

**Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard
Towns Fund Accelerated Programme Update Report**

17 May 2021

Subject:	Towns Fund Accelerated Programme Update Report
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1. To receive an update on the Accelerated Funding Programme for Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich

2. Purpose of the report

- 2.1. To provide an update against progress of the Accelerated Funding Programme for Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich

3. Background and Main Considerations

- 3.1. On 30 June 2020 the Government announced grants of £750,000 to Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich to fund capital projects that could be delivered within the financial year.
- 3.2. The accelerated funding was confirmed as additional to the main Towns Fund Programme of up to £25m per town.
- 3.3. The criteria outlined was to bring forward projects that would respond to immediate challenges, including:
 - a) Improvements to or new parks and green spaces and sustainable transport links
 - b) Improvements to town centres including repurposing empty commercial properties
 - c) Demolition or site remediation where this will have an immediate benefit
- 3.4. Following discussion at Local Board, Superboard considered proposals for projects that could be put forward, and confirmation was received from Government at the end of September that the applications had been accepted.
- 3.5. Work commenced on delivering each of the schemes in line with the completion date of March 2021. A number of the schemes have experienced unforeseen delays due primarily to Covid impacts which have impacted in a range of ways including on contractor capacity and timescales, and delivery of equipment. On some projects, delays have been experienced due initial consultation leading to the need for an extended period of consultation with residents. Sandwell's position is in line with other Towns Fund areas, and MHCLG confirmed that the grants will not be subject to clawback.

3.6 In the initial application for West Bromwich Accelerated Programme, a project was put forward to renovate the Town Hall Tower. The Town Hall was subsequently needed for use as a Covid-19 test centre. Following a review, the project was felt to be unfeasible to be completed within timescale due to the increased public access to the building. A change request was therefore made to MHCLG in December 2020 to replace the accelerated funding project with Phase 1 of a cycling and walking programme that had been included within the TIP. MHCLG approved this change. The implication for the West Bromwich Town Deal is that the financial amounts to each of these Town Deal projects need to be amended accordingly.

4. Accelerated Programme Projects

4.1. West Bromwich Accelerated Projects

Project Title	Project Description	Update
Outdoor Market Redevelopment	To undertake a programme of inventive, comprehensive and transformational improvement works to these to ensure that market stalls are fit for purpose and no longer detract from the area.	Detailed designs, consultation, temporary relocation of traders and demolition of previous stalls have been completed. The manufacturing of new stalls commenced off site and the stalls have been installed. Traders were invited back and were operational from 24 April 2021. Snagging issues are currently being identified and resolved.
Cycling and Walking Infrastructure (Phase 1)	To widen the existing footway on Europa Avenue to accommodate the National Cycle Network Route 5 into Sandwell Valley.	Detailed designs, surveys and road audits are complete. Initial resident consultation presented some concerns around the scheme. Further work and consultation with residents took place prior to the scheme proceeding which in turn caused delays. Work has commenced on the highway element (Europa Avenue) and will be completed on 14 May 2021.

4.2. Smethwick Accelerated Projects

Project Title	Project Description	Update
Tollhouse Way Cycle and Walking Scheme	To deliver a cycle path along A457 Tollhouse Way to Smethwick Galton Bridge station with improved crossing points and footway enhancements along the High Street, including pedestrian footway improvements to the entrance of all side roads.	All gables/ retaining structures and ducting are in place along the entire length of the route. Lighting columns have been replaced and relocated to the back of the cycle route and signals on Holly Lane/ St Pauls Road has been completed by contractors, however further work is commissioned on the cycle priority at the junction. The remaining works on the high street, bus stop areas on Tollhouse way and sub base/ binder course for the entire route is underway. It is envisaged the programme will be completed on 30 June 2021.

4.3. Rowley Regis Accelerated Projects

Project Title	Project Description	Update
Connectivity - 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.	Work has progressed significantly, with the cycleway on Archer Way now complete (from Avenue Road to Park Street West). Lighting columns have been installed in Avenue Road and Cardale Street. The remaining works for the cycle way on Archer Way from Park Street to Oldbury are ongoing.
Connectivity - 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	The pedestrian Refuge on Dudley Road, Oldbury is completed. The Tiger Crossing on Rounds Green Road & Cycle Link to Oldbury Ringway will be completed this month (currently waiting for the delivery of Belisha Beacons).
Tividale Park Improvements	Renovate disused changing rooms; accessibility improvements to adjoining community hub; create new car park, lighting, security bollards	The new car park and markings are complete and security bollards have been installed. A new tarmac surface has been installed to make the surface flat and level access to the community hub. In regard to the changing rooms, pipework alterations and mechanical works are complete and new showers have been installed. The boiler room alterations and internal decoration are ongoing. The completion date for this scheme is June 2021.
Britannia Park Improvements	Demolition of existing changing rooms.	The scheme experienced delays with contractors regarding the disconnection of services between the changing rooms and supply points in the road, however this work is now complete. Site meetings have been held with contractors in preparation of the demolition. The demolition will commence on 7 May 2021 and the completion date for this scheme is Mid-May 2021.
Bearmore Open Space Improvements	Installation of play equipment to complement existing infrastructure	Detailed designs are complete and several site visits have taken place to confirm the location and set up of play equipment. The delivery of the play equipment is expected at the end of May 2021. The completion date for this scheme is Mid-June 2021.
Warrens Hall Improvements	Upgrade to key paths around the park to all-weather surfaces, improvements to entrances and creation of fishing platforms at Swan Pool.	Achieving a confirmed design and securing a contractor have both been delayed by year-end capacity issues. The contract is let and work should begin imminently, on regrading and resurfacing the main link between the canalside and Swan Pool, to make it more suitable for visitors, making Springfield Lane entrance safer and more welcoming and providing new safer fishing

Project Title	Project Description	Update
		platforms around Swan Pool. The project is due for completion in mid-June 2021.
Haden Hill Park Improvements	Development of sensory garden providing facilities for people with a range of disabilities including mobile impairments.	The tarmac base has been laid for the new picnic area. Picnic benches and bench planters are being installed. The completion date for this scheme is Mid-May 2021.

Appendices

N/A

Source Documents