

Minutes of The Bishop Auckland Stronger Towns Board Meeting

Friday 27th November 2020, 12.30 – 14.30, Microsoft Teams

Attendees:		
David Land	DL	Chair
David Maddan	DM	The Auckland Project, CEO
Jonathan Ruffer	JR	The Auckland Project, Founder
Susie Doyle	SD	The Auckland Project, Head of Development
Rob Yorke	RY	Teescraft, Private Sector Representative
Cllr Brian Stephens	BS	Portfolio Lead for Neighbourhoods and Local Partnerships
Graham Wood	GW	Durham County Council, Economic Development Manager
Stuart Timmiss	ST	Durham County Council, Head of Development & Housing
Natalie Davison-Terranova	ND-T	Bishop Auckland College, Principal/Chief Executive
Amy Harhoff	AH	Durham County Council, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth
Mike Matthews	MM	Private Sector Member
Cllr Shirley Quinn	SQ	Councillor
Cllr Joy Allen	JA	Councillor
Margaret Coates	MC	Cities and Local Growth Team
Graeme Collinge	GC	Genecon, Director
Paul Robson	PR	Department for Work & Pensions

Apologies:		
Helen Golightly	HG	North East LEP, Executive Director
Liz Fisher	LF	The Auckland Project, Place & Purpose Director

Item		Action
1.0	Welcome	
1.1	Board members welcomed.	
1.2	DL commented that it would be useful to have issue numbers on documents tabled to ensure that all members are reviewing the most recent version.	
2.0	Review of Previous Minutes	
2.1	No comments.	
3.0	Declarations of Interest – if any	
3.1	No comments.	

4.0	Programme Development Update	
4.1	ST advised that an effective meeting was held with theme group leaders on Friday 20 th November 2020 to further discuss contentious issues raised at the previous Board Meeting.	
4.1.1	A discussion around Newgate Centre proposals took place.	
4.1.2	JA noted her support for the Newgate Centre cinema development and accompanying leisure/retail provision. This proposal presents a quick turnaround for locals and visitors and will encourage development of the high street.	
4.1.3	The Board agreed that it is crucial to deliver accessible visitor facilities in the Railway Station area in order to maximise opportunities for Weardale Railway. It is important to gain clarity on whether it is feasible to acquire an existing building for this use, or if a new build facility in this area should be considered.	
4.1.4	RY seeks clarity as to whether TAP and DCC are working together on a visitor management plan and whether this will be funded from the Stronger Towns capacity funding. AH to meet DJM offline to discuss. AH will table for approval at the next Board Meeting a summary of drawdown requests on the capacity funding so that they can be reviewed in line with budget remaining.	AH
4.2	GC tabled the consolidated 'prioritised projects' list. GC noted that the figures annotated in red are where the Board needs to consider cost reductions. Currently the bid total is £55m, which is over budget.	
4.3	GC advised that in his opinion the bid should not be pitched at the full £50m. A more realistic approach would be to pitch at £35m.	
4.4	GC advised that currently there are gaps in the level of co-funding. The canopy scheme for example would benefit from some private sector leveraged investment. ST agreed to take this offline to review opportunities.	
4.5	The Board agreed that Edinburgh House funding towards Newgate Centre should be reflected as private co-funding. GC to amend document.	GC
4.6	JR noted that there is also additional match funding from Eleven Arches Day Park development which should be reflected in GC's figures. GC to discuss offline with JR and amend document.	GC
4.7	Regarding Tindale Triangle Infrastructure Improvements, GW clarified that Believe Housing are currently driving a development at Woodhouse Close which is restricted due to the highway issues in the area. Support from STF would help in releasing this potential investment by resolving the issues. Value of investment TBC.	

4.8	<p>Regarding the Bishop Auckland Digital project, GC queried if there are any opportunities for funding from DCMS next year that could be used as co-funding to reduce the direct ask from Towns Fund on this project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GW advised that he has an upcoming meeting to discuss opportunities and will feedback. 	GW
4.9	<p>Regarding Heritage Walking and Cycling Routes, GC similarly queried if there is any opportunity for LTP funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GW confirmed that he is looking at co-funding opportunities to support this project as well. 	GW
4.10	<p>AH summarised that the Board is in support of the long list of prioritised projects as it stands, however there is further work to be done in regard to commerciality, ensuring match funding and cost reduction on certain projects.</p>	
4.11	<p>GC raised that it is likely that the Eastern Access Road (EAR) will be subjected to Treasury review due to it totalling £18.2m. GC suggested that it may be to the Boards advantage to reduce this project cost, otherwise we run risk of having to present a full green book appraisal rather than just receiving local sign off.</p>	
4.12	<p>DL noted that the full EAR scheme is crucial in terms of reducing congestion in the town for locals and visitors.</p>	
4.13	<p>JR responded that the work of TAP and Eleven Arches has highlighted a critical problem in that the towns infrastructure is not sufficient nor ready to support its future. The Charities investment has made available opportunities for further funding through the High Street Fund and Stronger Towns Fund, to drive forward the development of Bishop Auckland. It is crucial that as part of this we prioritise the EAR scheme and JR is pleased to see common consent within the Board on this matter. JR noted that we should not fear green book appraisal on this project and would recommend pitching the overall Towns Deal bid at £40-45m.</p>	
4.14	<p>DL raised that public consultation remains outstanding and is a critical element which needs to be progressed. It is one of the methods of ultimate prioritisation of the project list.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GW confirmed that consultation materials are being progressed i.e. pop up posters, websites, questions, stakeholder lists, press and social media postings. • AH suggested that herself and DL meet early next week on behalf of the Board to review the content of the material and approve it for issue. • GW to then circulate to the Board for information. 	AH/GW
4.15	<p>JA advised that the Bishops Press is going to print next Thursday and it would be good to get an article on the proposed plans in here as it is distributed throughout the town. GW noted.</p>	

4.16	<p>BS queried the extent of consultation with businesses and landlords of high-street properties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GW confirmed that some consultation has taken place as part of the Heritage Action Zone programme and more recently as part of the Reopening High-Street works in response to Covid-19. This is all documented. • GW to confirm the timing of this consultation and ensure it is still relevant. 	
5.0	Accountable Body Support to the STF Board	
5.1	AH advised that a paper will be circulated within the papers for the next Board Meeting that will articulate our role as the Board for the Bishop Auckland Stronger Towns Fund. It will clarify the different remits of Board members and our function as the accountable body.	
6.0	Any Other Business	
6.1	DL raised the concern that DCC has been too slow to action and progress CGI as a result it was now too late to start the work requested.	
6.2	AH undertook to issue DL an email regarding what is remaining of the £164k capacity funding early week commencing 30 th Nov. AH to also include a summary within the papers for the next Board Meeting.	AH
7.0	Date of Next Meeting	
7.1	The next Board Meeting will be advised based on update on progress. Now planned for Monday 21 st December 2020.	
	Meeting Closed.	