



Towns Fund Board

Minutes - 25 September 2020

Attendance

Members of the Towns Fund Board

Ninder Johal (Chair)	Owner, Nachural
Stuart Paul Anderson	Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South West
Simon Archer	Director, Bilston BID
Mal Cowgill	Principal and Chief Executive, City of Wolverhampton College
James Crowter	Managing Director, Tecman
Ray Flynn	Head of the Vice Chancellor's Office, University of Wolverhampton
Adam Daniels	Regional Operations Director, Countryside Properties
Ro Hands	Owner, Learn Play Foundation
James Holland	General Manager, Collins Aerospace
Josie Kelly	Chief Executive Officer, Access 2 Business
Pat McFadden	Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South East
Maninder Mangat	Director, MM Consulting
Ben Reid	Board Member, International Co-Op Alliance
Kevin Rogers	Executive Director, Paycare
Ruby	Youth Council Representative
Amit Sharma	Director, INCO
Cherry Shine	Director, Wolverhampton BID
Councillor Stephen Simkins	Cabinet Member for City Economy, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC)
Jane Stevenson	Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton North East

In Attendance

Ian Culley	Lead Planning Manager (Regional Strategy), CWC
Liam Davies	Head of City Development, CWC
Ian Fegan	Director of Communications and External Relations, CWC
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer, CWC
Charlotte Jordan	Account Director, Copper Consultancy, CWC
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration, CWC
Michelle Nutt	Area Director, BEIS
Harinder Sangha	Project Assistant, CWC
Andrew Scragg	Participation Officer, CWC
Tony Marvell	Transformation Programme Manager, CWC
Julian Pye	Town Coordinator, Arup

Item No. *Title*

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Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from James Holland, Professor Geoff Layer, Patricia Willoughby, the Leader of the Council and Tutsi, Youth Council Representative.

2 **Notification of substitute members**

Ray Flynn attended for Professor Geoff Layer.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair, Ninder Johal, Owner of Nachural, declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Sandwell's Towns Fund Board.

4 **Minutes of the meeting of 24 July 2020**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 24 July 2020 be approved subject to following correction:

Minute 1:

That Ben Reid's apologies for the meeting of 24 July 2020 be recorded.

5 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

6 **Towns Fund Board Action Tracker**

Tony Marvell, Programme Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) presented the Towns Fund Action Tracker which outlined the outcomes of actions agreed at the last meeting.

Resolved:

That the outcomes from the actions agreed at the meeting of 24 July 2020 be noted.

7 **National Towns Fund Update**

Michelle Nutt, Area Director, BEIS provided an update on the progress of the National Towns Fund. It was outlined that assessment Town Investment Plans (TIPs) was still ongoing. This was scheduled to have been completed by the end of September 2020, however delays had pushed assessment timescales back. It was hoped that outcomes would be announced by October 2020.

In terms of Wolverhampton's TIP, it was reported that there had been some clarification sought around partnership working, funding for certain projects and engagement plans, however it was clarified that a response would be provided by Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration, CWC to BEIS within the week so the plan could progress. It was anticipated that the Board would hear back from BEIS by October 2020.

Resolved:

1. That the National Towns Fund Update be noted.
2. That a response to BEIS' query regarding Wolverhampton's Town Investment plan submission would be provided by Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration, CWC to BEIS within a week.

8 **Summary of Towns Investment Plan (TIP)**

Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration, City of Wolverhampton Council provided an outline of the TIP document that had been distributed with the meeting papers.

It was reported that the document was available to view online on the Invest Wolverhampton website with provision for stakeholders to view the TIP and comment further. Board members were asked to circulate the document and details of the website throughout their networks and it was advised that paper copies were available upon request.

In response to a query around whether the usual social media platforms would be used to promote the TIP for maximum exposure and feedback, it was stated that support would be offered to Board members with whichever platforms they wished to use to cascade the TIP.

It was noted that methodological underpinning and partnership working were key to ensure high quality engagement that satisfied the Government's requirements.

In response to a query around all whether all Councillors from both political parties within the Council would be briefed on how they could support the project, it was proposed that Richard Lawrence would arrange Councillor briefing sessions to this end.

Resolved:

1. That the Towns Fund Board note the Summary of the Town Investment Plan (TIP).
2. That Board members cascade the summary TIP throughout their organisational networks to encourage and gather feedback.
3. That Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration, City of Wolverhampton Council would arrange briefing sessions for all elected members on how to support the TIP.

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Communications and Engagement Planning

Charlotte Jordan, Account Director, Copper Consultancy delivered a presentation on Communication and Engagement Planning. It was noted that to develop a plan for communication and stakeholder engagement, the Council were in the process of commissioning Copper Consultancy to advise the Towns Fund Board on best practice and how to satisfy Government requirements. It was established that the company had previously been used to support the Future High Street Fund and their involvement in this project ensured continuity.

The presentation provided an outline of the key techniques recommended to develop a robust communications and engagement plan and business case including Planning; Timelines; Engagement Methods; Monitoring and Evaluation, Governance and Structure as well as how to engage with hard to reach stakeholders and overcome barriers, such as digital exclusion. This framework would inform the planning and delivery.

It was noted that two teams would be established; one to advise the Board on what is required by the Government in terms of communication and engagement and a second team that would work alongside the Board to create a narrative for the City and support development and delivery of the Plan. A copy of the presentation slides would be shared with Board members for future reference.

It was acknowledged that Copper Consultancy would work alongside the Board in an advisory capacity but ownership and accountability for the Communication and Engagement Plan lay with the Towns Fund Board.

In respect of the £1 million funding, it was clarified that the key projects were ready to begin delivery immediately once the funds became available; it was noted that the funding had been secured and receipt of the funds was expected by the end of September 2020. An update was to be provided at the next Board meeting of progress on the Key Projects within the TIP. It was clarified that 10 key projects had been approved for areas across the City, including Wednesfield and Bilston, and a list of these projects would be shared with Board members.

In response to queries around the resources and who would be delivering the communication and engagement plan, it was clarified that the second team from Copper would be working closely alongside members of the Board to develop and deliver the plan. What that would look like was yet to be determined, but it was suggested that perhaps the existing Key Project Working Groups or a sub-committee format could be used. This would be determined during a meeting in the next week whilst the outcome of the TIP application was awaited.

It was queried whether allowances would be made for delays or lack of sufficient responses due to barriers caused by the pandemic. Concerns lay around the fact that previously used face to face methods of engagement were unfeasible or that digital exclusion may delay or prevent stakeholders from contributing virtually. It was agreed that these unprecedented challenges must be acknowledged however, creative ways to mitigate these barriers should be explored as part of the Plan.

It was acknowledged that there needed to be clarity for the public on how the Towns Fund projects correlated with others, such as Westside Link, and who was accountable for which projects and the timelines for completion.

It was noted that the City was in a good place having applied among the first tranche of applications and were placed at 13 out of 100. It was noted that it was important that the City stood out amongst the others and Board members were encouraged to contribute by supporting, challenging and scrutinising the Plan.

It was reported that Business Week event had taken place in the same week as the meeting, which had included many of the members of Towns Fund Board and formed a strong foundation for an engagement programme.

The contributions of the Board thus far were commended and it was noted that the plans made possible by the Towns Fund would create a legacy within the City for future generations to enjoy.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation on Communication and Engagement Planning be received.
2. That Copper Consultancy's involvement in the planning and delivery process be noted.
3. That a copy of the presentation slides would be shared with Board members for future reference.

4. That a summary of the 10 key projects relating to the £1 million capital accelerator grant be shared with Board members.

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Any other business

There was no other business.