

# Minutes of Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard

**Thursday, 17 February 2022 at 3.00 pm**  
**Meeting not open to the public**

**Present:**

- Jude Thompson, Chair of Sandwell Superboard (Chair)
- Chris Hinson, Local Board Chair- West Bromwich
- Alan Taylor, Local Board Chair- Smethwick
- Geoff Layer, Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership
- James Morris MP, Halesowen and Rowley Constituency
- John Spellar MP, Warley Constituency
- Nicola Richards MP, West Bromwich East Constituency
- Cllr Iqbal Padda, SMBC
- Geoff Foster, SCVO

**SMBC Officers:**

- Tony McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth
- Jenna Langford, Interim Towns Fund Programme Manager
- Hayley Insley, Planning Regeneration Team Leader
- Alex Oxley, Senior Planning Regeneration Officer
- Alan Reynolds, Senior Planning Regeneration Officer
- Clinton Felicio, Planning Regeneration Support Officer
- Josh Singh, Senior Planning Regeneration Officer
- Emma Parkes, Project Support Officer
- Andy Miller, Service Manager- Transport and Planning Policy
- Mark Evans, West Bromwich Town Hall Project Manager
- Jane Lillystone, Service Manager - Tourism, Culture and Leisure
- John Satchwell, Parks Project Officer
- Rina Rahim, Towns Fund Programme Manager

**Also present:**

- Austin Bell, Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust
- Shaun Hunt, Sandwell College (Representing Graham Pennington)



## **34/21 Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Jude Thompson welcomed attendees to the meeting of the Sandwell Towns Fund Superboard.

The Chair welcomed Rina Rahim as the recently appointed Towns Fund Programme Manager. Rina will take over from Jenna Langford, who will revert to her substantive Regeneration Manager post at the end of March.

## **35/21 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from the following Superboard members:

- Adrian Eggington - Black Country Housing Group
- Geoff Layer - Black Country LEP
- Sandeep Shingadia - Transport for West Midlands
- Kim Bromley Derry- SMBC
- Cllr Maria Crompton- SMBC
- Keeley Bevington, WMP
- Cllr Kerrie Carmichael- SMBC

## **36/21 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

## **37/21 Declarations of Interest**

No new declarations of interest were received.

Existing and continued declarations from previous meetings:

- Adrian Eggington - Interest in Shaftesbury House site so will refrain from discussion with regards Sandwell MEC 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

## **38/21 Towns Fund Programme Update**

Jude Thompson introduced Jenna Langford, Interim Towns Fund Programme Manager, to present an overview of the programme.

Currently all projects, aside from the Blackheath Bus Interchange and Public Realm Project (discussed within agenda item 13), are RAG rated green, and are on track for submission to DLUHC in line with the 24th March submission date.

Positive news was shared with Members regarding the Digital Den project (West Bromwich portfolio). The project Summary Document was submitted to DLUHC in October 2021 and the Programme Management Office has recently received confirmation of approval by DLUHC. In addition, funding is expected late February 2022. This project is moving into delivery phase which represents the first Towns Fund spend within the programme.

Members were informed a planning application for the Sandwell Civil and Mechanical Engineering Centre, West Bromwich project led by Sandwell College was submitted this week, which is another key milestone for this project previously agreed by Superboard.

### **West Bromwich**

All three remaining West Bromwich Full Business Cases were scheduled for Superboard consideration and review as part of today's agenda. Subject to Superboard agreement, Full Business Cases would proceed to Assurance Panel. There were therefore no assurance panel recommendations to report on these projects.

### **Smethwick**

Two Smethwick projects were scheduled for Superboard consideration, review and agreement as part of today's agenda.

Following Superboard agreement on 17 January 2022, The Ron Davis Centre Expansion Project was presented to Assurance Panel on 24 January and 8 February 2022, however Assurance Panel Members requested further work to address recommendations prior to Assurance Panel approval.

Jenna provided Superboard with an overview of the recommendations made by the assurance panel on the remaining Smethwick projects, previously agreed by Superboard:

### Rolfe St Regeneration

- That prior to entering into a funding agreement with the DLUHC, Strategic Finance review the terms and conditions of funding to assess the level of risk to the council.
- A Project Change Request to be submitted to DLUHC to capture revised number of residential units (115 from 125).
- The Full Business Case is updated to reflect the most viable delivery option to deliver the 115 residential units will be undertaken (i.e. joint venture or through development agreement)

### Smethwick Connected

- That prior to entering into a funding agreement with the DLUHC, Strategic Finance review the terms and conditions of funding to assess the level of risk to the council.
- That more detailed costings and supporting information is provided for phases 2 to 5.

### **Rowley Regis**

The Britannia Park Community Hub project was scheduled to be presented to Superboard today for consideration, review and agreement.

The Blackheath Bus Interchange and Public Realm project was scheduled on today's agenda, but board members were advised that, given the documented difficulties in developing the Full Business Case for this project, it will be reviewed by an exceptional meeting of the assurance panel on the 10th March 22. Further discussion regarding this project continued within item 13 of the agenda.

Jenna provided Superboard with an overview of the recommendations made by the assurance panel on the remaining Rowley Regis projects:

### The Rowley Regis Satellite Education Hub

- That the Partnership Agreement between Sandwell MBC and Sandwell College formally transfers the full financial risk of delivery and operation of the project to Sandwell College
- That external VAT advice is sought to confirm that VAT costs will be considered eligible spend
- That prior to entering into a funding agreement with the DLUHC, Strategic Finance review the terms and conditions of funding to assess the level of risk to the council.
- That the agreement between Sandwell Council and Sandwell College includes a provision for payments to Sandwell College to be made in

arrears, following evidence of defrayed expenditure to reduce the financial risk to Sandwell MBC.

- That the terms of the lease agreement are reviewed and confirmed as adequate prior to the commencement of the project.
- Project Change Request to be submitted to DLUHC to capture revised number of learners assisted and value of project Towns Fund Ask.

### The Canal Network Connectivity Project

- That prior to entering into a funding agreement with the DLUHC, Strategic Finance review the terms and conditions of funding to assess the level of risk to the council;
- That the Partnership Agreement between Sandwell MBC and CRT formally transfers the full financial risk of delivery and operation of the project to CRT;
- That the Partnership Agreement includes a provision for payments to CRT in arrears, following evidence of defrayed expenditure to reduce the financial risk to Sandwell MBC;
- That the Financial Case includes a full breakdown of the capital costs and a narrative confirming that soft market testing has been undertaken to demonstrate robustness in the cost estimates;
- That the Commercial Case captures the Design, Consent, Construction, Financing and Operational (revenue) Risk allocation between CRT and the contractor.

The Chair invited Members to raise questions. No queries/ comments were forthcoming.

Jude invited each of the Local Board Chairs to present a short summary of recent Local Board meetings.

### **Chris Hinson - West Bromwich Local Board**

Chris advised Superboard on the recent meeting, where Local Board Members were given presentations on the three outstanding Full Business Cases.

Throughout this process Local Board have provided constant challenge and question to project leads. Recently these have focussed on the need to ensure ongoing maintenance to ensure the future longevity of projects. This has resulted in a number of recommendations to project leads as projects move into delivery stage.

West Bromwich Local Board wholeheartedly endorse the Full Business Cases presented to Superboard today.

## **Chris Hinson, on behalf of Adrian Eggington - Rowley Regis Local Board**

Chris read a pre-prepared statement from Adrian Eggington. Adrian outlined his - and Local Board - support for all projects presented to Superboard today and noted the Local Board's pleasure in hearing that previous projects presented to Superboard had been successfully passed on to submission to DLUHC.

## **Alan Taylor - Smethwick Local Board**

Alan provided Members with an overview of discussions from recent Local Board.

There had been concerns raised with regards to the walking and cycling project and certain members remain to be convinced about their future success, although the majority of Local Board are optimistic in this respect.

Discussions also revolved around local procurement and ensuring spend is retained in the local area. Local Board are strongly advocating this approach to project leads and work is underway to ensure this.

## **39/21 Town Hall Quarter Full Business Case**

Chris Hinson provided an overview of the project, the strategic rationale and the proposed outputs, highlighting the fact that this project, from a Towns Fund perspective, is phase one of a three phase programme of works and is primarily concerned with improvements to the internal and external Town Hall and Library buildings. West Bromwich Local Board have endorsed this project for submission to Superboard.

Jane Lillystone and Mark Evans provided further high-level narrative to board members, confirming this is a standalone project but is also envisaged to be part of a wider programme to extend beyond Towns Fund.

Mark Evans presented pictures of the areas of most in need of renovation as a visual aid to board members.

The project has a benefit cost ratio of 1.7 for phase one in isolation ranging to 2.66 on completion of further stages.

The HM Treasury compliant Full Business Case, which outlines the project details in entirety, has been provided to board members in advance as part of the meeting pack for reference and review.

Floor was opened to questions - none arising.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for the Town Hall Quarter project including project adjustment and approval for submission.**

*Vote passed unanimously.*

#### **40/21 West Bromwich Connected Full Business Case**

Chris Hinson provided overview of the strategic rationale for the project. Chris advised that this was a multi-phase programme and highlighted that the project has strong links to other complementary projects in the Towns Fund and other strategic sites in the town centre. West Bromwich connected aims to increase the uptake of walking and cycling in the town to facilitate sustainable transport methods. West Bromwich Local Board have endorsed this project for submission to Superboard.

Andy Miller was present to answer any local board questions. Andy did provide board with details of the BCR, which has come out at a score of 2.41 and is therefore considered to provide high value for money.

Question from John Spellar MP - would like to understand exactly how the BCR figure has been calculated and what specific inputs have been identified to arrive at this figure.

Andy Miller advised that the BCR has been calculated using the Dept for Transport BCR tool.

**Action (Andy Miller) to share BCR methodology with John Spellar MP.**

The HM Treasury compliant full business case, which outlines the project details in entirety, has been provided to board members in advance as part of the meeting pack for reference and review.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for the West Bromwich Connect project.**

*Vote passed by majority.*

#### **41/21 Retail Diversification Programme Full Business Case**

Chris Hinson provided an overview of the project including its status as the largest towns fund project in West Bromwich at £13m. The project aims to deliver transformational change to West Bromwich's retail submarket and

address an oversupply of retail floorspace which has resulted in high levels of vacancy and decline in the visual amenity of the area.

It aims to: -

- Bring 26,559 sqm of land into full public ownership
- Rationalise 7,590 sqm of floorspace
- Rehabilitate 11,217 sqm of land
- Clear three sites
- Deliver a new indoor market

Alex Oxley provided a summary of amendments made since the Full Business Case was circulated to board members. Some additional legal costs were identified as the project has progressed, these have been picked up within the total project budget through value engineering and confirmed there are no changes to scope.

The HM Treasury compliant full business case, which outlines the project details in entirety, has been provided to board members in advance as part of the meeting pack for reference and review.

Floor was opened to question. None arising.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for the Retail Diversification Programme including project adjustment and approval for submission.**

***Vote passed unanimously.***

#### **42/21 Midland Met Learning Campus Full Business Case**

Alan Taylor introduced the project and provided an overview of the strategic rationale. The Midland Met Learning Campus aims to bring a world class learning facility to the heart of Smethwick and represents the first university presence in the area. Alan passed over to Austin Bell who provided board members with a detailed project presentation.

The proposed building will be a net zero carbon design and is currently at RIBA stage 2 concept design. The project team will be proceeding with RIBA stage 3 designs at risk in April 2022, this is in order to maintain momentum and ensure that the facility does not lose an academic year in the programme.

Planning permission has already been submitted and is anticipated to be determined in March 2022.



The BCR has been calculated at 4.03 which represents high value for money. Social value outputs have been a key topic of discussion at Local Board. Project team ensuring these will be captured in the procurement process.

The HM Treasury compliant full business case, which outlines the project details in entirety, has been provided to board members in advance as part of the meeting pack for reference and review.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for Midland Met Learning Campus including project adjustment and approval for submission.**

*Vote passed unanimously.*

### **43/21 Grove Lane Regeneration Full Business Case**

Alan Taylor provided an overview of the project including key outputs, strategic rationale and links to other project in the vicinity. It is a key transformational project for Smethwick. The agenda item cover report will be updated to include accurate information following receipt of final FBC.

The Grove Lane Regeneration project aims to enable the future delivery of up to 800 new homes through a package of land remediation and associated remedial works.

In light of the updated FBC, it is noted that the total land remediated is now 2Ha and the final BCR has been calculated at 2.87, which represents good value for money.

Hayley Insley was on hand to answer any board member questions and advised that the project would aim to deliver a number of affordable homes for the area. It is important that SMBC take ownership of the site to ensure high quality future development.

Question - John Spellar MP. We need to be incorporating high density development in the borough, especially around key infrastructure such as the hospital. What is being done to accommodate this?

Hayley advised that SMBC Cabinet have recently agreed the area Masterplan which outlines a good mix of density so there will be high density elements as part of the future proposals.

John was pleased to hear this.

Floor opened to further questions. None arising.

The HM Treasury compliant full business case, which outlines the project details in entirety, has been provided to board members in advance as part of the meeting pack for reference and review.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for Grove Lane Regeneration Project including project adjustment and approval for submission.**

*Vote passed unanimously.*

#### **44/21 Rowley Regis Connected Full Business Case**

Chris Hinson, on behalf of Adrian Eggington, provided a short overview of the project to board members. The Rowley Regis Connected project is a multiphase cycling and walking proposal which aims to improve the connectivity around multiple town centres in Rowley Regis.

It will deliver against sustainability targets by reducing air pollution and encouraging residents to take up active travel modes. It has received full approval by Rowley Regis Local Board.

Andy Miller advised board members that this project has distinct aspects which each focus on individual parts of the transport network, such as Oldbury ringway, which has a focus on cycling, where other aspects focus on providing more comprehensive walking routes and links to other projects, such as Britannia Park.

Question - James Morris MP. How do all these separate items link together?

Andy Miller advised that, whilst they have been separated for the purposes of the Towns Fund process, all the proposals have been designed spatially as one whole, so there is a clear focus on interconnectivity of projects.

Floor was opened to further questions. None forthcoming.

The HM Treasury compliant full business case, which outlines the project details in entirety, has been provided to board members in advance as part of the meeting pack for reference and review.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for Rowley Regis Connected and approval for submission.**

*Vote passed unanimously.*

## **45/21**     **Britannia Park Greenspace and Community Hub Full Business Case**

Chris Hinson, on behalf of Adrian Eggington, provided board with an overview of the project. Proposals aim to deliver a rejuvenated park, changing rooms to encourage the use of the sports pitches, new allotments and accessibility improvements. The project will also deliver a new skate park and plant 100 trees in the park. It has a total budget of £2.46m.

Alan Reynolds provided board with a summary of the process to date, adding that there will also be a full circuit walking path installed around the perimeter and a contemporary garden which will replace the rose garden. The local community have readily recognised the benefits of this project, and it has therefore been relatively straightforward to gain community buy in.

It is envisaged that this is the first phase of a wider programme where SMBC will procure a not-for-profit partner to deliver a full community building on the park.

Jude Thompson outlined his pleasure with how the project was developing and, as someone who grew up in the area, can clearly see the benefits this will have for the local community.

The HM Treasury compliant full business case, which outlines the project details in entirety, has been provided to board members in advance as part of the meeting pack for reference and review.

**Vote: Agreement of the Full Business Case for Britannia Park Community Hub project and approval for submission.**

***Vote passed unanimously.***

## **46/21**     **Blackheath Bus Interchange and Public Realm Project Update**

Andy Miller provided a project overview including strategic rationale and alignment with vision for town centres. The project aims to pedestrianise a central part of the town centre.

The complexity of the project, and the various sensitivities that need to be assessed has resulted in difficulty calculating the BCR. This is the primary reason for the delay in programme and why the FBC has yet to be complete. Consultation proposed for later this year.

There are many stakeholders involved with the project who will need to be consulted in due course.

The project has a total value of £3.74m. This also includes contributions from Transport for West Midlands. There is currently a project board in place which are overseeing the development of the FBC. Andy Miller is chairing this and also has representation from TfWM.

Jenna Langford invited to introduce the governance and assurance proposals to ensure the project is submitted on time to DLUHC. Given that there is no FBC to present to Superboard, and understanding the need for proper due diligence, it is proposed that the FBC be assessed in an exceptional meeting of the assurance panel on the 10th March. In order to provide a level of Superboard and Local Board oversight, it is proposed that Adrian Eggington, Chair of the Rowley Regis Local Board, also be present on the assurance panel as a representative. The assurance panel, in collaboration with Adrian, would then review and approve the FBC.

Question - James Morris MP. If consultation is not proposed before the submission to DLUHC, how can we utilise the feedback?

Andy Miller recognised that if it were outside the Towns Fund process, this would not have been the preferred approach, however, the primary reason was that no design or detailed work had been done to this point and therefore there was little of note to consult on. Furthermore, there has been conceptual consultation done previously, for which there was support and this provides basis for the project, although there is further work to be done to address specific feedback around access.

James Morris happy pleased to hear this work had been done previously. No further question or alternative proposals to what have been suggested by Jenna Langford.

Tony McGovern advised that despite being at FBC stage, the future plans are still subject to change dependent on future design and consultation. The FBC will be circulated to board members on completion, so Superboard will have sight of the document.

Question - John Spellar MP. Concerned about traffic, where will traffic go if the through road is pedestrianised?

Andy Miller advised that the ring road is likely to be the main route following works, it has been identified that the majority of road users are currently not using the road to explicitly access the town centre, rather to pass through. This has impacts on levels of pollution. The FBC, and associated BCR calculations, are taking these implications into account and will need to show clear benefit if it is to be passed by assurance panel.

John Spellar advised that he is not overly happy, in principle, with the proposed assurance arrangements, however, he will have a discussion with James Morris MP- as the local MP for the area- and come back to the board if there are any significant problems arising.

Geoff Foster advised that he would like to see an improved project management approach for this project going forward.

**Vote: Agreement for the Blackheath Bus Interchange FBC to be submitted to an exceptional assurance panel on 10th March and for Adrian Eggington to attend as a representative of Superboard.**

*Vote passed by majority.*

***Note that John Spellar MP and James Morris MP agreed to have a further conversation and feedback to Jude Thompson if any issues arise.***

#### **47/21 Any Other Business**

John Spellar - wanting to stress that projects should not apply for government grant simply because it exists, and benefits must clearly be outlined.

Tony McGovern advised that there is a robust governance and assurance process as part of the Local Authority review of projects as accountable body. This process is detailed and provides clear challenge and recommendations to project leads to ensure that only projects that deliver clear benefit and provide value for money, will move through to application stage.

#### **48/21 Closing Remarks**

Jude Thompson thanked members for attendance and input.

**Meeting ended at 17:10**

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