

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (FORMERLY STEVENAGE TOWN FUND BOARD)
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 23 May 2024

Time: 10.00am

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)
Councillor Richard Henry (Stevenage Borough Council)
Councillor Jeannette Thomas (Stevenage Borough Council)
Matt Partridge (Stevenage Borough Council)
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)
Natasha Lee (Stevenage Borough Council)
Ross Hughes (Stevenage Borough Council)
County Councillor Stephen Boulton (Hertfordshire County Council)
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)
Charlotte Blizzard-Welch (Citizens Advice Bureau)
Stephen Chown (Vincent and Gorbing)
Ian Langley (Viavi Solutions)
Piers Slater (Reef Group)
Ed Jordan (WENTA)
Alex Templar (Catapult)
Claire Dicks (MBDA)
Sian Carter (Homes England)
Kit Davies (North Herts College)
Greg Wilkinson (DLUHC)
Karen Burness (Airbus)
Dave Mudd (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
John Lewis (Aecom)
Daniel Trindall (Morgan Sindall)
Chris Scott (Muse)
Isaac Prats (Arup)
Amber Maguire (MBDA)

Start / End Start Time: 10.00am
Time: End Time: 12.00pm

1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted by the following:

County Councillor Richard Roberts (HCC) – County Councillor Stephen Boulton substituting

Clare Fletcher (Stevenage Borough Council)

Dave Wells (SBC Regeneration Team)

Gemma Hannant (SBC Regeneration Team)

Ishbel Brierley (SBC Regeneration Team)

Forogh Rahmani (Hertfordshire Growth Board)

Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)

Stephen Ward (Catapult) – Alex Templar substituting

Mairi Watson (University of Hertfordshire)

Chris Scott (Muse)

Kevin Cowin (Mace)

3 **MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 29 FEBRUARY 2024**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 29 February 2024 be approved as a correct record.

4 **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS**

The Board received the latest conflicts of interest list.

5 **REEF GROUP - STEVENAGE PROJECTS**

Reef Group

The Board received a presentation from Piers Slater from Reef regarding the Stevenage Knowledge District and the goal for Stevenage to emerge as a top destination for medical and scientific research by the end of the decade, reinforcing the importance of the existing presence of vital partners such as GSK, the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult and the Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst.

The Assembly, in the heart of the Town Centre, will provide over 530,000 sq ft of space. Phase 1 is complete and let to Autolus. Phase 2 is yet to commence but is hoped to complete in December 2026 and a number of potential occupiers are currently being consulted.

The Board was advised that the Elevate Quarter, 1.6million sq ft of R&D and manufacturing space, would help reinforce Stevenage's position as a leading cell and gene therapy cluster. Phase 1, offering a range of facilities is currently planned to complete in 2025/26 and work is underway to procure suppliers.

The facilities would include a fitness and sport offer, event and auditorium spaces, cafes and amenity, training spaces and digital labs.

The Board were pleased to note that almost 70% of the UK's core biopharmaceutical workforce lived within two hours of Stevenage. The positive social impact of the development included apprenticeships, training and an increase in skills and knowledge and outstanding opportunities for the local community. The Board noted

the importance of developing new opportunities for local people to acquire skills and broad career development options.

Piers outlined the membership benefits of The Forge Club which gave members unlimited access to FabLabs, flexible workspaces and digital platform with locations across North America and Europe.

Members of the Board agreed the importance of working in partnership to increase the social value that could be achieved for the Town.

In response to a question regarding connection to the Town Centre, it was advised the scheme intends to help improve connections, including cycle access, bus routes and footpaths.

It was also noted that there would be benefit in Highways England considering improvement works in relation to Junction 7 and in particular the access into Knebworth House and Gardens.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Piers for his presentation.

Lumo

At this juncture, the Board received a presentation from Paul Jackson from Lumo, an open access rail operator, launched in October 2021, currently running 70 services a week between London and Edinburgh via Stevenage.

The open access model allowed Lumo to purchase routes where there were gaps in the timetable. Track access was awarded by the industry regulator in agreement with Network Rail. It generated choice for customers with a strong local community focus.

The Board noted that the average fare was £40 and the fully electric trains produced 95% less carbon than flying.

Lumo was building partnerships by supporting English Tourism Week, sponsorship with Edinburgh Fringe Festival, local sports teams and partnering colleges and universities. The company was attempting to build on social value with existing and new partnerships including social value.

The Chair on behalf of the Board thanked Paul for his presentation and wished the company well in its future endeavours.

6 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Board received an update on the Regeneration Programme from Ross Hughes, Regeneration Manager and Lucy King, Regeneration Programme Manager.

- SITEC and Enterprise Centre – SBC was continuing to work with all partners involved to explore options for this project and is working with architects Bond Bryan on design options.

- Cycling and Pedestrian Activity (inc Arts and Heritage Trail) – following the successful pilot of the three underpasses already delivered, artworks were progressing close to the Vista Tower roundabout. Three themes had been chosen including Stevenage on Wheels, Stevenage Photographers and Town Centre Gardens. Charlotte Blizzard-Welch, Citizens Advice, was keen to align this work to that of the social inclusion partnership supporting families in cycle safety.
- Sports and Leisure Hub – The Regeneration Manager advised that the Project Team were looking to advance to RIBA stage 2, incorporating consultation responses provided. There was also continued engagement to progress the feasibility report with Morgan Sindall and architects Faulkner Brown.
- SG1 – The Hub – Further design development was underway for the Hub including partner engagement with the Library and Health Teams to consider their requirements in the new offer, and for partners to share ideas and thoughts on how it could be designed. The Board discussed suggestions in relation to design and layout to ensure it is cohesive for all users and visitors. Stephen Chown – Vincent and Gorbing advised that he had archive material including drawings and old plans of Stevenage which he would welcome the Chair and other Board Members to view.

It was noted in respect of SG1 – Plot A, work is ongoing in relation to the Stevenage Borough Council and Mace partnership to bring forward the first phase of SG1 and preparation works are underway.

- Town Fund Programme Management – The Board were pleased to note the excellent achievement of the total spend for 2023/24 of £2.1m. Comments were welcomed from Board Members prior to the report being submitted to Central Government. Members of the Board agreed the importance of maintaining the level of spending which could open up future funding opportunities.

7 **COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING 2024/25**

Natasha Lee (SBC Regeneration marketing and Communications Manager) advised that as the Council had entered the pre-election period for the forthcoming General Election, there would be no pro-active communications until after the 4 July 2024. She reported on the key themes for the communications programme including:

- Connectivity including the Station Gateway, cycleways, underpasses, sustainable travel hub;
- Homes and Town Centre Living such as the Guinness Partnership Trust development;
- Jobs and Skills Opportunities including school engagement, Generation Stevenage;
- Public Realm – Arts and Culture and the Heritage Trail;
- Sports and Leisure

Natasha advised that the communications and marketing strategy would be targeted towards audiences such as residents, visitors, businesses, investors and developers

and would be run through traditional media, social media, case studies and partnership working.

It was agreed that recent successes in awards were also helping to raise the partnership working profile.

Tom Pike (Strategic Director) reported on recent visits to Stevenage including:

- A positive Homes England Summit in April ;
- Visits from different political parties including Ministers and Shadow Ministers;
- German delegation visit to see the Catapult training facility;
- Visit from representatives from the Policy Team at Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC).

8 **INVESTMENT PROSPECTUS**

The Strategic Director presented key points from the emerging Stevenage 2040 Investment Prospectus to the Board. This will be a document setting out the potential opportunities for the town over the next 15 years, and a case for investment to help secure further regeneration, jobs and skills. The Local Plan has a requirement for 7,600 new homes over the period to 2031 to meet housing needs and tenures of all types. Linked to life sciences, space and defence, and the move of Hertfordshire County Council services into the town, there is the potential for many more jobs in the local economy, and this could generate real benefits for local people and businesses.

The Strategic Director advised that work would continue with the Government and partners to ensure the Towns Fund is delivered in full, alongside support for all regeneration priorities.

Comments were invited from Board members by the end of July with a view to having a document prepared for the autumn. The Chair advised that the Prospectus would also be shared with Herts Futures and the Herts Economic Board.

Charlotte Blizzard Welch, CAB stressed the importance of building in the social value of the partnership with the voluntary and community sector and the benefits brought to Stevenage. The Board discussed the importance of local companies in delivering social value and that this would be incorporated going forward.

Councillor Richard Henry, Leader of Stevenage Borough Council, also highlighted the importance of support continuing to be given to SME's alongside the larger businesses in the Town, and the support offer available at the Business Technology Centre.

9 **GUNNELS WOOD ROAD**

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting of the Board.

10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair wished Ian Gourlay, Secretary to the Board, well in his upcoming retirement and thanked him for his support over recent years.

11 **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was noted that future Board meetings would take place (virtually via Zoom) on the following dates:

- Thursday 8 August 2024 10.00am – 12.00pm
- Thursday 19 September 2024 10.00am – 12.00pm
- Thursday 21 November 2024 10.00am – 12.00pm

CHAIR