

Minutes of the Bishop Auckland Stronger Towns Board
Monday 20 December 2021
1.00 p.m.

Attendees:

Claire Barry (CB), [Minutes], Durham County Council
Bishop Paul Butler (PB), Bishop of Durham
Natalie Davison-Terranova (NDT), Bishop Auckland College
Rachel Edmunds (RE), AAP Chair
Jonathan Gilroy (JG), BEIS
Amy Harhoff (AH), Durham County Council
David Land (DL), [Chair]
David Maddan (DM), The Auckland Project
Geoff Paul (GP), Durham County Council
Cllr Elizabeth Scott (ES), Durham County Council
Katy Severs (KS), Job Centre Plus
Rob Yorke (RY), SEDA / Teescraft
Graham Wood (GW), Durham County Council

Apologies:

Susie Doyle (SD), The Auckland Project
Councillor Kate Eliot (KE), Bishop Auckland Town Council
Liz Fisher (LF), The Auckland Project
Helen Golightly (HG), NE Local Enterprise Partnership
Jonathan Ruffer (JR), The Auckland Project

1. Welcome and Introductions

David Land welcomed the Board members to the meeting.

2. Minutes from Last Meeting

No issues were raised.

3. Declarations of Interest

A Declaration of Interest was made by NDT as Bishop Auckland College are project sponsor for the Springboard to Employment project

4. Bishop Auckland Stronger Town Project Update and Next Steps

AH highlighted the scale and complexity of the programme advising that this is one of the most complex due to nature of the project and requested support from Board Members for this to be progressed over the next couple of years.

Funding has been received and there is now the opportunity for targeted communication and engagement with the community.

Presentation

GW delivered a presentation that provided an overview of:

- Programme Management : Key activities completed during 2021.
- Heads of Terms document next steps including:

- The process for developing detailed business cases;
- How business cases will be assured; and
- Funding release/implementation.
- An update of the current status of Stronger Town projects.
- Next Steps for the Board in the period from January to June 2022.

DL advised that a cohesive way forward is to be found on how this is progressed and communicated.

DM advised that the public are to be made aware that The Auckland Project (TAP) are utilising the building in the market place to display information on what is happening in each site, the reasons and the costs for the various programmes. It was noted that briefings can be held in this building along with walk-ins.

PB advised that the Board must ensure that there is one communication stream for everything i.e. high street, heritage action zones and levelling up etc. PB enquired if the Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership could be merged with the Stronger Towns Board to join up as one strategy for communications.

ES enquired if it would be possible for the Council to produce a monthly briefing regarding the current position on communications that could be shared more widely with interested groups. AH advised that a monthly bulletin could be produced that would include a range of issues. AH and GP are to provide an update at the next Board meeting regarding the comms mechanism that is to be deployed.

GP advised that meetings have taken place to look to bring in direct support for communications. A meeting is to be arranged in 2022 to finalise this. It was noted that work will start in the town centre that will cause disruption whereby communication is essential.

RE agreed that communication is vital and that, as Chair, it is important that the AAP are contacted to review town and village funding to ensure that there is a combined approach. RE enquired if it would be possible for AH and GP to attend a future meeting of the AAP; AH and GP advised that they could attend a future meeting.

RY noted the 5% funding advance and enquired if it would be suitable to use it to have a Durham County Council (DCC) officer based in TAP's community/consultation building due to the size of the programme. AH advised that the 5% is available to support the acceleration of individual project delivery. As part of the Council's role in managing the implementation of the programme, it is proposed that an officer is employed as a major communication and stakeholder lead who will work with partners on communication; this will be supplemented by other programmes.

ES enquired who is the contact officer; it was noted that GW is the key strategic lead for any enquiries and that AH is the overall lead.

AH advised that work is to be carried out on project and governance along with ensuring there is visibility and communication, as part of the Board, with other groups.

DCC are working with Gardiner Richardson and a meeting is to be arranged in January 2022 to shape the plan. DM advised that LF would be a lead for this.

DL enquired if there is a revised timeline. GW advised that work is being undertaken on the timeline to review the focus for funding and projects. This will coincide with planning applications and communications. The timeline should be available during the early part of 2022.

DL stated that it is necessary to meet in early January 2022 to review the current status along with how the funding could be re-purposed for Bishop Auckland and the wider area.

DM advised that a meeting is to take place in January 2022 to discuss how to rescope the Durham Dales Gateway project and links with the railway. DM recommended that focussed effort takes place in 2022 regarding how communication in the town centre is resolved.

DL requested that a meeting is arranged during the first week in January 2022 with AH, ES and himself to discuss what has been discussed at this meeting, communication that could take place that will involve the heritage action zone along with arranging for information to be provided to Board members on the progress that is to be made.

AH highlighted the comments from GW regarding the key decision points that are required from the Board to sign off the business cases.

DM advised of a project regarding walking and cycling routes that is to be reviewed as part of the levelling up funds and the necessity to ensure that this combines with the perspective for the town.

Recommendations

GW highlighted the following recommendations that are to be put before the Board:

- (a) Note the current position in terms of programme development and mobilisation.
- (b) Note the anticipated date for project assurance for the Eastern sustainable access corridor project and endorse the submission of a project change request to formally amend the assurance date.
- (c) Note the receipt of 5% project advances available to project sponsors to accelerate project mobilisation.
- (d) Note the priority actions identified for the forthcoming period to deliver project assurance summaries:
 - The development of a schedule of business cases and anticipated dates for assurance; and
 - Regular updates to Board on the progress of business case development.

Action:

DL requested that the Board review the detail within the circulated papers and provide any comments to GW by 24 December 2021.

5. Any Other Business

No issues were raised.

6. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Future meetings are to be arranged for 2022.