

Minutes of the meeting of the MK: BLETCHLEY/FENNY STRATFORD TOWN DEAL BOARD held on TUESDAY 3 JULY 2020 at 2.00 pm.

**Present:** Councillor P Marland (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 Cove (Chair - MK Dons SET), C Macdonald (Chief Executive - Milton Keynes Development Partnership), Julie 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) and D Shephard (Clerk - Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council).

**Also Present:** T Aldworth (Deputy Chief Executive - Milton Keynes Council), S Beggs (Senior Policy Advisor - MHCLG), P Hammond (Area Manager MK Land and Tariff - Milton Keynes Council), A Rolfe (Assistant to I Stewart MP) and P Brown (Head of Democratic Services - Milton Keynes Council).

**Apologies:** H Hupton (Clerk – West Bletchley Council), L Rawlinson (Chair Consortium of Bletchley Resident Associations) and D Wetton (Commercial and Business Director - Network Rail).

#### **TDB01 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

Councillor Marland welcomed members of the Board to the meeting and invited nominations for the positions of chair and vice chair.

RESOLVED:

That John Cove (proposed by Councillor Marland) be elected as Chair and Councillor Marland (proposed by Julie Mills) be elected as Vice Chair.

#### **TDB02 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

The Chair explained that all members of the Board would need to sign the Code of Conduct and complete the Disclosure of Interests Form and that further details were provided at Agenda Item 5. At each meeting, Board members would need to declare interests in any agenda items in which they had a pecuniary interest.

Councillor Marland indicated that once interests were registered, declarations of interest in Board decisions would only usually be required at meetings if a decision was likely to have an effect on a Board member's financial standing. In these circumstances' advice would be provided to Board members about participation and voting.

No declarations of interest were received.

### **TDB03 OVERVIEW OF REQUIREMENTS AND RESOURCES**

The Board received a presentation from Tracey Aldworth, which covered

- Latest Government Guidance and available funding
- Background to the investment plan and the submission/assessment process
- Purpose and Focus of the Towns Fund
- The Intervention Framework
- Engagement and alignment with other strategic work and partners
- Investment Plan requirements
- Capacity funds and outline budget
- Additional Towns Deal funding

The Board heard that the ultimate aim was to submit a Town Investment Plan (TIP) that passed the Government's gateway test by the 31 March 2020. There were three TIP submission cohorts; 31 July 2020, 31 October 2020 and a date to be confirmed in January 2021. There was also a resubmission process for any TIP bids submitted that did not initially meet required gateway standards. Once a successful TIP was approved, Heads of Terms would then be agreed and the Town Deal formally announced, before a detailed business cases was developed, which was likely to take up to 12 months.

The funding available was predominantly capital based and in order to be successful, the TIP process needed to improve economic and productivity growth, through urban regeneration, skills/enterprise and connectivity. It was recognised that there would need to be a clear link to spatial strategies such as Neighbourhood Plans, Plan:MK, Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and the new emerging local plan.

There was also an additional capital project funding allocation of £1million to help support projects that would make an immediate impact to the Town Deal area in the current financial year. Proposals would need to link to the TIP process and be submitted to government by 14 August.

The Board considered the available cohorts for the TIP submission and whether 31 October 2020 or January 2021 would be the most appropriate option. The Board's agreed cohort needed to be submitted to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by 13 July 2020, but there was no priority or advantage to selecting a particular cohort.

The Board discussed the merits of two available cohorts and particularly the need to be in a position to submit a robust and sustainable bid, that included any Covid-19 learnings, was aligned with East West Rail decisions and that was also supported by an effective engagement and consultation process.

Stephanie Beggs confirmed the three cohorts were largely arranged to assist MHCLG to plan resources accordingly across 100 Town Deal areas. If, having selected the October cohort, the Board was not in a position to submit the TIP by 31 October 2020, then there was likely to be flexibility to move between cohorts.

Hilary Chipping confirmed that there was additional regional funding available to SEMLEP which was likely to be allocated and confirmed by the end of September, but which was unlikely to be in the Bletchley area.

Councillor Marland explained that there had already been a lot of work on the project undertaken to date, both within the community and through the Bletchley Prospectus. The Council was experienced in this area of work and that four months to complete work on the TIP was achievable. Moreover, he noted there was likely to be flexibility around cohorts, should there be any issues.

The Chair reflected on the resubmission 'safety net' and the likely flexibility around cohorts. He indicated that by selecting the October cohort, the pace and impetus of the project was maintained. Additionally, that one of the Board's particular areas of focus should be ensuring the pace and effectiveness of the engagement process.

**RESOLVED:**

That Officers be authorised to confirm to MHCLG that the MK Bletchley/Fenny Stratford TIP bid would be submitted as part of the October cohort. (Note – October submission confirmed to MHCLG on 10 July)

#### **TDB04 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Chair presented the Draft Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct.

Julie Mills and Ian Revell reflected on the diversity of the Board's membership and community representation. It was broadly agreed that there was underrepresentation on the Board from BAME communities.

Iain Stewart asked about Ward Member representation on the Board and it was confirmed that elected member representation from Milton Keynes Council and Parish Councils would be at sub-group level, including Community Forums, Member Forums and Thematic Working Groups.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct be agreed subject to any further suggestions for additional Board Membership.
2. That a Word version of the Code of Conduct be circulated to Board Members which should be completed and returned to Peter Brown.

#### **TDB05 THE AREA FOR THE TOWN DEAL**

The Board heard from Paul Hammond who advised that the MK Intervention Area was allocated by Government alongside the Towns Fund Prospectus in November 2019. That Intervention Area, based on 2011 census data, did not include Bletchley. With the Council having confirmed Bletchley as the focus of the MK Towns Fund bid, and in line with Government Guidance, it was proposed to extend the MK Intervention Area to include the whole of Bletchley.

RESOLVED:

That the Board authorise Officers to agree an extended MK Intervention Area with government, to include Bletchley.

#### **TDB06 WORK PROGRAMME, SUB-GROUPS AND TIMELINE**

Tracey Aldworth introduced the work programme, noting the ambitious nature of the work plan before introducing the four key strands of work, which were:

- Place and Connectivity
- Land and Development Opportunities (inc SPD)
- Economy and Skills
- Community, Health and Wellbeing

The Board discussed the importance of ensuring that spatial work such as the Central Bletchley Urban Design Framework SPD and the developing Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Neighbourhood Plan linked with the TIP preparation process. The Chair reflected on the number of interventions and policy initiatives effectively running in parallel which might appear disparate and/or confusing from the perspective of the various local communities. On that basis the principle of establishing a Town Deal 'brand', to provide a more visually coordinated approach, was discussed.

The Board agreed the need for collaborative approach across various landowners and particularly the need to have a clear plan for the area which would help ensure that developments were sympathetic to the overall approach and that landowners, parishes and the community understand the overarching aims for the physical/visual identity of development.

Engagement with stakeholders and communities was also identified as important, especially given the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the effect on traditional forms of community engagement. Paul Hammond explained that he had commenced some exploratory work looking at digital engagement platforms and indicated that further detail would be reported to the next Board meeting.

The Board considered the immediate Town Deal capital project funding allocation and were reminded of the need for linkage to the TIP and deliverability in the current financial year. There was some initial discussion about potential priority areas, both for the immediate funding application and those which might feature in the TIP and the need to ensure a coherent approach to developing and shortlisting projects, as opposed to a piecemeal one.

Councillor Marland highlighted the need to align physical completion of project milestones with delivery timescales for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and East West Rail projects. In response, Stephanie Beggs confirmed there was ongoing dialogue between project teams at MHCLG about the linkages between the two projects.

Tracey Aldworth confirmed that individual members of the Board would be encouraged to engage with thematic work groups in the coming weeks and the Chair encouraged that members of the Board be as active as possible in engaging and leading sub-groups.

RESOLVED:

1. That the four key strands in the Work Programme be agreed
2. That members of the Board should complete and submit the 'call for projects' form in respect of schemes that are capable of being delivered in the current financial year (note - by Friday 17 July)
3. That a shortlist of potential projects be available for consideration at the next Board meeting ahead of submission
4. That recommendations for sub-group membership be sent directly to Tracey Aldworth

#### **TDB07 DATES OF FUTURE MEETING**

The Chair received no dissent to the date of the next board meeting date (30 July 3.30 – 5.30pm) and noted the subsequent dates for 17 September and 22 October (both 3.30 pm – 5.30pm).

RESOLVED:

That the circulated dates for Towns Deal Board meetings on 30 July, 17 September and 22 October be agreed.

#### **TDB08 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Oliver Mytton queried the relationship between the Intervention Area (Map A) and the MK Towns Fund Bid Bletchley Focus Area (Map B). Paul Hammond explained that the intervention map was the area agreed by Government for use of Towns Deal funds and based on 2011 census data. However, Milton Keynes Council had identified that Bletchley and Fenny Stratford (Map B) would be the focus area for the work and funds. There would need to be an amendment to the Intervention Area so that it included the Bletchley Focus area and did not exceed the maximum population allowed by Government.

Jack Pickering reflected on the unique relationship between rail operators, Network Rail and The East West Rail Company (EWRC) and particularly their minimum delivery requirements for design and configuration work at Bletchley Station. In particular, that there might be an opportunity to be more ambitious than what each party might ordinarily be inclined to deliver in isolation, especially given the projected growth in Bletchley and Milton Keynes more broadly and the specific role that transport hubs have in placemaking. The Chair asked if the Board might need additional input (in particular from the EWRC) and suggested that this should be raised with EWRC by Network Rail ahead of the next meeting.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 15.45 PM.