



Towns Fund Board

Minutes - 14 May 2021

Attendance

Members of the Towns Fund Board

Ninder Johal (Chair)	Owner, Nachural
Stuart Anderson MP	Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South West
Simon Archer	Director, Bilston BID
Councillor Ian Brookfield	Leader of the Council, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC)
Katharine Clough	Director of External Relations, University of Wolverhampton
James Crowter	Managing Director, Tecman
Louise Fall	Vice Principal – Student Engagement, City of Wolverhampton College
Ro Hands	Owner, Learn Play Foundation
James Holland	General Manager, Collins Aerospace
Tim Johnson	Chief Executive, CWC
Josie Kelly	Chief Executive Officer, Access 2 Business
Pat McFadden MP	Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South East
Maninder Mangat	Director, MM Consulting
Ben Reid	Board Member, International Co-Op Alliance
Amit Sharma	Director, INCO
Cherry Shine	Director, Wolverhampton BID
Councillor Stephen Simkins	Cabinet Member for City Economy, CWC
Jane Stevenson MP	Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton North East
Patricia Willoughby	Head of Policy (Housing & Regeneration), West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

In attendance

Liam Davies	Head of City Development, CWC
Lindsey Flynn	Representative of LEP
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer, CWC
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration, CWC
Simon Marks	City Executive, Birmingham, Arcadis
Tony Marvell	Tony Marvell, Programme Manager - Regeneration and City Environment, CWC
Michelle Nutt	Area Director, Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)
Julian Pye	Town Coordinator, Arup

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies for absence**
Apologies were received from Kevin Rogers, Executive Director, Paycare and Mal Cowgill, Principal and Chief Executive, City of Wolverhampton College.
- 2 Notification of substitute members**
Louise Fall, Vice Principal – Student Engagement, City of Wolverhampton College attended on behalf of Mal Cowgill.

3 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made

4 **Minutes of the meeting of 19 March 2021**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 19 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.

5 **Matters arising**

In respect of Minute 11, it was reported that a Towns Fund Project and Funding Proposal planning session had been held on 30 April 2021 to discuss and agree funding allocation for the eleven projects.

Resolved:

That the Towns Fund Project and Funding Proposal planning session held on 30 April 2021 be noted.

6 **Towns Fund 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.

As discussed in Minute 5, a closed meeting was held on 30 April 2021 where additional funding and timescales were discussed and agreed amongst Towns Fund Board members.

It was updated that the Head of Terms letter already signed by Ninder Johal, Chair of Towns Fund Board and Tim Johnson, Chief Executive of the accountable body (City of Wolverhampton Council), had been countersigned by Luke Hall, Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the formal acceptance process had been completed.

Resolved:

That the outcomes from the actions agreed at the meeting of 19 March 2021 be noted.

7 **Refreshed Terms of Reference**

Tony Marvell, Programme Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) presented the Refreshed Terms of Reference for approval. It was highlighted that Ninder Johal's term of office for LEP had come to an end and, although Ninder remained on the Board as Chair and representative of the private sector, the vacancy for a LEP representative would need to be filled. In the refreshed Terms of Reference, it was proposed that Lindsey Flynn, Chief Executive of Well Consultancy and LEP member join the Board in that capacity.

The Refreshed Terms of Reference were approved and the Chair welcomed Lindsey to the membership.

Resolved:

That the Refreshed Towns Fund Board Terms of Reference be approved and adopted.

8 **National Towns Fund Update**

Michelle Nutt, Area Director, BEIS provided a verbal update which outlined that summary documents were currently awaited and finance colleagues were examining town profiles and making preparations for funding payments.

A baseline had been developed and first reporting was due from 1 June 2021 with the expectation of an update every six months thereafter.

Resolved:

That the National Towns Fund Update be received.

9 **Towns Fund Project and Funding Proposal**

Simon Marks, City Executive - Arcadis provided a verbal update on the Towns Fund Projects and Funding Proposal. As reported earlier in the meeting, the proposals had been agreed upon by Board members following completion of the MHCLG Toolkit exercise. It was thought that the approach had been balanced, sensible and impartial.

A breakdown of the projects was provided and it was reported that two projects – Brewers Yard and Wolves@Work – had received 100% of their allocation ask; the Bilston and Wednesfield projects would be receiving 55% each of the amount originally requested, the Horseley Fields Project was to receive funding from another source (West Midlands Combined Authority funding) whilst the remaining projects had been allocated 50% of their ask.

It was acknowledged that maintaining momentum with all projects was key, although the projects considered as ‘whole’ would in all likelihood be moving through to business case more swiftly.

The projects with 50 - 55% of the ask may need extra work to realise, however there was scope to take advantage of other funding opportunities should they arise over the five-year delivery window. It was recommended that a procedure be established to ensure the next phase or module in a position to commence could be identified as soon as more funding became available.

It was suggested that projects be divided into self-contained modules to make it easier to allocate in this way. It was agreed that this would be a sensible approach for projects that lent themselves to being divided, however it was noted that some projects could only be delivered as a whole or not at all therefore this was not suitable for all of them.

In response to a query around why Brewers Yard had stood out to receive 100% of its allocation, it was noted that it had not been considered feasible to subdivide the project. In addition, an allocation of at least £5 million had been required in order to attract match funding to realise the amount required to deliver; allocating less would not result in the funding required to fully deliver the project. It was also acknowledged that the Brewers Yard project would cover a large footprint within Wolverhampton which would be key to regeneration and economic benefit for the City. It was also thought that the City’s positive reputation would be upheld if large projects such as this were delivered successfully.

The point was raised that it would be beneficial to monitor progress and only continue to fund the projects which were progressing well to avoid funding failing projects.

Concerns were raised around the risk factor for the projects which were only receiving partial funding. Assurances were offered that there was often an element of risk and that, over the five-year delivery period, it was highly likely that alternative funding mechanisms may become available.

In addition, a funding allocation system was discussed, and this would need to be able to be re-evaluated and reallocate underspends or account for additional funding. It was noted that any funding bids or lobbying for funding would be supported by MPs. It was reiterated that some projects could be delivered in the aforementioned phased approach to ensure there was some progression.

Resolved:

1. That the Towns Fund Project and Funding Proposal be received.
2. That an allocation procedure be developed to allow for allocation of alternative funding or reallocation of underspends.
3. That Towns Fund Board acknowledge and address the potential risks at each stage of delivery.

10

Forward Programme Plan

Tony Marvell, Programme Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) presented the Forward Programme Plan with a supporting presentation providing a timeline for delivery. It was highlighted that the next upcoming phase would be the accountable body (City of Wolverhampton Council) sign-off of the Summary Document which would then be submitted to BEIS and MHCLG for approval.

A point was raised that sometimes the business case development stage took longer than anticipated and it was queried if this had been considered. Assurances were offered that this had been taken into account and work on this had been planned to take place over the coming weeks.

It was queried how communities would be involved in shaping the less developed projects. It was noted that Copper Consultancy would be assisting with community engagement programmes to ensure successful co-production.

In response to a query around events programme funding allocations, it was reported that work was underway to develop a robust engagement strategy. Community engagement had already been strong in Wednesfield and it was anticipated that this would continue.

It was noted that the projects would only succeed with the efforts of the people involved therefore the Chair wished to record thanks to all partners and Towns Fund Board members for their continuing support and the work undertaken so far.

In response to a query around communications, it was noted that a range of communications for release into the public domain would be explored to inform communities of each phase of development.

Resolved:

That the Forward Programme Plan be received.

11

Any other business

There was no other business.