



Towns Fund Board

Minutes - 29 July 2022

Attendance

Members of the Towns Fund Board

Ninder Johal (Chair)	Owner, Nachural
Craig Bateman	Representing the Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South West
Anthony Burns (v*)	Paycare Representative
James Holland (v)	General Manager, Collins Aerospace
Josie Kelly (v)	Chief Executive Officer, Access 2 Business
Maninder Mangat	Director, MM Consulting
Peter Merry (v)	City of Wolverhampton College Representative
Amit Sharma	Director, Sapphire Innovation
Councillor Stephen Simkins	Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC)
Tim Steele (v)	University of Wolverhampton Representative
Jane Stevenson MP	Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton North East
Patricia Willoughby (v)	Head of Policy (Housing & Regeneration), West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)
Tia	Youth Council Representative

In Attendance

Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer, CWC
Darowen Jones	Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions Ltd
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration, CWC
Ayesha Malhan (v)	Regeneration Officer, CWC
Andrew Scragg	Participation Officer, CWC
Peter Taylor	Regeneration Manager, CWC
Peter Thomason	BEIS

*v = Virtual attendance

Item No. Title

- 1 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Board Members Simon Archer, Director of Bilston BID, Councillor Ian Brookfield, Leader of the Council - City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC); Ray Flynn, Associate Director of University of Wolverhampton, Tim Johnson, Chief Executive of CWC; James Crowter, Managing Director of Tecman; Adam Daniels, Regional Operations Director of Countryside Properties; Pat McFadden MP for Wolverhampton South West; Kevin Rogers, Executive Director of Paycare; Mal Cowgill, Principal and Chief Executive of City of Wolverhampton College; Stuart Anderson, MP for Wolverhampton South West and Ro Hands, Owner, Learn Play Foundation.

Apologies were also received from Liam Davies, Head of City Development for CWC; Ian Fegan, Director of Communications and External Relations for CWC and Jack Stevens, Towns Fund Coordinator for CWC.

2 **Notification of substitute members**

Tim Steele attended for Ray Flynn, Anthony Burns attended for Kevin Rogers, Peter Merry attended for Mal Cowgill and Craig Bateman represented the office of Stuart Anderson MP.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **Minutes of the meeting of 20 May 2022**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 20 May 2022 be approved as a correct record subject to a correction to the attendance to record Maninder Mangat, Director of MM Consulting as present.

5 **Matters arising**

Other than those covered in the Towns Fund Action Tracker at item 6, there were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

6 **Towns Fund Action Tracker**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions Ltd presented the Towns Fund Action Tracker which outlined the outcomes of actions agreed at the last meeting.

It was noted that the requested Programme Risk Register had been included on the agenda at item 9 and there were plans for the September 2022 meeting to be held at the NBI Building, with future tours around wider projects discussed as part of the meeting agenda.

Resolved:

That the outcomes from the actions agreed at the meeting of 20 May 2022 be noted.

7 **Engagement and Communication Strategy**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions Ltd delivered the update on the Engagement and Communication Strategy which included a demonstration of the new website on which members were invited to provide feedback.

This led to a discussion during which concerns were raised from Board members around the public perception of delays and level of engagement with stakeholders regarding the interventions at Wednesfield. Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions Ltd pledged to fully investigate the matter and provide a plan of action to reassure Board members.

In response to a query around maximising the potential of the Wolves Business Week, it was confirmed that content was currently being developed for this purpose, although any additional input from Board members would be welcomed. It was also noted that invites would be going out shortly to Board members for various events throughout that week.

Following a short live test, a search did not retrieve many results directing viewers to the website, therefore work around search engine optimisation was suggested. It was also noted that residents may be using search terms including the area of the City they were interested in, rather than 'Towns Fund' or 'Levelling Up' and a wider range of keywords could be considered.

In response to a query around clarification on the role and purpose of the Board, members were referred to the Assurance Framework as presented at the meeting of 28 January 2022.

It was noted that more use could be made of social media platforms managed by the City of Wolverhampton Council.

A discussion ensued around the role of Board members in communications and some Board members reported they had been using their own channels to communicate across their organisations on the achievements of Towns Fund Board. Other members stated that they were happy to act as ambassadors for Towns Fund on the proviso that the latest information be provided to them prior to engaging in any formal press releases or publishing information through social media or networking platforms.

A query was raised around the level of expenditure for each project and how this was monitored. It was confirmed that regular reports were being generated and agreed that these would be shared with the Towns Fund membership. It was suggested that information pertaining to expenditure, data analysis, marketing, etc could be stored somewhere with shared access although it was highlighted that this would need to be secure.

Resolved:

1. That a plan of action around public engagement for the Wednesfield interventions be provided to Towns Fund Board.
2. That Towns Fund Board members be kept abreast of developments ahead of media releases.
3. That further exploration of website and search engine optimisation be undertaken.
4. That expenditure records be shared with Towns Fund Board.

8 **Programme Dashboard**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions Ltd delivered the Programme Dashboard presentation and provided a summary of the status of each of the projects. This included outputs, key milestones, projected timelines and funding positions.

Following the update on all projects, the Chair invited Board members to consider whether they felt the level of detail on each project within the presentation would allow them to confidently respond to any resident queries and feedback at the next meeting.

Resolved:

That Towns Fund Board members provide feedback at the next meeting on the level of detail for the projects within the Programme Dashboard.

8a Brewers Yard / Culwell Street

It was reported that the planning application for both the wholesale market re-development and Culwell Street sites was submitted on 31 March 2022 with a determination date of 25 August 2022. The project was on track to be operational by the end of 2024.

In response to a query, it was clarified that narrative shown during the presentation was not currently published on the website as it was subject to change.

8b WM5G

It was reported that the next reporting period to Government was due in September and that the 5G Accelerator Facility was now open and the test bed fully operational for both private 5G and Internet of Things (IoT) networks.

Feedback showed that 500 small and medium enterprise businesses had increased their awareness of 5G technology and how it could be used to optimise their business and 84% of organisations engaged with had reported an increase in commitment to incorporate 5G technology in their business offering.

8c Events Programme

It was reported that additional resources had been made available to work with the BID managers for Bilston and the City centre to develop a programme of events. Discussions around how funds would be allocated were being undertaken early to ensure swift transfer of funds once the programmes were finalised. It was confirmed that there were plans to extend the reach of the programme wider to other areas of the City. It was noted that there was currently no BID manager for the Wednesfield area therefore engagement would be needed with stakeholders.

8d Wednesfield Markets and Permeability

It was highlighted that conversations were ongoing with the trader stakeholder group in respect of the five physical interventions. Concept designs had been provided to the group and an update would be provided following stakeholder feedback.

It was acknowledged that stakeholder contribution was crucial to ensure they had input over decisions made for the area.

8e Bilston Markets

It was reported that the Bilston Market project was progressing well and RIBA 2 design concepts were due to complete during August. Conversations with market traders were due to conclude later today.

8f Wolves@Work

It was reported that the programme was showing promising results and having a positive impact. It was noted it wasn't a standalone project and aimed to align with all other projects.

A query was raised around there being no mention of Towns Fund support on the Wolves@Work website to demonstrate the affiliation, although it was noted that the DWP also supported the programme. A press release outlining the organisations working in partnership with Towns Fund was suggested to clarify involvement and achievements.

Resolved:

That a communication be released outlining the organisations working in partnership with Towns Fund to clarify involvement and achievements.

8g Public Realm P2

It was noted that this project was slightly behind the others however the project was still showing progression. Key stakeholder engagement remained ongoing and a decision was awaited on a match funding bid for £9.5 million.

8h Grand Theatre

It was reported that legal advice had been received in terms of a compulsory purchase order and the Council were in the process of making a final offer. Other options were being considered in the event that the building could not be purchased and these would be brought before the Board for a decision as per the Assurance Framework. An open dialogue with the Grand Theatre was ongoing to keep abreast of developments.

8i City Learning Quarter

It was highlighted that the Department for Education (DfE) had confirmed £20.4 million funding which had completed the funding and moved the project on to procurement stage using the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework. This process would ensure a swift move to market thus mitigating any risks around potential long term cost increases.

9 **Towns Fund Programme Level Risk Register**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions Ltd delivered an update on the Towns Fund Programme Level Risk Register as circulated with the agenda pack and provided an onscreen demonstration of how information was recorded and analysed.

It was reported that the information was held and managed using project management software, Verto. It was noted that the system could identify risks and alert to trends as well as standardise how risks were approached across all the projects. Using the example of cost management, it was demonstrated how the system could be used to track any identified risk in this area and factor it into project planning.

In terms of unknown risk, it was conjectured whether any changes might be made to the Town Deal following the appointment of a new Prime Minister. It was requested that open dialogues were maintained with ministers to keep abreast of any developments. Ministers present pledged to offer any support to Wolverhampton bids and the interests of the City wherever possible.

Resolved:

That the Towns Fund Programme Level Risk Register be noted.

10

Levelling Up Bids (Round 2)

Peter Taylor, Regeneration Manager for CWC delivered a presentation which provided an update on the status of the second round of Levelling Up Bids. It was recalled that there was £20 million of funding available per application and each submission required endorsement from a Member of Parliament. It was noted that the second of three possible bids for Wolverhampton was now in the process of being submitted.

Proposals included the first phase of the Green Innovation Corridor and Bilston Health and Regeneration Programme.

The first formed part of the Green Innovation Corridor and included a hub based at the University of Wolverhampton's Springfield site designed to provide space for business growth and start-ups, with the potential to generate 300 new jobs. The Bilston Health and Regeneration Programme aimed to provide a central community facility with GPs, pharmacies and other health and wellbeing services together under one roof.

It was outlined how both schemes aligned with priorities in the Strategic Framework for Levelling Up. Plans were also outlined for additional improvements to public realm in Bilston.

A query was raised around whether the Green Innovation Corridor scheme was open to private investment and if so, interest was expressed.

It was also noted that the plans for Cross Street North had great potential however it was felt that the name was not reflective of the intended purpose of the site.

Resolved:

That the verbal update on Levelling Up Bids (Round 2) be received.

11

Levelling Up Agenda and Meeting Structure

Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration for CWC provided a verbal update on the structure of the Towns Fund Board.

It was proposed that Towns Fund Board would transition into the Levelling Up Board to support and oversee not only interventions under the Towns Fund scheme, but all programmes and funding streams under the Levelling Up agenda. It was suggested that the last meeting of Towns Fund Board would take place in September 2022 with the first meeting of Levelling Up Board in November 2022.

In addition, a refreshed membership and Terms of Reference to reflect the changes to scope and remit of the Board would be presented for approval at the final meeting of Towns Fund Board in preparation for the launch as the Levelling Up Board in November.

Resolved:

That the Levelling Up Agenda and Meeting Structure be noted.

12 **September 2022 Board Meeting - Proposal to be Onsite at National Brownfield Institute**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions reported plans for the final meeting of the Towns Fund Board to take place at the National Brownfield Institute. Invites and further details would follow in due course.

Resolved:

That the proposal to hold the September meeting of Towns Fund Board at the National Brownfield Institute be noted.

13 **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.