

## **STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MINUTES**

**Date: Tuesday, 16 March 2021**

**Time: 10.00am**

**Place: Virtual (via Zoom)**

**Present:** Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)  
Matt Partridge (Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council)  
Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Councillor John Gardner (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Chris Barnes (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Annie Piper (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Councillor David Williams (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)  
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire LEP)  
Mary Sykes (Herts Chamber of Commerce)  
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)  
Alice Loukaides (Citizens Advice Bureau)  
Ed Jordan (WENTA)  
Zahid Latif (Catapult)  
Kit Davies (North Herts College)  
Kevin Cowin (MACE)  
Sian Carter (Homes England)  
Greg Westover (Legal and General)  
Karen Hillen (BEIS)  
Malcolm Everly (Airbus)  
Sally Ann Forsyth (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)  
James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)  
Rupert Thacker (Hertfordshire County Council)  
George Stephens (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust)  
Hetty Thornton (Historic England)  
Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire)

**Start / End**      Start Time:    10.00am  
**Time:**            End Time:       11.36am

### **1      WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING STATEMENT**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the eighth meeting of the Development Board. He referred to the wonderful news that the Government had allocated £37.5Million of Town Deal funding for the Stevenage Town Investment Plan, and he gave his

heartfelt thanks to all Board Members, together with the officer support team, for their efforts and hard work over the past year in achieving this excellent outcome.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Board was advised that apologies for absence had been received from the following:

Stephen Ward (Catapult) – Zahid Latif substituting  
Charlotte Blizzard-Welch (Citizens Advice Bureau) – Alice Loukaides substituting  
Sarah Brierley (East & North Herts Health Trust) – George Stephens substituting  
Briege Leahy (Herts Chamber of Commerce) – Mary Sykes substituting  
Charles Amies (Homes England) – Sian Carter substituting  
Sarah McLaughlin (Hertfordshire County Council) – Rupert Thacker substituting  
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)  
Claire Dicks (MBDA)  
Neville Reyner (Groundwork East)

## **3 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 28 JANUARY 2021 / MATTERS ARISING**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 28 January 2021 be approved as a correct record.

## **4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS**

The Board received the latest conflicts of interest list.

## **5 TOWN DEAL - HEADS OF TERMS AND NEXT STEPS**

The Chair referred to the Stevenage Town Deal Heads of Terms offer document from Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) for the £37.5Million awarded to Stevenage following the successful approval of its Town Investment Plan (TIP). This document had been circulated to Board members in advance of the meeting.

The Chair was pleased to report that no projects had been excluded from the TIP, but reminded the Board that its bid had been for £50Million, and so work would be required to tailor projects to fit the £37.5Million awarded. In this respect, the Chair stated that he would be writing to the MHCLG to ascertain that, should the information provided back to them by the Team regarding the projects be of a high standard, would they consider releasing the remaining £12.5Million applied for originally.

The following points were made by Board members:

- The resourcing requirements of all partners to deliver the programme, particularly the SBC Regeneration Team, would need to be considered at an early stage, as well as innovative and imaginative ways of attracting match funding to fully finance the programme; and

- Foremost in the ongoing work on priorities and action plans should be that the Government's offer of £37.5Million was in recognition of the case made for the national significance of the proposals to develop Stevenage's life sciences sector.

In response to a question, Chris Barnes (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) explained that Heads of Terms offer stipulated a period of 12 months in which to submit business cases for all of the projects to the MHCLG, and a period of five years (up to 2026) in which to spend the £37.5Million.

In reply to a further question, Chris Barnes commented that ideally the match funding required for each scheme should form part of its Business Case, but he recognised that this would be challenging for some projects, especially if private sector funding would be required. There would be a need to weigh up what would be considered to be an acceptable level of financial risk pertaining to each project.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Stevenage Town Deal Heads of Terms offer document be accepted, to be signed off by the Chair of the Board and SBC Chief Executive and returned to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

## 6 2021 BOARD PROGRAMME

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) presented a report on the proposed 2021 Board Programme, which had been circulated to Board members in advance of the meeting.

Tom advised that, following agreement of Heads of Terms, there would be a significant programme of work to develop all business cases and the overarching plan (the Town Deal Summary Document), to be completed within a twelve month timeframe. It was therefore proposed that the Board work plan included reports throughout the year ahead to:

- Agree the overall 2021/2022 Town Deal programme, including plans to develop and progress project business cases, along with supporting elements such as an engagement plan;
- Incorporate an early stage progress review against business case development (late Spring); and
- Incorporate review points for the finalisation of business cases for submission to Government, in accordance with potential Town Deal funding conditions.

Tom explained that the development of individual business cases would be supported by a Town Deal Officer team, to work on business case development and providing the technical skills (financial modelling, development management, particular specialisms) to ensure that high quality business cases received full approval within twelve months.

In support of the above aim, Tom stated that it was proposed that a key focus for the Board's work plan in 2021 would be to oversee this business case development process, and inviting the thematic working groups to contribute to different projects (Heritage, Skills, Regeneration, Connectivity) at key points such as project scoping,

review of the outline proposals and review of draft final outline business cases.

Tom advised that a key priority for the Stevenage Development Board was to create outstanding opportunities for local people to access skills, training and development opportunities, and benefit from the employment opportunities within the local area. This had been proactively led by the Board, with events such as Generation Stevenage achieving very positive support from businesses, young people and public sector partners. It was proposed this theme had a particular focus during the course of the year ahead.

Tom commented that it was further recommended that the Board maintained an overview of other Government funding streams and bidding opportunities as they emerged, to help leverage the fullest impact for the Town Investment Plan and provide support across partners to secure further funding where available. This approach could be used to provide support to future bids, lobbying or inward investment activity, and to maintain close links with opportunities such as the Herts Growth Board programme and to remain informed of the progress of key regeneration and other programmes.

Tom presented a draft 2021 Board Programme aligned to the priorities and areas of focus set out above, and based on the Board meeting on a two monthly basis in May 2021, July 2021, October 2021, December 2021 and February 2022.

In response to a series of questions, Tom replied:

- the size of the SBC Regeneration Team would need to be increased to support/resource the TIP project business cases. Further external support would be required from sector experts, together with the specialist advice provided by the various thematic working groups;
- the October TIP submission identified a number of potential fast-track projects. This would be re-assessed, although there were 2 projects that could fall into this category. If so, it was possible that a relatively early approval of business cases relating to these projects could be submitted to the Board during 2021; and
- The Team was working closely with the Herts Growth Board on cell and gene therapy technology. The Growth Board was working on an Action Plan in this regard, which when completed would be shared with the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst and Catapult.

It was **RESOLVED** that the draft 2021 Board Programme, as set out in the report, be approved.

## **7 2021 PROGRAMME PLAN**

Annie Piper (SBC Regeneration Programme Manager) gave a slide presentation providing some further detail in respect of the 2021 Programme Plan.

Annie displayed a slide showing an indicative delivery programme for the 10 projects included in the TIP and a funding strategy. The importance of engagement, both with stakeholders and the public, was also stressed. It was also proposed to re-

establish the four themed working groups that were set up to drive forward the work on the TIP submission.

Annie presented flowcharts showing the progression of a business case through to Board approval and the business case development structure. Slides were presented on business case work streams, including a delivery plan for business case development; governance and business case assurance; engagement plan (residents and stakeholders); and financial planning and programme profiling.

Annie summarised the work completed so far, which included:

- Delivery appraisal for the projects;
- Development of Board Plan for next 12 months;
- Initial Resourcing estimation;
- Initial programme and project commissioning matrix;
- Reviewed updated Green Business Case guidance (Towns Fund resources provided this); and
- Engaged in the Town's Fund working groups and webinars related to the projects (including on Active travel, Tourism, Digital, Masterplanning, and general).

Chris Barnes (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) explained the various responsibilities of the Board and Accountable Body (Stevenage Borough Council) throughout the ongoing process, and commented that the Board would play a key role in supporting the journey from concepts to projects (and on to delivery) as follows:

- Leading aspects of projects;
- Providing Assurance and Guidance;
- Providing direction and input through engagement in theme groups and sponsoring projects; and
- Co-ordinating communications and supporting campaigns, remaining a champion of the Stevenage Town Investment Plan.

Annie concluded the presentation by stating that the next steps would be to complete the works outlined above and specifically to:

- Develop the engagement approach;
- Reactivate the four theme groups;
- Finalise business case processes;
- Agree Heads of Terms;
- Prepare financial profiling of projects; and
- Allocate resources.

## **8 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

Chris Barnes (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) gave a slide presentation updating the Board on the Stevenage Regeneration Programme. He advised that, in summary, the challenges of the third lockdown were easing slightly, but that the impact was still felt, especially in relation to risk & scheme programme changes.

However, there was some positive commercial news on multiple fronts, highlighting the pace of change. Overall, there had been really positive progress on project completions, projects underway and projects in planning.

Chris displayed a number of photographs showing the good progress on the North Block/Town Square, Bus Interchange, and Queensway North projects.

In relation to a question regarding the Bus Interchange project, Chris informed the Board that he was unaware of any public criticism regarding the current temporary closure of one of the southbound lanes on Lytton Way, required in order to facilitate various preliminary aspects of the scheme.

In reply to a question in respect of demolition works, Chris stated that these were still planned for Swingate House and the Former Police Station/Garage Block in Southgate. Mace were currently carrying out asbestos removal and soil testing works. The public would be informed of demolition proposals and dates as soon as these became clearer.

## **9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **(1) Enterprise update**

The Chair invited Ed Jordan (WENTA) to provide an update on the Covid-19 recovery situation of the enterprise sector.

Ed advised that some small and medium businesses had received little or no Government funding support. Joblessness was a risk, particularly amongst younger people. Conversely, however, there were a number of new business start-ups, reflecting a growing entrepreneurial spirit, fuelled by a sense of vaccine optimism.

### **(2) Leisure/Culture/Hospitality update**

The Chair invited Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House) to provide an update on the Covid-19 recovery situation of the leisure/culture/hospitality sector.

Martha advised that the sector had been pleased with the Government's Roadmap, although many organisations had experienced difficulties in the interpretation of the guidance. It was difficult to forward plan as, for example, weddings involved not only the venue, but also catering, florists, photographers etc.

Martha commented that many parts of the sector had introduced excellent online engagement methods, but there was a growing impatience amongst the public for the ability to meet in person. For this to occur, there was a need to ensure that robust Covid-safety systems and protocols were in place. It may be the case for some parts of the sector that further Government financial support might be needed in order to sustain the viable re-opening of leisure, cultural and hospitality venues.

### **(3) Construction Industry update**

The Chair invited Kevin Cowan (Mace Developments) to provide an update on the

Covid-19 recovery situation of the construction industry.

Kevin stated that work on the SG1 project was continuing. Demolition work would be commencing soon, together with finalisation of the Section 106 Agreement and legal conditions. Once completed, work on the first phase of the SG1 scheme could commence in earnest.

Kevin advised that, in general terms, the construction industry had been robust over the past 12 months, and had incorporated Covid-safe working methods and procedures. He added that Mace was now close to the level of on-site productivity pre-pandemic, and he was positive for the future.

(4) NHS update

The Chair invited George Stephens (East & North Hertfordshire NHS Trust) to provide an update on the Covid-19 recovery situation of the National Health Service.

George advised that recovery had started, with less patients being hospitalised with Covid-19. Across the NHS, providers were looking at re-commencing “business as usual”, in tackling the backlog of cases placed on hold whilst resources were focussed on the pandemic. The NHS were employing new clinical support workers, and so he was pleased that the Town Deal included an Enterprise Centre, which he hoped could be utilised to support the training of NHS staff.

(5) Stevenage Old Town High Street

Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council) advised that the Council was working with businesses in Stevenage Old Town on a short-term recovery plan. The Council had received £78,000 from the Government to assist via the Reopening Safely scheme and was looking at a shop local scheme (with some ring-fenced funding) to help attract local demand. A consultation letter to be sent to Old Town businesses and residents was to be sent out shortly.

## **10 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Board had been arranged to take place virtually (via Zoom) at 2.30pm on Thursday, 13 May 2021.