

# Minutes of Rowley Regis Town Deal Board

**Thursday, 22 February 2024 at 10.00 am**  
**This meeting will be held online.**

**Present:** A Eggington (Chair), J Thompson (Vice-Chair), Cllr P Hughes, L Bird, V Smith, D Harrold and J Morris MP

**Also present:** A Miller, A Reynolds, C Smallman, D Stewart, H Cashmore, J Dennison, J Langford, M Farid, M Wragg, R Rahim, S Griffiths, S Patel, and T Stokes

## **11 Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed board members to the meeting and outlined the agenda items for discussion. The Programme Management Office confirmed the meeting was quorate.

## **12 Apologies**

Apologies were received from the following board members: -

- Cllr D Millard
- Cllr J Webb
- Cllr K Carmichael
- M Asif
- S Shingadia

## **13 Minutes and Action Log**

Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed by board members. In regard to attendance, PMO were asked to include A Reynolds.



## Action Log

See attached action log for updates.

## **14**    **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.

## **15**    **Governance**

### Board Membership

As set out in the Town Deal Board Terms of Reference, review of Town Deal Board membership is scheduled to take place annually. The Programme Management Office confirmed the review will commence in the upcoming weeks, where board members will be asked if they wish to remain a member.

It was agreed for the Programme Management Office to contact members who have not attended the last 2/3 meetings to ask if they wish to remain a member and that they attend the next meeting/ send apologies. Should the member not respond, it was agreed by the Chair and Board Members that they are removed from the board.

In regard to young person's representatives, the Programme Management Office attended the last Shape Forum meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb and reported that the young people in attendance were happy for project leads to attend for consultation, feedback or engagement. It was suggested that this platform is used to engage with young people.

The Chair suggested reaching out to market traders to seek their interest to join the board.

It was noted SCVO have offered to support the Programme Management Office for all three Town Deal Boards to help identify voluntary and community groups for Board membership or for consultation around particular projects.

### Scrutiny

Board Members were reminded a report is presented to Scrutiny on a quarterly basis. The last report was presented on 8 February. Scrutiny have provided feedback on a number of areas which will be discussed during project updates. Overall, Scrutiny look for information on projects that are completed, in progress with budget pressures and how projects plan to mitigate pressures and what risks they are facing.

## **16**    **Project Reporting**

### Canal Network Connectivity

An update was provided by the project leads. This included a recap of the project details and photos of completed works to date. A presentation was shared showing results from towpath surveys conducted following improvements, benefits noted by towpath users following improvements and general feedback from users.

The chair thanked the project leads for their update and asked board members if they wish to comment/ ask any questions.

A comment was raised regarding the compliments that had been received by residents using the upgraded towpath in Cradley Heath/ Old Hill.

The project leads were asked if the plan to utilise underspend to fix the footbridge in Old Hill is still going ahead. The project leads confirmed this is planned for the end of 2024.

Board members were informed the contractor employed 6 local people through the council's employment and skills team as a consequence of this scheme of works.

A comment was raised in relation to the survey results, that it's promising in terms of usage with 4 out of 5 people are using the upgraded towpaths for health and wellbeing and 1 in 5 are using for connectivity/ getting to work. The project leads were then asked if there will be counters installed to see how many people are using the towpaths.

The project leads confirmed counters have been installed on some towpaths. The implications to this are that they are installed on lamp posts, so if users do not pass that specific point, they would not be counted. As a result, a consultant was commissioned to carry out a survey to get data which was presented to board members at this meeting.

A question was asked if dog bins and lighting would be installed on towpaths. Board members were advised dog bins are costly and no funding is available at this time. Installation of solar lighting were discussed previously for this scheme and remains an option for the future.

The project lead acknowledged there are a lot more towpaths that would benefit from improvements in Sandwell, so if opportunities for investment arise, they would be interested.

A compliment was shared regarding the survey work and asked how benefits would be tracked overtime. Board members were informed in other survey works, metrics have been applied to the number of users spoken with, to provide a financial value of benefits.

In regard to investment to improve other towpaths in Sandwell, Board members were informed of some of the terms and conditions set by Government that can impact how accessible funding is.

**Action: Andy M and James D to discuss legislate/funding issues around towpath improvements.**

**Action: Andy M/ James D to email James M MP regarding legislate/funding issues around towpath improvements.**

### **Satellite Education Hub**

An update was provided by the project lead. This included an update on progress since the last board meeting, updated milestones and timeline for the project which is subject to Sandwell College's Governance meeting in March 2024.

Board members were informed the overall cost plan is currently on budget and the build programme is expected to take 53 weeks.

An update was provided on the curriculum planning and initial vocational areas, of which will conclude in April 2024. Marketing of the facility will then commence with residents. The aim is to open applications to residents and potential students in from October 2024 to collate an initial register of interest.

The chair thanked the project lead for providing an update and asked board members if they had any comments. The discussion included: -

A question was asked how the College will support pathways into work, particularly care leavers. The project lead confirmed the College have an employment partner who inform the College of vacancies. The College then train according to their vacancies. The College are also working with the NHS Trust who have c.800 vacancies and DWP. The project lead advised they would come back with a definite answer regarding care leavers, however the last Ofsted noted they take the most care leavers compared to others in the Midlands.

The project lead was asked how many SEN students do they expect and how many will they accommodate. Board members were advised the facility will look to cater a maximum of 50 per year. For every 1-2 student, you need 1-2 staff.

**Action: Simon Griffiths to engage with Towns Fund Programme Management Team when undertaking consultations. PMO can support with Press/ Media coverage.**

### **Britannia Park Greenspace**

An update was provided by the project lead. This included: -

- Allotment works have commenced, introducing 6 plots with raised beds
- Design of the play area is complete and a contractor has been awarded to deliver this element. Works are expected to commence by May 2024
- Co-funding from LTA (Tennis Association) has been secured for tennis courts
- Project Lead attended SHAPE Forum. Young people are engaged and excited on developments
- The design for 4 changing rooms is overbudget and can be reduced by reducing the quantity to 2 changing rooms.

A question was asked if co-funding had been explored with FA and Sports England as reducing the number of changing rooms is not ideal. Board members were advised the project team have contacted organisations, however due to the Towns Fund timescales, no funding is available immediately. It was noted communication about the changes made must be done properly i.e. Utilising notice boards within the park and social media.

A comment was made regarding the changes made to the original business case; removing the café element and now reducing the number of changing rooms. J Morris advised he would discuss funding opportunities with WMCA. This was welcomed by all.

A comment was raised on how disappointing it is to continue descope changing rooms. Facility should be available to both men and women, therefore 4 would've been minimum and any less wouldn't be practical. If we can get further funding, then we should explore this.

The Chair agreed with these comments, summarising the double descope was a concern but it can be argued that football facilities is prioritised over the community facility, otherwise the project ambition is not being delivered.

The Board members were asked to agree the approach for this project: -

- Option A - Proceed with 2 changing rooms
- Option B - Seek alternative funding and come back to board to then decide the approach and number of changing rooms

All board members present agreed Option B - to seek alternative funding. The Board were informed this option does present a risk to time and planned milestones.

**Action: Sunish P, Jude T and James M to explore match funding opportunities for Britannia Park project.**

### **Blackheath Bus Interchange and Public Realm**

An update was provided by the project team. This included sharing the revised design for the project and costs, an updated timeframe for public consultation, detailed design and expected on site works date.

A comment was made regarding the updated timeframe and that only a 3-month slippage exists. Should consultation be negative, this could result in further delay.

Board members were advised the high risks associated with this project have been flagged regularly with DLUHC. The next stage for this project would be to identify the outputs to deliver within delivery timeframe and what outputs would be achieved beyond 2026 and complete the BCR. This work would need to be done prior to consultation between now and March. In regards to the delivery, there are some areas that could result in slippage. Throughout project delivery phase it will be higher risk. If there are significant objections at consultations, the team would need to review the time plan.

The chair acknowledged the next meeting is scheduled for May 2024 and if required, a further meeting by exception could be held to deal with any urgent matters.

In regard to concerns over negative feedback, Jude T provided an update on the engagement he has had with traders and local businesses where concerns were listened to and the team have completed a re-design which would improve the business case. The redesign makes the town more friendlier (lower kerbs, improve traffic flow) and easier access. It was highlighted by many businesses about increase in traffic. Officers came to the conclusion at last face to face meeting, all local businesses and reps, were happy new designs would bring more to the town centre and increase ability for people to come in/out, dropped off etc. Loading areas were also discussed and could be brought in.

The efforts of the chair and Jude were acknowledged for getting project turned around as well as the officer's support. However, this is a lesson learnt as it appears extensive consultation should've taken place at the beginning to save time.

## **17 Forward Plans**

The Press and Media forward plan was shared with board members in advance of the meeting. Comments included the need to ensure strong communication is published for the Britannia Park project and Blackheath Bus Interchange project.

## **18 Any other Business**

**Action: Agenda Items for the next meeting to include Britannia Park Project and Social Value.**

**Action: Potential meeting to be scheduled following consultation for Blackheath Bus Interchange project**

## **19 Closing Remarks**

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

Meeting closed at 11:56.

## **20 Action Log - Rowley Regis Town Deal Board**

Contact: [town\\_deal@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:town_deal@sandwell.gov.uk)

## Rowley Regis Town Deal Board Action Log

### Open Actions

Date	Description	Responsible Officer(s)	Update
22.02.24	Andy M and James D to discuss legislate/funding issues around towpath improvements.	A Miller and James D	
22.02.24	Andy M/ James D to email James M MP regarding legislate/funding issues around towpath improvements.	A Miller, James D and J Morris MP	
22.02.24	Simon Griffiths to engage with Towns Fund Programme Management Team when undertaking consultations. PMO can support with Press/ Media coverage.	S Griffiths	
22.02.24	Sunish P, Jude T and James M to explore match funding opportunities for Britannia Park project.	S Patel, Jude T and James M MP	
22.02.24	Agenda Items for the next meeting to include Britannia Park Project and Social Value.	PMO	
22.02.24	Potential meeting to be scheduled following consultation for Blackheath Bus Interchange project	PMO/ A Eggington	
23.11.23	PMO to circulate draft plans on the reduced number of allotments to Board Members.	PMO	
23.11.23	PMO to request footfall surveys from CRT and circulate this with Board Members.	PMO	

### Closed Actions

Date Opened	Date Closed	Description	Responsible Officer(s)	Update
31.08.23	23.11.23	Simon Griffiths to confirm the what proportion of funding is central government vs WMCA funding and report this back to board members.	Simon Griffiths	Complete.
31.08.23	23.11.23	PMO to schedule October 2023 Board Meeting to focus on Blackheath Bus Interchange Project.	Rina Rahim	Complete.
25.05.23	31.08.23	PMO to set up introduction meeting between Chair and newly elected members	PMO	Complete.
25.05.23	31.08.23	PMO to invite new board members to future meetings.	PMO	Complete.

## Closed Actions

Date Opened	Date Closed	Description	Responsible Officer(s)	Update
25.05.23	31.08.23	PMO to share Satellite Hub papers to MP J Morris in the next 2 weeks.	PMO	Complete
23.02.23	31.08.23	PMO to circulate material/reports from Public Health in relation to benefits of cycling when available.	PMO	Complete
23.02.23	25.05.23	PMO to circulate feedback from consultations.	PMO	Complete
23.02.23	25.05.23	Keep Youngs Persons representative as an Agenda item for the next board meeting	PMO	Complete Shape conference in June and PMO will be attending. Will update at next meeting
24.11.22	23.02.23	Kelly Thomas to liaise with Chair of Young Leavers Programme and explore interests from Sandwell Council apprentices to see if they wish to join the Town Deal Board for Rowley Regis, West Bromwich and Smethwick.	Kelly Thomas	Complete
24.11.22	23.02.23	Board members to contact the Programme Management Office with details of incentives on offer to help create a package for young people to encourage their commitment to the Town Deal Board. (town_deal@sandwell.gov.uk)	All Board Members	Complete
08.07.22	24.11.22	PMO to contact board members to confirm their interest to continue as a board member.	R Rahim/ E Parkes	Complete
08.07.22	24.11.22	Terms of Reference to be updated to include 50% attendance annually is mandatory and would trigger individual board member review.	R Rahim/ E Parkes	Complete
08.07.22	24.11.22	Jude Thompson to contact relevant individuals at BCC to explore potential membership suggestions.	J Thompson	Complete
08.07.22	24.11.22	Debbie Downs to also review from a WMP perspective to understand whether they have any local contacts.	D Downs	Complete
08.07.22	24.11.22	PMO to circulate short survey to capture board member preference on board meeting day/ time.	R Rahim/ E Parkes	Complete