

Minutes of West Bromwich Town Deal Board

**Tuesday, 21 February 2023 at 1.00 pm
at This meeting is held online.**

Present: C Hinson (Chair)
J Thompson (Vice-Chair), Cllr Rollins, Cllr Randhawa, Cllr Hughes, Cllr Hartwell, G Tomlinson, L Bird, L Hill, M Wildman, S Shingadia and W Brookfield

Also present: A Oxley, J Singh, M Farid and R Rahim, T McGovern

21 Welcome and Opening Remarks

The chair welcomed board members to the meeting before outlining the agenda items for discussion.

22 Apologies

Apologies were received from the following board members: -
Jenna Langford – SMBC
Deska Howe – West Bromwich African Caribbean Centre
Kelly Harris – SMBC
Tanya Derham – SIPS

23 Minutes of the last meeting

Board members agreed minutes of the Local Board meeting held on 22 Nov 2022 were a correct record.

24 Declarations of Interests



The Chair asked board members to raise any declarations of interests. None were forthcoming. The chair asked board members to raise any declarations during discussions should they need to.

25 Governance Arrangements

At the previous board meeting, board members discussed the vacancies for representatives for a young person and for WMCA/LEP. A meeting took place with PMO and SHAPE colleagues where suggestions were made to update young people during the SHAPE forums. SHAPE is holding a conference in June where PMO and other reps have been invited to engage with young people and build relationships ahead of recruiting a rep in the coming months. The PMO will liaise with Shape Forum to promote the Towns Fund Projects amongst existing young people's forums. Engagement with young people on specific projects of interest such as Britannia Park (Rowley Regis) will encourage participation in other Towns Fund and future projects.

26 Social Value and Local Spend

Following discussions from all Towns Board meetings in November 22, the draft guidance has been updated to provide further clarification on prioritising local spend and social value as part of procurement.

Updates include:

- Projects to provide details on supplier location, approach, and rationale for choosing that supplier if not Sandwell/Black Country/Birmingham based
- Monitoring of Social Value targets agreed with contractors
- Compliance with SMBC Contract procurement guidelines.

The Programme Management Office reassured board members the projects are required to implement social value within any procurement process required. Where existing frameworks are used, project will be required to engage with contractors to capture this information.

Board members agreed to adopt the guidance for Towns Fund programme and review the information presented on a quarterly basis

A board member thanked Rina Rahim for her work on developing the guidance.

27 Project Reporting

Board members received Item 7a - West Bromwich Town Deal Board Reporting October - December 2022 prior to the board meeting. This appendix was shared on screen to provide an update on project progress.

Board members were informed there will be a slippage into the next financial year but will be within the 40% threshold DLUHC have set. DLUHC can ask for additional information and/or do an assurance visit if slippages are more than 40%.

DLUHC have informed the funding for 2023/24 will be released at a staggered stage. They're currently reviewing December returns and will release in the following stages as per RAG ratings; low risk will be released in April, amber in June and high risk in October.

A question was asking where there's any risk associated with the slippage or is it just for information for DLUHC. It was confirmed it is just for information. However, currently it is advised that if the slippage was more than 40% then further information and reasoning would be required, including how it is going to be mitigated.

Digital Den

A board member enquired whether there's a profile of where learners are based geographically for the Digital Den project. The project lead confirmed the learners are predominantly local with a few from wider Sandwell and very few from outside of Sandwell. Other queries were raised regarding whether demographics of learners are captured, age profile, ethnic background and how students are commuting to the centre. The ethnic breakdown is very diverse, and the ages vary from young parents up to retirement age. This information can be captured and presented at future Board meetings.

Action: Digital Den to provide demographics of learners

A suggestion was made to do a press release for Digital Den. Case studies are being created currently and will be released in due course.

Sandwell Civil & Mechanical Engineering Centre

Works progressing as per FBC. Board members were informed there have been a few planning applications made around the area of Sandwell MEC which shows further works around initial investment into the area.

Suggestions were made to have updates and progress displayed in West Bromwich for residents to see progress i.e. at the Town Hall or Library.

Action: PMO to explore further regarding displayed exhibitions for project update/progress in West Bromwich and how to promote that further.

Urban Greening

Following the last board meeting, a site visit to West Bromwich Town Centre took place to see progress of the Urban Greening project where board members were in attendance.

A question was raised regarding volunteers, how they are being trained and what the Council is doing to support their training. The volunteers will be trained via the Cultural programme and will be trained in subjects such as Photography where they will gain an NVQ.

Project leads for Town Hall Quarter and Retail Diversification Programme attended the meeting to provide updates on progress:

Town Hall Quarter

Project lead shared a presentation onscreen on project progress with board members including photos.

There have been restoration works to the Bell Tower of the Town Hall including timber repairs and tiled steeple. Morgan Sindall were appointed as the contractor in November 2022. Project completion has moved forward to early/mid-May from late-April. There are social value targets which form part of the tender framework of the project. The contractor has tried to use local suppliers where possible.

The project is looking to achieve renovation and restoration of central library and West Bromwich Town Hall which are both grade-listed buildings. The wider benefits of the project are for it to be a building block for future investment in West Bromwich Town Centre and the Cultural Quarter.

There was a query on the number of tenants at the Town Hall; project lead confirmed there are currently 7 tenants.

A board member queried regarding future tenants/occupation and whether there's any proposals for higher fee-paying tenants. This will be reviewed periodically.

Chair asked the project lead when they would have a more detailed update of the project. The project lead hopes to have a further update for the next board meeting.

Action: Agenda item for the next board meeting for Town Hall Quarter project lead to provide a more detailed update.

Retail Diversification Programme

Project lead shared a presentation onscreen on project progress with board members.

The Retail Diversification Programme consists of 3 distinct areas: indoor markets, acquisitions, and demolitions.

Indoor markets

There has been a recent period of consultation (Dec 2022 – Jan 2023) for the indoor markets. A contractor was appointed in October 2022. The consultation in collaboration with professional advice procured from the consultancy group has informed at the initial concept designs for the new proposed indoor market. There's a very clear theme emerging from the consultation being a food and beverage offer.

It was further commented that markets generally across the country have changed a lot in recent years and we need to adapt our offer to be in line with what is what is fit for purpose in modern day town centre setting. Furthermore, designs will be finalised soon and start on site April/May 2023.

Acquisitions

It was commented that they are looking at more creative ways now to engage with landowners. As a result of disparity on land values, a new site is required to be acquired as the Kings Square Cinema site isn't viable anymore. A CPO strategy is being developed by Sandwell Council and a proposal is being taken to March cabinet. Due to the challenges faced, acquisitions have been moved to 23/24.

The Chair congratulated all Project Leads on the progress so far. Chair suggested to extend future meetings to 2 hours.

Action: PMO to extend future meetings to 2 hours.

28 Forward Plans

The PMO presented the updated forward plans detailing upcoming consultations, press releases and site visits. These will be updated periodically and circulated to board members to promote where applicable.

It was proposed for the next board meeting potentially to be held at Digital Den subject to suitability.

Action: PMO to circulate forward plans to members.

29 Any Other Business

Members were reminded of the High St Taskforce workshop being held on Wed 1st March for which details have already been circulated.

30 Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked board members for their attendance and contributions to the meeting

31 West Bromwich Town Deal Board Action Log

Meeting ended at Time Not Specified

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk