

**Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard
Towns Fund Digital Den Full Business Case Documentation**

22 July 2021

Subject:	Digital Den Full Business Case Documentation
Presenter:	Wendy Brookfield – Greets Green Community Enterprise Chris Hinson – Chair West Bromwich Local Board
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1. To receive and agree the final Full Business Case for Digital Den, including the project equality impact assessment, environmental impact assessment and monitoring and evaluation plan.
- 1.2. To recommend the Full Business Case to Cabinet for approval subject to the outcome of the Capital Appraisal review.
- 1.3. To note that in the event that the Full Business Case appraisal leads to minor amends / points of clarity being required, these will be addressed by the Project Lead in conjunction with the Chair of the Local Board, the Chair of the Superboard and the Council's S151 Officer.
- 1.4. To note that in the event that the appraisal leads to a recommendation of substantial changes to the Full Business Case, that this will be reported to Superboard with a revised Full Business Case presented for consideration.
- 1.5. That subject to Cabinet's approval of the Full Business Case, that the Chair of the Superboard sign the Project Summary Document for submission to MHCLG in consultation with the S151 Officer

2. Purpose of the report

- 2.1. To present the Full Business Case for the Digital Den project for agreement including an equality impact assessment, environmental impact assessment and monitoring and evaluation plan.
- 2.2. To outline the comments and input from the West Bromwich Local Board.

3. Background and Main Considerations

- 3.1. On 3 March 2021, Heads of Terms for a Town Deal for West Bromwich were offered by Government. This included an offer of an overall funding package of £25m and agreement to the 6 proposed projects for West Bromwich. The Heads of Terms offer is subject to the appraisal and approval of a Full Business Case for each project and the submission of a Summary Document (one per project) by March 2022.
- 3.2. The Town Deal for West Bromwich was signed on 24 March 2021.
- 3.3. Details of the projects put forward for West Bromwich Town Deal were re-confirmed with Government in the form of a Project Confirmation Table. These were considered by Superboard on 17 May and submitted following approval from the Council's S151 Officer.
- 3.4. Collectively, there are 17 Towns Fund projects that have been approved by MHCLG. To co-ordinate the process across the 17 Towns Fund projects, Sandwell's Towns Fund projects will be organised into 3 tranches. This will enable projects to proceed to Phase 3 (delivery) when they are read and to manage the work required to develop and appraise the Full Business Cases in line with the Government's deadlines.
- 3.5. The Digital Den Project is within tranche 1 and the Full Business Case has been prepared for Superboard's agreement.

Full Business Case Contents

- 3.6. The Towns Fund Business Case Guidance, December 2021, outlined that Towns Fund Full Business Cases should be compliant with the HMT Treasury Green Book (2020). This sets out that Full Business Cases should address five cases; Strategic Case, Economic Case, Commercial Case, Financial Case and Management Case.
- 3.7. Preparing a project business case using the five-case model provides decision makers and stakeholders with a proven framework for structured thinking and assurance that the project: Provides strategic fit and is supported by a compelling case for change, will maximise public value, is commercially viable, is affordable and is funded and can be delivered successfully by the organisation and its partners
- 3.8. Sandwell's Towns Fund Full Business Cases have been prepared according to this model.

Appraisal and Approval of Towns Fund Full Business Cases (FBC)

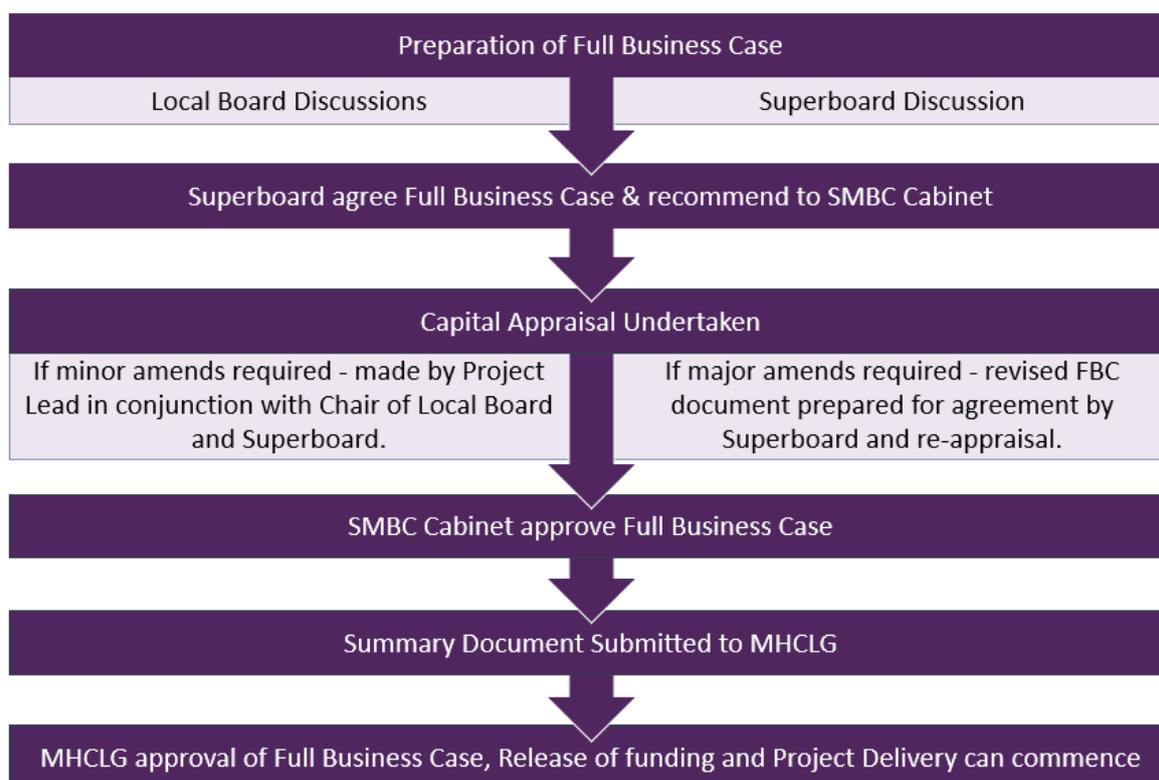
- 3.9. The Towns Fund Business Case Guidance, December 2021 set out that local assurance process should be followed for Towns Fund business case appraisal and approval led by the Council as the Accountable Body for the Towns Fund. In Sandwell, the process is for Full Business Cases to be reviewed by the Council's Strategic Finance Team and put to Cabinet for approval once an appraisal threshold is met.
- 3.10. Following Superboard's consideration and agreement to a project Full Business Case, the project will then be submitted for appraisal by the Council's Strategic Finance team. This appraisal will include a review of each of the 5 cases contained

within the Full Business Case (strategic case, economic case, financial case, management case, commercial case). It will ensure compliance of the Full Business case with the Government's Green Book Standards for business cases, along with ensuring viability, value for money, and deliverability. The Full Business Case will be scored and a threshold must be met for the project to be recommended for approval by SMBC Cabinet.

- 3.11. In the event that the appraisal leads to minor amends / points of clarity being required, these will be addressed by the Project Lead in conjunction with the Chair of the Local Board, the Chair of the Superboard and the Council's S151 Officer.
- 3.12. In the event that the appraisal leads to a recommendation of substantial changes to the Full Business Case, this will be reported to Superboard and a revised Full Business Case presented to Superboard for consideration.

Submission of Full Business Case to MHCLG

- 3.13. Once a Full Business Case has been approved by Cabinet, a Summary Document will be prepared and submitted to MHCLG for review.
- 3.14. The Summary Document contains an overview of each Business Case, how it has been appraised, and confirmation that key conditions from the Heads of Terms have been addressed (where applicable).
- 3.15. The Chair of the Superboard will be a signatory on the Summary Document.
- 3.16. The Summary Document will be assessed by MHCLG before funding is released. MHCLG may require submission of the Full Business Case.
- 3.17. An outline of the process for approval of a project Full Business Case is as follows:



Digital Den Full Business Case Summary

Project Description

- 3.18. A Digital Den located in the ward of Greets Green and Lyng area of West Bromwich with the project predominately serving residents from, but not exclusive to Greets Green and Lyng. The project will establish pathways to opportunities to education, employment and reduce costs of digital services to residents.

Summary of Strategic Case

- 3.19. Research shows 26.6% of children in Sandwell reside in low income families, almost 10% higher than the England average of 17%. Greets Green and Lyng are in the top 10% of areas associated with poverty and deprivation (ONS). The percentage of young people achieving strong pass levels at GCSE in English and Maths for England is 43.4% for Sandwell this is 30.5%, significantly lower than the England average. (Gov.UK March 21). Whilst most people have a mobile phone, their functional IT skills are incredibly low for those people and families who do not engage with education, training and use the online services.
- 3.20. Digital exclusion has had a significant impact during 2020 and this continues, with a growing digital divide being the outcome for many families in a modern UK society. The Digital Den will bridge the gap that many families experience when accessing digital and online services.
- 3.21. Engagement with local residents and training groups have demonstrated clear demand for an improved digital skills and training provision to support residents and help them benefit from online provision and to be able to engage with all services that are moving to online services.
- 3.22. The project has been brought forward as part of the West Bromwich Town Deal through its contribution to the priorities of support good quality jobs and stimulate Covid-19 recovery.
- 3.23. The Digital Den project particularly aligns to the strategic objective within the Sandwell Digital Strategy 2018-2021 to invest in the digital skills set and reduce both digital and financial exclusion, which are inextricably linked. Families not having the skills set and the connectivity to online services are potentially getting left behind in employment opportunities and consequently in access well paid employment.

Economic Case

- 3.24. Applying for employment, completing training, accessing government services all require access to online provision and the skills to use technology. The Digital Den will invest in the skills and the development of aspirations for residents by providing opportunities and directly help local employers to grow.
- 3.25. The main risks have been identified for the project and are being proactively managed through regular risk review and escalation, as required. The main risks are as follows:
- *Cost escalation*

- *There may be potential Covid-19 impacts on building usage, as a result of Government guidelines*
- *There may be potential timescale delays/ slippages as a result of approvals and MHCLG approvals*

Management Case

- 3.26. The project will be managed by Greets Green Community Enterprise and will be overseen by the Project Manager and will report frequently to the Board of Trustee Directors of Greets Green Community Enterprises.
- 3.27. A partnership agreement is being prepared by Bevan Britten's to formalise the arrangements between SMBC as the Accountable Body for the Towns Fund and Greets Green Community Enterprises.
- 3.28. The delivery of this project is not dependent upon the delivery of any other TIP projects but will complement the additional skills delivery from the Sandwell Mechanical Engineering Centre and the Town Hall Quarter project, raising the overall standard of education.

Financial Case

- 3.29. The project value is £154,600 comprising £42,600 from Towns Fund and match funding of £112,000 from Greets Green Community Enterprise. Long term running costs will be met by Greets Green Community Enterprises.

Commercial Case

- 3.30. Procurement – Three contracts will be sourced for IT equipment and resources, centre refurbishments and signage. In 2020, Greets Green Community Enterprises completed a tender process to secure IT support provision, of which is a three-year contract. This tender process will be repeated in 2023.
- 3.31. Specific social value targets and/or requirements to be included as part of the contract evaluation are not proposed for this project as the project itself is delivering social value outcomes.
- 3.32. The project value is below the threshold set out in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 therefore a formal Contract Notice on the Central Government Contracts Finder website is not required.

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.33. An equality impact assessment has been conducted and is appended. The assessment has indicated that there are no anticipated adverse impacts on any groups with protected characteristics as a result of this proposal.
- 3.34. The equality impact assessment has identified specific positive impacts for the following groups with protected characteristics:

Age. through the increased skills offer for young people and adults

Disability: through a fully accessible building

Race, Sex, Gender Reassignment and Sexual Orientation: through creating a welcoming environment for all residents and offering the opportunity for targeted support including English as a second language and women's only group for example.

Environmental Impact Assessment

3.35. An Environmental Impact Screening has been undertaken and is appended. The screening has identified that Schedule 1 and 2 of the EIA regulations do not apply to this project and therefore a full assessment is not required.

West Bromwich Local Board Feedback

3.36. Local Board Members were satisfied with the development of the Full Business Case and supporting documentation.

Appendices

Digital Den Full Business Case document including:

- Consultation and Engagement Plan
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Environmental Impact Assessment
- Risk Register
- Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Source Documents

Digital Den Project Confirmation Table
West Bromwich Town Deal Heads of Terms
MHCLG Business Case Guidance, December 2020
MHCLG Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance, April 2021