

Minutes of Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board

**Thursday, 18 April 2024 at 3.30 pm
at Friar Park Millennium Centre, Wednesbury, WS10 0JS**

Present: M Jardine (Chair), Cllr T Fitzgerald, C Geddes Cllr L Giles, Cllr P Hughes, B Hussain, L Matthews, D Salisbury, Shingadia, K Titley

Also present: A Blakeway, L Brookes-Smith, C Felicio, A Hartshorne, R Jenkins, N Plant, S Rhoad, A Sangha, T Stokes,

14/24 Chairs Welcome and Introductions

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

The Chair set out that she would invite comments from each representative group in attendance in turn, including the Voluntary and Community Sector representatives, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion representative, the business representative, the representatives from partner organisations and Councillors.

15/24 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from the following board members, S Bailey MP, Cllr J Chidley, J Fellows, Chief Insp P Griffiths, N Woodcock.



16/24

Minutes of the previous Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board

The Chair asked Board Members if the minutes from the previous WLUP Board Meeting in February 2024 were accurate and invited any comments.

All Board Members agreed they were accurate.

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held 29 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.

17/24

Declaration of Interest

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

Declarations of interest were received from D Salisbury regarding discussion about the Site improvements and the Wednesbury Police Station site.

No other declarations of interest were brought forward.

18/24

Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan and Public Realm Works

The Board received a presentation from C Felicio providing an update on the progress of the Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan and Public Realm Works. C Felicio took Board Members through the draft Masterplan for Wednesbury Town Centre ahead of the consultation.

In relation to the draft Masterplan the following points were raised during the discussion included:

- The draft Masterplan sets out the long-term aspirations for Wednesbury.
- There is a vision statement and a set of 6 aims. Feedback from Board Members on wording is welcomed ahead of the consultation launch.
- There is a set of strategies supporting the vision and aims: Development, Movement, Public Realm, Greening and

Sustainability. This includes shorter term projects and long-term aspiration.

- The images are included to aid understanding and present the level of ambition. Board Members felt that the images used are very important.
- Parking in the town centre is likely to be an issue raised by residents. In relation to the High Bullen site, there are options which could include retaining more of the car park, and it would assist a wider debate to include those.
- That a car parking survey had been undertaken and that High Bullen is the least well-used car park in Wednesbury and offers development potential to help increase footfall in the Town Centre.
- No decisions have been made about individual sites and that any development that comes forward would be subject to planning permission. The planning stage is where detailed consideration of impact of parking would be given.
- In relation to Union Yard, that the draft masterplan contains images of 'meanwhile use' of pop-up food similar to Digbeth Dining Club. This could be ahead of a longer-term development of the site taking place – but again it should be recognised that this is an aspiration not a firm proposal at this stage.
- That in relation to bringing leisure into the Town Centre that this would be key to increasing footfall. Caution was urged as it was felt that residents' expectations had already been raised around a private investor bringing forward a cinema in the past that hadn't happened.
- The communication and engagement around the Masterplan needs to make it clear to residents that the Masterplan is a long-term vision for Wednesbury.
- That in relation to an events and animation programme that this was felt to be very popular with residents and is a chance to encourage Civic Pride, local identity and bring Wednesbury's heritage to life.
- That a funding approach would need to be identified to put on more of these types of events but that there might be scope to grow existing events e.g., Remembrance Day.
- That the Communications and Engagement Sub-group had reviewed the consultation and engagement plan for the Masterplan.

In relation to the public realm consultation findings and proposed works, the Chair reminded Members that a delegation had been put in place for the Chair to sign-off final proposals. Due to the

timescales allowing, the Chair agreed to bring the proposals to the Board for consideration. C Felicio set out the consultation findings that the majority of responses were in favour of the proposed public realm works with a smaller number of negative responses. C Felicio summarised the negative responses.

In relation to the public realm works, points raised during the discussion included:

- That there had been some negative comments around the proposed re-paving of Union Street but that the paving was important to address concerns around slips and trips, drainage and to improve the visual appearance of Union Street.
- There would be disruption during the works and that the impact would be minimised. There will be ongoing engagement with businesses with the contractor.
- S Shingadia can support with any communication needed around impact on the routes to the Metro and Bus Station during the works
- In relation to tree roots and the paving solution, this would be included in the FAQs document.
- The FAQs document will provide responses to the negative points raised during the public consultation.
- An additional point was raised around paving flooding issues at the top end of the Town Centre.

Actions:

- WLUP Board members to provide feedback to C Felicio on the draft Masterplan including wording used and images.
- Statement 3.1 in the Masterplan draft is to be reviewed by the Comms and Engagement Subgroup.
- High Bullen references and images to be reviewed in the Masterplan draft to show parking and disability access.
- CF to investigate the flooding concerns raised by Board Members due to the paving at the top end of the high street.
- S Shingadia to support CF with sharing comms and information regarding access to Metro and Bus Station during Public Realm works
- Public Realm FAQs document to include responses to points raised by the Board and through the public consultation.

Resolved: -

- (1) That the WLUP Board recommend to the Assistant Director – Spatial Planning and Growth and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and WMCA that public consultation on the draft Wednesbury Town Centre Masterplan commence.
- (2) That the final public realm consultation report be received.
- (3) To approve that project delivery, commence for the public realm project (public realm works) subject to S151 Officer sign-off.

19/24

Greenspaces: Hydes Road

R Jenkins delivered a presentation setting out proposed designs for Hydes Road Playing Fields

Points raised during the discussion included:

- To support designing-out ASB and crime, whether an out of hours barrier or lighting could be installed at Hydes Road car park.
- A suggestion was made that consideration be given to how the pavilion facility would be managed when it is not occupied and whether CCTV would be required.
- What energy efficiency measures were included in the design for the building.
- Whether the car park entrance needed to be reviewed
- Whether the kitchen space would be used as a cafe facility and/or for community group use.
- For designs to ensure that there is disabled access throughout the pavilion building including disabled access to the pitches.
- WLUP Board expressed concerns about the construction due to the rising inflation costs. R Jenkins set out that SMBC are confident in the budget available and that inflationary pressures were being kept under review.

Actions:

- Arrange a site visit for Board Members to Hydes Road Playing Fields
- That the points raised during the WLUP Board discussion about Hydes Road Playing Fields be considered and addressed in the next update to the Board

- J Satchwell to keep all residents informed including the adjacent resident on Hydes Road Playing Fields about the work that will be taking place at Hydes Road Playing Fields.

Resolved: -

(1) Draft designs and proposals for the Hydes Road Playing Fields project were received; and

(2) Consultation plans for the Hydes Road Playing Fields project be approved.

20/24

Levelling Up Partnership Programme Overview

R Jenkins delivered a presentation setting out the programme status and explaining the contents of the agenda pack.

The WLUP Board were reminded that a status report for each of the 6 projects is provided in the agenda pack at appendix 1. RJ informed the WLUP Board of milestones agreed with DLUHC and that these will be provided at each meeting.

All 6 projects are progressing with key achievements made since the last Board meeting as follows:

- Preparation of draft masterplan for Wednesbury Town Centre
- Conclusion of Public Realm consultation and final designs
- Orders placed for Wyntor and Lakeside Open Spaces
- CCTV installation and testing commenced
- Business engagement commenced
- 'Ask Angela' safety scheme in Wednesbury Town Centre launched
- Initial Design for Millennium Centre expansion agreed

There are some areas of delivery slippage and RJ provided a summary of the risks to the WLUP Board.

Since the last report to WLUP Board, 3 programme risks have reduced, 7 have stayed the same, and 0 programme risks have increased. The red programme risk relates to delays in the delivery of the Friar Park Urban Village project. The risk is expected to reduce when the EA permitting process is concluded, delivery partner procured, and planning permission granted.

Individual project updates were presented to the Board:

Community Safety

- The CCTV has been installed and is going through testing now.
- The deployable cameras are in stock and are going through testing at the moment.
- The deployable camera protocol has been circulated to WLUP Board Members. The cameras have been ringfenced for Wednesbury.
- Discussions with CF regarding CCTV and the public realm works have taken place, so that the public realm work doesn't impede the CCTV.
- The programme is on target for the installation of the nuisance bikes preventative measure.
- There are initial meetings with Canals and Rivers Trust, should funding permit additional location(s) for nuisance bike measures to be progressed at Addison Street.
- S Dhillon to meet with the WLUP Board and formally introduce herself. She is working well with the business link scheme and has made links with businesses.

Friar Park Millennium Centre

A Sangha reminded members that at the last WLUP Board meeting the plans for the Millennium Centre were shared with the WLUP Board. Since then, work has started on procurement for the detailed designs to be prepared. The Millennium Centre Board have approved the design. The plan will be shared with residents later in Spring.

Points raised during the discussion included:

- That a WLUP Board member raised a concern that they had received feedback about the extension being offered to an external third party. The Council and Millennium Centre were not aware of the context of this.

Friar Park Urban Village

A Blakeway informed the WLUP Board that the Friar Park land remediation project remains complex but that the final preparations are being made to the Invitation to Tender documents. There has been progress with the environmental agency permits. There has been some slippage in the developer appointment.

Points raised during the discussion included:

- WLUP Board members shared concerns about the project slipping.
- DLUCH are aware of the timescales for the project and SMBC finance team have a solution in place to manage spend beyond March 2025.

Green Spaces

Wyntor Lane – work commenced. The council has taken receipt of the trees for planting and the foot path work will start shortly
Norbury Lane will be prepare for works after Wyntor Lane works are completed. Balls Hill is at procurement stage.

Public Health

LBS informed the WLUP Board that there was an engagement event on the 12th April 2024. This involved looking at a timetable of activity for groups and services in Wednesbury around Wellbeing. The public health team are getting schools involved in the timetable.

Actions:

- To add another column marked 'revised date' to the milestone report.
- S Dhillon to be formally introduced to the next WLUP Board in June 2024.
- L Giles to contact Officers in relation to feedback around external third party at the Millennium Centre
- LBS advised WLUP Board members to contact her directly with groups to pass information to the Public Health Team.

21/24

Project Change Requests

R Jenkins delivered a presentation setting out the 4 requests for project changes that require endorsement from the WLUP Board.

The proposed changes were:

- A change to the project end date for the Masterplan project
- A change to the project end date for the Millennium Centre project

- A change to the scheme budgets within the Public Realm Project
- A change to the scheme budgets within the Greenspaces Project

In addition to the changes set out in the paperwork, a request to change the budgets within the £1.65m for the greenspaces schemes was raised. The proposed change was for £0.5m of underspend to be moved to the budget for the Balls Hill Open Space scheme.

The underspend was due to a change in specification for lighting at Wyntor Lane Open Spaces and Lakeside and Norbury Open Space. Costs for the Balls Hill scheme had been received and were over the scheme budget.

Resolved: -

- (1) The WLUP Board endorse the project change requests in relation to the milestones for the Masterplan Project and Millennium Centre project and recommend approval by the Assistant Director Spatial Planning and Growth in consultation with the Council's S151 Officer.
- (2) That the WLUP Board endorse the project change request to adjust the project budgets within the Public Realm project and recommend approval by the Assistant Director Spatial Planning and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and West Midlands Combined Authority and Council's S151 Officer.
- (3) That the WLUP Board endorse the project change request to adjust the project budgets within the Greenspaces project budget and recommend approval by the Assistant Director Spatial Planning and Growth in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and West Midlands Combined Authority and Council's S151 Officer.

22/24

Millennium Centre Activity

The Board received a video clip from the Millennium Centre manager outlining information about Millennium Centre activity and contribution to LUP outcomes.

S Bradshaw advised the WLUP Board that the new space will bring the community together.

The activities that are available at FPMC were highlighted to the WLUP Board.

Points raised during the discussion included:

- WLUP Board asked if the FPMC are linked in with external agencies. It was confirmed that FPMC work with SCVO.
- The WLUP Board asked if there was any adult learning available at the centre. S Bradshaw confirmed that staff have been recently qualified as digital champions and SAFL support the centre users.

23/24

Overview of Community Groups in Wednesbury

The Board received a presentation from A Hartshorne outlining her role as a Neighbourhood Partnerships Officer and the aims with the community in Wednesbury. She also set examples of how the community groups she works with contribute to LUP outcomes.

24/24

Communication and Engagement

R Jenkins provided members with an overview of Communication and Engagement plan for the May 2024.

Actions:

- WLUP Board members to support any LUP campaigns on social media.

25/24

WLUP Board Forward Plan

R Jenkins informed members of the details of the WLUP Board forward plan for June 2024.

26/24

Wednesbury Town Centre Site Improvements

PC D Salisbury left the meeting before the restricted item was discussed.

Resolved that the WLUP Board agree the priority sites for improving with the LUP funding as Addison Street, High Bullen Car Park, the former Spires Health Centre and former Outdoor Market site, and that delivery commence subject to S151 approval.

Meeting ended at 18:30pm (adjourned between 17.08pm and 17.22pm)

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