

Minutes of Telford Town Deal Board
Friday 19th June, 11.30am - 1.00 pm
Held via Microsoft Teams

Attended:

Board Members

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| Graham Wynn OBE (GW) | Chair |
| Lucy Allan MP (LA) | MP for Telford |
| Mark Pritchard MP (MP) | MP for Telford (dialled in via telephone) |
| Cllr Shaun Davies (SD) | T&W |
| Cllr David Wright (DW) | T&W |
| Gill Hamer (GH) | 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
Julie Wedge Minute taker

1. Welcome

Actions

GW welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for joining through Teams. Mark Pritchard had dialled in to today's meeting

2. Apologies

Mandy Thorn MBE - Gill Hamer had joined in MT place
Karl Tupling had advised that he would be slightly delayed joining the meeting

3. Declarations of Interest

NK advised the usual Declaration of Interest regarding the University of Wolverhampton.

GW asked if Board Members hadn't already done so if they could please complete and return the declaration of interests form sent out by KK on 16 June 2020.

ALL

4. Notes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

GW reviewed the notes from the previous meeting held 22 May 2020. No amendments requested.

GW confirmed that the notes were a true record of the meeting.

AGREED

5. Terms of Reference

GW asked if everyone was happy with the revised Terms of Reference circulated with the agenda pack.

LA asked that the Terms of Reference record the area served by the investment fund as Telford Town as defined by ONS boundaries rather than the borough as a whole.

GW acknowledged this point and agreed to come back to LA offline to ensure LA was happy the comment had been addressed.

GW

No other comments received.

6. Developing our Investment Priorities - Presentation & Discussion

GW handed over to AA / KK for the presentation.

Presentation will be circulated to all attendees after the meeting.

KK

AA gave a brief overview of what had been agreed at May's meeting.

AA advised that further Government guidance on Town Deals had been received on 16.06.2020 which KK/AA had reviewed. The objectives of the Deal remain the same with a focus on long term economic growth alongside an additional focus on investment supporting recovery.

We may be able to secure more than £25m on an exceptional basis and AA/KK were reviewing this.

The 3 potential dates for submission are as reported to the last Board – end July; end October and end January 21. It is proposed to work towards the date of 30 October subject to Board's view.

KK continued with the presentation which, on the basis of the issues discussed in May proposed 5 potential investment opportunities which could form the basis of the Telford Investment Plan.

Gigabit Telford

There is already a strong foundation with superfast project but an opportunity to grow the digital structure to attract investment, support companies to grow and increase productivity and to address digital poverty within the Borough.

Opportunity Towns - Wellington / Oakengates

Proposing to focus on the 2 largest borough towns which support significant surrounding communities, have rail connections and strong potential through targeted investment into repurposing and regeneration to attract more visitors and new investments.

Station Quarter, Telford Town Centre

Transformational opportunity to deliver a major mixed use development on brownfield land linked with the main railway station including a skills and enterprise anchor. The scheme could introduce residential living in the Town Centre supporting the recovery and futureproofing of the Centre.

Telford - Connecting Communities

Series of measures around connecting communities to employment and skills including potential investment into transport links, digital and skills provision. The TIP might also seek some initial investment and further government support for the first phase of estate renewal.

Driving Recovery Plans

Proposal to top slice, at risk, a proportion of the £25m to support business case development to enable draw down of further investment leveraged by the TIP. This would ensure that all communities in the town would benefit recognising that the £25m is only part of what is needed to support the Town's success.

KK confirmed the proposal to target 30 October submission date. This would maintain pace and drive recovery plans. The view of the Board was sought to enable this date to be confirmed to MHCLG.

The Board were asked for their initial thoughts regarding the investment opportunities and submission date. An online survey would also be created and the board would be able to submit their rating of the packages, and make further comments. On the basis of the outcome of the discussion and survey, further work would be done on the priority packages and presented back to the July for endorsement.

AA recognised that the Gigabit project should say 'Telford', the slide would be amended.

GW opened up for discussion starting with MP who had to leave the meeting early.

MP – suggested might be helpful to see the slides ahead of the meeting as appropriate. MP asked that it was recorded that he was not a member of the board but a contributor. MP welcomed Wellington as a key part of the proposals and pleased that emphasis on new technology has been brought out in the presentation. Media companies for example in Hortonwood are growing and is a sector to be encouraged. Wellington has struggled for some time although changes to the property facades have given an up lift to the town. Concern that unemployment has increased in last 2 months and is likely to do so further. Linked to employment suggested that access to technology for use by communities could be made available in public spaces in Wellington. Tech hubs with superfast broadband could be set up for both Private / Public sector companies. Companies could then hot desk without the overheads of running their own business. Those in areas that perhaps don't have superfast broadband could then also come to these hubs.

MP suggested that not all the changes post Covid would necessarily be permanent so is a need for caution in plans. The digital switch was happening before Covid and the growth in on line purchases etc. Consider if is opportunity for distribution hub facility within the Town.

Regarding the housing development proposals recommend a focus on mixed use to encourage social cohesion.

GW thanked MP for his comments. There is an opportunity to go to Government with our ambition to make Telford the most connected Town in the UK.

LA – Fabulous projects which all have merit but need to select on basis of economic benefit not 'nice to haves'. Phase 1 of the Town Investment Plan must involve vision and strategy for the town. Jobs/skills for the 'new economy' provide an underlying theme for vision and strategy. The purpose is economic growth and question how health projects boost economic growth. Station Quarter appears hotel / leisure focussed and may want to revisit mix in light of Covid. Phase 1 also needs to include community engagement. We need to ensure we follow the guidelines, focus on economic growth and ensure is an overall theme through all projects.

GW assured all that there is no intention not to consult, a key part of the process is to consult with a wider stakeholder group and the community. However we need to be able to present something when we consult to avoid a selection of ideas being put forward by community that do not accord with the guidance.

The reason for driving to make a submission in October is so that we can draw down on the funds before the end of the year.

CH - some people, especially in our more disadvantaged neighbourhoods, need help to connect (digitally, physically, socially) and so would like to see the connecting communities strand being explicit about how we will achieve this. The role of the VCSE - including social enterprise - is important in this.

LA - Agree with CH about digital access plan.

PH - Agreed with LA around stakeholder engagements in terms of business and local people and needing to understand what their needs and aspirations are. We need a portal where we could gather some views. Agreed with the time frame of October. Need to make sure places are affordable. Due to Covid, going forward there will be empty office spaces, could we look at these spaces being converted to affordable homes? Really exciting presentation but concerned that no reference to manufacturing sector which we cannot ignore given its importance to Telford. Would like to see this incorporated and kept at the forefront of minds.

LA agreed regarding our manufacturing sector - job losses very significant and LA was working with unions and Government on this.

SD - Agreed with those who have spoken so far that we need to work towards the October date to get the money into borough. Health is important as an emerging technology and in supporting how we can keep people in their own homes for longer and changing care models. A geographical link with where the money is invested using the rail way line 'corridor' linking TC, Oakengates and Wellington seems a natural fit alongside gigabit Telford having a Town-wide benefit. Important to engage with residents but feel we do need to go with a view of what we want to do, Covid is dominating everything at the moment and risk that it would be hard for residents to come up with projects that fit Government guidance. If we first achieve a position on package of proposals can then go out on a united front to seek community input.

MM – felt there was good reference to connectivity in the proposal. DfT had announced funds around walking / cycling / electric scooter and it would be good to link into those funds as well. Midlands Connect are also working with Telford around the Queensway. There will be development funding details shared in July. Focus on future of high streets is important. Telford Centre is a massive hub for retail / restaurants and a lot are closing due to Covid. Could there be a package around high street / supporting businesses and how this all links together.

LA - This is a good point, Board needs to agree a vision and strategy so the projects are linked.

AA confirmed that we had already linked in with bids that MM mentioned. **MM** - Great to see you are already on the case for DfT funding!

GG - Digital skills are important and the Colleges' curriculum is moving more towards this and potential for a Town Centre location for the College would be beneficial and enable further support across the borough with links out to local areas. Economic Recovery is a key drive by WMCA. How does this board position itself going forward, does it need to link up further.

GW confirmed we do see ourselves being linked in to wider West Midlands.

KK – confirmed that we were linking in with WMCA and this was a key point as we need to make sure we are live to the agendas that are around us.

DE - Agreed with the comments so far and focus on economic growth. We will see an increase in demands on health, particularly around mental health linked to unemployment and finances. To drive economic growth we need to invest in and put in place mechanisms of support for the population including around educational

attainment to enable full participation and benefit from new jobs and new types of jobs moving forward.

LA - Agreed health provision but not sure that town fund should be financing NHS.

DE – clarified that he wasn't suggesting that investment funds are used for NHS, this would be inappropriate, but if we pick the right schemes around economic growth and regeneration it could reduce reliance on public services including health.

DW – Already have some strands of a vision around connectivity and skills. We need to tell a story with this bid that supports recovery. The idea for a geographic focus will enable us to talk to residents. Putting forward a series of proposals which include elements around housing, investment into new technology and a focus on linking people to skills and training linked to that vision would provide a strong pitch. Really open to be putting together mixed use of schemes.

KT – In terms of flight to affordability, need to be careful re target market for housing in the town. Would support concept of an enterprise offer. Have fantastic transport connection and digital focus including converting to live / work space to attract young entrepreneurs. Go for quality rather than affordability, attracting highly skilled into Telford with the offer of quality of homes. If going for exceptional bid level need to be delivery ready - can the schemes move forward quickly? Need to illustrate economic impact and value for money. Very happy to be engaged in developing the specific residential elements

NK - Agree with KT on enterprise, (social enterprise), microbusinesses.

SD – it is only £25 million which will do a lot but not everything. We need to link narrative and strategy to other elements outside the Deal/TIP – DiT; Council; partners visions and investment plans and other bidding opportunities. All partners need to connect into the vision day to day to support delivery.

NK – reinforce the focus on enterprise and micro businesses linked in with the skills agenda. Decarbonisation and digitalisation can connect the themes in a wider strategy.

CH - Agreed with NK, social enterprise, skills and community connections fit naturally.

GH – nothing more to add to suggestions put forward. All that has been outlined compliments what is coming through the Marches LEP Board in supporting recovery. Welcome good, clear focus on schemes. Will look to pick up the proposals in the LEP recovery planning.

GW confirmed the LEP is an important link.

DS – encouraged to hear all agreeing with the October submission date to get the bids in. Strong leaning towards digital to give us USP and which would benefit wider cohort. Significant list of projects and £25 million won't cover all of it. If invest in Telford Town Centre with an education led development this will drive aspiration and ambition setting tone for development. Include a focus on live / work to help to kickstart businesses. Acknowledge that mustn't forget manufacturing which is a key part of the economy and a risk at this point. Time is of the essence, need to get hold of vision

AA/KK had made notes of the comments and will review and the survey will follow the Board. Plan is to bring something more developed back to July board. Will also look at the vision/narrative to connect projects for July.

AA/KK

Based on discussion the Council will indicate a submission date of 30th October to MHCLG.

KK

7. AOB

GW outlined his concern that the board structure we did not have sufficient representation from private sector and there was also a gap from the retail sector which was a big part of the economy. LA had suggested Felicity Wingrove of Zen Communications, a Telford based SME be invited to join the Board.

GW asked if board supported this suggestion. DW was happy to support and asked about Felicity Wingrove's background. LA advised that FW is known to a number of board members, has also worked with the Council in the past, is a small business owner, local employer and resident.

GW - stated is support but caveated that the role was to support SME sector and he wanted communication around the Deal/TIP to come through T&WC.

PH - advised that FW also used to be a member of TBB and made a wonderful contribution.

DS also knew FW and felt this was a good decision. With regards to the retail offer could he suggest a representative from Sovereign Centros agents to Orion, owners of the Telford Shopping Centre?

The Board agreed that both Felicity Wingrove and a representative of Sovereign Centros be invited to join the Board.

AA/KK

KK asked that all Board members provide a short bio and photo to include on the Town Deal Board web page.

ALL

GW brought the meeting to a close.

10. Date of Next Meeting -

17 July – 11.30 – 13.00 via TEAMS