



# Towns Fund Board

## Minutes - 28 January 2022

### 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
Anthony Burns	Paycare
James Crowter	Managing Director, Tecman
Ray Flynn	Associate Director (Place), University of Wolverhampton
Ro Hands	Owner, Learn Play Foundation
James Holland	General Manager, Collins Aerospace
Tim Johnson	Chief Executive
Josie Kelly	Chief Executive Officer, Access 2 Business
Maninder Mangat	Director, MM Consulting
Amit Sharma	Director, INCO
Cherry Shine	Director, Wolverhampton BID
Councillor Stephen Simkins	Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy
Jane Stevenson MP	Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton North East
Patricia Willoughby	Head of Policy (Housing & Regeneration), West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

#### In Attendance

Heather Clark	Head of External Funding and Digital Projects, CWC
Liam Davies	Head of City Development, CWC
Shelley Humphries	Democratic Services Officer, CWC
Darowen Jones	Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions
Richard Lawrence	Director of Regeneration, CWC
Simon Lucas	Senior Regeneration Officer, CWC
Ayesha Malhan	Regeneration Officer, CWC
Julie Obada	Head of Skills, CWC
Marianne Page	Service Lead - Transport Strategy, CWC
Ballal Raza	Programme Manager, CWC
John Roseblade	Head of City Transport, CWC
Peter Taylor	Regeneration Manager, CWC
Ruth Taylor	Senior Regeneration Officer, CWC
Peter Thomason	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)
Joanne Till	Markets General Manager, CWC
Isobel Woods	Head of Enterprise, CWC

*Item No.*      *Title*

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#### **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Towns Fund Board members Janis, Youth Council Representative and Kevin Rogers, Executive Director, Paycare.

Apologies were also received from Crissie Rushton, Visitor Economy Manager, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC).

2      **Notification of substitute members**

Antony Burns attended for Kevin Rogers.

3      **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4      **Minutes of the meeting of 26 November 2021**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of 26 November 2021 be approved as a correct record.

5      **Matters arising**

A matter was raised in respect of minute 9d on the Events Programme and how the programme would be distributed between the City Centre, Bilston and Wednesfield. It was proposed to arrange a stakeholder meeting prior to the next Board meeting to progress the plans forward.

Resolved:

That a stakeholder meeting would be arranged to discuss the Events Programme.

6      **Towns Fund Action Tracker**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions 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 26 November 2021 be noted.

7      **Towns Fund Board - Refreshed Terms of Reference**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions presented the refreshed Terms of Reference for approval and highlighted key changes.

The document had been updated to reflect the changes in membership agreed at the meeting of 26 November 2022 and to include Darowen Jones as the Programme Manager going forward.

Resolved:

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

8      **National Towns Fund Update**

Peter Thomason, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) provided a verbal update on the National Towns Fund. It was reported that the programme was now moving on to the delivery stage and, from a national perspective, working through business plan submissions for approval.

It was noted that the assurance framework was currently under revision and development to ensure the programme aligned with other funding streams to make the process more user friendly.

Resolved:

That the National Towns Fund Update be received.

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### **Levelling Up Fund**

Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration, City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) provided a verbal update on the Levelling Up Fund bid. It was reported that £20 million had been received for tranche one for the City Learning Quarter project and noted that there was also a Towns Fund contribution.

It was reported that the project was in a position to procure a contractor and was just awaiting the final funding prior to starting on site. Project leads were currently awaiting guidance on the second round of funding. Once this was achieved, the project would potentially be on track to open in late 2024.

Thanks were extended to MPs on the Board for their support.

It was noted that the visit to Wolverhampton from Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had been positive and generated a great deal of interest in the City Learning Quarter and other work progressing in the City. Jane Stevenson MP echoed this and pledged to continue to push for growth in Wolverhampton.

Resolved:

That the verbal update on the Levelling Up Fund be received.

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### **Towns Fund Business Case Submissions: Tranche 2a**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions provided an update on the Towns Fund Business Case Submissions: Tranche 2a.

It was reported that the submission for Tranche 2a deadline was on 13 January 2022 and the four projects had been submitted successfully. These included the Arts Park, Bilston Market, City Learning Quarter and Wolves @ Work and the presentation provided an update on the progress of these.

It was noted that the business cases for the final three projects were due for submission on the 22 March 2022 and the timelines and submission processes were outlined. Assurances were offered these were on track to be submitted on time.

Resolved:

That the presentation on the Towns Fund Business Case Submissions: Tranche 2a be received.

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### **Assurance Processes**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions delivered the presentation on the Assurance Processes. The presentation provided an overview of the governance being developed and strengthened around Towns Fund projects in the lead up to the final business case submissions scheduled for March 2022.

It was reported that the Transformation Office was now in operation to ensure uniformity across all projects, detailed processes developed, and risk assessments had been undertaken. Senior Responsible Officers (SROs), Project Leads and Managers were now in place ready to take projects forward.

In response to a question around communications, it was confirmed SROs were aware of the communication and engagement plan and this was part of their role. It was noted that the SROs, along with Project Leads and Project Managers would be visible and accessible to constituents to assist or answer any questions. The first stakeholder engagement meeting had been held which was to be closely followed by another meeting including traders.

A concern was raised around ward members' awareness of Towns Fund Project activity in their ward area and the need for ensuring they were involved in all engagement, notified of work being carried out in their constituencies and allowed the opportunity to contribute to project delivery. It was requested that members be briefed at each stage of the project. It was acknowledged that this was a valid point and ensuring all stakeholders were included would be at the forefront of the communication and engagement planning.

The concern around engagement was echoed and concerns around funding being redistributed if the business case wasn't submitted in time for the 4 February 2022 deadline. It was confirmed that the project was going through a rigorous process however the 4 February deadline was for the first draft of the business case and not the final submission.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation on Assurance processes be received.
2. That elected ward members be kept informed and offered the opportunity to engage with projects in their constituencies at all stages.

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### **Programme Dashboard**

Ballal Raza, Programme Manager, CWC; Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions; John Roseblade, Head of City Transport, CWC; Isobel Woods, Head of Enterprise, CWC and Julie Obada, Head of Skills, CWC; Ruth Taylor, Senior Regeneration Officer, CWC; Ray Flynn, Associate Director (Place), University of Wolverhampton; Simon Lucas, Senior Regeneration Officer, CWC; Peter Taylor, Regeneration Manager, CWC and Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration, CWC each provided a high-level update on their respective projects. The presentations and work undertaken against each project were commended.

12a

### **Brewers Yard / Culwell Street**

Ballal Raza, Programme Manager, CWC provided a verbal update on Brewers Yard / Culwell Street and extended thanks to Board members for support in reaching this stage of progression.

It was reported that the project was moving forward positively and on track to submit planning applications. Assurances were offered that ward members from East Park and Heath Town would be included in engagement. No slippage had been reported and allowances had been made in the plans for inflation.

**12b WM5G**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions provided a verbal update on the WM5G accelerator project. It was reported that funding agreement had been received and approved by Council and grant payment was due to be paid to WM5G in line with requirements.

**12c Events Programme**

Isobel Woods, Head of Enterprise, CWC shared the news that British Art Show 9 had gone live in the City and been met with a positive response. Board members were notified of the off-site activities included in the programme and encouraged involvement where possible.

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions highlighted that a key priority for the events program was to engage with the Wolverhampton and Bilston BIDs to ensure early involvement. A further update on this would be provided shortly after the meeting.

**12d Wednesfield Markets and Permeability**

John Roseblade, Head of City Transport, CWC provided a verbal update on Wednesfield Markets and interventions project which had had the £2.51 million funding approved, a business case outlined and was at initiation stage. The success of the bid was attributed in part to stakeholder engagement which had been hugely positive and inclusive of traders, MPs and elected ward members. There were plans to expand this group along with a walkthrough of the site.

A query was raised around what was in place if, whilst working through the business case, it became apparent that more funding was required. It was confirmed that the £2.51 million was the envelope the project was working within, however plans to attract further funding had been written into the business plans over the three-year life of the project. In the event that no further funding was available, it may be necessary to curtail the project. Assurances were offered that if this happened, plans would be reviewed with engagement with stakeholders to ensure the best possible impact was made with the money available.

It was noted that the Board would be informed promptly of any slippage and what that would mean for the project. As with all of the Towns Fund projects, contingency plans had been developed and inflation had already factored into business plans. Work had been ongoing with a consultancy to forecast possible inflation over the life of the project. It was noted support would always be given from MPs for any future funding bid opportunities, but Board members were asked to be mindful they may not always be successful despite best efforts.

A concern was raised around the timing of the visit to the Wednesfield market and the meeting that followed as these events had fallen during the busy Christmas period meaning traders found this challenging to fit in. Concerns were also raised around the 4 February deadline. Assurances were offered that the 4 February 2022 date was for the start of the business case review process and it was confirmed that 21 February 2022 was the deadline for business cases to be ready for scoring.

A plea was again made to ensure ward members were kept abreast of all activity surrounding projects in their respective areas as there were concerns around missed opportunities for involvement or additional support from ward members. Assurances were offered that ward members would be involved with stakeholder groups and any further site visits.

#### **12e Bilston Markets**

Simon Lucas, Senior Regeneration Officer, CWC provided a verbal update on the Bilston Market Project which had secured funding. It was reported that designers Greig and Stephenson and consultants Faithful and Gould had been procured and had been developing a scheme within budget. It was reported that topographical utilities and grant surveys had been undertaken to inform the process and to highlight and mitigate any significant risks. It was noted that inflationary and contingency plans had been included within the work. It was hoped that if there happened to be an underspend, this could be used to add further value to the scheme on top of what was planned.

It was highlighted that the scheme would be delivered in three strands. The first would be to maximise the visual transformation of the site with a canopy and signage to promote the positive change happening within. The second included plans to transform an area in use whilst the market was operating by day into a usable area for events in the evening. The final intention was to ensure the scheme attracted new customers whilst maintaining the interest of the existing customer base. It was noted that the project would be progressing through to engagement with members and stakeholders shortly.

#### **12f Wolves @ Work**

Isobel Woods, Head of Enterprise, CWC provided a verbal update on the Wolves @ Work initiative to support Wolverhampton residents into employment or other opportunities. It was reported that the Towns Fund was supporting a service that was already established to grow and expand further. Extensive work was being undertaken to incorporate and include young people as a response to youth unemployment in the City. Work had also been undertaken in partnership with local businesses to review recruitment processes and understand what employers are looking for.

It was noted that recruiting had been ongoing over the past few weeks to undertake the new work made possible by Towns Fund and it was hoped work coaches would all be in place by March 2022.

It was acknowledged that the Towns Fund was not focused only on growth in terms of building new environments, but growth in terms of social value with employment and recruitment opportunities and the Wolves @Work initiative was commended.

#### **12g Public Realm P2**

Ruth Taylor, Senior Regeneration Officer, CWC provided a verbal update on the Public Realm Project. It was reported that the project was the second of three phases in the City centre programme. Plans for phase two included an improved public realm that served as a link from Darlington Street to the new Interchange with

an infrastructure to support active travel, such as cycling and walking, as well as new event spaces.

It was highlighted that the options appraisal was close to completion and consultations were being held with key stakeholders such as Transport for West Midlands and International Express. A robust governance had been developed around this project including a member reference group which met monthly. The business case was progressing well and there was confidence that this would be ready in draft for the first deadline. As with other projects, inflationary pressures were being factored in.

## **12h National Brownfield Institute Block A**

Ray Flynn, Associate Director (Place), University of Wolverhampton provided a verbal update on the National Brownfield Institute Block A. It was highlighted that its location on the Springfield campus site played an important role in relation to other key projects in the City, such as Brewers Yard, and formed part of the City's ambition to become a national centre for sustainable construction.

It was noted that the National Brownfield Institute scheme had completed on 24 January 2022 followed by a successful visit from Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 27 January 2022.

It was reported that the original propositions had been revised to refocus from a business incubation scheme to an outreach and engagement hub for schools and colleges with a focus on employability and skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

It was noted that the business case was being refined supported by Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions. Special thanks were also noted for the support from Tony Marvell, the previous Programme Manager.

Efforts were being made to ensure the sustainability of the scheme and, as before, potential inflation pressures had been accounted for.

It was noted that previous visits to the site had been beneficial and other Board members were encouraged to visit once it was appropriate. It was agreed that other Board members be invited to visit this and other project sites to gain an understanding of the progression of the work.

## **12i Grand Theatre**

Peter Taylor, Regeneration Manager provided a verbal update on the Grand Theatre project. The business case had been submitted on 14 January 2022 and set out the benefits of the acquisition of 66-70 Lichfield Street adjacent to the existing theatre building. The new space would facilitate community outreach as well as growing the existing audience base through the Friends of the Grand group and releasing auditorium space and providing accommodation for theatre groups, which would all maximise income for the theatre.

It was reported that the Council's revised purchase offer for the property had been due for consideration at an external freeholder board meeting before Christmas

2021. This meeting had been deferred until early February, although it was anticipated that there would be some feedback following this. The purchase offer had been supported by an evaluation report which also set out the funding position of the project.

The risk of inflation had also been factored into the plans. The options of purchase and compulsory purchase were being both explored along with implications for each. Caution was urged to ensure that the asset was secured for the right price.

It was acknowledged that the project would be of great benefit to the City in terms of community outreach.

## **12j City Learning Quarter**

Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration, CWC provided a verbal update on the City Learning Quarter. It was reiterated that final funding was awaited but otherwise the project was ready to begin. Planning was in place and

It was anticipated that there would be a confirmed contractor within the next few months with a view to commence work in around six months.

Resolved:

1. That members of Towns Fund Board be invited to visit all project sites when appropriate to do so.
2. That an events update be provided to Towns Fund Board members following the meeting.
3. That the Programme Dashboard update presentation be received.

## **13 Engagement and Communication Strategy**

Darowen Jones, Programme Manager, Kinver Solutions provided a verbal update on the position of the Engagement and Communication Strategy. The presentation outlined key points around delivery building on the successes seen in Bilston, Wednesfield and the City Centre.

A query was raised around the Copper consultancy and if they were still supporting the projects. It was noted that Copper consultancy had laid the groundwork and developed principles and the project leads were now working on putting these into practice as the projects moved forward.

It was noted individual project leads had begun development of engagement and communications plans tailored to each project.

A query was raised around how to align all the projects' engagement strategies. It was noted that standardised key themes, priorities and messages at programme level would be embedded through all projects alongside each project's own priorities.

Resolved:

That the Engagement and Communication Strategy be received.

## **14 Any Other Business**

There was no other business.