects that had not been shortlisted across the three towns had been included in Project Pipelines for potential future investment.

From the comments and questions by councillors, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- The Government had approached the Council to submit Town Improvement Plans to outline projects to bid for funding for Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich. The Council had not been able to suggest other towns or influence Government's decision on this matter.

- Members highlighted the continued need for improvement projects in other towns in the borough, such as Wednesbury.
- Any cycling and walking improvements outlined across the Town Improvement Plans would support the Council's strategic approach as set out in the Sandwell Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.

The Chair thanked officers for attending the meeting and highlighted the ongoing need to ensure all councillors are updated throughout the Towns Fund process.

41/20 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to information) (Variation) Order, 2006, relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

42/20 **Birmingham Airport Update**

The Interim S151 Officer presented an update on the financial situation of Birmingham Airport, of which the Council was a shareholder along with the other West Midlands local authorities.

A number of different factors relating to the Airport and their potential longer-term impacts were discussed. The Board undertook to share these with the relevant members of the Cabinet.

Resolved that the views of the Scrutiny Management Board in relation to Birmingham Airport be shared with the relevant members of the Cabinet.

Meeting ended at 7.44pm following an adjournment between 6.51pm and 6.52pm