

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
MINUTES**

**Date: Friday, 20 March 2020**

**Time: 2.00pm**

**Place: The Codicote Suite, Holiday Inn, St Georges Way, Stevenage SG1 1HS**

**Present:** Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)  
Matt Partridge (Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Councillor)  
Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership)  
Councillor John Gardner (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Ed Jordan (WENTA)  
Kevin Cowin (Mace Developments)  
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Andrew Fisher (Baron Willmore)  
**The following accessed via teleconferencing facilities:**  
Mary Sykes (Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce)  
Sarah McLaughlin (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)  
Stephen Ward (Catapult)  
Claire Dicks (MBDA)  
Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College)  
Greg Westover (Legal & General)  
Karen Hillen (BEIS)  
Chris Barnes (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Graeme Collinge (Genecon)

**Start / End**      Start Time:    2.00pm  
**Time:**            End Time:        3.30pm

**1      WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS**

The newly appointed Independent Chair of the Board (Adrian Hawkins) welcomed everyone to the meeting, both those physically in attendance and connecting via tele-conferencing. He commented that he was delighted with his appointment, and saw it as a key role in driving forward the ambitious plans for the regeneration of Stevenage.

The Chair advised that he had commenced his appointment on 16 March 2020 and had spent the time since getting up to speed with what would be required for the Board. He had already met with a number of the Board representatives and had been impressed with their commitment, vision and leadership for the town.

The Chair stated that he was deeply passionate about Stevenage, and considered that one of the key elements of the Board's work would be to engage with the public and businesses to help maximise the local benefits for regeneration of the town. It was important that a presence and vision for the Board was created, as well as the co-ordination of the aspirations of all Board partners.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Board was advised that apologies for absence had been received from Neville Reyner (Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce), Councillor David Williams (Hertfordshire County Council), Charlotte Blizzard-Welch (Stevenage Citizens Advice Bureau), Charles Amies (Homes England) and Malcolm Evely (Airbus UK).

## **3 MINUTES - STEVENAGE TOWN FUND BOARD - 31 JANUARY 2020**

It was **AGREED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Town Fund Board held on 31 January 2020 be approved as a correct record.

## **4 GOVERNANCE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Tom Pike (Strategic Director, SBC) presented a report on the proposed Governance and Terms of Reference for the Development Board.

The Board was informed that, in 2014/15, a local partnership was formed to support the regeneration of Stevenage, following the allocation of Growth Deal 1 funding of £15Million. The vision was for the re-invigoration of the town centre and various projects were commenced. In 2016/17, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced Growth Deal 3 (GD3) funding of £19Million for Stevenage, subject to conditions including new governance to oversee this programme, including business and political representation.

The Board was further informed that, in late 2019, the Government announced national Town Deal funding programme of £3.6Billion for the regeneration of 101 towns and cities, including Stevenage, and invited Borough/District Councils to form Town Deal Boards to bid for a share of this funding of up to £25M per town. Each town was required to create a Town deal Board, with broad representation from across a range of different organisations and representative bodies, with clear guidance given on which bodies should be involved in a Town Deal Board.

The Board was advised that the proposed Terms of Reference for the Board, attached as Appendix A to the report, had been drafted following negotiation with Government representatives and local partners, and were recommended for approval.

Karen Hillen (BEIS) confirmed that, according to the Cities and Growth Unit, the conditions for release of Growth Deal Round 3 funding for Stevenage had now been met.

It was **AGREED** that the proposed Terms of Reference for the Stevenage Development Board, as attached at Appendix A to the report, be approved.

## **5 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS**

The Chair asked to Board Members to ensure that they declare any potential conflicts of interest they may have at the commencement of the respective item of business on the agenda.

## **6 THE JOURNEY SO FAR - LATEST UPDATE**

Chris Barnes (Regeneration Manager, SBC) gave an oral update in respect of the Stevenage Regeneration journey so far.

The Board was advised that the Queensway project was progressing well, with the first retail units (including the new gym) expected to be completed by the end of April 2020. The Town Square and North Block works were also progressing at pace, and Mace Developments had submitted a planning application for the SG1 Scheme, which had begun its “journey” through the planning process. A planning application for the Bus Interchange project had also been submitted.

The Board acknowledged the uncertainty of activities due to the impact of the coronavirus. As at the date of the meeting, all sites were operational, with Council officers supporting contractors to keep them open, if possible. This would be monitored on a daily basis and developers and contractors would be required to operate in accordance with Government guidelines.

The SBC Regeneration Manager commented that he would keep Board Members updated on the status of projects over the coming months.

In response to a question regarding precautions being taken to protect operational staff on site, Kevin Cowin (Mace Developments) stated that contract staff were reporting in from each site on a daily basis. All sites were following the guidance on protecting workers and sites issued by the Government, Construction Leadership Council and Build UK. Some administrative workers associated with particular sites were working remotely, although there needed to be some presence maintained for health and safety purposes.

## **7 TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN - WORK PLAN**

This item was taken in association with the following item – Developing the Town Investment Plan (TIP).

Andrew Fisher (Barton Willmore) gave a presentation on the Town Investment Plan – Work Plan. He explained that it was a challenging timetable, which could be extended due to the coronavirus situation, but that the proposal was to continue as usual for the time being and work through different stages of the project with review points at each stage.

Slides were presented in respect of a number of things (big questions) for Board Members to consider the current position of regeneration in Stevenage; the TIP approach (guidance, content and process); the TIP submission; and the target

programme; engagement; and the spatial and thematic focusses.

The focus on delivering long term economic and productivity growth through the TIP was stressed, with projects and actions relating to the 3 themes of urban regeneration, planning and land use; skills and enterprise infrastructure; and connectivity.

Andrew Fisher (Barton Willmore) explained that the plan was for the submission of a final Stevenage TIP to the Government by late Summer (August) 2020. Graeme Collinge (Genecon) commented that, should the process be similar to that used on the High Street Fund, there would be a strong focus on TIPs delivering projects within proposed timescales.

In relation Step 3 of the TIP process (Rationalisation of Scope and Project Capture), Graeme Collinge (Genecon) explained that the High Street Fund process had placed an emphasis on direct and indirect economic contributions and that work had been needed to narrow down project lists and priorities to align with these priority areas.

In reply to a question regarding the nature of economic contributions, Graeme Collinge (Genecon) advised that the Treasury's approach to this had changed over time. It used to relate to an assessment of the impact on jobs and Gross Value Added (GVA), but with an increasing focus on a Land Value Uplift (LVU) approach, with the wider impact on jobs and GVA referred to in the narrative alongside. It was anticipated that the LVU approach could be used to assess TIP bids (in the same way it had been used in the assessment of High Street Fund bids). Karen Hillen (BEIS) undertook to clarify if the LVU approach was to be used by the Government for TIP bids.

Andrew Fisher (Barton Willmore) concluded the presentation by drawing attention to 3 particular things that required consideration, namely engagement (utilising the #MyTown campaign); spatial focus (central parts of Stevenage or beyond); and thematic focus (fitting in with the 3 themes outlined earlier).

Comments made by Board Members included:

- For engagement, as well as the idea of utilising #MyTown, the importance of using, where possible, existing consultation and communication platforms;
- A sense of perspective, in that for some towns the Town Deal bid was the entirety of their regeneration proposals, whereas Stevenage also had access to GD3 funding and possibly other regeneration funds and so may wish to broaden the scope; and
- The area of Gunnels Wood Road including the Science Park, and improvements to its connectivity to the Railway Station and Town Centre, would be investigated as a potential project.

## **8 DEVELOPING THE TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN (TIP)**

[Covered under previous item: Town Investment Plan – Work Plan – see Minute 7 above.]

## **9 GROWTH DEAL ROUND 3**

[Prior to the consideration of this item, the Chair, Councillor Sharon Taylor (SBC) and Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP) all declared potential conflicts of interest as they all serve on the Hertfordshire LEP Board or work for the LEP.]

Tom Pike (Strategic Director, SBC) presented a report in respect of Growth Deal 3 (GD3) funding. He advised that a bid for £19M of GD3 capital funding had been made in the autumn of 2016, and approved by the Hertfordshire LEP in December 2016, as part of a package agreed with the Government (Cities and Growth Unit). It included allocations for:

- Relocation of the bus station to unlock development potential in Stevenage town centre;
- Further land assembly to unlock other major opportunity areas;
- Creating car park decking to enable development of other sites; and
- Delivery of some at-grade crossings on existing highways to enhance connections with the central parts of the town.

The Board noted that the release of this funding was tied to specific conditions in relation to the governance of Stevenage Town Centre regeneration. As it stood, GD 3 funding must be spent by the end of the Financial Year 2020/21, presenting a short window to deliver particular schemes.

The Board further noted that, in February 2017, the Cities and Growth Unit and Ministers agreed that the bid from Hertfordshire LEP presented a strong case for investment, but had some concerns around funding, capacity and governance to deliver solutions in Stevenage. A revised package of projects was agreed, subject to conditions that:

- Local partners created a new governance structure to oversee the regeneration, with an independent Chair;
- The new structure should include a stronger business voice than the pre-existing Stevenage First partnership, with representation from local employers; and
- The new structure should also include stronger political representation, including the local MP.

After much discussion, the Cities and Growth Unit had agreed that the Stevenage GD3 funding can be released, subject to meeting these and additional conditions, required under the new 'Towns Fund'.

The Board was advised that, with the appointment of a new independent Chair for the Stevenage Development Board, the creation of this new Board, and the approved Terms of Reference for the Board (see Minute 4 above), the £19M GD3 Stevenage funding would then be released to support and enable regeneration projects in Stevenage.

Tom Pike (Strategic Director, SBC) explained that the Borough Council had processed early work on the Stevenage Bus Interchange scheme and the LEP had approved GD3 funding of £9.6M for the project. The Council was currently

prioritising a range of developments and interventions for the balance of £9.4M capital funding that not only aligned with the regeneration programme for the town, but also achieved the spend profile within the allocated timescale. The Council had been engaging with the Hertfordshire LEP and other partners to consider suitable projects, which could include improvements to the physical and digital infrastructure and utilities; land acquisition of town centre sites; sustainable transport; and public realm, heritage and environment improvements.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the TIP proposals to be put forward would be complementary to the GD3 projects, and could include highways-related schemes.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair undertook to write to the Hertfordshire LEP confirming that Growth Deal 3 conditions had now been discharged and to request the release of the GD3 monies, both for the Bus Station Interchange project and the balance of funds to be used for other schemes.

It was **AGREED**:

1. That it be noted that the previously approved GD3 Transport/Bus Interchange project was underway, and it be requested that delivery of the project is progressed in accordance with the funding application approved by the Hertfordshire LEP.
2. That it be requested that the LEP and SBC review the most efficient and robust process for expediting remaining GD3 project applications.
3. That delegated authority be given to the Chair to review proposed GD3 projects with the Officer Team prior to the next meeting, given that the meetings will be focussed mainly on the Town Deal.

## **10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### Government Support Funding due to Coronavirus outbreak

Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage BC) advised that, due to the coronavirus outbreak, the Government had announced 100% Business Rates relief for retail businesses. Stevenage Borough Council had written to all relevant businesses advising them of this announcement and that direct debit payments due in April 2020 had been cancelled.

The Government had also announced a Business Grants scheme of £10,000 for small businesses and up to £25,000 for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses (tapered accordingly to rateable value of premises). The Grant money would be released by the Government after 1 April 2020, with SBC making arrangements for swift payments, noting the implications for a range of businesses, including most of the businesses operating out of the Indoor Market and Business Technology Centre.

It was noted that the Government had further announced a hardship fund to support residents struggling with Council Tax payments. Information would be conveyed to

residents as soon as guidance was received from the Government.

## **11 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Meetings would be monthly initially to enable the Town Fund proposal to progress. Some may become virtual workshops for developing the Town Deal proposal. Meetings would revert to quarterly from late Summer 2020 onwards.

- **Tuesday, 7 April 2020: 10.00am – 12.00pm**
- **Tuesday, 5 May 2020: 10.00am – 12.00pm**
- **Wednesday, 3 June 2020: 2.00pm – 4.00pm**
- **Wednesday, 28 July 2020: 10.00am – 12.00pm**
- **September 2020 (tbc)**
- **December 2020 (tbc)**

In closing the meeting, the Chair thanked all participants for their contributions, either in person or via tele-conferencing, and asked SBC officers to investigate the possibility of video (rather than telephone) conferencing for future Board meetings.