



City Investment Board

Minutes - 17 February 2023

Attendance

Members of the City Investment Board

Ninder Johal (Chair)	Owner, Nachural
Cilla T	Youth Council Representative
Ray Flynn	Associate Director (Place), University of Wolverhampton
Cathy Francis ^v	Director for Regeneration and Housing Delivery, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
Harleen N	Youth Council Representative
James Holland ^v	General Manager, Collins Aerospace
Keisha R	Youth Council Representative
Maninder Mangat	Director, MM Consulting
Peter Merry ^v	Deputy Chief Executive, City of Wolverhampton College
Kevin Rogers ^v	Executive Director, Paycare
Cherry Shine	Director, Wolverhampton BID
Councillor Stephen Simkins	Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC)
Jane Stevenson MP ^v	Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton North East
Scott Thompson	Managing Director, Thompson AVC and Lead of Business Champions and Economic Growth Board (EGB)
Patricia Willoughby ^v	Head of Policy (Housing and Regeneration), West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

In Attendance

Liam Davies	Head of City Development, CWC
Helena Hansen-Fure ^v	Kinver Solutions
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer, CWC
Darowen Jones	Programme Manager, CWC
Chris Kirkland	Head of City Investment, CWC
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration, CWC
Ayesha Malhan ^v	Regeneration Officer, CWC
Steven Millington ^v	High Street Task Force
Marianne Page ^v	Head of Strategic Transport, CWC
Andrew Scragg	Participation Officer, CWC
Ruth Taylor ^v	Service Lead – Placemaking, CWC

^v = virtual attendance

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
The Chair opened the inaugural meeting of the City Investment Board with introductions and welcomed new members.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ian Brookfield, Leader of the Council, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC); Pat McFadden Member of

Parliament for Wolverhampton South East; Tim Johnson, Chief Executive, CWC; Simon Archer, Director, Bilston BID; Stuart Anderson Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South West; Mal Cowgill, Principal and Chief Executive, City of Wolverhampton College and Stuart McLachlan, President of Moog Industrial Group and Lead of Business Champions and Economic Growth Board.

Apologies were also received from John Roseblade, Director of Resident Services, CWC; Claire Nye - s151 Officer, CWC, Charlotte Johns - Director of Strategy, CWC.

2 **Notification of substitute members**

Peter Merry, Deputy Chief Executive, City of Wolverhampton College attended for Mal Cowgill.

Marianne Page, Head of Strategic Transport, CWC attended for John Roseblade.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

4 **Minutes of the meeting of 25 November 2022**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 25 November 2022 be approved as a correct record, subject to the correction of minute 8h to read:

It was highlighted that the preferred contractor had been announced for the first phase and the project was on track for RIBA Stage 4 to be completed by April 2023.

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 **City Investment Board Action Tracker**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council presented the Towns Fund Action Tracker which outlined the outcomes of actions agreed at the last meeting.

Item 7 - Levelling Up Agenda – Briefing Note and Update

It was noted that the refresh of the Towns Fund Board and rebranding as City Investment Board had been undertaken and governance documents were attached for approval at agenda item 7.

Item 8b - Programme Dashboard: WM5G

It was noted that an agenda item on exploring potential business opportunities created by the WM5G digital infrastructure was scheduled for the April 2023 meeting.

Item 8d - Programme Dashboard: Wednesfield Markets and Permeability

An introduction to the Wednesfield High Streets Task Force was on the agenda for this meeting and a further update was scheduled for the April 2023 meeting.

Item 8g - Programme Dashboard: Public Realm

It was reported that the Youth Council had been consulted on the Communications Programme and ideas were being discussed with the Council's Communications

team. An update would be shared with the Board within the next few weeks. Plans were also in place for the Youth Council to visit the National Brownfield Institute to receive an overview of the regeneration projects going on in the City.

Item 8i - Programme Dashboard: Arts Park

It was noted that a briefing note had been shared with the Board providing an update on the Arts Park which would be covered later in the agenda.

Item 8j - Programme Dashboard: Engagement & Comms

Members were advised that the next Board newsletter would be circulated prior to the April 2023 meeting.

Item 9 - Towns Fund Programme Level Risk Register

It was noted that a current copy of the risk register had been included as part of the agenda pack for easy reference.

Item 11 - Towns Fund Performance Return to Government

It was reported that the return to Government had been made on time and thanks were extended to Kevin Rogers, Executive Director of Paycare for his support in reviewing the submission. In terms of the response from Government, it was reported that high-level feedback indicated that Wolverhampton were delivering well however it was requested that more detailed feedback be prepared to cascade information down to residents that was meaningful to them.

Resolved:

1. That the outcomes from the actions agreed at the meeting of 25 November 2022 be noted.
2. That feedback from the Performance Return to Government be prepared as a narrative to share with residents.

7

City Investment Board - Governance Documents

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council presented the City Investment Board - Governance Documents which included the refreshed Terms of Reference, Local Assurance Framework and Conflict of Interest Policy.

In terms of electing a Vice Chair, Board members were invited to submit nominations or expressions of interest via the Towns Fund Mailbox. Confirmation was requested whether elected members were excluded from holding this position and it was agreed this query would be investigated and fed back between meetings.

Following discussion and clarification on the role of the Board as outlined at paragraph 2.2 of the Terms of Reference, the Governance Documents were approved. It was confirmed the Terms of Reference would be subject to an annual review and refreshed as required.

Resolved:

1. That the City Investment Board - Governance Documents be approved.
2. That Board members submit nominations or expressions of interest for Vice Chair via the Towns Fund Mailbox.
3. That clarification be sought on whether an elected member could be elected as Vice Chair of City Investment Board.

8 **Levelling Up Fund Update**

Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration, CWC provided a verbal update on the Levelling Up Funding bids for the Bilston Health and Regeneration Programme and Green Innovation Corridor schemes.

It was reported that the bids for round two of Levelling Up Funding had been well-developed and submitted within timescales, however had unfortunately been unsuccessful on this occasion. Full detailed feedback was anticipated in the next month.

Jane Stevenson, MP for Wolverhampton North East confirmed to the board that she'd spoken to the Minister and the criteria for award was altered following receipt of bids due to unprecedented demand with the criteria changing to confirm that any Council who had been successful with Levelling Up Fund 1 would be automatically excluded from Levelling Up Fund 2 awards.

Board members enquired whether there would be any recompense for lost resources to local authorities who had not been successful as it could be considered that the criteria had changed midway through the selection process to a predetermined outcome. It was also queried whether this was likely to happen in the third round however it was noted that there would be a clearer picture following the full feedback.

Disappointment was expressed from Board members however, undeterred, it was agreed that the Board would continue to work with colleagues and stakeholders to prepare for a submission in the third round. Members were also assured that the two schemes had merit and other options were being explored to fulfil these ambitions.

Resolved:

1. That the Levelling Up Fund Update be received.
2. That Cathy Francis, Director for Regeneration and Housing Delivery, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities provide feedback to the Council's senior officers as to the reasons for the awards not being successful.

9 **Wolverhampton Prospectus**

Chris Kirkland, Head of City Investment, CWC presented the Wolverhampton Prospectus to the Board prior to its presentation at Cabinet in the coming week. The presentation outlined the content of the Prospectus as well as the interactive digital elements, all of which served to identify and promote Wolverhampton's assets and numerous opportunities available within the City for business, employment and leisure.

In response to the presentation, Youth Council Representatives enquired whether an accessible version aimed at young people could be developed using language targeted at younger readers and highlighting points of interest for young residents. It was suggested that Chris Kirkland attend a meeting of the Youth Council to present the Wolverhampton Prospectus and discuss ideas of this nature.

This prompted further discussion around highlighting potential jobs for future generations and moving with the times to highlight emerging industries. It was noted that this would work towards mitigating youth unemployment; it was also suggested that a barrier to many young people gaining employment was a skills deficit therefore

exploring ways to ensure young people left school with transferable skills needed to enter the job market could be considered.

Resolved:

That the Wolverhampton Prospectus presentation be received.

10 **Towns Fund Programme Update Dashboard**

10a High Street Task Force Presentation

Steven Millington, High Street Task Force delivered the High Street Task Force presentation which provided an outline of the purpose of the High Street Task Force, research and engagement undertaken as well as successes to date towards reimagining Wednesfield high street. It was noted that high streets were evolving therefore work with stakeholders was ongoing to explore ways to keep the high street relevant and attract footfall.

In response to a Board member query, it was acknowledged that residents being deterred by empty retail units was a challenge faced by many high streets across the UK and not just in Wolverhampton. It was noted, however, that there were often complex narratives behind barriers to development, such as difficulty acquiring buildings or gaining building owners' permission to use of their premises. It was noted that, in other areas, cultivating strong relationships with landlords had played a part in agreeing mutually beneficial arrangements for using dormant properties.

Further discussion followed around what else discouraged residents away from high streets and city centres, noting that many were influenced by perceptions of crime levels, lack of activities or negative comments on social media, and what might draw them back.

In a response to the query why fewer young people were seen in the City than in previous years, Youth Council Representatives suggested that discounted transport fees or low-cost leisure activities might encourage more young people.

Board members added that some of the ideas already being explored in the area included the introduction of a canal bus to provide an unusual transport link with a nod to local heritage as well as repurposing empty retail units as accessible community spaces or health hubs.

It was suggested that residents were often frustrated by waiting for long-term development plans for high streets and the potential of realising short-term goals using existing assets was acknowledged, using the recent example of bringing empty Wednesfield market stalls back into use for a pop-up street food event.

Resolved:

That the High Street Task Force Presentation be received.

10b Project Updates

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council delivered the Town Deal Project Updates presentation which summarised key milestones for each of the projects.

It was highlighted that the progress update slides had undergone a visual refresh with easy-to-read infographics and would be circulated with the agenda pack going forward. A notable addition was the inclusion of contingency versus inflation for each project.

Resolved:

That the Project Updates be received.

10c Programme Level Risk Register

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council presented the Programme Level Risk Register which had been circulated with the agenda pack for comment.

In response to a query around risks posed by increased costs, it was confirmed that project plans had factored in a 10% inflation risk from the start, although cost pressures were still being felt due to recent inflation rates. This would be mitigated by making efficient use of funds available.

A concern was raised around whether if, as a contingency, there would be any assistance from Government if inflation seriously jeopardised delivery of the projects; Cathy Francis, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities offered to seek clarification on this and report back.

Resolved:

That clarification be sought on assistance available from Government should inflation rates impact project delivery.

11 **Any Other Business**

Arts Park Update

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council presented the Arts Park, Towns Deal Briefing Note which had been circulated to the membership shortly before the meeting and highlighted key points. This provided an update in response to a request for a Task and Finish Group to be established to explore options to deliver outputs from the Arts Park project after the purchase of the building adjacent to the Grand Theatre had not been possible. This would include the development of a new business case and preparation of Project Adjustment Forms with the intention of bringing a further update back to the Board in April 2023.

A concern was raised around the development moving away from the City centre where it was originally planned; assurances were offered that this would form part of the group discussion. It was suggested that other ways of funding could be explored to support the project. Councillor Stephen Simkins Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy, CWC; Jane Stevenson MP, Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton North East; Ray Flynn, Associate Director, University of Wolverhampton and Cherry Shine, Director, Wolverhampton BID volunteered to join the Task and Finish Group and it was noted that anyone else wishing to contribute could get in touch by using the Towns Fund Mailbox.

Meeting Venues

It was requested that consideration be given to hosting Board meetings in other relevant locations around the City.

Resolved:

1. That City Investment Board support a Task and Finish Group to be established to drive forward the development the Art Parks Project.
2. That City Investment Board members express interest to contribute to the Task and Finish Group through the Towns Fund Mailbox.
3. That consideration be given to hosting City Investment Board meetings in other relevant locations around the City.