

Minutes of the meeting of the MK: BLETCHLEY/FENNY STRATFORD TOWN DEAL BOARD held on THURSDAY 30 JULY 2020 at 3.30 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), C Butt (Vicar of St Frideswides), H Chipping (Chief Executive - SEMLEP), L Costello (Deputy Clerk - West Bletchley Council), J Mills (CEO - MK College), O Mytton (Deputy Director for Public Health - Milton Keynes Council), J Pickering (Business Development Manager - Network Rail), A Ravn-Aagaard (Vice Chair – Consortium of Bletchley Resident Associations), I Revell (CEO - MK Community Foundation), T Roxborough (Special Projects Director - Milton Keynes Development Partnership) and D Shephard (Clerk - Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council).

**Also Present:** L Adolphus (Programme Manager - EWRC), T Aldworth (Deputy Chief Executive - Milton Keynes Council), S Beggs (Senior Policy Advisor - MHCLG), L Guyon (Consultant - Hatch Regeneris), P Hammond (Area Manager MK Land and Tariff - Milton Keynes Council), C Rawson (Associate Director - Hatch Regeneris), A Rolfe (Assistant to I Stewart MP), M Smith (Infrastructure Programme and Broadband Manager - Milton Keynes Council), M Todman (Area Lead - BEIS), D Webber (Associate – Hyas Associates) and P Brown (Head of Democratic Services - Milton Keynes Council).

**Apologies:** H Hupton (Clerk – West Bletchley Council), C Macdonald (Chief Executive - Milton Keynes Development Partnership), L Rawlinson (Chair - Consortium of Bletchley Resident Associations) and D Wetton (Commercial and Business Director - Network Rail).

#### **TDB09 MINUTES OF THE MEETING 3 JULY 2020**

The Chair welcomed members of the Board to the meeting and Tracey Aldworth introduced Lyndon Adolphus from East West Rail Company, Chris Rawson and Louise Guyon from Hatch Regeneris, Diane Webber from Hyas Associates and Martyn Smyth from Milton Keynes Council who had been seconded to the project to assist with project management.

The Chair invited comments on the draft minutes of the Board meeting on 3 July 2020.

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the Board's meeting on 3 July 2020 be approved as a correct record.

## **TDB10 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

The Board heard that a small number of Code of Conduct and Register of Interest forms were outstanding from Board members.

Tim Roxborough and Julie Mills declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in relation to agenda item 4 given their employment by Milton Keynes Development Partnership and Milton Keynes College respectively and took no part in the vote on the item.

Tracey Aldworth declared a Personal Interest in relation to agenda item 4 as a Board Member at Milton Keynes Development Partnership.

RESOLVED:

That the Head of Democratic Services contact Board Members who had not submitted a Code of Conduct and Register of Interest form to arrange for submission and a copy of the form be provided to Tim Roxborough in his capacity as a substitute.

## **TDB11 CALL FOR INITIAL PROJECTS FOR £1M CAPITAL INVESTMENT**

The Board heard from Tracey Aldworth and Paul Hammond, who reiterated that there was an invitation received from MHCLG on 1 July 2020 to submit proposals for an immediate and additional capital project funding allocation of up to £1million, for projects meeting particular criteria:

- Improvements to or provision of a new park or green spaces and sustainable transport links.
- Improvements to town centres including repurposing empty commercial properties.
- Demolition or site remediation where this would have an immediate benefit.

The Council needed to agree and confirm with the Government, by 14 August 2020, the projects that it proposed to spend the initial £1 million of funding on and planned to do so by way of an Executive Delegated Decision on 11 August, prior to the submission deadline.

As part of the submission process, the S151 officer would need to confirm that the proposed spending was in line with the Towns Fund intervention framework, would achieve good value for money and that the projects could be delivered in the 2020/21 financial year.

The Board was thanked for the eleven projects that had been submitted for consideration, which were set out in the Annex to the presentation. It was noted that some of the projects submitted were at an early or embryonic stage and were therefore unlikely to be deliverable in the 2020/21 financial year.

The Board heard that a proposal for a Bletchley skills hub proposal raised some issues about ongoing revenue commitments associated with rental costs, given that the funding available was solely capital. Notwithstanding that, all those projects that had not been shortlisted for the immediate capital funding, would be considered as part of the Town Investment Plan (TIP) development work.

Four projects had been recommended based on a key requirement that they could be delivered by the end of the financial year and were where the Council had a degree of control in relation to procurement and land ownership.

- Project 5 - Redway Link 1 - Provision of new Lakes Estate - Blue Lagoon Redway link, to include toucan crossing – MKC Lead Delivery partner.
- Project 6 - Redway Link 2 - Provision of new Newton Leys - Blue Lagoon Redway Link – MKC Lead Delivery Partner.
- Project 7 - Redway Link 3 - Provision of new Blue Lagoon Redway link – MKC Lead Delivery Partner.
- Project 8 - Former Bletchley Fire Station - repurposing/redevelopment/remediation and demolition works – MKDP Lead Delivery Partner.

The links between the Redway routes and Bletchley Station were noted, along with the opportunity to further develop a strategic Redway Hub and improve connectivity across the focus area. MKDP was exercising its option to acquire the former Bletchley Fire Station site and was thought to be in a position to take forward remediation and other works quickly.

The Chair asked for clarity about which agencies had submitted which bids and was advised that:

- all Redway link proposals were submitted by Milton Keynes Council and supported by various Bletchley Ward Members as well as a general Redway expansion proposal having been submitted by Councillor Rankine;
- the Former Bletchley Fire Station proposal was submitted by MKDP;
- the Community Information Centre proposal was submitted by Bletchley Park Area Residents Association;
- the Youth Zone proposal was submitted by Rev. Butt at St Frideswides;
- the Mass Rapid Transit Connection proposal was submitted by Councillor Rankine; and
- the Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Skills Bridging Hub proposal was submitted by MK College.

Councillor Marland spoke in support of the recommended projects and highlighted the inclusivity and sustainability benefits of linking Newton Leys and Bletchley to the Redway network.

Further, that in relation to former Bletchley Fire Station, the clearance and preparation of the site would likely improve the financial viability of the site in relation to any potential residential development and affordable housing commitments.

The Chair asked for clarification as to whether recently announced Government cycleway funding could be used to deliver the recommended Redway improvements and was advised that this funding could be utilised, but was likely to be a discrete bidding process as there were specific conditions preventing mixed use of surfaces, which would not be compatible with the Redway model of mixed pedestrian and bicycle use.

Board Members were supportive of the shortlisted projects and noted that there were existing plans in place for Redway schemes as part of the Regeneration Programme/Strategy on the Lakes Estate and Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan(s), but that these were not in currently funded programmes and therefore had no anticipated delivery date. It was also noted that any future funding for these projects would likely have been from the Housing Revenue Account, which would have made other regeneration schemes less viable. The Board agreed that supporting the recommended proposals would accelerate the delivery of the Redway projects and that it would be important to ensure this was communicated clearly to local communities.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Board agree that the four shortlisted projects be submitted to MHCLG, alongside an additional proposal that any underspend on the shortlisted projects be allocated Bletchley High Street (2:3) / Fenny Stratford High Street (1:3) for upgrade works such as paving and pedestrianisation, subject to:
  - (a) the s151 officer confirming the projects' financial compliancy; and
  - (b) a Delegated Decision being taken by Councillor Marland on 11 August 2020.
2. That officers make arrangements for a plan of communications to residents and communities about the funding bid and likely accelerated delivery of Redway projects.

## **TDB12 UPDATE ON WORK PROGRAMME AND KEY ACTIVITIES**

Tracey Aldworth introduced progress on the project since the last meeting which included:

- that the revised town deal intervention area had been formally approved by MHCLG;
- that the Chair and officers had met (virtually) with the Government Towns Hub on 8 July 2020 who would further update with the package of support available during August and would be available to check progress and challenge the development of the TIP; and
- that additional resources and expertise had been secured to support preparation of the TIP and to deliver the necessary Community Engagement.

The Board heard that the details of a dedicated website with resources and upcoming seminars which might be beneficial for the Board Members would be circulated.

The TIP submission would be developed around a number of themes which would be supported via sub-groups, which had the following provisional membership:

- Place and Connectivity – Jack Pickering, Paul Hammond and Lee Parker.
- Land and Development Opportunities – MKDP representation, Liana Sinclair and Tracy Darke.
- Economy and Skills – Julie Mills, Hilary Chipping and Geoff Snelson.
- Community, Health & Wellbeing – Oliver Mytton, Lyndsey Stiles and Maryann Brooks.

The next phases of work would be to:

- arrange virtual sub-group meetings (with Hatch Regeneris and Hyas Associate in attendance);
- commence community engagement;
- continue to utilise support and advice from the Towns Hub; and
- progress discussions around key issues, themes and project ideas to be included in the TIP.

The Board would be updated on progress via email prior to the end of August and then receive a further update on outcomes and key lines of enquiry/work at the September Board meeting.

Chris Rawson and Louise Guyon from Hatch Regeneris introduced themselves and Hatch Regeneris' credentials in relation to large scale growth projects and specifically their involvement in cohort 1 TIP submissions. Hatch Regeneris had supported other authorities through the submission process

and was able to share experience in terms of the assessment process at MHCLG, particularly in relation to appropriate supporting evidence, developing an economic business case and how engagement and consensus was reflected in the TIP.

The Board heard how Hatch Regeneris would be assisting, both in relation to capacity (given the timescales for submission), but also development of the TIP document, which included assessing priorities and projects.

The Board received a high level introduction to the project plan from Chris Rawson including the sequencing and the key themes, which were, initial research to develop an economic vision and set of priorities, understanding community engagement outcomes, detailed work to substantiate and assess projects/interventions and the preparation of a detailed TIP. Hatch Regeneris would work closely with Hyas Associates, especially given the importance of engagement work underpinning the TIP and the challenges associated with Covid-19.

Diane Webber introduced herself and Hyas Associates' credentials, having previously supported local authorities on large scale development projects including Garden Towns, alongside the delivery of community engagement strategies for such projects. The Board was advised that the initial phase of engagement would be starting imminently, with the immediate priority being to raise awareness with the community and stakeholders, by improving the web presence and developing a Bletchley/Fenny Stratford Town Deal Brand.

Given social distancing guidelines, it was likely that traditional face to face engagement would not be routinely possible and instead a map-based platform would allow for the initial gathering of ideas and projects and for residents and stakeholders to provide quick feedback to test ideas as they emerged. This would be complimented by written and posted material where appropriate and necessary.

The Chair referred to the demography of the area and the need to include a broad range of views from different sections of the area. The need to engage with the Muslim and Italian Community was also highlighted and agreed.

There was agreement that in addition to the TIP process, central funding opportunities were becoming more readily available and the importance of developing a coherent pipeline of projects that would complement each other and be ready as and when the opportunity arose was therefore important.

The Board discussed the likely assessment models and the difference from the more traditional approach used for Local Growth Fund proposals. Chris Rawson reflected on his experience with cohort 1 local authorities and that central guidance had developed over time but it was now fixed and was sufficiently detailed.

The TIP success factors were likely to be; alignment with the baseline of evidence from the engagement work, supporting the Covid-19 recovery/longer term economic resilience and a reasonable mix of thematic projects.

The Chair reflected on the meeting with the Towns Hub and spoke about not constraining thinking in terms of the current upper bidding limit (up to £25 million), as exceptional schemes would be eligible for up to £50 million. The Board discussed the potential criteria for exceptional, noting the central location of Bletchley in the East West Arc and the opportunity to deliver fundamental change. The Board also noted the significant potential cost of land assembly and the opportunity to enable the delivery of an exceptional Station/Transport Hub. Stephanie Beggs indicated that there was flexibility, but the TIP would need to be particularly high level in terms of vision and context to qualify as exceptional. There would be the opportunity to share more context after the initial assessment of cohort 1 submissions.

Lyndon Adolphus highlighted that the current plans for the Western redevelopment of Bletchley Station and the new eastern entrance were likely to be unsuitable for the additional growth and were also not reflective of Milton Keynes master planning. There was a stage 1 study ongoing which was collecting passenger flow and journey data and was due to complete on 11 August 2020. A feasibility study for a Super Station, which would likely take around 6 months to complete would then follow. Potential design outcomes were the accommodation of a lower level concourse on the western side, an improved eastern entrance and a revised/improved flyover. There was up to £20 million capital funding allocated to the EWRC for the delivery of a Super Station and the outline delivery date was 2022. The Board agreed that the relationship between the TIP and a Super Station should be considered in more detail with a view to forming part of the TIP submission.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Board note the progress update.
2. That engagement workplans should specifically reflect plans to engage with Muslim and Italian communities.
3. That officers engage with Stephanie Beggs after cohort 1 TIP submissions to understand any additional information or examples of likely success factors for 'exceptional' funding bids.
4. That the membership of sub-groups be agreed, and any additional volunteers or suggestions be forwarded to Tracey Aldworth or Paul Hammond.
5. That further work be undertaken to collaborate with the EWRC to incorporate development of a Super Station into the TIP development process.

**TDB15 DATES OF FUTURE MEETING**

The Chair reminded the Board of the dates for the forthcoming meetings, which were 17 September and 22 October (both 3.30 pm – 5.30pm).

**TDB16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 16.45 PM.