



DRAFT Minutes of the meeting of the MK: BLETCHLEY/FENNY STRATFORD TOWN DEAL BOARD held on TUESDAY 23 MARCH 2021 at 2.15 pm.

Present: J Cove (Chair & Chair - MK Dons SET), Councillor P Marland (Deputy Chair & Leader of Milton Keynes Council), I Stewart (MP for Milton Keynes South), J Barker (SEMLEP), C Butt (Vicar of St Frideswides), B Dove (West Bletchley Council), P Hume (Joint Sponsor Lead – Network Rail/East West Rail Company), J Mills (CEO - MK College), A Ravn-Aagaard (Treasurer – Consortium of Bletchley Resident Associations), I Revell (CEO - MK Community Foundation), A Rolfe (Parliamentary Assistant to Iain Stewart, MP), T Roxburgh (Special Projects Director - Milton Keynes Development Partnership and D Shephard (Clerk - Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council).

Also Present: T Aldworth (Deputy Chief Executive - Milton Keynes Council), P Hammond (Area Manager MK Land and Tariff - Milton Keynes Council), M Todman (Area Lead - BEIS), M Smith (Infrastructure Programme and Broadband Manager - Milton Keynes Council), D Webber (Associate – Hyas Associates) and R Tidman (Committee Services Manager - Milton Keynes Council).

Apologies: Dr V Cathanboo (Westfield Road GP Surgery), H Chipping (Chief Executive - SEMLEP), H Hupton (Clerk – West Bletchley Council), K Hyatt (Project Manager – Milton Keynes Council), O Mytton (Deputy Director for Public Health - Milton Keynes Council), J Pickering (Business Development Manager - Network Rail), and D Wetton (Commercial and Business Director - Network Rail).

TDB53 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members of the Board and other attendees to the meeting.

TDB54 PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Chair invited comments on the draft minutes of the Board meeting held on 4 February 2021.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Board meeting held on 4 February 2021, be approved as a correct record.

TDB55 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest were received.

TDB56**EAST WEST RAIL UPDATE**

Peter Hume provided an update on viability work related to the improvement of Bletchley railway station. Arup had been commissioned to undertake this work and had commenced information gathering. It was anticipated that concept designs and options would be available for sharing with a wider stakeholder group after 5 April. This would be a workshop session aimed at gathering input from the various stakeholders. There were two core challenges that needed to be addressed which concerned how to move passengers around the station. The footbridge and whether it would be fit for purpose over the long term is a particular concern. The other challenge was the ambition for an eastern entrance which needed to form part of any design solution. However, there were some difficult legacy issues which needed to be resolved to ensure that a viable eastern entrance could be created.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

TDB57**CAPACITY FUNDING UPDATE**

Paul Hammond advised that, shortly after the last Town Deal Board meeting, MHCLG announced the opportunity to bid for further capacity funding to support the completion of the Town Deal process. It was anticipated that grants would be in the region of £50k – £100k. The Council had worked with SEMLEP to submit a bid for £85k to employ someone to support the development of the Business Cases. The proposal was to partner with SEMLEP to employ an expert to prepare the Business Cases and engage with specialists. This would be a shared resource which might be available to the project for 3 days a week for 9-12 months.

Mike Todman advised that MHCLG's capacity funding had been oversubscribed and that the Milton Keynes bid had been allocated £40k which would be paid by the end of March 2021. While this had been less than requested it was hoped that it would still help to assist with the development of the business cases.

Councillor Marland advised that the Council would look at making available additional funding to make the proposal work given the capacity funding shortfall and would ideally look to contribute funding for a two-year, part substantive post.

John Cove passed on the thanks of the Board to Mike Todman and the rest of the team at MHCLG for their support and the award of the grant.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update be noted.
2. That it be noted that the Board supported the partnership work with SEMLEP and the proposal as to how the grant would be spent.

TDB58

ACCEPTANCE OF DRAFT HEADS OF TERM OFFER

John Cove outlined that the award of £22.7 million from the Town Deal Fund represented very significant and much welcomed investment in the area. It signalled the beginning of what the Board wanted to deliver and an opportunity to join with partners to make the most of other investment sources for the area. It would, however, be challenging to convey to MHCLG the changes in the Board's priorities given the amount of funding that had been awarded relative to the investment 'ask'.

Tracey Aldworth advised that the three options available were as follows: deleting an entire project; top slicing all the projects to achieve the £2.3 million shortfall; or, reducing the funding on a limited number of projects. The proposal put to the Board was to reduce the Revolving Development Fund (RDF) and Public Realm Improvement project allocations, as these both lacked detailed delivery plans at this stage compared to other projects. This was considered a balanced approach which reflected the reality that the delivery of certain projects was more advanced.

Delia Sheppard commented that she understood the rationale for this approach, but that she had concerns about the impact of reducing the funding allocations for those projects and public perception of the same. She added that there would be particular disappointment in the community if improvements to public realm were scaled down.

Julie Mills supported the suggested approach as they were the least developed projects but it was important to review what investment could still be made and what work could be delivered with the reduced funding.

Ian Revell stated that, where possible, the Board should ensure that all opportunities were taken to reduce the cost of other projects to help to make up the shortfall.

Councillor Marland commented that it was right that the RDF took the biggest slice of the reduction. He added that the allocated funds for public realm improvement was at this stage an estimate and that this project proposal would, in any event, need further development.

Tracey Aldworth advised that production of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the area was crucial and that the development of this would help with establishing and deciding what public realm improvements were required.

Angie Ravn-Aagaard asked if the Active Marketing of Vacant Sites project was linked to the other projects. It was noted that this proposition complements other TIP projects by providing the Board with the means to promote and capitalise on future investment opportunities.

John Cove identified that work would start to move at pace and the Board would work hard at helping to keep everyone up to date and involved.

Mike Todman advised that the business case for the RDF would need to go to MHCLG for approval and that some market analysis would need to be undertaken to underpin any interventions proposed via the RDF.

John Cove commented that, as the Board moves into decision making mode, further thought would need to be given to governance arrangements, particularly with a view to avoiding potential conflicts of interest.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update be noted and the recommendations proposed in the report be agreed.
2. That the Board note that the Council provided reassurance that funding for public realm works would not be limited to the grant funding currently available and that it was expected that additional funding would be required to progress schemes as required.

TDB59 UPDATE OF DELIVERY PLAN

Tracey Aldworth advised that the Council had prepared a project plan to keep track of the delivery phase and that it will evolve with input from the Implementation Group and reported to the Board.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

TDB60 ACCELERATED PROJECTS UPDATE

Paul Hammond provided an update on progress with the accelerated projects. Excellent progress had been made with the demolition of the former Fire Station and Paul thanked colleagues at MKC for their help with ensuring that all approvals and other work were completed in good time. The tower was removed by hand to minimise risk and asbestos removal from the main office was nearing completion and

demolition of the same would start after that process had been safely completed. MKDP was on track to take back control of the site by 19 April 2021.

Regarding the Redways, delivery continued to present a range of challenges with work progressing on Section 1 and other Sections requiring further discussion with landowners. Paul advised that the Council would facilitate discussions about the route options for (indicative) Redway Section 4 and an engagement activity will take place to seek views on this matter

John Cove asked what the learning points were from this in terms of delivering the next stage of the project. Paul advised that preparation and planning was key. With regard to future Town Deal projects he noted that these would be the subject of longer lead-in times (i.e. relative to the accelerated projects) and there would also be a need for the preparation of associated businesses cases.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update be noted.

TDB61

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Paul Hammond advised that the new procurement contract with Hyas had been completed and that recent communication activity had focused on the positivity around the Town Deal announcement. Informal discussions had taken place with partners to discuss options as to how to reduce the TIP by £2.3 million. It should be noted that the Heads of Terms refer to the need to provide a communication plan for private stakeholders. Officers along with Hyas were scheduled to make presentations to Parish and Town Council's and local resident associations. A communication and engagement plan was being prepared for the next stage of the Town Deal process with the challenge to understand what was permissible to take place during the local election Purdah period.

Diane Webber outlined that Stage 3 of the engagement process which would build on previous engagement and consultation work. Key activities would include continuing liaison and information sharing with local partners and widening and diversifying stakeholder engagement. A distinction needed to be made between, on the one hand, public engagement where people can engage with a view to shaping project proposals and, on the other hand, project proposals where the scope of engagement is limited to information sharing. It would be important to develop the 'story of the place' as a key component of the businesses cases and it is hoped that there would be a number of local resources that could be utilised to assist with this.

Ian Revell advised that the Community Foundation were setting up an infrastructure group to support BAME communities. In addition, he advised of a new MK BAME Business Network which the Board could also link into as part of its wider engagement activity.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

TDB62

CAR PARKING

Paul Hammond reminded members that at the last Board meeting it was requested that the Clerks of the town councils update the Board on any resolutions that their organisations make with regard to the issue of car-parking in the locality. The Board was advised that both town council's had made resolutions and while they understood that parking could not be the only consideration, they would like it to be considered at the earliest stage of any development proposal process.

Julie Mills advised that she had asked that parking for the Institute of Technology be considered at the earliest stage of the development process even before the formal planning stage and that everyone was trying to work creatively on solutions.

Councillor Marland advised that the funding that had been set aside for the Supplementary Planning Document included a parking survey and it was vital that this was completed as soon as possible.

Angie Ravn-Aagaard commented that West Bletchley Council had already commissioned a parking review and expressed her thanks for the engagement that had been undertaken by those working on the Institute of Technology and the associated parking issues. On behalf of COBRA, she noted that the residents' associations supported the resolutions put forward by the two town councils, however, she asked that it be minuted that proximity to nearby transport hubs should not be used by developers in the future to avoid adequate parking provision. In response to this request, John Cove noted that the Board had no legal ability to constrain developers in that regard and that it would be a planning matter. The Board had already resolved that parking was a central concern and early consideration of parking should be undertaken in respect of all projects the Board was sponsoring.

Paul Hammond noted that the Council Plan makes a commitment to deliver 300 new car parking spaces in the area. He noted that car parking provision was clearly a key factor in terms of determining development viability and also needed to be considered as part of a wider picture.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

TDB63 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date for the next meeting was confirmed as:

Tuesday 18 May 2021, 2.00pm – 4.00pm

RESOLVED:

That the date of the next meeting be noted.

TDB64 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mike Todman advised that there was a new Levelling Up Fund available that covered transport infrastructure, regeneration, culture and heritage schemes. The first round was now open and MHCLG was seeking bids from local authorities to apply by 18 June 2021. While Milton Keynes was not identified as a priority area, eligibility was universal and Milton Keynes would be able to bid for up to three projects. Iain Stewart advised that he would be looking at projects that would be complementary to the projects identified in the Town Deal.

Delia Shepherd advised that Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council managed a block in Albert Street which included a well-used public toilet facility. The building was costly to maintain, and the Town Council had been exploring ways to provide a more sustainable and cost-effective public toilet facility. The Town Council had requested if the provision of public toilets could be considered by the Board at a future meeting. John Cove noted that this issue could also be picked up in the development of the Supplementary Planning Document.

Paul Hammond advised of the recently published Arc Spatial Framework which promoted strategic planning across the Arc and an integrated approach to planning and transport. He would provide a link to this document for the information of Board members.

Councillor Marland highlighted the recent resubmission of the planning application for the Burger King site and suggested that it might be helpful to circulate this to Board members. As part of the development of the SPD it would be helpful to have a conversation concerning the principles of development in the area. Delia Shephard suggested that any development proposal in the area should be considered by the Board until the Supplementary Planning Document was approved. Delia added that it was unfortunate that production of the SPD and the Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan had been delayed by the pandemic; the SPD is viewed as a critical document which would allow the Board to act most effectively.

John Cove commented on the recent incident of charred insulation being found inside the cladding at Stephenson House and asked if any Board members were aware of this. Delia Shepard advised that the Emergency Planning team at Milton Keynes Council had engaged with the fire service concerning that issue.

RESOLVED:

1. That an update on the proposed bids for the Levelling Up Fund be provided at the next meeting.
2. That an item on the provision of public toilets be scheduled at an appropriate point in time.
3. That the Board be advised of any planning applications that are submitted within the Town Deal area.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 4.05 PM.

DRAFT