

# Minutes of Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard

**Thursday, 20 January 2022 at 3.00 pm**  
**Meeting not open to the public**

**Present:**

J Thompson (Chair)  
A Eggington, Chair of Rowley Regis Local Board  
C Hinson, Chair of West Bromwich Local Board  
Councillor K Carmichael, Leader of SMBC  
G Layer, Black Country LEP  
J Morris, MP Halesowen and Rowley Constituency  
M Davis, SCVO  
J Spellar, MP Warley Constituency  
S Shingadia, Transport for West Midlands

**Also present:**

A Bell, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust  
J Dennison, Canal and River Trust  
J Bailey, Sandwell College  
S Griffiths, Sandwell College  
  
T McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth  
J Langford, Towns Fund Programme Manager  
A Oxley, Senior Planning Regeneration Officer  
A Reynolds, Senior Planning Regeneration Officer  
C Felicio, Planning Regeneration Support Officer  
J Singh, Senior Planning Regeneration Officer  
M Evans, West Bromwich Town Hall Project Manager  
J Lillystone, Service Manager - Tourism, Culture and Leisure  
E Blackwood, Ron Davis Centre Expansion Project Lead



## **19/21 Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Jude Thompson welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard and thanked Chris Hinson for deputising as chair in last Superboard meeting held in November 2021.

Chair invited Cllr Kerrie Carmichael, Leader of Sandwell MBC, to make opening remarks. Cllr Carmichael thanked the board for their work to date and advised she was looking forward to developing a more detailed understanding of the programme in due course.

## **20/21 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from the following Superboard members:

- Kim Bromley-Derry, SMBC Interim Chief Executive
- Michael Jarrett, SMBC Director of Children and Education
- Alan Taylor, Chair of the Smethwick Local Board
- Geoff Foster, SVCO

## **21/21 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

## **22/21 Declarations of Interest**

No new declarations of interest were received. Existing and continued declarations from previous meetings: -

- Adrian Eggington, Chair of Rowley Regis Local Board: Interest in Shaftesbury House site so will refrain from discussion with regards to West Bromwich Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre Project
- Nicola Richards, MP West Bromwich East Constituency: Trustee of the Albion Foundation
- Alan Taylor, Chair of Smethwick Local Board in relation to any matters relating to Sandwell College
- Geoff Layer, SVCO in relation to any matters relating to University of Wolverhampton
- Graham Pennington, Sandwell College in relation to any matters relating to Sandwell College

## **23/21 Towns Fund Programme Update**

Jude Thompson introduced Jenna Langford, Towns Fund Programme Manager, to present an overview of the programme progress. Key points for board consideration were:

- The Albion Foundation withdrew Smethwick's Albion Family in the Park project due to a number of practical issues hampering project development and delivery.
- In light of the above, the 6% reduction to all projects in Smethwick (as a result of not achieving full grant ask) is no longer required as the costs allocated for Albion in the Park can now be reallocated between remaining projects (with the exception of Smethwick Connected). A project adjustment form has been completed and will be submitted to DLUHC.
- Feedback has been received from DLUHC on the Digital Den project. Officers are working with Government and project team to provide supporting information where requested.

Board were updated with regards to the programme risk register. There are no longer any remaining red risks across the programme. The audit committee agrees with this assessment which is positive news and reflects recent work to explore efficiencies in procedure through the assurance panel process.

The programme is now moving into delivery stage rather than development. This will require a revision of the risk register to reflect these changes going forward.

Jenna proceeded to provide a brief town by town update to board members on the projects not covered in today's agenda.

West Bromwich: Full Business Cases (FBC) are progressing well. A number of projects will require further tweaks to the FBC as a result of the assurance panel review in advance of final submission to DLUHC. Brief overview of the projects not covered on today's meeting - none of which are red rated (i.e. in danger of slippage).

Smethwick: Projects will receive their 6% reallocation (with the exception of Smethwick Connected). Brief overview of the projects not covered on today's meeting - none of which are red rated (i.e. in danger of slippage).

Austin Bell advises that the planning application for the Midland Metropolitan Learning Campus has been submitted to the LPA this week.

John Spellar MP voiced support for both Midland Met Learning Campus and the Grove Lane projects as priority sites given these have the most transformational scope in his view.

Rowley Regis: FBCs are progressing, all projects are currently in line with expectations other than the Blackheath Bus Interchange Project which is currently red rated. Work is underway to bring that project back into acceptable tolerances.

Town Board Chairs were invited to provide an update of discussions at Local Board meetings.

### West Bromwich

Chris Hinson provided an update of the board meeting that took place this week. Everything is progressing well with regards the outstanding projects. Board are happy with progress and have been highly engaged in the process to date. Questions invited but none forthcoming.

### Rowley Regis

Adrian Eggington provided a brief update on the local board meeting that took place last week. The board had been updated on the progress of the outstanding FBCs.

Risk had been a topic of conversation, particularly in light of recent hyperinflation of material costs. Methods to control these costs are being explored at individual project level.

Blackheath Bus Interchange has been a challenging project, but signs of improvement are there, and much work is being done on this project by the project team.

### Smethwick

Jenna Langford provided an update in place of Alan Taylor. Last meeting of the local board was positive and board members continue to be supportive of projects.

Albion in the Park no longer part of the Towns Fund Programme. The 6% reallocation to projects will hopefully help some of the aforementioned issues surrounding material/ cost inflation experienced recently in the market.

## **24/21 Town Hall Quarter Full Business Case**

This agenda item has changed since the publishing of board papers. The Chair provided an overview advising that that board members will not receive the FBC for agreement during this meeting and that this item will return to February Superboard. Chair invited Jane Lillystone, SMBC, to elaborate.

Jane confirmed the above. FBC requires some amendment which has been identified through the assurance panel review. The BCR is expected to remain strong and match funding remains unchanged. The FBC is on track for submission to the internal assurance panel next week.

## **25/21 Ron Davis Centre Expansion Full Business Case**

Erroll Blackwood, SMBC, provided a brief overview of the project and recent progress on the FBC. The project is with a modular based construction method to alleviate cost pressures, this is standard industry practice for such a facility and has a 60+ year life span. The FBC has been submitted for internal review.

Jenna Langford advised that, having just attended a meeting with the consultancy group, that the BCR is likely to be revised up in due course, which will improve prospects of DLUHC approval.

John Spellar MP raised a question of whether a higher density, multi-storey development had been considered.

Errol advised that this had been considered but was deemed to be unfeasible for a number of practical and economical reasons for this particular project.

John asked that this be considered across all projects in an attempt to bolster housing numbers across the borough.

Tony McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth, assured board members that densification was something the Council are actively seeking to achieve in the appropriate locations.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for the Smethwick Ron Davis Centre Expansion Project including project adjustment and approval for submission.**

***Vote passed unanimously.***

## **26/21 Rolfe Street Canalside Regeneration Full Business Case**

Hayley Insley, SMBC, provided an overview of the Rolfe Street project and the development of the FBC. The project is concerned with demolition and remediation of the site in Smethwick.

FBC development has been progressing at pace over recent weeks. There have been a number of improvements to the identified outputs within the FBC. As a result, the benefit-cost-ratio (BCR) calculations have increased to 2.7. This represents high value for money.

The risk register has been developed and will be attached to the submission. Future investment of c. £23m will be required to fully bring the site forward for development but the de-risking completed as part of this project will make the project more commercially attractive to investors in order to attract this investment.

Some minor alterations/ tweaks expected to be required to the FBC over the coming weeks as it is assessed by the assurance panel.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for the Smethwick Rolfe Street Canalside Regeneration Project including project adjustment and approval for submission.**

**Vote passed unanimously.**

## **27/21 Smethwick Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Full Business Case**

Andy Miller, SMBC, provided an overview of the Smethwick Walking and Cycling Project and associated progress of the FBC.

Board received a summary of the project context, which is forming part of the strategic case, this included the rationale and links to the wider active travel network. Within the economic case the BCR has been calculated at 2.92, which offers high value for money.

Key risks were identified to board members these included:

- Further COVID implications which could result in delivery delays
- Objections to detailed design
- Unforeseen practical issues such as ground conditions

Financial case has identified a number of ongoing revenue costs, these will be met by SMBC as part of the existing highways maintenance works.

Board were given an overview of management and commercial cases, including proposed procurement route. It is expected that this project can be procured through existing frameworks.

John Spellar MP raised concerns at this point with regard the use of existing schemes and questioned the benefit against the disruption caused via implementation.

Andy Miller advised that the routes, of which these initial phases are only a small part of, will need to be fully complete before the true benefits/ take up can be delivered and that, whilst disruption is inevitable when undertaking works to public highway, any disturbance will only be temporary. No vehicular carriageway is to be removed in the long term as part of these schemes.

Jude Thompson pointed out that, given the seasonal nature of active travel, it is likely that usage will increase as the weather improves.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for the Smethwick Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Project and approval for submission.**

***Vote passed by majority.***

## **28/21 Rowley Regis Satellite Education Hub Full Business Case**

Simon Griffiths, Sandwell College, provided an update to local board on the Rowley Satellite Education Hub.

The project was taken to the Rowley Regis Local Board last week. Discussions with board members were positive. A number of minor amends has been made following feedback with both partners and local board.

Questions invited, none forthcoming.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for Rowley Regis Satellite Education Hub Project including project adjustment and approval for submission.**

***Vote passed unanimously.***

## **29/21 Canal Network Connectivity Full Business Case**

Adrian Eggington introduced the project and project manager, James Dennison. Advised board that the Local Board were very supportive of this project, it has not been without challenge with regards costings, but much positive work has been undertaken to address this.

James Dennison provided an overview of the progress with the FBC and each of the cases.

As part of the strategic case, board were reminded of the project objectives which include a series of towpath and access improvements. This is envisaged to generally improve the active travel infrastructure and therefore encourage additional usage.

The economic case is robust and the BCR is currently showing very high value for money. Further tweaks to the BCR are expected, although it is still envisaged that this will remain very strong.

A number of risks were outlined to board members including hyperinflation of material and labour; however, overall funding should accommodate costs identified within the FBC. Total project value of £2.3m.

CRT are well versed in the delivery of such projects and are able to lean upon this vast experience and associated project management techniques within the management case.

Procurement scoping will be ongoing, although a number of exercises have already been conducted with both CRT and SMBC framework providers. There is a programme of consultation and engagement which will be attached to the programme, this will mainly focus on raising awareness.

John Spellar MP offered support for the project, outlining the importance of improved lighting and access points. Urged project team to explore further funding to increase scope where possible.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for Rowley Regis Canal Network Connectivity Project and approval for submission.**

***Vote passed unanimously.***



## **30/21 Any Other Business**

Question from James Morris MP with regards Blackheath Bus Interchange.  
Will the FBC be submitted after upcoming local elections?

Response from Andy Millar - no, only the detailed consultation will occur after.  
FBC will be submitted in advance of local elections as per existing programme timelines.

## **31/21 Closing Remarks**

Jude Thompson thanked board members for their attendance and input.  
Thanked project leads for their presentations and continued engagement.  
Meeting closed.

**Meeting ended at 16:20**

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