

Minutes of the meeting of the MK: BLETCHLEY/FENNY STRATFORD TOWN DEAL BOARD held on THURSDAY 16 JUNE 2022 at 3.30pm.

**Present:** J Cove (JC) (Chair & Chair - MK Dons SET), Councillor, P Marland (Deputy Chair & Leader of Milton Keynes Council), A Ravn-Aagaard (ARA) (Treasurer – Consortium of Bletchley Resident Associations), H Chipping (Chief Executive - SEMLEP), J Mills (JM) (CEO - MK College), J. Graham (Network Rail), A. Warner (Milton Keynes College), H Hupton (HH) (Clerk – West Bletchley Council), I Stewart (IS) (MP for Milton Keynes South), R Whinnett (RW) EWR, J Fairclough (JF) Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council) and D Webber (DW) (Associate – Hvas Associates)

**Also Present:** T Aldworth (TA) (Deputy Chief Executive - Milton Keynes Council), N Sainsbury (NS) (Milton Keynes Council), A Rodgers (AR) (Business Case Development Manager – Milton Keynes Council), S Lloyd (SL) Strategic Lead Economy & Policy – Milton Keynes Council, G Cox (GC) Head of Highways, P Hammond (Area Manager MK Land and Tariff - Milton Keynes Council), Martyn Smith (MS) Infrastructure Programme Manager and E Pierce (EP) (Project Support Officer – Milton Keynes Council)

**Apologies:** N Hart (SEMLEP), P Hume (Joint Sponsor Lead – Network Rail/East West Rail Company), I Revell (CEO - MK Community Foundation), M Todman (Area Lead - BEIS), J Silva (Network Rail), B Everitt (MP), S Proffitt (Director of Environment & Property – Milton Keynes Council), J Barker, (SEMLEP), D Shephard (Clerk - Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council, J Jardine (EWR) and O Mytton (Deputy Director for Public Health - Milton Keynes Council),

**MINUTES:**

**TDB83 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair welcomed members of the Board to the meeting.

**TDB84 PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The Chair invited comments on the minutes from the Board meeting held on 29 March 2022. There were none.

**RESOLVED:**

The minutes of the above meeting were approved as a correct record with only one minor typing amendment to be made.

**TDB85 BUSINESS CASE & PROGRAMME UPDATE**

AR provided the programme update. Business case summary documents for 6 of the 9 projects have been submitted and approved. Confirmation received that funding for projects that have projected spend in the 22/23 financial year will be released at the end of June.

The biggest programme risk is currently inflation. Bletchley Park have encountered issues and are having to raise additional funds to address the rising cost of building material. It is likely to be an ongoing risk that could impact all projects.

AR made the Board aware that there may be delays with approvals and responses from DHLUC over the next few months due to the volume of documents they are currently appraising, including levelling up, shared prosperity as well as Towns Deal summary documents.

**RESOLVED:**

That the board acknowledged approval of the 6 business cases and recognised that rising inflation could impact all projects.

**TDB86**

## **TRANSPORT HUB/INTERCHANGE UPDATE**

AR provided the update. The transport hub can't be created until we do some enabling work. The suggested plan is based around principles outlined in the local transport plan and SPD. It is important to ensure that the plan is both deliverable and affordable within the allocated timeframe

It is important that some enabling work takes place soon in relation to strategic traffic assessments and congestion.

The next steps involve traffic modelling and engineering feasibility assessments whilst continually and proactively engaging with stakeholders.

Until the traffic modelling and assessments have taken place, we will not be in a position to submit a full business case (FBC).

JC advised that he had recently attended a helpful meeting with Iain Stewart and EWR in relation to the transport project, the purpose of the meeting was to convey the importance of an Eastern entrance. Everyone involved in the meeting agreed that they want the Eastern entrance plans to go ahead. EWR have stated that they would like to have clearer plans in place before the recess of parliament if not they will know more in the Autumn.

RW advised that EWR have a new Chief Executive who is supportive of the potential impact that EWR can have on Bletchley and in principle agrees with the proposal for an Eastern entrance. The meeting highlighted that we have a shared vision and plan that everyone wants to be working towards. A working group has been set up to start to move plans forwards.

### **Action RW to provide views on the impact of the current proposals.**

HH enquired what the process would be for commenting on proposed schemes. It was confirmed that changes would need to come back to the Board.

IS suggested it would be helpful for traffic surveys to be undertaken on a comparative basis, keeping Saxon Street as single carriageway as well as a dual carriageway. We also need to consider the Levelling Up bid to compliment the Towns Deal ensuring all options are aligned.

IS advised that DHLUC have suggested they are willing to meet to discuss potential flexibilities around project deadlines.

**Action IS to arrange for a meeting to take place with DHLUC to discuss project timescale flexibilities.**

ARA advised that she received some information from EWR suggesting that there is no interest in progressing with an Eastern Entrance. RW confirmed this information is incorrect.

ARA also made an enquiry relating to Mass Rapid Transit (MRT). GC confirmed that options/business cases are being assessed over the next 12/24 months and should not impact on this project.

RESOLVED:

That the Board approves funding can be spent on transport enabling studies in order to progress the project.

## TDB87

### FIBRE UPDATE

MS provided the update. The business case was approved in early 2022 and funding released in April. The project was ready to move into the delivery stage but before this could happen a statement was required from City Fibre to confirm they haven't exceeded their subsidy control position. It's important we get this clarity; without their assurance we would be proceeding at risk.

City fibre have declared either they don't know their position or can't provide the details. Our 3 options are therefore:

**Proceed at risk** – whilst the likelihood of a challenge is low, the implications are high. MKC legal have advised against this option.

**Full tender** - This option would remove the need to comply with subsidy control as anyone can bid, however there are only 12-18 properties currently targeted which would probably not be an attractive proposition to suppliers.

**Building Digital UK (BDUK) Project Gigabit** – It has been announced that a procurement exercise to extend the reach of fibre to 85% of UK communities by 2025 is to take place.



This is known as “Project Gigabit”. Bletchley is included in the Bedfordshire, Northants, and Milton Keynes procurement for Project Gigabit. This procurement is due to commence in Spring 2023 with the outcome being notified later in the year.

It is recommended that we await the outcome of project Gigabit as the preferred option.

RESOLVED:

That the Board agrees to await the outcome of BDUK Project Gigabit before proceeding any further with the project.

## **TDB88**

### **INNOVATION HUB UPDATE**

AR provided the update. The project has changed directions a number of times recently. The original project concept was to place the Innovation Hub on the old police/fire station site, this was however proving to be a big revenue risk for MKC. This risk resulted in a delay to the production of the FBC. The concept then evolved and the Brunel Centre which is owned by MKDP was suggested as a temporary site. This involved the need for a feasibility study to test the concept. Unfortunately due to consultancy companies’ commitments to levelling up bids, the work attracted no bids.

In consultation with the College it has since become clear that one of the potential options to explore would be how we can instead integrate the Innovation Hub in to the College/IoT model.

The most logical solution would be to give the college the concept and integrate it into their ongoing business model and redefine the business case on that basis. This eliminates issues with the Brunel centre, allowing the site for other business to locate. MKC and the College will need to work together on the concept and jointly produce a FBC.

These latest changes will however result in further delays to the project and the need for a further extension which would have to be formally agreed with DHLUC.

JC stated that as a Board we need to be mindful of the original project objectives and ensure these are not lost through these changes.



Groundbreaking Bletchley & Fenny

AW advised that as part of the original feasibility study the Tech Park and Innovation Hub were competing which didn't make much sense. The team at the College have since re-visited the concept and there appears to now be more synergies. By the next Board meeting more details should be available.

HC enquired if the Board would have visibility of the scope for the feasibility study due to the movement of this project. AR confirmed this would be made available.

IS suggested that it might be worth linking in with the Silverstone Innovation Hub who could provide useful advice from their own experiences.

ARA requested details of the long list of developments for the RDF.

**Action TA to check if the long list of sites can be shared with Board members.**

RESOLVED:

That the Board acknowledged the project changes resulting in further delays, and more details will be shared at the next meeting.

**TDB89**

**RECONFIRMING BOARD ATENDEES**

JC confirmed that he has sent out a skills audit to Board attendees which he has received a good response to but not a conclusive response. It has since become clear that DHLUC are going to issue more guidance in relation to future Board operations moving into delivery stages. This information should be available in the next few weeks.

RESOLVED:

That that Board approved delaying this item until further information is available from DHLUC.

**TDB90**

**AOB**

JF advised that the multi storey car park next to Bletchley leisure centre is attracting anti-social behaviour making it feel unsafe and there are also ongoing issues with the management of the car park.



JF was keen for the Board to be made aware of the future potential management opportunity.

**Action NS to speak to leisure colleagues at MKC about the car park issues and management situation**

GC advised that he has been looking at parking issues in Bletchley more broadly and has agreed a few actions to look at parking and signing, particularly around the Queensway area.

ARA enquired if there was an update on the potential levelling up project, to acquire a key redevelopment site in Central Bletchley to deliver a mixed-use scheme that will have major community benefits. TA confirmed that there was a delegated decision earlier in the week and the proposal will not go forward to round 2 it will however be taken to round 3. The projects to be taken forwards are MK:U and transport improvements.

JC acknowledged his thanks to ARA for inviting several Board members to attend the recent BPARA AGM.

**DATES FOR THE NEXT MEETINGS:**

TBC

**THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING at 16:45**