

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 13 May 2021

Time: 2.30pm

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)
Chris Barnes (Stevenage Borough Council)
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)
Annie Piper (Stevenage Borough Council)
Warren Myles (Stevenage Borough Council)
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)
Zayd Al-Jawad (Stevenage Borough Council)
Lewis Claridge (Stevenage Borough Council)
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)
Colin Haigh (Hertfordshire County Council)
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)
Briege Leahy (Herts Chamber of Commerce)
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)
Ed Jordan (WENTA)
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)
Zahid Latif (Catapult)
Kasia Averall (Catapult)
Kit Davies (North Herts College)
Kevin Cowin (MACE)
Greg Westover (Legal and General)
Karen Hillen (BEIS)
Keith Ellis (Airbus)
Sally Ann Forsyth (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
George Stephens (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust)
Hetty Thornton (Historic England)
Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire)

Start / End Start Time: 2.30pm
Time: End Time: 4.30pm

1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including those who were attending their first meeting of the Board. He updated the Board on a number of things that had happened since the last meeting, including:

- Borough Councillor John Gardner had suffered a heavy fall, resulting in his hospitalisation. The Board supported the Chair in wishing Councillor Gardner a speedy recovery;
- County Councillor David Williams had unfortunately lost his seat at the recent County Council Elections and would no longer be a member of the Board. On behalf of the Board, the Chair had passed on his commiserations to David and had thanked him for his excellent input into the Board's work and in support of Stevenage over the past few years;
- Malcolm Evely (Airbus) had recently retired from work. The Chair thanked him for his support for the Board and wished him well in his retirement; and
- Neville Reyner (Groundwork East) had resigned from the Board and had moved to Lincolnshire.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Borough Councillor John Gardner
 Stephen Ward (Catapult) – Zahid Latif and Kasia Averall substituting
 Charlotte Blizzard-Welch and Alice Loukiades (Citizens Advice Bureau)
 Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership)
 Charles Amies (Homes England)
 Sarah McLaughlin (Hertfordshire County Council) – Colin Haigh substituting
 Sarah Brierley and Mary Hartley (East & North Herts Health Trust) – George Stephens substituting
 Duncan Parsley (GlaxoSmithKline)

3 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 16 MARCH 2021 / MATTERS ARISING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 16 March 2021 be approved as a correct record.

4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS

The Board received the latest conflicts of interest list, and was advised that the list would be updated to reflect the fact that former County Councillor David Williams was no longer a member of the Board.

5 TOWN DEAL - SUBMISSION TO GOVERNMENT ON BUSINESS CASE PIPELINE

Chris Barnes (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) gave a slide presentation regarding the pipeline for the submission to the Government of Business Plans for projects included in Stevenage's Town Investment Plan (TIP).

Chris advised that key work streams had been established, in order to prepare for Business Case delivery, including a delivery plan, governance, engagement plan and financial planning. The completion of these activities over the coming 4 weeks would form the full programme delivery plan for the next 12 months.

Chris stated that, in terms of Business Case (BC) preparation, the Town Deal Heads of Terms had been returned to the Government. A number of other steps were also reported to be in place: a draft governance paper had been prepared setting out the development and review process for business cases, including further engagement with the Government's Town Deal support team; professional support had been commissioned for the production of business cases; a number of the fast track projects were moving towards the drafting stage; additional resources had been secured to increase capacity to work on business cases and to prepare for implementation; initial meetings had been held with the Theme Group leads from within the Development Board; and work was progressing on the finalisation of the delivery plan and timescales.

Chris explained that the Board would play a key role in supporting the journey from concepts to projects (and on to delivery) by leading on aspects of projects; providing assurance and guidance; providing direction and input through engagement with the four Theme Groups and in sponsoring projects; and co-ordinating communications, supporting campaigns and championing the Stevenage Town Investment Plan.

Chris commented that, following the issue of the Town Deal Heads of Terms, the Stevenage Development Board Chair and the Council as "Accountable Body" must sign and submit a 2 month return by 23 May 2021, including the allocation of monies across the projects; financial profiling for the next 5 years; and a summary showing the anticipated outputs for the projects.

Chris advised that it was proposed that the following key principles would be followed:

- Retain all of the projects in the shortlist of the Investment Plan and publicly commit to delivering what the Board had set out to deliver, making the funding work as hard as possible to maximise the investment.
- Remove the digital project (£150,000) as a standalone item, and include it in the GWR or Gateway as a wider connectivity piece, which meant it could be delivered much quicker, as it would not achieve direct outputs; and
- Reduce formal outputs with the Government where projects were utilising less grant funding – these should be viewed as "minimum" baseline requirements and the Board would seek to achieve beyond these baseline requirements.

In terms of adjustments to mitigate the funding gap between the Town Deal Funding and the overall estimated cost of schemes, Chris proposed the following approach:

- Less funding for Station Gateway – working on the preparation phases to enable land release for example by provision of a Multi-Storey Car Park and master planning as a first stage to unlocking the gateway, with the infrastructure and enabling works to be the subject of a future funding bid. Work would continue on the Area Action Plan so that preparations could be made to deliver the long-

- term vision for this area;
- Focus initially on the life sciences development on Marshgate, using other sites to deliver key-worker housing and maintaining commitment to its key worker housing priority, and seek further funding;
- Minor reductions to a couple of the other projects (Cycling, Heritage Centre, Enterprise Centre) to balance the £37.5M across the projects without affecting deliverability too significantly; and
- An alternative funding scenario had been considered where one big project, such as the Leisure or Station Gateway, was removed completely, enabling other projects to receive their full funding allocation. This option had been rejected as it significantly reduced what could be delivered (one of the key regeneration projects dropped out), and what would be gained back in return from the other projects was not significant.

Chris concluded by stating that the next steps would be to:

- submit the two-month return in line with the principles outlined above, signed by the SDB Chair and the SBC's Section 151 Officer to confirm agreement to the funding profile following consultation with the Chair and the Theme Leads.
- develop funding brochures for each of the business cases to engage other funding sources;
- continue to engage through the four Theme Groups;
- start work on the fast-track business cases; and
- finalise governance and assurance arrangements for Board endorsement.

Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council) asked Chris to submit to the next Board meeting a list of potential sources of match funding for the TIP projects, together with any Government advice as to the suitability and acceptability of match-funding sources.

It was **RESOLVED** that the actions taken, the proposed approach and the next steps outlined by the SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration in respect of the Stevenage Town Investment Plan projects be endorsed.

6 LEVELLING UP SUMMARY

Chris Barnes (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) gave a slide presentation in respect of the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF).

Chris began by explaining that the Levelling Up Fund was a £4.8Bn Government fund for high level local infrastructure, with places being categorised by need (Stevenage was in Category 3 – lowest need). The guidance and assessment principles had been published, based on the three themes of Transport (bids of £20M - £50M), Regeneration (bids of up to £20M) and Cultural (bids of up to £20M).

Chris was requesting the endorsement of the Board for a bid to be submitted, to build on the economic analysis, vision and strategy presented in the Stevenage Town Investment Plan (TIP). The deadline for Round 1 bids was 18 June 2021.

Chris advised that the proposal was to submit a package of 3 bids, expanding on the

TIP submission, based on an assessment of deliverability; alignment with the guidance and priorities of the LUF; the ability to start spending money in 2021/22; and added value – delivering more outputs and outcomes than the Town Fund submission. The package would highlight a renewed focus on recovery from the Covid pandemic, in terms of the impact on the way transport was used, public spaces, town centres, ways of working and changing trends in employment. Other area would include delivering health and wellbeing, sustainability, town centre regeneration and job creation.

Chris explained that the package of 3 bids would focus on urban connectivity; “Healthy Hub” leisure and wellbeing; and unlocking sustainable employment. He presented slides outlining examples of what could be included in each of these bids for Stevenage.

During the debate, the following points were made:

- Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire Growth Board) welcomed the focus on unlocking sustainable employment, which was so important to the work of the Hertfordshire Growth Board. She suggested that the bid should focus on the importance of the STEM/Gene cluster element within the package as a whole;
- Borough Councillor Sharon Taylor asked for the bids to pay due cognisance to levelling up in relation to the skills and employment agenda for young people, as well as levelling up for healthy lifestyles by mentioning the Stevenage Young People’s Healthy Hub;
- Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House) was pleased to see the cultural sector represented, and requested that consideration be given to the provision of more community use spaces in the Healthy Hub, and to apply for further financial support for Stevenage Museum, including outreach work and the digitising of archives;
- Sally Ann Forsyth (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst) was delighted to report that an independent economic impact assessment relating to the Gunnelwood gyratory road system had recently been published. The cost benefit analysis had concluded that works to improve the gyratory were viable. She had been involved in a number of meetings with BEIS representatives, in order to emphasise the importance of these highway improvements on the adjacent STEM/Gene cluster, and she would shortly be writing to the Secretary of State for Transport about the matter;
- Kit Davies (North Herts College) stressed the importance of the linkages between each of the bids in the package, with regard to the Government’s priority agendas, including skills training, adult learning, health, young people, local employment, etc.;
- Karen Hillen (BEIS) explained that package bids would be assessed by the Government at bid level, not at individual project level, meaning that weaker projects could potentially affect the whole submission;
- Colin Haigh (Hertfordshire County Council) expressed his Council’s support for the Gunnelwood gyratory improvement project. HCC was intending to submit a £50M bid for LUF for a strategic transport scheme in the Transport category, possibly the proposed cross-country Mass Rapid Transit scheme, but was awaiting any local bids in this category in order that (if possible) they could be linked into the strategic bid;

- Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) acknowledged that the bid deadline of 18 June 2021 would be challenging, but that officers would be working with the intention of submitting a compelling bid, in conformity with Government guidance. Should a bid be submitted, he noted that some Board Members may prepare letters of endorsement and support that could be sent to the relevant Government Department.

The Chair asked Chris Barnes to take into account the above comments during the preparation of the package of bids.

It was **RESOLVED** that the package of bids for Levelling Up Funding, as presented by the SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration, be endorsed.

7 **THEMATIC REPORT - STEVENAGE CONNECTION GATEWAY AREA ACTION PLAN**

Tom Pike (Strategic Director, Stevenage Borough Council) provided an introduction to the Stevenage Connection Gateway Area Action Plan (aimed at enhancing the area around the Stevenage Railway Station). He commented that the Stevenage Local Plan identified the area as a major opportunity area, which could accommodate uses such as an extended and regenerated train station; a new bus station; residential homes; multi-story parking; offices uses; commercial uses; and restaurants and cafes.

Tom commented that the Stevenage gateway area of Stevenage was a key for economic competitiveness, and a number of local businesses had identified this as a key front door for their business and future growth.

Tom advised that the Council had prepared an Options and Issues report on the Area Action Plan (AAP), which had been circulated to Board Members. This was the first stage of development of the AAP, which would be open for public consultation shortly. This would be followed by a further stage of consultation, anticipated to take place in late 2021. A number of relevant bodies would be invited to submit representations on the document, including Hertfordshire County Council (Highways), Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Network Rail, Govia Thameslink Railway, Mace (SG1 partner) and Legal & General (landowners to the west of the station).

Lewis Claridge (SBC Planning Policy Manager) gave a slide presentation on the detail of the AAP, including the enabling framework, the key design principles for enhancing the area, and the proposed core enhancements.

At the suggestion of Hetty Thornton (Historic England - HE), Lewis undertook to contact HE's Historic Places Advisor to discuss the heritage issues and links relating to the project. In a similar vein, Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House) commented that the project should be aligned with any proposals for a future cultural, arts and heritage trail across the town.

In response to a question from Kit Davies (North Herts College) regarding how the potential revised highway layout would link up with other parts of the town, Lewis

commented that this would be considered as part of a separate piece of work to be carried out jointly with Hertfordshire County Council Highways.

8 STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - FINANCIAL REPORT

The Chair presented the first financial report to the Board, and commented that Stevenage Borough Council's Finance Team, led by Clare Fletcher (SBC Strategic Director), would henceforth be responsible for providing the Board with regular financial reports.

9 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Chris Barnes (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) gave a slide presentation updating the Board on the Stevenage Regeneration Programme. He advised that physical delivery was progressing well on all sites. In respect of Queensway North, lease completions were underway and multiple fit-out works were taking place on site. There had been significant interest in the new residential units. Enabling works on the Matalan site were due to commence in the summer. The Board noted a number of photographs showing progress on a number of the projects.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(1) University of Hertfordshire – Institute of Technology application

Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire) advised that the University was in the process of a Stage 2 application for Institute of Technology (IoT) status. This application needed to be supported by local large businesses being represented on the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) that would be established to oversee the IoT process. Julie will be writing to such businesses, in the near future to ask for representatives to serve on the SPV.

Keith Ellis commented that Airbus are very keen on STEM activities/ delivery and would be pleased to support the IoT application.

(2) STEM Discovery Centre

The Chair invited comments from Board Members in respect of the STEM Discovery Centre offer, noting its positive contribution and opportunities it created for local young people, and the need for a post-pandemic business plan to support the vital STEM agenda in Stevenage.

11 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To be advised.