

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 29 July 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)
Councillor John Gardner (Stevenage Borough Council)
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)
Gemma Hannant (Stevenage Borough Council)
County Councillor Richard Roberts (Hertfordshire County Council)
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)
Rupert Thacker (Hertfordshire County Council)
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire LEP)
Briege Leahy (Herts Chamber of Commerce)
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)
Stephen Ward (Catapult)
Kasia Averall (Catapult)
Kevin Cowin (MACE)
Keith Ellis (Airbus)
James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
George Stephens (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust)
Jennifer Godwin (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust)
Hetty Thornton (Historic England)
Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire)

Start / End Start Time: 10.00am
Time: End Time: 11.55am

1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly County Councillor Richard Roberts, the Leader of Hertfordshire County Council, who was attending his first Board meeting.

The Chair conveyed his congratulations to Martha Lytton Cobbold on her recent appointment as Deputy Lieutenant of Hertfordshire.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Kit Davies (North Herts College)
Ed Jordan (WENTA)
Sarah Brierley (East & North Herts Health Trust)
Charles Amies & Sian Carter (Homes England)
Greg Westover (Legal & General)
Duncan Parsley (GlaxoSmithKline)
Karen Hillen (BEIS)
Sally Ann Forsyth (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
Alice Loukiades (Citizens Advice Bureau)

3 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 13 MAY 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 13 May 2021 be approved as a correct record.

4 CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS AND OPENNESS

The Board received the latest conflicts of interest list.

5 THE LIFE SCIENCES VISION AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR STEVENAGE

Kasia Averall (Catapult) gave a slide presentation regarding the Life Sciences vision and what it meant for Stevenage. Kasia began by referring to the BEIS Life Sciences Vision document published on 6 July 2021, which was a 10 year strategy for the sector “to solve the biggest healthcare problems of our generation”.

Kasia advised that the document focussed on the following four themes:

1. Building on the new ways of working from COVID-19 to tackle future disease missions;
2. Building on the UK’s science and clinical research infrastructure and harnessing the UK’s unique genomic and health data;
3. Supporting the NHS to test, purchase and spread innovative technologies more effectively, so that cutting-edge science and innovations can be embedded widely across the NHS as early as possible, and rapidly adopted in the rest of the world; and
4. Creating the right business environment in the UK in which companies could access the finance to grow, be regulated in an agile and efficient way, and manufacture and commercialise their products in the UK.

Kasia was pleased to report that the Stevenage Cell and Gene Therapy (CGT) Cluster was mentioned in the BEIS document. She added that this was a Global GCT opportunity for Stevenage, which was already recognised as a leader in cell and gene therapies in the UK, Europe and worldwide, and was currently the third largest CGT cluster outside of the USA. In the UK, strong GCT clusters either

already existed or were growing in Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh.

Kasia felt that it was important to maximise this opportunity for the benefits of all in Stevenage. Strategic planning was required to maintain Stevenage at the forefront of the opportunity in the face of aggressive global and UK competition. There need to be visible and facilitated business engagement, and a supported and sustainable infrastructure. A skilled local workforce was important, as were the leisure and lifestyle improvements currently taking place to make Stevenage a great place to work, live and develop.

County Councillor Richard Roberts expressed his delight at the success of the Stevenage GCT Cluster. He offered the full support of Hertfordshire County Council for any help and assistance required to facilitate the longer term development of the Cluster.

Stephen Ward (Catapult) drew attention to the need for suitable sites to be found in the Stevenage area for when companies starting out in the Cluster needed to expand into larger premises.

6 SKILLS IN STEVENAGE

(a) Institute of Technology update

Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire) advised that the UK government was establishing high-quality Institutes of Technology (IoTs) across England. These new employer-led IoTs would offer higher level technical education to help close skills gaps in STEM. IoTs were collaborations between Higher/Further Education and employers which specialised in delivering higher technical education with a focus on STEM.

Julie stated that 12 IoTs were established in 2019. Hertfordshire was successful in Stage One of the Department of Education's bid process and on 16 June 2021 the University submitted its second stage application. An announcement of the successful proposals would be made in Autumn 2021. If successful, the Herts IoT would be launched in August 2022, with a licence for 5 years.

Julie explained that the core aims of the IoT would be to:

- Significantly increase the number of learners with higher technical skills which were crucial to national, regional and local productivity growth;
- Attract a wide range of learners to maximise the social as well as the economic impact of this new type of institution; and
- Improve the occupational competency of learners to meet the needs of employers now and in the future.

In respect of the IoT Consortium, Julie commented that the Core Partners would be the University of Hertfordshire, North Herts College and West Herts College; the Additional Partners would be Oaklands College and Hertford Regional College; the Core Employers would be Wilmott Dixon Construction Ltd, GlaxoSmithKline Research & Development Ltd, MBDA UK Ltd and Ocado Central Service Ltd; and

the Delivery Partner would be University Campus St. Albans.

Julie advised that the IoT would be a dispersed business model, operating from the University campus, North Herts College and West Herts College, and the bid included £13M worth of associated capital improvement projects to teaching and laboratory spaces. The learning/teaching focus would be on Life Sciences (60%), followed by Construction (25%) and Digital (15%). The curriculum would comprise 80% to Level 4/5 (sub-degree) standard; 15% to Level 6 (degree) standard; and 5% to Level 7 (Masters/PhD) standard.

The Board Chair congratulated Julie and her Team on their achievements, and hoped that the IoT would help to increase the prospects of Stevenage residents in achieving technical/scientific qualifications to enable them to commence a career with one of the many world-class employers in the town

(b) Herts Skills Strategy and what it means for Stevenage/North Herts

Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) gave a slide presentation on the Hertfordshire Skills & Employment Strategy 2021-24. Norman advised that the Hertfordshire Local Skills Report (March 2021) provided a detailed insight into local skills needs across the county. It acted as an engagement tool through which Skills advisory Panels (SAPs) could engage with, influence and rally employers and providers in their areas to support the local skills agenda. The Report clearly sets out local skills needs to ensure they were visible to partners who can then engage with them, and offered valuable insight and evaluation on the progress made on current local skills initiatives, whilst utilising future plans to plug key skills gaps.

Norman explained that the Hertfordshire Skills & Employment Strategy 2021-24 had been developed jointly between the Herts LEP, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) and the Department for Work & Pensions aimed at helping to increase both the county's existing and future workforce. The latest edition was published on 19 July 2021 and was available to download.

Norman stated that the Skills & Employment Strategy had the following 5 key themes:

- Young People: unlocking emerging talent;
- Adults: working towards lifelong learning and full employment;
- Employers: skills to grow small and medium-size businesses;
- Sectors: harnessing the opportunities and developing skills of the future; and
- Places: making the most of our internal and external geographies.

Norman advised that the Strategy was being used to influence the HCC Employment, Education & Training Strategy; the Apprenticeships & Technical Education Strategy; the Community Renewal Fund and/or UK Shared prosperity Fund; the Local Skills Improvement Plan; Local, district level skills and employment strategies and action plans; and discussions with training delivery partners.

Norman presented some data which showed the disparity between Stevenage

residents and residents in Hertfordshire as a whole in respect of those receiving out of work benefits (including 16-24 year olds); workplace earnings; qualifications (both at Level 2+ and Level 4+); and apprenticeships (both for all ages and 16-18 year olds).

Norman concluded by stating that the next steps would be to refresh the local evidence base; develop a Stevenage Skills & Employment Strategy based on the county strategy; alignment with the Stevenage Economy Taskforce Action Plan; alignment for key skill-related initiatives, such as SITEC, Construction Hub, Gen Stevenage, STEM Centre etc.; and approval of a local action plan and targets. Progress would be reported to the Stevenage Development Board.

Comments made by Board Members included:

- This was a fantastic opportunity to align local skills with local jobs in the rapidly expanding Cell & Gene sector;
- The focus on STEM opportunities was welcomed, but sight should not be lost of skills development focussed on the hospitality, tourism and design technology sectors; and
- The Hertfordshire Growth Board (North East & Central Cluster) had earmarked £750K for a Community Wealth Building Fund to support the skills agenda, but further Government funding was required. The Growth Board was also aware that the skills of young people would need to be developed in the new technologies aimed at tackling emerging and future Climate Change issues.

7 LEVELLING UP FUND (LUF) APPLICATION SUMMARY

[Note: During this item, Hetty Thornton (Historic England) declared an interest as she was assisting Government officials in assessing Levelling Up Fund bids at a national level.]

Adam Wood (Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) gave a slide presentation providing a summary of the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) application. He advised that the Stevenage submission was one of 4 LUF bids in Hertfordshire and had been submitted to the Government on 18 June 2021. It had been evidence based and was very much a public/private sector collaboration, which should be viewed as complementary to the Town Investment Plan. He advised that the application had comprised three projects, with a total estimated cost of £22M, as follows:

Project 1 – Unlocking Sustainable Employment

This scheme was for improvements to the Gunnels Wood Road gyratory system to improve highway, public transport, cycleway and footway connectivity aimed at unlocking growth in the Gunnels Wood Road employment area, including the Bioscience cluster adjacent to Junction 7 of the A1(M).

The total cost over 3 years was estimated to be £14.5M, including £10.1M from the LUF, £1M from the Town Deal, £1M from the LEP, £110K from HCC and the remaining £2.3M from the private sector.

Project 2 – Healthy Hub

This project was for relocating the Healthy Hub to the proposed location for the new Leisure facility on St. George's Way (as set out in the Town investment Plan)

The total cost over 3 years was estimated to be £3M, including £2M from the LUF and £1M from SBC.

Project 3 – Urban Connections

This scheme was for improvements to the public realm in Stevenage Town Centre, including greening spaces, improving the existing walking and cycleway network in areas of the town, including links into the town centre.

The total cost over 3 years was estimated to be £4.5M, including £4M from the LUF and £500K from SBC.

Adam commented that the next steps were to await confirmation on the timescale for a decision on the application from the Government, and continuing to publicise the life sciences opportunity in Stevenage linked to the LUF submission, including latest news at the GSK campus.

Adam expressed his appreciation for the support from Board partners in preparing and promoting the LUF bid.

In response to a question, Adam confirmed that it was the intention that the Healthy Hub building would be designed flexibly to allow for both health and community uses.

8 TOWNS FUND BUSINESS CASE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE AND FINANCIAL REPORT

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) gave a slide presentation in respect of Town Fund Business Case development. He advised that work was continuing on the business cases for each of the projects, with the next steps being to:

- Identify programme costs, project delivery costs, and capital funding, to finalise what money was available for each project – aiming for a summary for next Board meeting;
- Monitor spend against 2021/22 profiled spend: £700k identified in two-month submission (subject to fast-track business cases being approved); and
- Identify complementary revenue activities that may be required alongside the capital programme to maximise effectiveness of the projects; utilise physical regeneration as a catalyst for socio-economic change.

Tom explained that programme-level progress since the last Board meeting had included:

- Commencing engagement with workstream leads;
- Identifying lead sponsors and accountable body leads of projects within each of

- the themes;
- Increased activity for external support with external advisors in place to give additional capacity and support on commercial, design, planning, economic analysis, and production of the business cases; and
 - Identifying specific products to commission to support relevant business cases.

Tom proceeded to provide specific updates for each of the nine projects contained in the Town Investment Plan.

Tom stated that the next steps were to:

- Refine the communication and engagement strategy for the next Board meeting;
- Continue to progress business cases with focus on fast-track projects - one produced in draft already and one underway;
- Enhance the involvement of the theme groups in development of the proposals;
- Ensure all products required to support business cases had been commissioned;
- Finalise the timetable for business case approvals; and
- Finalise the governance and assurance arrangements for Board endorsement.

Tom concluded by stating that the intention would for the Board to be provided with a more detailed update report in advance of its next meeting.

9 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Gemma Hannant (SBC Regeneration Team) gave a slide presentation updating the Board on the Stevenage Regeneration Programme. She advised that physical delivery was progressing well on all sites; a programme of demolition works was proceeding; demolition had commenced for the Guinness scheme; the Life Sciences project at Marshgate would be considered by SBC's Planning & Development Committee on 18 August 2021; and a summer events programme would take place in the Town Square to increase footfall and support Covid recovery.

Gemma referred to the Co-Space fit out of the Town Square North Block and the launch event on 3 September 2021, to which Board members would be invited. She displayed some photographs showing the rapid progress on the Bus Interchange scheme. In respect of the Queensway North project, she explained that 100 homes were due for completion by 16 September 2021 (with a strong early demand from potential occupants); the PureGym facility had opened; and Chateau Café and Cake Box had opened on the Ground Floor, with a Turkish restaurant planned to open soon.

Gemma drew attention to a communications and marketing update, which included a number of news articles on the Regeneration programme in the local and national press; the promotion of the Levelling Up Fund on the website; and the launching of a digital timeline.

Board members felt that consideration should be given as to how the next level of communications/marketing of all the exciting things happening in the town should be progressed, including the preparation of a Destination Management Plan to promote

Stevenage as an ideal place to live, work and visit.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Stevenage New Town 75th Anniversary

The Board Chair stated that Stevenage New Town was 75 years old and, to commemorate this milestone, a magazine of 60 pages was being produced about the past and future plans for the town. If Board members had any contributions they would like to make to the magazine, they were asked to send these to the Chair and he would endeavour to arrange for them to be included in the document.

11 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To be advised.