

Minutes of Telford Town Deal Board
Friday 22nd May, 1.00-2.30 pm
Held via Microsoft Teams

Attended:

Board Members

Graham Wynn OBE (GW)	Chair
Lucy Allan MP (LA)	MP for Telford
Cllr Shaun Davies (SD)	T&W
Cllr David Wright (DW)	T&W
Mandy Thorn MBE (MT)	Marches LEP
Karl Tupling (KT)	Homes England
Professor Nazira Karodia (NK)	University of Wolverhampton
Paul Hinkins (PH)	Telford Business Board
Maria Machancoses (MM)	Midland Connect
Graham Guest (GG)	Telford College
David Evans (DE)	T&W CCG
Caro Hart (CH)	Chief Officer Group (Telford & Wrekin Community & Voluntary Sector)

Observer

Clare Hannah (CHan) BEIS

Officers

David Sidaway (DS) T&W
Angie Astley (AA) T&W
Katherine Kynaston (KK) T&W
Helen Wilkes (HW) Homes England
Robyn Hill Minute taker

1. Welcome & Introductions

AA welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for joining through Microsoft Teams.

Housekeeping – it was agreed to:

- keep microphones on mute when not speaking, use the 'raise your hand' icon on the tool bar if you wish to ask a question/comment, so that all participants in the meeting have the opportunity to share their thoughts.

Introductions were made around the meeting.

2. Apologies

Mark Pritchard, MP.

3. Declarations of Interest

AA confirmed that paperwork will be sent to all stakeholders following the meeting asking them to make any declarations of interest, but to reassure this meeting will not involve any detailed discussions on investment plans.

DE declared an interest, as he is also the Accountable Officer for Shropshire CCG as well as Telford & Wrekin CCG.

AA gave apologies for the delay in holding this, the first Telford Town Deal Board, unfortunately previous meeting dates were postponed due to CV19, but very pleased to now be in a position to meet and make progress.

Actions

KK

4. Confirmation of Appointment of Chair

AA confirmed that following circulation of an email to all Board members prior to the meeting proposing the appointment of Graham Wynn as Chair of the Board no objections had been received and she was therefore pleased to formally confirm Graham as Chair and handover to him to chair the rest of the meeting.

GW thanked everyone for their support, and while he had not envisaged the first meeting would be done remotely, hoped everyone would make contributions and take the opportunity to support T&W on their submission for these funds.

5. Terms of Reference

GW confirmed that feedback from Board Members on the draft ToR had been considered and an updated final draft ToR was in front of the Board members for approval.

GW highlighted that this is a living document and proposed that as the Board is a new entity the ToR should be reviewed in 6 months' time before moving to a 12 monthly review.

KK

DECISION – this recommendation was fully supported, with no objections by the Board and the ToR were agreed.

GW asked KK to make her presentation covering items 6 & 7 on the agenda.

6. The Towns Fund 7. Telford – The Place

KK gave a presentation, which will be circulated to all attendees after the meeting.

KK/RH

Additional comments made but not contained in the slides:

- The geography for the fund is established by the Government Guidance and is the town of Telford.
- Timescales for submission of Investment Plans are still to be confirmed and there may be several opportunities but we are currently targeting October.
- C-19 impact – The Midlands as a region has been hardest hit particularly in relation to manufacturing, with the automotive sector still 90% furloughed and reporting they may only be at 80% capacity in 12 months' time.
- Figures nationally came out last week regarding increase in benefits. In March & April we had a 49% increase in benefit claimants. The absolute increase was greatest in 18-24 year age band was the highest with largest % increase in 50 – 54 age band. Anticipate impact will be greatest in communities who are already disadvantaged.

8. Discussion - Developing Our Ideas

GW – Welcomed the presentation and interested in the final comment about how we see the Fund as part of a toolkit. GW emphasised not limiting our ambition to the funds available and putting forward a bigger, evidence based case to the Government to show our ambition. GW saw the Fund submission as a start and not a final destination. GW threw the meeting open to comments starting with KT

All board members thanked KK for the presentation.

KT – I want to pick up on the digital infrastructure. We have seen over the past 8-10 weeks the ways in which we need to connect and the benefit of having good infrastructure. We have an opportunity to think about building resilience for the future

and setting out our stall for good quality design. Telford has a strong track record in setting the bar high for inward investment and the quality of accommodation provided for employment and in the wider offer for housing. So two areas of focus design aspirations and connectivity support into the future.

LA – very keen to see some work that acknowledges the impact of C-19, the recovery strategy we have locally and the need to equip people to provide in a post C-19 economy. We need to skill people for the new environment, particularly 18-24 age group which are being very hard hit, with apprenticeships and training being withdrawn. This is all about the levelling up agenda and reducing inequalities. It is a tragedy that we find ourselves where we are today after such good work. Retail, hospitality, leisure and tourism will take a very long time to recover and may fundamentally change going forward.

MT – as a LEP we are mindful of the regional economy, the economy of Telford and the potential big impact on young people. The LEP is focussing on developing a Local Industrial & Recovery Strategy building on work done on the LIS last year with colleagues from TWC and the Marches. We know that we will have to change the way we do things and how we support towns' across the LEP area. The Telford Town Centre is an exciting opportunity. We need to look at what difference we can make to the Town Centre, including through the digital agenda, connectivity, enlivening our town centre bringing people in, having a mix of residential and retail with less commercial, more mixed space and education. It is a big ask, but achievable if we work together.

PH – Quite rightly we need a focus on young people and housing needs to be affordable so we can retain young people in the area, when they get a job. We have new companies investing in the area, but also need to ensure we keep companies that are already based here, and safeguard jobs. You refer to strengths and weaknesses – one strength of the Borough is the private sector. I would like to see more engagement and collaboration with them which will enhance and make us more productive as a Board.

MM – I appreciate the opportunity to be involved in this wider group. C-19 is bringing challenges to the transport sector. Cycling and e scooters are becoming higher on the agenda. This is a good time for Telford to embrace new thinking on the place making agenda. I hope that we can assist with both the wider connectivity piece linking Telford out and providing support linking with other Government funding to support local transport opportunities.

GG – from our (Telford College) current perspective, we haven't seen too much impact in loss of apprenticeships, but anticipate picture may change over the next few months. Digital connectivity is really important – anticipate 50% of our curriculum will be delivered remotely in future. This will also affect our building use. Noted deprivation areas 18 out of 108, if we are not careful the gap will become greater. We have an opportunity to reduce the gap, by raising the aspirations of young people and adults in deprived areas by introducing them to new skills. The diversification away from current manufacturing processes will bring new opportunities and new skills requirements. Addressing this – unlocking and broadening out skills opportunity should be a key aim of T&W using this fund.

NK – to repeat what LA and GG said focus on skills is important. We know that a number of apprentices are furloughed. We don't understand the impact of the apprenticeship levy at this time, so the number that will be left and in jobs after C19 is unknown. This is about supporting our industry to maintain these roles. We must support new skills and advanced skills, but also need to focus on training post C19, as different/new jobs will emerge. The presentation by KK spoke not just about economic development but social inclusion. We need to focus on social inclusion and digital poverty in post C19 world.

DE – The digital agenda and much more home working will mean changes for office accommodation - what else can it be used for – social low cost housing? We need to consider this.

As we go through the post C19 phase and see the knock on effects, on mental wellbeing in particular, it may be appropriate to invest in mental health, drug and alcohol prevention

services etc. From a health perspective we want to engage further in new ways of local delivery, rather than people travelling too somewhere for health care.

SD – thank you to all partners for being around the virtual table today, this is a really exciting project. There has been a real consensus. Telford is a place of contrast and those people disadvantaged before C19 will be more disadvantaged after. Accommodation is poor in some areas, local high streets are struggling more and people can't access education without decent broadband. We really need to look at this area as a priority.

With health there is a real issue, we have some of the best and worst health outcomes in the borough. Really important to be able to level up in this area too. Obviously there are links between health, education and employment, but we cannot do this in the traditional way. We have to go to communities. If your home is overcrowded it is difficult to learn in, if your broadband connection is not good you will struggle.

CH – I have been thinking along the same lines. We need to include volunteering in skills, as people do want to give to their communities. We have seen a number of voluntary community groups setting up in recent weeks and we need to nurture this in the areas of health, wellbeing and prevention. We have seen more volunteering in poorer areas and it reaches and enables people to increase their health and wellbeing and reaches those furthest from employment. Important to use this 'capital' to help achieve our goals.

DS – 3 areas to touch on – I'm really encouraged about the placed based approach, this is very dear to my heart, it cannot be a generic response, it has to be Telford focused. We have opportunities as well as challenges in our economy but we are well placed with a strong manufacturing base – economies that make things respond more quickly than those reliant on other sectors. Ambition and aspiration for this town is key. When investors look at an area one of the factors is skills base, so 18/24 cohort development is important. Inequality – there are 2 huge extremes in our town and this is an opportunity to bridge this gap. Digital is a key part of our response – USP – digital by default

DW – the LA role is to listen to a range of voices and develop proposals that draw collectively from these sources that add value to the borough. In terms of place – there are issues around our borough towns which have been struggling for many years, and not able to adapt. We must consider how they need to look in the future and how to draw investment in. Young people and their access to skills and opportunity is important but we also need to focus on those in 50-60s age range, those in manufacturing who may find themselves redundant after C19 and struggle to get back into the labour market.

It is important we don't see projects in isolation but interlinked to other agendas and investments. We need a Strategic Plan that sets out what action we need to unlock private sector investment and go to Government with a bigger ask based on our reputation for delivery and say to Government what can be done with the right seed funding

GW - This is a capital fund, so I really like the idea of a strategic plan, what it can achieve and also what private sector involvement we can get. Also highlighting what else we can do beyond the fund is important. The town has a great track record of achieving and we need to show this through the plans.

GW asked that any further comments be submitted to Katherine Kynaston by 05/06, to allow time for consideration before further discussion at the next meeting on 19/06.

All

9. AOB

LA – Some capacity funding was made available to set up the board. Has this funding been spent or what are the plans for it. Also how does the readiness checklist fit into plans?

KK – the £173,000 to support development of these plans has not been committed and is ringfenced. We anticipate needing to use this for capacity to develop the Investment Plan, to undertake engagement with the residents and businesses in the borough on the plans and to support the work of the Board. This is in line with the Government Guidance.

The readiness checklist which was required to be submitted before Xmas was to provide evidence we had initial thoughts and ideas as to how to use funding and that we had the ability to establish a board. Those ideas that we put forward are aligned with many of the discussions today, but not set in stone.

SD – City Deals which were the precursor to town deals included a number of asks around devolution. We need to develop a set of proposals for the £25m, but also look at what resources/powers we need to unlock what we need to achieve. This could include around employment and skills where it remains difficult to engage with DWP as an example and to get funding devolved down to the local level

GW – this links in with seeing this as the start of the journey, and not being limited by it.

PH – what level will the board will be quorate at? This is not mentioned in the TOR. KK will pick this up and an amendment to the ToR will be considered at the next board meeting

KK

GW – thank you for attending the board and for your thoughts today. Please send any further feedback/thoughts to KK by 05/06, and the slides will be circulated by email.

All/KK

10. Date of Next Meeting - 19 June 2020 - 11.30 - 13.00 via Microsoft Teams