

5. Telford Town Investment Plan – Next Steps

Confirmation of Projects and Apportionment of Funding

KK shared the presentation. She thanked the Board for their support and contribution to achieving the £22.3M grant award. The Board now need to consider the apportionment of the funding. A paper circulated prior the meeting illustrated four options for discussion and agreement. This will then inform the Project Confirmation required to be submitted to MHCLG.

Option 1: Pro-rata funding based on % split in original TIP submission

Option 2: Equal reduction of £454,167 across each project

Option 3: Reduce Station Quarter by £1M, remove the Destination Growth Fund and reduce Wellington and Oakengates by remaining deficit

Option 4: Reduce Station Quarter by £1M, remove the Destination Growth grant fund by 50% to £0.5m and reduce Wellington and Oakengates by remaining deficit

GW opened the discussion. This is not a Council decision but a Board decision supported by the Council. If board have any other options to propose please do so. GW sought views from each Board Member individually

LA added her congratulations to everyone involved in this project which is fantastic news for Telford. LA stated that she feels strongly about the Digital Skills hub remaining with the only caveat being that public realm work could be scaled back. The core of what we are doing is providing skills and training.

MP gave his thanks to all and stated that in his view, Station Quarter is the jewel in the crown, however Wellington is a longstanding market town and the regeneration of the market is critical to the regeneration of Wellington. Anything done that may reduce the market in Wellington would not be good for the town. Footfall would be reduced and so proposed that the 'destination growth fund' element of the funding needs to be looked at again.

MT added her congratulations on the very good news for Telford in being awarded the funding, but voiced frustration that it has been top sliced. She continued that Station Quarter is very exciting for economic development, however as someone who does go to Wellington and Oakengates, both areas need a helping hand. The destination growth fund is small and we need to look at other ways to bring this to the fore. The LEP has been lobbied to remember both Wellington and Oakengates and relatively small amounts could bring about big changes.

WW confirmed that he has considered everything. The Telford Business Board (TBB) are in favour of the Digital Education and Enterprise Hub which is seen as a future first project with the ability to provide a steady stream of well-educated young people and a place to upskill the current workforce. It will be a flagship that will assist those looking to invest inwardly in Telford & Wrekin – providing the ability to communicate virtually around the world. This is invaluable and our support is behind that. WW did go on to say that this is not that the cultural side and commerce in Wellington and Oakengates is not important, but his emphasis is on the Enterprise Hub.

GG confirmed that this was quite a difficult decision for him but after careful consideration feels that the greatest impact on all residents would come from Station Quarter, the aim of which is to help the more deprived areas of Telford to gain qualifications, employment and raise the economy. This would benefit the whole of Telford & Wrekin and have the greatest impact.

AO stated that he has a vested interest in Wellington, as that is where his team operate from and he would be keen to see anything which increases social housing, however he agrees that Station Quarter will likely have the greatest impact.

GB commented that there are clearly some difficult decisions to be made. Speaking from his own experience in the town centre and looking at the residential growth within the town, a quality of development is required and this will require funding. The Town Centre residential areas are a key component for the town centre going forward and as we transition to less car use this will only increase.

PP echoed what others said – the more long term inspiration and job opportunities on offer the better and to this end Station Quarter stands out. It will give big, transformational change to the town and show what can be done within the region to attract investment and provide e-commerce from the Skills Hub.

CS gave her opinion that we don't want to lose the big impact items such as Station Quarter, but feel it is important that the smaller areas are not forgotten, such as Oakengates. They do need more funding. Agree with MT, if anything has to give is should be the Destination Growth Fund.

FW – super excited about what the skills hub can bring. It should be ring fenced and not be impacted by cuts. Feel we could look at increasing the match funding and make a slight reduction from each area as a suggestion.

GW advised that while it is a decision for the Board as independent Chair for him it is either option 3 or 4 and he is leaning towards option 3 and then reviewing how we bridge the gap.

SD echoed his thanks to the team for all their hard work. He went on to say that it is disappointing that government have decided to top slice. He gave a word of caution and picked up on GG point that if we want a centre of excellence then public realm has to look first class too – there are no easy decisions around this. SD agrees that Oakengates and Wellington do need money, far and above this money and these are hard decisions to make. SD agreed with FW around the destination funding and we could lobby others to help this sector going forward.

DW stated that he too was delighted we have secured resources and agreed with everything that has been said. We all want to protect Station Quarter and would like to do all the projects and it is important that we protect investment into Oakengates and Wellington and feels that those communities will expect and should receive something from this bid and we should not just concentrate on the town centre. DW confirmed that he would like to see some form of option 3 or 4. However, if we take more than £1m out of Station Quarter then we could risk its viability. He agreed that the point SD made about investing in public realm is important.

MP welcomed DW's comments in that every bit of our community needs to feel included but we must move forward in the best interests of council, business and residents and need to maintain investment in the markets of the town more widely. Without the markets we will see a decline and this would not be good for business and not good for borough councils and revenues.

In summary GW thanked everyone for their comments and opined that the majority of feeling around the Board is that option 3 is the best option and FW came up with a tweak to look at only losing a quarter of a million from Wellington and Oakengates and see whether we can find that from somewhere else.

GW asked if anyone disagreed with this summary. Nobody disagreed.

A definitive decision is required by Friday but GW stressed that he wanted all to take from this meeting that we have all managed to share our views and there is a broad consensus on which way travel should go.

If anyone has any other thoughts please share as soon as possible and no later than Monday 19th so we can circulate those to everyone. The deadline for final decision is Friday 23 July. All KK

Subsequent to the meeting a further paper was circulated to the Board on Monday 19th July confirming that no other proposals had been put forward and proposing Option 3 be put forward. Approval was sought by email vote for this approach and to delegate authority to GW to sign the project confirmation on this basis on behalf of the Board. Both recommendations were carried.

6. Stage 2 Governance & TDB Terms of Reference

GW confirmed that a slightly amended set of ToR had been circulated with the agenda. The amendments reflect changes to the membership of the Board and its role in relation to the next stage of delivery.

GW sought comments on the ToR and their endorsement by the Board. No comments were made and the ToR were agreed as amended.

7. AOB

No items raised.

8. Date of Next Meeting

24th September 2021