

# Minutes of Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board

**Thursday, 29 February 2024 at 3.30 pm  
at Wednesbury Town Hall, Council Chambers, Holyhead Road, WS10 7DF**

**Present:** M Jardine (Chair), Cllr J Chidley, C Geddes Cllr L Giles, Cllr P Hughes, J Fellows, L Matthews, K Titley, G Tomlinson, C Wakeman

**Also present:** A Blakeway, L Brookes-Smith, J Dolphin, C Felicio, D Hooper, R Jenkins, T Mitchell, S Rhoad, T Stokes, J Quinlan, S Bradshaw

## **1/24 Chair's Welcome and Introductions**

The Chair welcomed Board Members and attendees to the meeting. Participants introduced themselves.

## **2/24 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from the following board members:

N Richards MP, S Bailey MP, Chief Insp P Griffiths, S Shingadia and B Hussain.

## **3/24 Minutes of the previous Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board**

The Chair asked Board Members if the minutes from the previous WLUP Board Meeting in December 2023 were accurate and invited any comments.



All Board Members agreed they were accurate.

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held 18 December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

**4/24**

### **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair asked Board Members to raise any declarations of interest.

Declarations of interest were received from J Fellows, L Mathews and S Bradshaw regarding discussion about the Millennium Centre improvements.

No other declarations of interest were brought forward.

**5/24**

### **Appointment of a Vice-Chair**

The Chair confirmed there had been an expression of interest for the Vice Chair position prior to the meeting.

Cllr P Hughes nominated K Titley.

**Resolved** that K Titley be appointed as the Vice Chair of the WLUP Board.

**6/24**

### **Wednesbury Town Centre Public Realm Project**

The Board received a presentation from C Felicio providing an update on the progress of the public realm project. The Board were provided with the interim results from the public consultation around the public realm which will conclude on 11th March 2024.

Points raised during the discussion included:

- Feedback had been received and the consultation was promoted through the communication and engagement strategy.
- The consultation events were well attended, and the members of the public provided general feedback as an alternative to the online survey.

- Board members highlighted their concern that young people are not accessing the survey. Views from young people are needed so the council can expand the offer to young people.
- C Felicio noted that engagement with schools has been attempted through offering sessions including careers focus with St Johns and Woodgreen school.
- It was suggested that Board Members support C Felicio to reach out to Wednesbury's secondary schools and sixth forms to engage with younger people to provide their input in the public consultation for the public realm and the masterplan.
- It was advised that Public Health officers are active in schools and can support.
- L Brookes - Smith agreed to take any comments or raise concerns to the Heads at Schools meeting.
- Board members highlighted the links to the national curriculum and part of the Ofsted Framework.
- In relation to the engagement with young people, C Felicio outlined that this can be undertaken throughout forthcoming weeks and months to inform final designs and feed into the Masterplan consultation process.
- Concerns were raised around the pedestrian crossings on Holyhead Road and noted that work is underway with Highways to explore options.
- Board members advised the locations of crossings adjacent to the Town Hall are important.
- Board members highlighted that the site used for public performance is to be accessible when used by groups for performances.
- Concerns raised that public toilets are not proposed within the public realm works with suggestions into a self-cleaning option. It was advised there are funding issues due to maintenance and public toilets can't be guaranteed in the plan. Insp Tomlinson noted

public toilets attract crime and it's a negative impact on neighbourhood policing.

- Name of the square should be informed by young people.
- Proposals are being brought forward within the Council relating to controlling products being displayed on the street. The proposals for Wednesbury Town Centre need to take this into account.

**Actions:**

- C Felicio to contact the secondary schools and Sixth forms in Wednesbury to encourage engagement with younger people and gain their feedback into the public consultation.
- K Titley to contact Woodgreen School to encourage their participation and their feedback into the public consultation.
- Public Health Officers to link C Felicio with schools in Wednesbury to take part in the public consultation.
- C Felicio to contact Sadie Bolton at Connexions.
- C Felicio to contact Cllr Fitzgerald at Wodensborough school to encourage their participation and their feedback into the public consultation.
- C Felicio to have a discussion into funding for public toilets as part of the Wednesbury Masterplan and the daytime and nighttime activity and if they aren't viable, to provide feedback to residents on why.
- Consideration to be given to location of crossings on Holyhead Road and outside Wednesbury Town Hall.
- Name of the square to be informed by young people's input.
- Final public realm designs to be brought back to WLUP Board.
- Union Street designs to be reviewed in light of forthcoming proposals from the Council relating to controlling products being displayed on the street.

**Resolved: -**

- (1) That the WLUP Board Chair be authorised to review the final public realm consultation findings in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA and the Assistant Director – Spatial Planning and Growth.
- (2) That project delivery commences for the public realm project (public realm works) subject to S151 Officer sign-

off, and the WLUP Board Chair's review of the final public realm consultation findings.

- (3) That a working group meeting be held in March 2024 for Board Members to discuss the Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan and options for site improvements to inform the development of the draft Masterplan.

**7/24**

## **Community Safety: Nuisance Bike Measures**

The Board received a presentation from T Mitchell and D Hooper providing an update of the community safety project. The CCTV has been ordered and recruited a Community and Business Engagement Officer who will be introduced to Board in the future.

In relation to the nuisance bike measures, D Hooper shared images with Board members of sites visited with a surveyor to close gaps and is awaiting quotes from the surveyor.

T Mitchell informed members the focus of the update will be on nuisance bike measures and for the board to approve the programme delivery for this part of the project.

Points raised during the discussion included:

- CCTV enhancement and expansion are part of a wider package of crime and anti-social behaviour deterrents including additional patrols and residents' information.
- The Community and Business Engagement Officer will link directly with businesses and there will be open communication between officers, police colleagues, EPOs, and the store owners for continuous support.
- The nuisance bikes are part of a boroughwide plan to provide better intelligence, prevention, enforcement, and work with third party associates.
- Concerns raised over the deployable cameras being used elsewhere in the borough. Board members highlighted that they would like a written plan/ protocol and assurance that the deployable cameras will be used in Wednesbury.
- Comments made from Board members that many nuisance bikes are illegal, and this crime is a huge issue for WMP.

- The chair requested communication that the programme is being developed and to have a discussion outside the WLUP Board meeting.
- In relation to displacing nuisance bike activity through the measures proposed, T Mitchell informed Board members the team are monitoring this, and it will be picked up through Town Tasking. The next steps are obtaining quotes, ongoing consultation, implementation and provide regular updates to WLUP Board.
- Whether establishing an off-road bike club would re-direct nuisance bike activity. There was a discussion around barriers to establishing this type of facility and G Tomlinson set out that responsible off-road bikers would likely use this type of facility, but it would not assist with problem bike activity.

#### **Actions:**

- WLUP Board members require assurance in writing that the deployable cameras will be used only for Wednesbury. To be provided at the next WLUP Board meeting in April 2024.
- Community Safety team to have a meeting with the WLUP Board Chair to discuss the programme delivery of the Community Safety project.

**Resolved** that project delivery for the nuisance bike measures component of the community safety project.

**8/24**

#### **Millennium Centre**

The Board received a presentation from A Blakeway outlining the objectives of the Millennium Centre expansion to meet the needs of the existing community as well as providing for the future community and to provide youth provision.

Points raised during the discussion included:

- A Blakeway outlined that the early designs were higher than the budget available of £2 million. The proposal was redesigned.
- There is now a new proposed plan for the Millennium Centre. This includes a rear extension to the building and internal remodelling. However, the architect has come back with another proposal to increase the size of the event space as of Wednesday 28th February. This proposal needs to be looked at to see if the budget is manageable and if the grant conditions and outputs can be met.
- The scheme presented during the meeting works with the budget of £2 million and would like the WLUP board to agree to this scheme as the minimum expansion of space. If more usable space

can be created through the new proposal this will be brought back to the Board.

- That Millennium Centre Board need to approve the design.
- The Chair asked J Fellows and L Matthews if they had any comments. L Matthews set out that there was broad support for the proposal but that the new design would need to be looked at.

(J Fellows, S Bradshaw and L Matthews left the meeting).

- The Millennium Centre are in receipt of funding from Persimmon. WLUP Board members queried if the community funding from Persimmon could be used towards this project and if there are any other funding streams. T Stokes confirmed that the Millennium Centre have received the maximum amount from Persimmon to purchase furniture for the Millennium centre.
- A representative from the WMCA expressed concern that there is unlikely to be enough time to apply for additional funding streams as the LUP funding needs to be spent by the next financial year. They confirmed that there are no appropriate funding schemes from the WMCA.
- WLUP Board members expressed concern, as the project will likely have slippage. A Blakeway advised that the timeline will depend on Planning Permission required. It could be a few weeks of slippage.
- T Stokes reminded the board about the expected outputs that will be delivered through this programme.
- In relation to the recommendations to the Board, R Jenkins provided clarification that as the new design option needs to be explored, that the Board are being asked to approve the design presented during the meeting as the minimum outputs to be achieved through the project.

**Actions:**

- Persimmon to be contacted for a conversation around social value support into the Millennium Centre project.

**Resolved** that the WLUP Board approve the delivery of the Friar Park Millennium Centre project subject to exploration of the additional design option, agreement to the scheme from the Friar Park Millennium Centre Board, and Section 151 Officer sign-off.

(J Fellows, S Bradshaw and L Matthews returned to the meeting).

(Insp G Tomlinson left the meeting).

**9/24**

## **Communication and Engagement Strategy**

The Board received a presentation from R Jenkins outlining the objectives and contents of the communication and engagement strategy.

Points raised during the discussion included:

- The WLUP website has been launched and is live outlining all 6 LUP projects in Wednesbury. This is hosted on the Regenerating Sandwell website.
- The strategy objectives have been crafted from the WLUP Board steer provided in December.
- Board Members were invited to contribute further to the communications and engagement strategy at a meeting in January 2024.
- In the previous agenda items, it has been highlighted that lack of young people's engagement. Feedback provided by a Board member highlighted that the WLUP branding from the council is too formal and inaccessible by the youth when accessing the public consultation. It was suggested to rebrand the consultation with an informal campaign.
- WLUP Board members were informed that a communication and engagement subgroup is being created and other members of the board are keen to take part in this group to keep the communication and engagement strategy and plans under review.
- WLUP Board members suggested other groups are being missed from the public consultation such as younger school children and faith groups.

### **Actions:**

- Use the Communication and Engagement Sub-group to look at how public consultation can be made more accessible to young people and reach into the faith community.
- Communication and Engagement Sub-group to be established. S Shingadia and K Titley were nominated.
- Board Members to contact S Rhoad / R Jenkins if they would like to participate in communication and engagement sub-group.
- R Jenkins to liaise with Shahin Akhtar (Faith and Inclusion Lead) from Public Health, regarding reach into the faith community.



- R Jenkins to provide updates on communication and engagement at each Board meeting.

**10/24**

## **Levelling Up Partnership Programme Overview**

R Jenkins informed the Board all 6 projects are progressing. The key programme are risks relate to timeline of the delivery for March 2025. Friar Park land remediation is set to complete in November 2025. The Council's finance team are working on solutions for this.

In response to actions raised in the December meeting, R Jenkins drew attention to the information contained in the Board papers around programme outputs and outcomes.

Individual project updates were presented to the Board:

Friar Park Urban Village:

- A Blakeway informed Board members that expressions of interest have been received for developer partners. The Invitation to Tender is the next stage.
- R Jenkins advised a red risk in the project is around timescales and is escalated to programme risk register.

The Board received a presentation from R Jenkins outlining the update on the progress of the Wednesbury Greenspaces improvements.

Wednesbury Greenspaces Improvements:

- The orders have been placed for the first 2 greenspaces (Lakeside and Wyntor) and these came in within the project budget.
- Balls Hill is currently in procurement and has taken longer than anticipated due to increasing the specification on the play equipment.
- The completion of survey work for Hydes Road is due to be completed by April 2024.
- Risk highlighted around costs. Controls are in place to review project budget following procurement phase.
- Other LUP projects were covered under previous agenda items.

**Actions:**

- Chair requested milestone and activity reporting by month for the future programme update.

## Public Health Programmes

L Brookes-Smith provided an outline of the Levelling up programmes within Public Health. Levelling Up aims to reduce local disparities and promote equality in economic, social, and health outcomes across the nation. Public health interventions are critical for achieving these goals, as they address the root causes of health inequalities and contribute to overall societal well-being. The LUP is a capital programme and Public Health have programmes that address the following:

There are two parts to the Life expectancy programme which include:

1. Anticipatory care programme with the aim to create a pack to support health at home and take the prevent a barrier in the GP system.
2. Healthy aging app aims enable self-management to address health inequalities and conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. It is a multilingual self-management platform.

(Cllr L Giles left the meeting).

In relation to Infant mortality, L Brookes-Smith set out that Infant mortality is significantly higher for Sandwell than England. There is groundbreaking work happening, the work is being commissioned with the Health Economics Unit and will support the understanding of needs in Sandwell. The work was commissioned in January 2024, this is due to be delivered in March/April 2024 which will be an insight into infant deaths in Sandwell and drive action.

Economic wellbeing -A Work Well bid was submitted in January 2024. Should the black Country bid be successful there will be an offer in Sandwell to support people into work and prevent worklessness.

Obesity- Sandwell has the worst childhood obesity in the country at 50% of year 6 children. Obesity is higher in Friar Park. There will be a Public Health plan being compiled. Overall Sandwell does not have a good level for health.

Weight loss programme for families -Public Health will embark on a pilot a small programme similar to that of the Better Health pilot

programme in Wolverhampton, whereby families will be financially incentivised to cook healthy meals, eat healthy meals, take exercise as a family.

L Brookes-Smith set out that she welcomed Board Member discussion around how to engage with the community around wellness and for this to be a focus across Wednesbury. The intention is to gear everyone up for a focus on wellness and then stop activity to review its impact and adapt the approach.

Points raised during the discussion included:

- L Brookes-Smith to link the Better Health Pilot with the green spaces.
- The interest in allotments has grown and this should be factored into the public health programmes for healthy living.
- It was mentioned that SAFL provide wellbeing art classes to promote health and the Millennium Centre provide cycling opportunities and healthy food through HAF L Brookes-Smith set out that the intention isn't to duplicate existing community activity, but to bring it all together to be more purposeful and create a Wednesbury-wide focus.
- A suggestion to work with Wednesbury leisure and foodbanks to support residents with healthy eating. As well as working with the voluntary sector to provide free classes to encourage leisure activities.
- A suggestion to use market stalls for community activity and offer healthy street food or give out fresh fruit at Wednesbury events e.g., Wednesbury Day and carnival.
- A suggestion to do different activities in the parks during school holidays and use the greens spaces that are being improved by the LUP.

(S Bradshaw, J Fellows, T Mitchell and C Wakeman, left the meeting).

**Actions:**

- L Brookes - Smith to link Public Health Programmes with the comms and Engagement strategy.
- L Brookes - Smith to contact WLUP Board members to organise an engagement session in Wednesbury and Friar Park.
- L Brookes - Smith to report back on proposals around wellbeing following the WLUP Board discussion.
- Board members to email L Brookes Smith with any further suggestions for who to connect with in the Wednesbury community.

## **12/24**      **WLUP Board Forward Plan**

R Jenkins informed members that the WLUP forward plan for the April 2024 WLUP Board meeting to input into the programme.

## **13/24**      **Chair's Closing Remarks**

The chair reminded board members that the LUP milestones and activity have been discussed with R Jenkins for future programme updates.

R Jenkins will be putting together a training programme to upskill Board members.

There will be a working group meeting outside the WLUP Board meeting on the Masterplan.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked board members and officers attending in support for their contributions.

### **Action:**

- RJ to provide a skills/ training plan for the WLUP Board and update the Board at the next WLUP Board meeting in April 2024.

Meeting ended at 18:07pm  
(Adjourned between 17.03pm and 17.13pm)

Contact: [Wednesbury\\_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:Wednesbury_LUP@sandwell.gov.uk)