

Minutes of Rowley Regis Town Deal Board

**Thursday, 23 February 2023 at 1.00 pm
at This meeting is held online.**

Present: A Eggington (Chair)
J Thompson (Vice-Chair), Cllr Hughes, J Morris MP, M Asif,
Cllr V Smith, S Shingadia and J Thompson

Also present: A Miller, A Reynolds, C Smallman, M Farid, R Rahim and T
McGovern.

21 Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed board members to the meeting before outlining the agenda items for discussion and introduced new board member Cllr Vicki Smith who has joined as a ward member for Cradley Heath and Old Hill.

22 Apologies

Apologies were received from the following board members: -

- Jenna Langford – SMBC
- Deborah Harrold – Agewell
- Aaron Pugh – West Midlands Police
- Leona Bird – SCVO
- Simon Griffiths – Sandwell College
- Roland Barret-Price – Sandwell College
- Simone Hines – SMBC
- Cllr Kerrie Carmichael – Leader of the Council



23 Minutes and Action Log

Minutes

Board members agreed minutes of the Local Board meeting held on 24 November 2022 were a correct record.

Action Log

Updates recorded on the Action Log.

24 Declarations of Interest

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

A meeting took place with PMO, Cllr Hughes and SHAPE colleagues where suggestions were made to update young people during the SHAPE forums. The PMO will liaise with Shape Forum to promote the Towns Fund Projects amongst existing young people's forums. Schools, colleges etc. This could potentially lead to a sub-group forming in the future if participants do not feel comfortable in attending a formal Board meeting. Engagement with young people on specific projects of interest such as Britannia Park, will encourage participation in other Towns Fund and future projects. Following this, a press release would encourage more young people coming onboard. Engagement with young people can also be promoted on the Regenerating Sandwell website.

Board members were informed SHAPE colleagues will forward their current existing links with schools and colleges and PMO will make contact with them. SHAPE is holding a conference in June where PMO and other reps have been invited to engage with young people and promote regeneration activities in the area.

Board members were informed the vacancy for a LEP representative is formally removed as they will no longer be operational from March onwards. Additionally, the WMCA is currently being updated on Towns Fund progress via other platforms and may no longer be required to be a formal Board member.

Sandeep Shingadia offered to act as a conduit for the WMCA officer level representative as TfWM is part of WMCA.

Action: Keep Young Persons representative as an Agenda item for the next board meeting.

26 Social Value and Local Spend

At the previous board meeting, discussions took place around Social Value and Local Spend and how the Towns Fund Programme is incorporating this. The draft guidance has been updated following comments from all Towns Funds Boards 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.

It was highlighted to board members that although projects are trying to attract local suppliers and local spend, SMBC procurement rules refer to using existing Sandwell Council suppliers. The guidance has been expanded to include thresholds and requirements when obtaining quotes e.g. at least one quote is from a Sandwell supplier and if not available, one from the wider West Midlands Combined Authority area. PMO are getting involved in the early procurement process so conversations and negotiations can be discussed at the tender specification stage. It is a priority to promote and encourage contractors to work with the Council's social value team.

As the WMCA covers a large geographical area, projects are required to highlight where their contractors are from. If they're outside of Sandwell, Birmingham & the Black Country, projects need to provide their rationale and procurement approach.

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

27 Project Reporting

Project Reporting

To receive an update on project progress and monitoring information for the period of October-December 2022.

Board members received Item 7a - Rowley Regis 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.

The following discussions were held as a result of the information presented: -

Board members were informed that overall, there will be financial slippage into the next 23/24, but it's within the 40% threshold set by DLUHC.

Britannia Park

PMO has monthly catchups with the project lead on project progress.. A board member queried if there could be any implications with planning. There have been no concerns raised by the project lead in relation to objections and further update can be provided during planning stage. The project does regularly engage with the residents, Friends of the Park etc to provide an update of the progress of works yet.

Canal Network Connectivity

Most of the project is due to be delivered by the end of the current financial year.

Rowley Regis Satellite Education Hub

Delivery has slipped by 3 months due to acquisition of site being approved in Nov 22 by Cabinet. A planning application has been submitted and a number of petitions/objections have been received pertaining to the parking. A proposed site visit is planned at the end of March for the planning committee to look at the objections.

Discussions took place regarding the increased risks to the project delivery following these objections. Various other sites were considered prior to the FBC and the current site was considered the most appropriate considering its proximity to the train station, cost etc. It was added that considering an alternative site would incur further delays and potentially the project not delivering within Towns Fund timeframe.

Rowley Regis Connected

There is some slippage into the next financial year but that is expected due to planned phase of works milestones and key dates. The construction period is due to commence in Q2 of the next financial year.

Public Health information regarding benefits of cycling was requested by members to circulate where applicable. It was commented that there is a lot of evidence on it nationally and there is some current research in progress locally. Once the localised research is complete and published it will be shared with board members.

Action: PMO to circulate material/reports from Public Health in relation to benefits of cycling when available.

Project leads for Blackheath Bus Interchange were in attendance at the meeting to provide updates on progress.

Blackheath Bus Interchange

There was a recent period of public consultation (9/1/23-13/2/23) with successful live events in the Library and Market where the public and stakeholders were in attendance. Consultation attendees were shown visuals and were handed out FAQ's. Attendee's comments were recorded as not all wanted to fill in a questionnaire and there were differences in answers in respondents who submitted hard copies of the questionnaire compared to those who filled it in online. This could potentially be due to misunderstanding the plans and basing it on press releases from the media, compared to attending a live event and seeing a visual presentation. The data is currently being collated and will be shared with Board members.

Delivering the scheme within the cost envelope is a concern and further detail will be known at procurement stage.

Further updates will be provided at the next board meeting.

Action: PMO to circulate feedback from consultations.

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. Articles will be publicised in the Herald and individual Press Releases when applicable. Site visits will be planned so Board members have the opportunity to visit projects.

At the all Chairs meeting, it was proposed there should be fixed exhibitions in key sites across the towns i.e. libraries, to promote the projects for those who were unable to attend public consultations.

Action: PMO to progress fixed exhibitions further.

Board members outlined Rina Rahim's work gone into this and thanked her.

29 Any other Business

Project leads from Blackheath Bus Interchange informed board members they are welcome to get in touch with comments/suggestions regarding the scheme.

30 Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked board members for their attendance and contributions to the meeting and closed the meeting at 14:40.

31 Rowley Regis Town Fund Board Action Lot

Meeting ended at Time Not Specified

Contact: democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk