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## SANDWELL TOWNS FUND SUPERBOARD

THURSDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2021

**Present:** Jude Thompson, Chair

A Eggington, C Hinson, Cllr R Singh, G Foster, G Layer, G Pennington, J Morris MP and S Shingadia

**Also in Attendance:**

S Griffiths – Sandwell College  
J Dennison – Canal and River Trust  
A Bell – NHS Trust

**SMBC Officers in Attendance:**

A Oxley, A Reynolds, E Blackwood, E Parkes, H Insley, J Lillystone, J Singh, M Evans, T McGovern

**Apologies:**

A Taylor, Cllr I Padda, K Bevington, K Bromley-Derry, M Davis and N Richards MP

### 1 **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard.

### 2 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from the following Superboard members:

Alan Taylor – Chair of Smethwick Local Board  
Cllr Iqbal Padda – SMBC  
Keeley Bevington - WMP  
Kim BromleyDerry - SMBC  
Mark Davis- SCVO  
Nicola Richards MP

### 3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### 4 **Declarations of Interest**

No new declarations of interest were received.

Existing and continued declarations from previous meetings: -

- Wendy Brookfield – Project lead on Digital Den Project, West Bromwich
- Adrian Eggington – Interest in Shaftesbury House site so will refrain from discussion with regards MechEng Campus, West Bromwich
- Nicola Richards MP – Trustee of the Albion Foundation
- Alan Taylor – in relation to any matters relating to Sandwell College
- Geoff Layer – in relation to any matters relating to University of Wolverhampton
- Graham Pennington – in relation to any matters relating to Sandwell College

### 5 **Urban Greening Full Business Case**

Superboard are being asked to receive and agree Full Business Case for the West Bromwich Urban Greening Project. Jude Thompson invited Chris Hinson, Chair of West Bromwich Local Board, to introduce the item.

CH provided the board with a general overview and update on the project which is part of the tranche two pool of submissions.

Thanks were given to Josh Singh for his timely work on this to date.

**Superboard unanimously agreed:**

To receive and agree the final Full Business Case for Urban Greening, including the project equality impact assessment, environmental impact assessment and monitoring and evaluation plan.

To recommend the Full Business Case to Cabinet for approval subject to the outcome of the Capital Appraisal review.

To note that in the event that the Full Business Case appraisal leads to minor amends / points of clarity being required, these will be addressed by the Project Lead in conjunction with the Chair of the Local Board, the Chair of the Superboard and the Council's S151 Officer.

To note that in the event that the appraisal leads to a recommendation of substantial changes to the Full Business Case, that this will be reported to Superboard with a revised Full Business Case presented for consideration.

That subject to Cabinet's approval of the Full Business Case, that the Chair of the Superboard sign the Project Summary.

**6 Full Business Cases for Tranche 3 Projects**

Superboard were being asked to discuss and input on the tranche three submissions. Jude Thompson introduced the item and the presenters for each of the four focus projects, with the remaining projects to be discussed by exception.

i) James Dennison (Canal and River Trust) gave a presentation on the Rowley Regis Canal Network Connectivity project. Provided a broad contextual overview including an anticipated project timeline and advised that additional funding sources are now being explored to bolster an identified shortfall rather than reduce scope. An EOI has been submitted to TfWM in this respect. Sandeep Shingadia (TfWM) offered support in the development of this and will aid in connecting the relevant officers.

Adrian Eggington (AE), Chair of the Rowley Regis Local Board, provided a short comment on the project. Local Board are supportive for retaining the existing scope. Material costs were raised as a risk to deliver. Jude Thompson asked members to explore economies of scale where possible.

**Action – PMO to meet with Tony McGovern, SMBC Director of Regeneration and Growth, to outline options for moving money within the £67.5m total programme envelope.**

ii) No material update could be provided on the Rowley Regis Bus Interchange due to capacity issues with the dedicated SMBC officers.

AE conveyed a similar position and outlined difficulties with moving certain projects forward because of the resourcing issues. Despite this, Hayley Insley was thanked for her hard work in trying to bridge the gap.

Tony McGovern advised that despite only being in post for a short period of time that this is one of his priorities as incoming director and is working with the relevant departments to a solution. Potential for external resource to be identified. Also advised of the strong support in the Council for these projects and will be working to ensure no Towns Fund money is lost.

Cllr Rajbir Singh seconded this position and confirmed that work is underway to address it.

Sandeep Shingadia advised that TfWM are supportive of the project and will help support where possible.

James Morris MP questioned where the gaps are (PMO or project level). TMG advised there are gaps at both which are both being addressed.

On the wider topic of programme management, Graham Pennington (Sandwell College) outlined risks of not being mindful of interdependencies and opportunities with regard other sources of funding and the impact the programme will have. For board members and officers to note.

iii) Alan Reynolds, SMBC, provided an update on the work at Britannia Park. This included a summary of the consultation and project proposals that have arisen.

An EOI process is underway for potential partners to run a community hub which will improve the project outcomes and wider benefits for the community.

James Morris MP noted the update and was pleased to hear the positive progress. Advised that AR should perhaps open lines of communication with the Rowley Regis Horticultural Society, if this has not yet been done. JM left the meeting at this point to attend to parliamentary business.

Jude Thompson noted that if allotments are at a premium, there are potential other sites in the area. AR noted comments and will explore further.

Adrian Eggington thanked AR for his work on this to date.

iv) Jane Lillystone provided brief update on the Smethwick Albion in the Park project from an SMBC perspective. Spatial and visual concerns were raised by Heritage Lottery.

Jude Thompson provided further update advised that a number of proposed locations had been removed. Jude raised concerns over a lack of progress on this project to date.

Rob Lake, Albion Foundation, provided further context for the board. It was put to the board that potentially an alternative could be sought through the extension/redevelopment of some of the Albion Foundation's existing assets. These options are being progressed with the relevant officers although a steer is needed.

Jude Thompson outlined Superboard's frustration on this project and asked where possible if proceedings could be expedited.

Tony McGovern advised that SMBC will direct more resource to this.

**Action for PMO – SMBC officers working on this project to arrange meeting with TMG and Rob Lake to discuss in more detail. Rob Lake requested the meeting be held in person if possible.**

Remaining projects were discussed by exception and short verbal reports were given by the following officers on projects to be presented in more detail at future Superboard meetings:

- Alex Oxley- Retail Diversification Programme

- Jane Lillystone- Town Hall Quarter
- No officers were able to attend to provide update on cycling and walking projects. **Action for PMO – to request update outside of Superboard to be distributed to members.**
- Simon Griffiths - Rowley Regis Education Hub
- Erroll Blackwood- Ron Davis Learning Centre
- Austin Bell- Midland Met Learning Campus
- Hayley Insley- Grove Lane
- Hayley Insley- Smethwick Walking and Cycling Connectivity

The last of these projects (Smethwick Walking and Cycling Connectivity) is also part of agenda item 8 where the board are to note any proposed project changes. It was suggested that board consider these changes in this item, given that they had just received an update on the matter. It was also deemed that a formal vote on the matter would be appropriate.

**A vote was taken and Superboard unanimously agreed that proposed change request be progressed in line with Towns Fund guidance.**

## **7 Town Deal Local Boards**

Chris Hinson provided an update of discussions at West Bromwich Local Board and thanked Josh Singh, Alex Oxley and Emma Parkes for their continued work.

Broadly West Bromwich board are pleased with the way projects are progressing but echoed the sentiments around SMBC resource and the impact this is having on the connectivity project.

Adrian Eggington provided an update on Rowley Regis Local Board discussions which again focussed on the need for improved resourcing for certain projects.

Hayley Insley advised, in Alan Taylors absence, that there were no additional matters to report from the Smethwick Local Board.

## **8 Towns Fund Programme Update Report**

These matters were addressed within agenda item 6.

### **Closing Comments**

Jude Thompson thanked board members for their attendance and reiterated his thanks for SMBC officer support. Thanked project leads for their positive updates and input into the process to date.

Supported previous comments about the need for SMBC resource issues to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

JT closed meeting.

**Meeting ended at 16:59.**