

Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard

2 October 2020 at 11.30am

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
James Morris, MP Halesowen and Rowley Regis
Nicola Richards, MP West Bromwich East
Shaun Bailey, MP West Bromwich West
Graham Pennington, Sandwell College
Mark Davis, SCVO
Geoff Foster, SCVO
Cllr Maria Crompton, Sandwell MBC
Sandeep Shingadia, Transport for West Midlands

SMBC Officers: David Stevens, Chief Executive
Lesley Hagger, Executive Director – Children’s Services
Alison Knight, Executive Director - Neighbourhoods
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
Alan Reynolds, Senior Planner
Hayley Insley, Planning Regeneration Team Leader
Tariq Karim, Area Manager Youth Service
Santokh Singh, Neighbourhood Engagement Manager

Also present: Julian Pye, Arup
Samantha Hadley, James Morris MP’s Office
Armani Akbar-Roy, Arcadis
Scott Chapman, Nicola Richards MP’s Office
Ben Lucas, Metrodynamics
Claire Chen, Metrodynamics
Gail Harris, Shaun Bailey MP’s Office

11/20 **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard.

12/20 **Apologies for Absence**

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

Adrian Eggington, Chair of Rowley Regis Local Board
Josh Jordan, Sandwell Youth Parliament
Councillor Danny Millard, Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economic Growth
Karen Woolley, Federation of Small Businesses

13/20 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

14/20 **Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interests were made at the meeting.

Ninder Johal – insofar as he is the Chair of the Wolverhampton Board;
Graham Pennington – in relation to any matters relating to Sandwell College;
Alan Taylor – in relation to any matters relating to Sandwell College;
Tom Hawley – as Homes England was sometimes asked by other Government Departments for feedback on applications and submissions.

15/20 **Update on TIP Approval and Submission Timelines**

Rebecca Jenkins, Towns Fund Programme Manager provided an update on the Timelines for approval and submission of the Town Investment Plans (TIPs).

Sandwell's three TIPs – Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich – are being prepared for submission as part of Cohort 2, which require submission on 30 October. The shortlisted projects for inclusion in the three TIPs were to be considered by the Superboard later in this meeting (see Minute No. 18/20 below).

16/20 **Update on Engagement Activities**

The Superboard received an update on engagement activities that have taken place as part of Phase 1 of the Towns Fund Programme. This was broken into two Stages. Stage 1 was engagement as part of ideas generation, whilst

Stage 2 was more targeted and designed to shape the proposed interventions and test their feasibility and acceptability. The findings from the Stage 2 engagement would shape the details of the Outline Business Cases for projects and inform the full business cases, which would be developed subject to a Town Deal being agreed.

James Morris MP asked if engagement would continue in relation to the Town Investment Plans. It was confirmed that the intention was to continue to engage local residents and work was already underway identifying key groups in each area to take this forward.

Ninder Johal sought assurances around how organisations had been identified for engagement. The Superboard was advised that support had been offered by SCVO on this, and the members of the Local Boards were also being asked to ensure that local communities were reached, and their views gathered.

17/20

Learning from Cohort 1 Town Investment Plans

Julian Pye, Arup, provided the Superboard with an overview of the learning that had been identified from those Town Investment Plans (TIPs) that had been submitted as part of Cohort 1. A number of key learning points had been identified and these had been considered when developing Plans for Sandwell.:-

- Make your TIPs personal;
- Stakeholder engagement;
- Evidence base;
- Project Prioritisation;
- Golden Thread (coherence across projects and with identified priorities);
- Visualise (use of maps);
- Outputs vs Outcomes;
- Capital Strategy;
- Risk;
- Governance.

It was further reported that Check and Challenge sessions were being arranged and held to highlight any elements of TIPs that needed further refinement.

18/20

Approval of Shortlisted Projects for inclusion with the Town Investment Plans

The Chairs of each of the Smethwick and West Bromwich Towns Fund Local Boards, and Tammy Stokes, Interim Director – Regeneration and Growth on behalf of the Chair of the Rowley Regis Towns Fund Local Board presented the shortlisted projects for inclusion with the Towns Investment Plans. The Superboard's approval of these projects was sought.

The Superboard received an overview of the prioritisation process and criteria that had been followed by the Local Boards. This had previously been agreed by the Superboard at its meeting on August 2020 (Minute No. 8/20 refers).

Chris Hinson, Local Board Chair – West Bromwich presented the shortlisted projects from their Local Board:-

- Securing Sandwell's Engineering: Sandwell's Centre for Civil & Mechanical Engineering Skills;
- Digital Den;
- West Bromwich Town Centre Development;
- West Bromwich Green Corridor;
- West Bromwich Travel Scheme;
- West Bromwich Town Hall Quarter.

Feedback on the proposals had been sought and an overview of the feedback from local elected members and young people was provided to the Superboard.

Nicola Richards MP sought clarity on the anticipated benefits of the West Bromwich Town Hall Quarter project. The project aimed to improve the interior and exterior of the Town Hall, which would allow for greater community use and use as a cultural and entertainment venue. It would also be physically linked with West Bromwich Central Library, bringing together a cultural hub for the town.

Dilip Awtani requested detail on how capital funding figures had been arrived at for the projects. It was confirmed that figures had been developed through work between Council engineers, planners, finance and the Strategic Investment Unit. In addition, when developing a final Business Case for the projects these figures would be revisited in more detail.

Tammy Stokes, Interim Director – Regeneration and Growth presented the update from the Rowley Regis Local Board on behalf of its chair, Adrian Eggington. The shortlist of projects in Rowley Regis was:-

- Britannia Park Project; improving connectivity between Blackheath Town Centre and Rowley Railway Station;
- Rowley Regis Education Facility;
- Canal Network Improvement: Dudley No. 2;
- Canal Network Improvement: Old Mainline;
- Rowley Regis Travel Scheme;
- Energy Efficiency Scheme;
- Blackheath Bus Interchange and Social Space.

It was clarified that the proposals for Blackheath Bus Interchange and Social Space related to pedestrian prioritisation, not pedestrianisation.

Feedback on the proposals had been sought and an overview of the feedback from local elected members and young people was provided to the Superboard.

Tom Hawley, Homes England queried the responsibilities of the Canals and River Trust in relation to towpaths. The Superboard was advised that dialogue had been held with the Trust, however it did not have the capital funds to carry out improvement works. The works proposed in the projects would allow for future maintenance to be more cost-effective helping to keep the canals usable for the community.

James Morris MP asked a number of questions around the link between the Energy Efficiency Scheme and upskilling of local young people, the Blackheath bus interchange and social space and the need for clear communication with the local community. In relation to the Energy Efficiency Scheme the Superboard was advised that the intention was to make use of air source heating, which is a developing technology – by introducing local young people, and residents who wanted to retrain, to this technology they would be well placed to obtain employment in a growing field. In relation to the Blackheath bus interchange and social space, it was confirmed that Blackheath Town Centre would be kept open for the traffic that was needed – Blackheath was a town that had shown resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic and the proposals were intended to strengthen the town's continued attractiveness as a shopping destination for local people. The importance of clear communication and engagement with the local community on the proposals for Blackheath was acknowledged.

Alan Taylor, Local Board Chair – Smethwick presented the update from their Local Board. The list of projects in Smethwick was comprised of:-

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

Alan Taylor reported the feedback received on the proposed shortlist from Smethwick Councillors and raised in the latest Local Board meeting and reported that not all of the feedback on the proposed shortlist was positive. Councillors had fed back that they would have welcomed more of a spread of projects across the TIP boundary and felt that there may have been other ideas for projects. There had also been some remarks around the fairness of the scoring process. In response to this, the Chair reported that he had requested that an independent check be made on the scoring of the Smethwick projects on the long list to ensure that this had been fairly applied and he confirmed that the scoring had been fair.

Tom Hawley, Homes England asked if any communication had taken place in relation to those projects including housing elements with his organisation. It was confirmed that Homes England, and other partners such as the West Midlands Combined Authority, are involved with masterplanning for Grove Lane, no specific dialogue had yet been entered into around match-funding.

Ninder Johal asked about the traffic in the Smethwick High Street area following emergency changes. Officers confirmed that the changes had been brought in under emergency powers relating to COVID-19 and would be subject to a review. Further, it was clarified that the proposed cycle path would not take up road space but would make use of the embankment on Tollhouse Way.

The Chair thanked the Local Board Chairs, members of the Local Boards, officers and all involved with the process to shortlist projects.

Agreed that the Shortlisted Projects for inclusion in the Town Investment Plans for Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich, as attached as Appendix 1, be approved.

19/20

Update on Accelerated Funding Projects

The Superboard was updated on the Accelerated Funding Projects that had been successful in each town. These were:-

Rowley Regis

Blackheath Town Centre Pedestrian and Cyclist connectivity to Rowley Regis Train Station;
Oldbury Town Centre Pedestrian and Cyclist connectivity;
Tividale Park Improvements;
Bearnore Open Space Improvements;
Britannia Park Phase 1 Improvements;
Warrens Hall Improvements;
Haden Hill Park Improvements.

Smethwick

Tollhouse Way Cycle and Walking Scheme.

West Bromwich

Outdoor Market Redevelopment;
Improvements to West Bromwich Town Hall.

The importance of communicating these projects to the community was highlighted as it could help encourage engagement with other Town Investment Plan projects.

Meeting ended at 1.25pm.

West Bromwich Town Investment Plan - Shortlisted Projects

| Project Name | Description | Provisional Ask of the TIP | Match Funding Identified |
|---|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Securing Sandwell's Engineering: Sandwell's Centre for Civil & Mechanical Engineering Skills | The project will regenerate Sandwell' College's 'Engineering Centre', based in Phoenix Street in West Bromwich. A centre offering opportunity in Construction and Engineering for Adults and young people in programmes for the unemployed, reskilling of the workforce and apprenticeships | £2.2m - £3.7m | Sandwell College c.£330,000 |
| Digital Den | This project creates free to use and supported access to digital and online service, training and qualifications and careers and education support. The overall aim is to reduce digital exclusion and in doing so, reduce financial exclusion. | £42.6k | |
| West Bromwich Town Centre Development | This project aims to deliver comprehensive regeneration and transformation of the West Bromwich retail submarket through major site assembly and demolition works. It involves the potential acquisition of Queens Square and Kings Square shopping centre and the demolition of underperforming sites. This is to deliver a significant number of town centre homes, improve the towns declining retail offer, re-purposing surplus accommodation and unlocking large areas of brownfield land for planned regeneration. | £15m | |
| West Bromwich Green Corridor | An urban greening proposal that fall into 4 sections that begin with a central linear park and form a route past and through new and existing development through to Dartmouth Park, supported by a wider cultural arts programme. | £2.2m | Arts Council (amount tbc) |

| | | | |
|--|---|-------|---|
| West Bromwich Travel Scheme | Improved Cycle routes better connecting residents across West Bromwich to Sandwell Valley, Dartmouth Park, the town centre and creating improved cycle provision and crossing facilities. | £3.2m | |
| West Bromwich Town Hall Quarter | The council is looking to relocate public into the Town Hall and Central Library, creating a public services zone across multiple assets. This involves building a significant extension built on the side of the town hall and renovation of existing buildings. | £8.1m | Council disability access budget - £100,000 From partner (tbc) £250,000 |

Rowley Regis Town Investment Plan – Shortlisted Projects

| Project Name | Description | Provisional Ask of the TIP | Match Funding Identified |
|--|---|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Britannia Park Project | The construction of new changing room and centre facilities, general improvements to park entrances, walkways and cycle routes throughout the park, improved lighting and security to make it a more attractive venue. | £1.5m | |
| Rowley Regis-Education Facility | The construction of a satellite education facility located in Cradley Heath through a partnership between Sandwell College and SMBC. The project will provide options for three groups of learners: 16-18-year olds; 19-24-year-old NEET; 25+ (un)employed adults. | £11.2m | Amount TBC |
| Canal Network Improvement: Dudley No2 | Tow path improvements along Dudley No.2 Canal (between Windmill Edge Bridge and access to Old Hill Train Station) to improve walking and cycling along this route and access improvements to estate areas. | £750k | |
| Canal Network Improvement: Old Mainline | Tow path improvements along Old Mainline and Gower Branch canal from Tividale Aqueduct (Netherton Tunnel) to High Bridge (Rounds Green Road) to improve walking and cycling along this route and access improvements to estate areas. This includes Rose Lane and John's Lane tunnels and building connections to Rattlechain TIP development site. | £1.4m | Greener Cities Fund £120k |
| Rowley Regis Travel Scheme | Improvement of walking and cycling routes within Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Oldbury improving pedestrian mobility via sustainable modes of transport. | £1.3m | |

| | | | |
|--|--|-------|-----|
| Energy Efficiency Scheme | Installing air source heat pumps at Darley House, Addenbrooke Court, Wesley Court and nearby blocks, improving fuel efficiency, reducing fuel poverty and replacing outdated heating systems. Utilising this first of kind project in Sandwell to upskill young residents and those seeking new opportunities to train and learn new skills in a growing and sustainable industry. | £5m | TBC |
| Blackheath Bus Interchange and Social Space | Pedestrian prioritisation of Blackheath Town Centre, creation of new bus interchange and social space for improved pedestrian mobility. | £3.7m | |

Smethwick Town Improvement Plan – Shortlisted Projects

| Project Name | Description | Provisional Ask of the TIP | Match Funding Identified |
|---|--|----------------------------|--|
| Smethwick Travel Scheme: Cycle and Walking Provision | Creating cycle and pedestrian links from two railway stations to the town centre and local hospital. The scheme aims to improve access and connectivity within Smethwick by delivering cycling and walking infrastructure improvements and improving safety | £4.8m | TBC - AQ Centre LEP Transforming Cities Fund – WMCA |
| Grove Lane Regeneration: Housing Development | Acquisition and remediation of selected sites within the Grove Lane area to accelerate regeneration for housing delivery, the first phase of a comprehensive major regeneration project to deliver in excess of 800 new homes and associated infrastructure. | £4.35m | TBC – WMCA, Homes England (subject to business case) |
| Youth, Community and Sports Smethwick: Albion Family in the Park | A dedicated Youth, Community, Sport and Education Space in the renovated West Smethwick Park, creating a financially sustainable, all-year youth, community, sport and education offer for Smethwick. | £1.25m | Heritage Lottery £5m FA Premier League & Football Foundation £1.5m |
| Rolfe Street Regeneration | Demolition and remediation to provide a stand-alone development ready site, which will provide much needed housing and potential space for small enterprises, to support the wider regeneration of the Town and link to the opportunities around the Hospital. | £2m | Potential source that could be approached for 10% Potential match funding opportunity from WMCA |
| Centre for Health Education | Major new skills resource, covering training from entry level to L7 skills, linked to the hospital development. Providing a university presence in Smethwick | £14m | Amounts TBC |

| | | | |
|---|--|-------|--|
| Sandwell Adult Family Learning: Ron Davis Centre | The expansion of the Ron Davis centre through the addition of three extra classrooms, enabling the expansion of the successful Sandwell Adult Family Learning services | £300k | |
|---|--|-------|--|