

Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard

5 August 2020 at 2pm

Present: Jude Thompson, Black Country Chamber of Commerce (Chair)

Tom Hawley, Homes England

Ninder Johal, Local Enterprise Partnership

Dilip Awtani, Liberty Group

Chris Hinson, Local Board Chair – West Bromwich

Alan Taylor, Local Board Chair - Smethwick

Adrian Egginton, Local Board Chair – Rowley Regis

James Morris, MP Halesowen and Rowley Regis

Nicola Richards, MP West Bromwich East

Shaun Bailey, MP West Bromwich West

David Holden, Sandwell College

Geoff Foster, SCVO

Cllr Maria Crompton, Sandwell MBC

Cllr Danny Millard, Sandwell MBC

Sandeep Shingadia, Transport for West Midlands

Josh Jordan, Sandwell Youth Parliament

SMBC Officers: Tammy Stokes, Interim Director - Regeneration and Growth
Surjit Tour, Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Rebecca Jenkins, Towns Fund Programme Manager
Alex Oxley, Planning Regeneration Support Officer
Joshua Singh, Planning Regeneration Officer
Hayley Insley, Planning Regeneration Team Leader
Tariq Karim, Area Manager Youth Service

Also present: Julian Pye, Arup
Aaron Toussaint, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
Harry Walker, Arcadis
Samantha Hadley, James Morris MP's Office
Armani Akbar-Roy, Arcadis
Dr Colin Clinton, West Midlands Combined Authority
Scott Chapman, Nicola Richards MP's Office
Ben Lucas, Metrodynamics
Anoush Darabi, Metrodynamics
Claire Chen, Metrodynamics
Gail Harris, Shaun Bailey MP's Office

1/20

Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard. He welcomed Josh Jordan, the Sandwell UK Youth Parliament representative, to his first meeting of the Superboard.

2/20

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from the following Superboard members:-

Keeley Bevington, West Midlands Police
Gareth Bradford, West Midlands Combined Authority
Philip Farrell, Homes England
Graham Pennington, Sandwell College
Karen Woolley, Federation of Small Businesses

Apologies were also received from the following Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council officers supporting the Superboard:-
Lesley Hagger and Alison Knight.

3/20

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

4/20

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests made at the meeting.

5/20

Towns Fund Guidance and Town Hub Support

Tammy Stokes, Interim Director – Regeneration and Growth provided the Superboard with an overview of the Towns Fund Guidance which had been published in June 2020. Further developments relating to Towns Fund that had happened since the last meeting included:-

- Announcement of accelerated funding of up to £750,000 per town this financial year (to be spent in-year);
- Templates released for Town Investment Plans.

The Further Guidance Document contained specific information about:-

- The Purpose of the Towns Fund
- What should be in a Town Deal
- Preparing a Town Investment Plan
- Decision Gateway One
- Developing Detailed Projects and Business Cases
- Decision Gateway Two
- Support and Next Steps

The Superboard was advised that Town Deals would cover a period of 5 years and that investment was for up to £25m. In exceptional cases, more than £25m would be considered and this would be subject to additional scrutiny. It was noted that the Towns Fund was 90% capital funds.

The guidance stated that Town Investment Plans should be guided by sustainability – economic, environmental, and social, and that Clean Growth was a core principle of the Towns Fund.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government had committed to support each of the 100 towns shortlisted for the Towns Fund. As part of this commitment, a Towns Fund Delivery Partner had been appointed.

Julian Pye, regional delivery partner, reported that Welcome Meetings had been held between the Towns Fund Delivery Partner and the Chairs of each of the Local Boards to determine support needs. Initial conversations had led to identification of support from the Delivery Partner around sharing outcomes of cohort 1, providing check and challenge sessions, advice on stakeholder engagement, feedback on project prioritisation, advice on economic issues and viability, approaches around COVID-19 impact, and gap analyses on emerging TIPs.

Agreed that the contents of the Government's Towns Fund Further Guidance and the availability of support from the Towns Fund Delivery Partner be noted.

6/20

Approval of Towns Fund Governance arrangements and Adoption of Code of Conduct

Surjit Tour, Director – Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer (Sandwell MBC) presented proposed Towns Fund Governance arrangements for approval by the Superboard. These arrangements had been designed to mirror the Council's existing arrangements wherever applicable, whilst taking in guidance relating to Towns Funds. The Arrangements related to the Towns Fund Superboard and the local boards. The Arrangements included the respective roles of the different boards and how they interact with the Council's decision making processes, including overview and scrutiny.

It was confirmed that Sandwell MBC was the accountable body for the purposes of the Towns Fund.

A proposed Code of Conduct was also submitted for approval by the Superboard; again this reflected the Council's existing arrangements. The Code of Conduct included provision for the declaration of interests; these would be published on Sandwell MBC's CMIS website, along with profiles of Superboard members, to meet the requirements around openness placed on Towns Fund boards by Government. Officers would contact Superboard members to arrange for the relevant information to be captured.

Agreed that:-

- (1) the Towns Fund Governance Arrangements be approved;
- (2) the adoption of the proposed Code of Conduct be approved.

7/20

Approval of Engagement Strategy

Rebecca Jenkins, Towns Fund Programme Manager presented to the Superboard a proposed Engagement Strategy for Phase 1 of the Programme.

It was noted that the Superboard had previously agreed a statement in relation to engagement, upon which the Strategy had been based:

“This stakeholder engagement plan will clearly outline an inclusive stakeholder list and communication strategy as to ensure a transformational, locally driven and community owned submission to the Town Fund for Sandwell’s three towns.”

The Strategy document set out:-

- how major stakeholders would participate;
- two stages of involvement within the development of Town Improvement Plans: ideas generation and investment development;
- an outline of engagement activities and publicity.

Young People had been identified as a specific group for engagement and as such a specific proposal for engaging with this group had been developed which sought to capture views directly rather than being relayed through adults. This included a Reference Group and participation at both Local Town Board and Superboard levels.

James Morris MP queried how the Reference Group would be appointed and what aspects of the programme would it be involved with. It was confirmed that this would be through the already-established SHAPE Forum and UK Youth Parliament representatives to identify young people. The engagement would also be supported by the Council’s Youth Service. The Reference Group would be engaged in idea generation as well as seeking the views of young people on potential interventions that had already been included on long-lists for each town.

Ninder Johal asked about if timescales involved would allow for idea generation at this stage. In response, the Superboard was advised that it was anticipated that the long-lists already generated were a good start on the key issues in each town area, but there was still opportunity for other issues to come through engagement processes.

Agreed that the Engagement Strategy for Phase 1 of the Towns Fund Programme be approved.

Approval of Project Prioritisation Process and Criteria

Harry Walker, Arcadis and Ben Lucas, Metrodynamics, presented a process for the Local Boards to adopt to prioritise project ideas into a set of projects within the Town Improvement Plans that represented the best chance to transform the Town's economic prospects and be successful against the Towns Fund criteria.

The Prioritisation Process was outlined as:-

- Ideas generation;
- First sift of ideas;
- Long list of interventions;
- Options appraisal;
- Short list of interventions;
- Business case development;
- Included in Town Improvement Plan.

It was noted that Interventions should support one or more of the themes as set out in the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government Town Fund objectives. These were:-

- Local transport;
- Digital connectivity;
- Urban regeneration, planning and land use;
- Arts, culture and heritage;
- Skills infrastructure;
- Enterprise infrastructure.

Scoring criteria had been developed to support the determination of which projects should proceed from the long list to short list stages. These had been weighted (criteria in bold below) to reflect Sandwell's priorities:-

- **Local Need;**
- **Local Support;**
- **Deliverability;**
- **Longevity;**
- **Value for Money;**
- Clean Growth;
- Inclusive Economy and Community Wealth Building Principles;
- Match Funding.

James Morris MP sought clarification on the process followed to date in procuring consultants in support of the Towns Fund. It was confirmed that Sandwell's Cabinet had agreed to use the enabling funding to appoint consultants and that the appropriate channels had been followed.

Ninder Johal queried the relationship between the Local Boards and the Superboard. Members were advised that the Chairs of the Local Boards were all appointed to the Superboard to create linkages between those Local Boards and the designated Town Deal Board for Sandwell (Superboard).

Dilip Awtani asked questions around the timescales and the potential difficulty in evidencing match funding opportunities in that time. It was acknowledged that the timescales were tight (to October), but that the sizes of interventions and the possibility of grouping related/themed interventions together could assist.

Agreed that, subject to additional feedback from the Towns Hub Delivery Partner, the Superboard approve the project prioritisation process and scoring criteria for Local Boards to apply.

9/20

Programme Update

The Chairs of each of the Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich Towns Fund Local Boards provided updates on the programmes for each of their towns.

Adrian Egginton, Local Board Chair – Rowley Regis presented the update from their Local Board. The emerging priorities for the Rowley Regis town area were:-

- Connectivity within and between the communities;
- Raising education and skill aspirations;
- Making town centres more inclusive;
- Stalled sites;
- Improving asset base.

The long list of potential interventions in Rowley Regis was comprised of:-

- Improving connectivity between Blackheath Town Centre and Rowley Railway Station;
- Improving connectivity between Cradley Heath Town Centre and Cradley Heath Railway Station;
- Improved connectivity from communities to open spaces;
- Tippity Green, Rowley Regis residential development;
- Land off Lower City Road, Tividale residential development;
- Land off Temple Way, Tipton Road residential development;
- Silverthorne Lane/High Street, Cradley Heath residential development;
- Dudley Road, Rowley Regis residential development;
- Improve fabric, fuel savings, carbon footprint and environmental assets;
- Green Spaces, investing in infrastructure, communities and safety;
- Digital Connectivity;
- Satellite education hub, Lower High Street, Cradley Heath;
- Interventions to attract people back into the High Street;
- Interventions to attract people back into Oldbury Town Centre;

- Interventions to attract people back into Blackheath Town Centre;
- Interventions to attract people back into Cradley Heath Town Centre.

James Morris MP asked questions around the type of interventions relating to residential developments and if it was intended to seek funding for remedial works to brownfield sites from the West Midlands Combined Authority. It was confirmed that the intention was to make sites financially viable for development and that the Council was engaged with the Combined Authority on this topic.

Alan Taylor, Local Board Chair – Smethwick presented the update from their Local Board. The priorities for the Smethwick town area were:-

- Maximise local impact of major investment in Hospital and Aquatics Centre;
- Deliver more housing;
- Regeneration and upgrade local assets;
- Support good quality jobs.

The list of potential interventions in Smethwick under consideration was comprised of:-

- Grove Lane regeneration;
- Rolfe Street regeneration;
- Health Innovation Support (linked to Midland Metropolitan University Hospital);
- Soho Foundry;
- Green Transport Infrastructure;
- Chances Glassworks;
- Tollgate Precinct;
- Desi Pubs Offer;
- Smethwick Indoor Market;
- Bearwood Community Hub;
- Youth Bus;
- Ron Davis Centre

Ninder Johal raised the importance of good quality jobs. It was intended that aspiration of local people, especially young people, around types of jobs they wanted would be increased through improving the local environment and the opportunities it offered.

Chris Hinson, Local Board Chair – West Bromwich presented the update from their Local Board. The priorities for the West Bromwich town area were:-

- Reinvigorate the town centre;
- Unlocking land to aid regeneration;
- Support good quality jobs;
- Stimulate COVID recovery

The list of proposed projects in West Bromwich was comprised of:-

- STEAM Centre Talent Studio for Sandwell College;
- Sandwell's Centre for Civil & Mechanical Engineering Skills;
- Digital Hub;
- A temporary Creative Arts Hub;
- Indoor Market regenerations;
- Redevelopment of Market Pitches;
- Greening Urban Environments;
- Town Hall and Library;
- Bull Street redevelopment;
- Carters Green redevelopment;
- African Caribbean Community Centre redevelopment.

Nicola Richards MP emphasised the importance of the Indoor Market in West Bromwich and sought assurances that the traders would be consulted with and supported through any regeneration project. It was acknowledged that engaging with traders was key.

Tom Hawley, Homes England highlighted that housing-related projects were identified by all three Town Local Boards. He offered input from that agency to see how it could support projects and maximise their value.

Agreed that the programme update contained in the report and the verbal updates from the Chairs of the Local Boards be noted.

10/20

Agreement of Accelerated Funding Projects

The Chairs of each of the Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich Towns Fund Local Boards presented the proposals for the accelerated funding projects in their towns (set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes).

In relation to the proposals for Rowley Regis, James Morris MP requested clarification on the plans following the proposed demolition of the changing rooms in Britannia Park. It was confirmed that a replacement facility was being looked at, but the existing structure needed to be demolished to allow for future plans to progress.

James Morris MP also requested further information on the nature of the 'pop-up park' proposals. Officers undertook to provide further detail.

Nicola Richards MP requested further detail on the rationale for the proposals relating to West Bromwich Town Hall. It was reported that long-term West Bromwich Town Hall was a key part of the cultural and tourism offer being developed for the town, the proposals would directly support these plans.

Nicola Richards MP also highlighted the importance of the West Bromwich Indoor Market and raised its potential as a priority project. The Superboard was advised that the accelerated funding had to be spent by the end of March

2021 and it was not felt feasible to deliver on projects relating to the Indoor Market within that timescale – however the future of the Indoor Market remained a key issue for the town going forward and would not be lost.

Agreed that the Superboard recommends the proposals for Towns Fund Accelerated Funding as attached in Appendix 1 to these minutes, to the Council's S151 Officer for consideration and sign-off.

Meeting ended at 3.59pm.

Rowley Regis Accelerated Projects

Intervention	Description	Cost
Blackheath town centre	Avenue Road link from Blackheath town centre to Rowley Regis Station improved for pedestrians/cyclists: new lighting on re-sited columns, side-road crossings, resurfacing, signs and lines	£176,508
Oldbury town centre	Upgrade Ringway crossing to toucan spec: install tiger crossing on Rounds Green Rd; add marked cycle paths around Ringway to build on recent traffic calming, pedestrian and cycle priority schemes	£213,141
Tividale Park improvements	Renovate disused changing rooms; accessibility improvements to adjoining community hub; create new car park, lighting, security bollards	£133,949
Bearmore Open Space improvements	Install multi-climber to complement existing play equipment	£45,980
Britannia Park improvements	Changing rooms to be demolished. Replacement being explored as part of TIP proposals.	tbc
Warrens Hall Park improvements	Upgrade key paths around site to all-weather surfaces; improve entrances; create fishing platforms at Swan Pool	£66,550
Haden Hill Park	Create pop up park with sensory garden, raised beds, accessible picnic benches and paths on former bowling green	£57,200

Smethwick Accelerated Project

Intervention	Description	Cost
Phase 1 –Cycle path along A457 Tollhouse Way to Smethwick Galton Bridge station with improved	With improved crossing points and footway enhancements along the High Street, including pedestrian footway improvements to the entrance of all side roads. Phases 2 & 3 to be included within the Town Investment Plan as part of a comprehensive suite of walking and cycling improvements	£750,000

West Bromwich Accelerated Projects

Intervention	Description	Cost
Outdoor Market Regeneration	It is evident, simply looking at the High Street, that its most prominent, and also most detractive feature, is the street market structure located centrally down the promenade. SMBC proposes to undertake a programme of inventive, comprehensive and transformational improvement works to these to ensure that they are fit for purpose and no longer detract from the area.	£440,000
Improvements to West Bromwich Town Hall	To complete the refurbishment of the tower of West Bromwich Town Hall. This initial investment will commence the renovation of the Town Hall in line with the opportunity to transform the Town Hall into a Cultural Hub in the heart of West Bromwich, as part of a wider regeneration proposal being developed for the TIP.	£310,000