

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
MINUTES**

**Date: Wednesday, 3 June 2020**

**Time: 2.00pm**

**Place: Meeting held via tele-conference**

**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)  
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership)  
Kevin Cowin (Mace Developments)  
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Chris Barnes (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Annie Piper (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Briege Leahy (Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce)  
Councillor David Williams (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Sarah McLaughlin (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)  
Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College)  
Malcolm Evely (Airbus)  
Greg Westover (Legal & General)  
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)  
Claire Dicks (MBDA)  
Charlotte Blizzard Welch (Stevenage Citizens Advice Bureau)  
Ed Jordan (WENTA)  
Sally Ann Forsyth (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst) (representing Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership)  
Karen Hillen (BEIS)  
Andrew Fisher (Barton Wilmore)  
Graeme Collinge (Genecon)

**Start / End** Start Time: 2.00pm  
**Time:** End Time: 4.20pm

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

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He advised that the main purpose of the meeting was to receive updates on the various themed work streams and to consider the criteria for assessing/evaluating projects and proposals leading up to the production of a Town Investment Plan (TIP).

The Chair commented that the work of the Board was not limited to regeneration projects. The aim was to produce a TIP bid for £25M which encompassed a range of proposals and schemes, and also to prioritise the use of the remaining Growth Deal 3 (GD3) funds, the first tranche of which had been allocated to the Stevenage Bus Interchange project.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Board was advised that apologies for absence had been received from Neville Reyner (Groundwork East), Stephen Ward (Catapult) and Sharon Brownlow (Catapult).

## **3 CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS AND OPENNESS**

The Board received a conflicts of interest list.

County Councillor David Williams asked that his role as a member of the Local Government Minister's Economic Recovery Group be added to his conflicts of interest entry on the list.

## **4 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 5 MAY 2020 / MATTERS ARISING**

It was **AGREED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 5 May 2020 be approved as a correct record.

## **5 JOURNEY SO FAR - LATEST UPDATE**

Chris Barnes (Acting Director of Regeneration, SBC), assisted by Dave Wells (Acting Regeneration Manager, SBC), gave a presentation providing an update in respect of the Stevenage Regeneration journey so far.

Chris advised that good progress had been made across all projects in the build and planning stages, helped by the general easing of construction sector conditions. A start had been made on quantifying the Covid-19 related delays and costs, although it was recognised that the market would be very challenging, both for current and potential tenants. However, Stevenage remained an attractive location for such tenants, and the existing investment was making a significant difference.

Dave updated the Board on specific progress with the Town Square Public Realm, Town Square North Block, SG1, Queensway North and Bus Interchange projects. In respect of the SG1 scheme, it was hoped that the planning application would be determined later in the summer. In relation to the Bus Interchange scheme, the application was scheduled to be determined by the SBC Planning & Development Committee on 18 June 2020.

## 6 ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE THEME FEEDBACK

Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House) advised that the Arts, Culture & Heritage Sub-Group, comprising representatives from SBC, Herts LEP and North Hertfordshire College had met and had produced a template to monitor its work reflecting the TIP vision and the core values of health & wellbeing; climate change; digital & innovation; and local wealth building. The desired outcomes would be to:

- Enhance the vitality of the town through the introduction of new quality cultural and leisure assets that drive local growth through a thriving destination and evening economy
- Engender a network of creative industries spaces and hubs, including digital, to attract and develop talent and to support economic growth
- Increase levels of cultural participation across Stevenage's business and resident population as part of a wider drive to raise aspirations
- Widen the cultural offer of the town by celebrating both the New Town and Old Town heritage to help change perception of Stevenage nationally and internationally

Martha continued by outlining the 6 objectives formulated by the Sub-Group, namely:

Objective 1 – Enhanced Arts Offer

Objective 2 – Celebrating the UK's New Town history

Objective 3 – New Town-Old Town Arts & Heritage Trail Network

Objective 4 – Growing the Destination and Visitor Economy

Objective 5 – Leisure for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Objective 6 – Digital and Creative Space

Martha concluded by drawing attention to the 4 potential projects identified by the Sub-Group:

Project 1 – New Arts Centre

Project 2 – New Towns Heritage Centre and Museum of Stevenage

Project 3 – Arts and Heritage Trails

Project 4 – New Leisure Centre on Stevenage Centre Park site

A summary of each project, together with estimated costs, potential funding streams, and delivery timeframes was included in the template document. Martha commented that, if progressed, Projects 1 and 4 would need to be developed concurrently.

In response to a question, Martha confirmed that any improvements to the arts and cultural offer in the town, together with the wider regeneration proposals, should provide an attractive environment to encourage new restaurants, bars, clubs and live music venues to open in the town centre, thereby increasing its vitality.

Board Members drew Martha's attention to the Stevenage Music Centre (based at Nobel School) and, by way of example, the relationship in Northampton between the Derngate Centre and the Northants Music & Performing Arts Trust.

In relation to the potential relocation of the Leisure Centre on the Stevenage Centre Park site, Martha agreed to discuss this matter outside of the Board meeting with Greg Westover (Legal & General).

## **7 SKILLS THEME UPDATE**

Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire LEP) reported back on the work of the Skills Sub-Group.

Norman advised that the Sub-Group had established a baseline position for Stevenage regarding skills. This included the mapping of existing skills provision (being undertaken by Mena Caldbeck, Business Relationship Manager, SBC) and the commissioning of the HCC Data Analysis team to produce a detailed skills analysis of Stevenage. The first draft of this analysis document was expected in a few weeks' time. This would be considered by the Task Group set out by the Skills Sub-Group, before being submitted to the Sub-Group itself.

In relation to the preparation of a Skills Strategy for Stevenage, Norman explained that this would include the production of a video/social media campaign to promote excellence/opportunities in Stevenage; draft proposals and the identification of potential budget requirements; generating an appraisal framework for reviewing projects; and the development of a skills page on the Stevenage Even Better website, with links to key partners, such as North Herts College, Stem Discovery Centre, etc. the draft strategy would also be considered by the Task Group set out by the Skills Sub-Group, before being submitted to the Sub-Group itself.

Norman commented that the final recommendations of the Skills Sub-Group would be presented to the Development Board when completed.

Andy Fisher (Barton Wilmore) made a general comment that, for consistency, each of the Board Sub-Groups should endeavour to use the same template document to record their work. To this end, he asked Norman to invite him and Graeme Collinge (Genecon) to the next meeting of the Skills Sub-Group.

Kit Davies (North Herts College) offered to the Skills Sub-Group the services of the College's marketing consultants, who had produced video content for the College.

Claire Dicks (MBDA) undertook to discuss the Generation Stevenage event with Norman outside of the Board meeting.

The Chair agreed to discuss ideas for a possible Enterprise Strategy for Stevenage with Ed Jordan (WENTA), again outside of the Board meeting.

## **8 CONNECTIVITY THEME UPDATE**

Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council) presented an update on the Connectivity Theme. She commented that the Sub-Group had not met, but had been in contact through regular e-mail correspondence.

Patsy reminded the Board of the Assets and Challenges for Stevenage connectivity

and outlined the policy documents relating to transport in the county, including the Local Transport Plan 4, supported by the North Central Hertfordshire Growth and Transport Plan (NCGTP) covering the Stevenage area, which had identified packages of transport measures to address current and future transport issues on key corridors taking into account future growth. Consultation on the NCGTP finished at the end of March 2020 and the plan was being revised on the basis of the feedback. The intention was to take the final GTP back through the political cycle in Autumn 2020, with adoption later this year.

Patsy advised that, for Stevenage, the GTP focussed packages on future growth and employment areas and interurban links with adjacent towns. The SBC Future Town, Future Transport Strategy contained themes which had a synergy with the HCC plans/policies, including connectivity, liveable streets, active travel and green travel. SBC had also developed a Local Cycling Walking Investment Plan, which had involved a detailed audit of the existing cycle and pedestrian network and identification of measures to improve it and address gaps.

In terms of rail improvements, Patsy highlighted that SBC would be working on an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the area around Stevenage station to provide an enhanced environment, which would sit alongside the Stevenage Local Plan (adopted 2019) as part of the Development Plan for the wider Stevenage gateway area. The new 5<sup>th</sup> platform at the station was due to be operational in the summer.

Patsy also referred to the Sustainable Travel Towns partnership initiative promoted by the County Council to support the development and delivery of sustainable and active travel in town centres. Stevenage was one of six bids shortlisted for consideration in September 2020.

In relation to bus services, Patsy reported that the application for the new Stevenage Bus Interchange was scheduled for consideration by the SBC Planning & Development Committee on 18 June 2020. If approved, it was anticipated that works would commence in August 2020, with works ongoing until April 2021. Ringway were working on design of associated sustainable transport measures on Lytton Way (a new signalised pedestrian crossing carriageway narrowing and bus priority in the form of bus lanes and bus gates). These Highway works were due to start in late 2020.

With regard to the Glaxo Smith Klein (GSK) A1(M) junction, engagement had taken place with both the Department for Transport and Highways England in relation to the optimal timelines for the A1M smart motorway improvement programme and alignment of works at GSK roundabout (all subject to funding). Consultants had been appointed to review the scheme design and previous modelling work and to advise on whether or not the previously identified 'hamburger' scheme was still the preferred option to take forward. GSK had been supportive at this feasibility stage and with the design review. Funding for the junction works had yet to be identified.

Patsy concluded by referring to the potential next steps/future ambitions, which were:

- Cycle/E-cycle and Scooter/E-scooter hire schemes (led by SBC)

- Enhancements to cycle network and routes/infrastructure
- Develop the Station Area AAP to enhance links and improve connectivity
- GSK and Gunnels Wood area access and connectivity improvements
- Use the Transport and Connectivity Group to help carry out a Covid-19 review of current plans and ambitions

Councillor John Gardner advocated the greater use of electronic buses for Stevenage, together with the introduction of a more reliable bus service for the town. Councillor Taylor added that a long held ambition of SBC had been for a circular electric bus route in Stevenage, linking both New and Old Towns, as well as the Leisure Park, Gunnels Wood Road area and the Roaring Meg Retail Park.

Councillor Taylor informed the Board that she was involved with the Herts Growth Board in taking forward improvements to digital connectivity in the county. She felt that this issue should be reflected across all of the Stevenage TIP themes/projects.

## **9 REGENERATION THEME UPDATE**

Chris Barnes (Acting Head of Regeneration, SBC) provided an update on the Regeneration Theme.

Chris stated that regeneration would centre on utilising the work of the Stevenage Central Framework, now adopted in the Stevenage Local Plan. Options would focus on a new opportunity area; supporting Queensway; the de-risking of schemes that were at planning stage; and proposing an appropriate scale/level of intervention. The key would be to identify which opportunities/projects aligned best with the Town Deal prospectus/guidance.

Chris drew attention to the major opportunity areas that were already being progressed, such as Park Place/Town Centre Gardens, the Central Core, and Southgate Park.

In respect of the scale of any potential interventions, Chris commented that these could include:

- Large scale – enabling works / design work for a big intervention - £25M+ GDV
- Medium scale – delivery of an entire ‘scheme’ - £7-8M GDV/investment
- Small scale – quick wins to deliver fast improvements to the town centre.

In terms of the next steps for the regeneration theme, Chris considered that these should be driven by a strategic steer based on the work of the other themes; objectives should be finalised based on the Central Framework, and should build on the strong foundation of work; the continuation of work with the HCC and LEP officers on potential projects; and the holding of a workshop to explore potential ideas in more detail.

During the debate, the demand for businesses to set up in the area and from the Bioscience Park was mentioned. Tom Pike and Chris Barnes undertook to commence discussions on this matter outside of the meeting with both Greg Westover (Legal & General) and Sally Ann Forsyth (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst).

In relation to the Leisure Park, Councillor Taylor felt that a discussion/meeting with all interested parties should take place before formulation of the Stevenage Station Area Action Plan.

The Board supported the concept that, on sustainability grounds, town centre residential units should benefit from limited parking spaces. This should be a strand which fed into the relevant TIP themes. Less reliance on the car and increased home-working should also be encouraged post-pandemic. Kevin Cowin (Mace Developments) commented that the SG1 development would be marketed on the basis that there would be limited car parking spaces for the residential units.

## **10 TOWN IMPROVEMENT PLAN (TIP) OBJECTIVES & CRITERIA**

Andy Fisher (Barton Wilmore), assisted by Graeme Collinge (Genecon) gave a presentation on the Town Investment Plan (TIP) Objectives and Criteria.

Andy advised that the Stevenage TIP process had reached Stage 3 – Rationalisation of Scope and Project capture. Priority Areas for short, medium and long term should include activity that could be locally funded; projects that could be supported by public investment; and ambitions for private sector investment and community involvement.

Andy stated that between this Board meeting and the next one on 29 July 2020, the emphasis would be on the production of a first draft of a Project Programme (from which the TIP could be produced by drawing down projects from that programme). The Government would be very much looking for “oven-ready” projects.

Graeme commented that the process in assessing projects would include the following steps:

Check 1 – alignment with the Vision and Core values;  
Check 2 – alignment with Theme outcomes and objectives;  
Check 3 – deliverability, funding and value for money (this would also be the project prioritisation/ranking stage)

Graeme explained the matrices it was proposed to use for ranking projects in each of the above steps. Potential projects should aim to fulfil at least one objective, but preferably more, in their respective Theme areas.

Graeme reiterated comments made earlier in the meeting that efforts should focus on the consistency of presentation of information by the various Board Sub-Groups, in terms of the use of standard templates, etc.

In respect of the anticipated further Government guidance on the Town Deal, Graeme advised a 3 stage process would be confirmed, as follows;

Stage 1 – Submission of a Town Investment Plan (TIP)  
Stage 2 – At the invitation of the MHCLG, the preparation of a full Business Case  
Stage 3 – A negotiated Town Deal

Graeme further advised that the MHCLG had not yet issued guidance on how the Town Investment Plans would be assessed, although the assumption was that MHCLG would require a Land Value Uplift (LVU) approach to test Benefit Cost Ratio/value for money – however, this was still to be clarified.

Andy concluded the presentation by referring to the next steps, which were:

1. Further discussion with the Theme Leads;
2. Finalisation of thematic Objectives, Outcomes and Projects
3. Themes/Objectives to be published for feedback
4. Initial appraisal and reporting of results to Client Team
5. Second appraisal
6. Preparation of First draft TIP Programme
7. Presentation to Development Board

The Chair invited Karen Hillen (BEIS) to update the Board on the position regarding further Government guidance regarding the Town Deal Fund.

Karen advised that the further guidance was expected within the next couple of weeks, and would be adjusted to recognise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This would include an amendment to the timings for submission of completed TIP bids, with three deadline dates of being in tranches, for example potentially at the end of July 2020; the end of October 2020; or the end of March 2021. Bidders would be required to identify to the Government which deadline they intended to meet within four weeks of the receipt of the further guidance, though dates could change.

In response to a request from Graeme Colling (Genecon), Karen undertook to investigate and report back to him outside of the meeting regarding confirmation (or otherwise) that the MCHLG would be using an LVU approach based on the HM Treasury Green Book as part of their assessment of Town Investment Plan bids.

## **11 REVIEW OF FUNDING STREAMS**

Tom Pike (Strategic Director, SBC) provided an overview of the various funding streams available to assist in the delivery of projects. He reminded the Board that Town Investment Plans should complement other pre-existing strategy documents that had been developed with local partners, and should set out how the Towns Fund was being used to crowd-in other local and private investment.

Tom added that TIPs should also articulate how the interventions were driving economic regeneration and value for money, and should capture existing government and local initiatives, co-ordinating investments, and leading to further economic growth. The aim would be to work with partners to identify opportunities to align or rationalise public investment around key local priorities, as part of agreeing a Town Deal.

Tom highlighted the current funding for SBC Regeneration, which included:

- Growth Deal 1 - £15M



- Growth Deal 3 – up to £19M
- Town Deal – up to £25M
- Privately funded schemes
- One Public Estate – c£200K+

Tom concluded by referring to other funding opportunities, which could include:

- Hertfordshire Growth Board
- Homes England
- Sector-specific funding
- Arts Council / Heritage Lottery / Sports England funding
- Sustainable Transport options

## **12 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

Annie Piper (Regeneration Programme Officer, SBC) presented a Communications update.

Annie reported on the responses that had been received relating to the consultation exercises carried out on the various Stevenage regeneration projects, and the views of those visiting the Stevenage Visitor Centre. The key themes raised were:

- Urgent delivery of regeneration and renewal
- Encourage more things to do in the Town Centre
- Attractive and welcoming public spaces
- Better transport infrastructure

Annie drew attention to the public feedback posted on the MyTown website, which aligned with the Development Board's ambitions and aspirations, with the public raising elements relating to Climate Change; Housing; Supporting local businesses/groups; and Future proofing the town.

Annie advised that the next steps would be to:

- Launch a new 'My Town' section of the Stevenage Even Better website feeding back to residents on the suggestions they put forward
- Publicise the establishment of the Stevenage Development Board and its vision for the Town fund
- Launch an engagement campaign across digital channels in June and July to gain feedback on the Town Fund vision, four themes and objectives
- Present the findings to the next Development Board meeting

## **13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### Growth Deal 3 (GD3) Funds – timescale for expenditure

The Chair advised that representatives from Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership had been discussing proposals for use of the remaining Growth Deal 3 monies allocated

to Stevenage (the first tranche of which had been allocated to the Stevenage Bus Interchange project). It was intended that such projects would align with the aims and objectives of the emerging Town Investment Plan.

The Chair commented that a potential difficulty was that the time limit for expenditure of the GD3 funding was by 31 March 2021. The Board supported the Chair's request that a joint letter from Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership be prepared and sent to the Government requesting an extension to the 31 March 2021 deadline for expenditure of the GD3 funds.

In the meantime, priority projects would be agreed between SBC, HCC and the LEP for expenditure of the remaining GD3 monies, in readiness for submission to the next Development Board meeting.

#### **14 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance, and advised that the next Board meeting (also likely to be held in a teleconferencing format) would take place **at 10.00am on Wednesday, 29 July 2020.**

Future meetings were scheduled for:

- September 2020 (date tbc)
- December 2020 (date tbc)