

HEREFORD STRONGER TOWNS BOARD
Notes and Action Points
Friday 14 August 2020 at 08.30
Zoom Video Conference

Chair:	Mark Stevenson	MS	Co-Founder, Work Here Ltd
Board Present:	Ellie Chowns	ECH	Cabinet Member Environment, Economy & Skills, H.Council
	Ian Christie	IC	Big Business Representative / MD, Welsh Water
	Elise Cummings	ECU	NMITE
	Laura Hughes	JH	Director, Signs And Labels
	David Langley	DL	Chief of External Engagement, NMITE
	Frank Myers	FM	Herefordshire Business Board / Marches LEP
	Jesse Norman	JN	MP for Hereford and South Herefordshire
	Ruth Parry	RP	Director of Operations & Marketing, Simple Design Works Ltd
	Lauren Rogers	LR	Project Manager, Rural Media
	Paul Stevens	PA	Hereford Business Improvement District (HBID)
	Julian Vaughan	JV	Managing Director, Green Dragon
	Will Vaughan	WV	Hereford Pedicabs and Pedicargo
	Nick Webster	NW	Economic Development Manager, Herefordshire Council
Board Apologies:	Kath Hey	KH	Councillor, Herefordshire Council
	Will Lindesay	WL	Chief Executive, HVOSS
Other Attendees:	Rebecca Collings	RC	Consultant, The Nichols Group
	Clare Hannah	CH	MHCLG representative
	David Hitchener	DH	Leader of the Council, Herefordshire Council
	Luke Thompson	LT	Towns Fund Delivery Group
Other Apologies:	Melissa Walker	MW	Growth Programme Support Officer, Herefordshire Council

ITEM	NOTES	ACTION
1.	<p>WELCOME - Chair</p> <p>MS went through the Minutes and Actions from the meeting held on 21 July 2020.</p>	
2.	<p>COMMS AND BRANDING – LH / RP / LR</p> <p>LR gave an update on the comms strategy and how it was being developed. Looking to develop own social media presence and considering establishing a microsite. JV volunteered support to refine the brand if required.</p> <p>MS suggested that the Comms group should continue with establishing content and follow up with a budget proposal. Action.</p> <p>LR mentioned that the Comms Group were looking at what other towns were doing in terms of their engagement and how this could be used to good effect in Hereford.</p> <p>Press release outlining the work of the Board and the purpose of the Towns Fund was in progress and would be issued over next week or two.</p>	
3.	<p>VISION AND STRATEGY – Rebecca Collings & Luke Thompson</p> <p>RC & LT ran through a presentation.</p> <p>Spend must be 90% capital projects. Set out a Vision for 2030, not just focused on what can be delivered using the £25m but an overall vision for the town, and then identify what can be delivered from within the funding, explaining how the Towns Fund enables this vision to be delivered. Vision needs to lead onto the projects that follow. Important for evidence to be provided to make the case for what is to be brought forward. Need to set out Herefords unique strengths and assets to give a sense of place. Ensure stakeholders are engaged in the vision and town investment plan going forward.</p> <p>Need a connection between the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy and the business case that is brought forward. Ideally the vision will capture and address the weaknesses and build on the strengths, i.e. what are the opportunities for our town, what makes our town different to other towns within the UK, what can be done to address the weaknesses and build on the strengths.</p> <p>The starting point for the SWAT, what we know today, will change following engagement with the community. The team have previously run workshops based on the SWAT analysis</p>	

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	<p>based on the top five issues / opportunities. Enables community buy in to the top priorities.</p> <p>DH advised he is excited by the project as it is not HC saying this is the vision for Hereford, it is the community of Herefordshire setting out what the priorities are.</p> <p>JN queried where we are relative to the competition, what are the best projects being seen at present; RC advised that Hereford is in a similar position to others in cohort 3 who are undertaking a similar process of visioning and starting projects and stakeholder engagement. Some towns have a list of existing projects that they are trying to slot into the vision rather than using the feedback, this is not the correct route to take.</p> <p>The types of projects which are the best are exciting ones that tick multiple boxes, i.e. bring together economic opportunity, health improvements, sustainable travel, etc. and identify opportunities not originally visualised that can now be delivered.</p> <p>CH stressed that when they assess the TIP's received so far, they are not comparing towns to each other, they only assess against the criteria set out in the guidance. It is not towns competing against each other.</p> <p>Existing visions and strategies have been shared, details from these documents have been used to identify key themes and current opportunities. RC suggested a discussion / queries about the key themes to identify if anything is missing, which are most important to be defined as part of the vision, what are the must do's, etc.</p> <p>LR identified that the cultural strategy missing.</p> <p>LH felt we need to be engaging with primary education to get a wider picture of young families. We talk about retaining younger people in Hereford but also need to look at encouraging younger families to return to the county. RP agreed with this suggestion and advised that this is something they see all the time in their business. We need to increase the skills base to enable the retaining of opportunities and inspiring people to stay here.</p> <p>DL agreed we need to retain people and bring them back. We need to attract new people to the County, so we need jobs and professional and personal opportunities. By working alongside the education community we can create an opportunity to join up work.</p> <p>EC felt there needs to be a point specific about diversity and accessibility to ensure everyone gets a voice.</p> <p>JV advised he was pleased to see tourism listed, he felt a lot of these boxes can be ticked by something that has a more rapid response He would like to see visitor economy added under tourism. He would like to see an improvement to the sense of arrival from the train station through to the river, to connect the city to the thoroughfare throughout, with a more pleasing environment, tree lined streets, etc. People recognise Hereford as different and unique in its approach. They are seeing huge amounts of footfall from people visiting the city for a leisure based experience, with outdoor experiences packed. People from within and outside the community want to visit Hereford and enjoy what it can offer. They don't want to visit for traditional retail experience, they want more experience led visits. Entwine narrative with this, visitor economy is more important than tourism.</p> <p>EC liked LH comment re quality of life, which has been picked up by a number of people. The world of work has become more virtual so it's possible to live here but not work here, there is an opportunity to bring up family in a rural area, and improve family wellbeing and quality of life. In relation to the Sustainability theme, zero carbon is important, as is an increase to biodiversity which strengthen the richness of the natural environment. Other theme is around skills and opportunity and quality of life</p> <p>PS highlighted that although it called the Towns Fund, Hereford has been a city since 1189. We need to promote the city and countryside, a green city, apple blossom trail, urban wetland, city walls, etc.</p> <p>LT agreed that quality of place is an important one for the list, with linkages between the town centre and its other assets. If we think about how it works it can drive up land value and have a strong impact on the economy.</p> <p>MS suggested work tourism as well as leisure tourism. Recent changes have created the ability to work in the city within large corporations but stay living local.</p> <p>FM queried how other successful bidders have resourced the project management element; RC advised there have been mixed solutions across the towns, some have just one person,</p>	

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	<p>others have a full team. Towns use combination of one lead officer and use input from consultancy and other areas of the LA. Resources have been stretched due to Covid.</p> <p>WV felt he couldn't think of anything not included within the key themes, but expressed concern that we are being too broad with the key themes, we need to focus on things that were going to be excellent at. He was concerned about how thin the money would be spread if we try to tackle all of the themes. A lot of excellent work has already been done by HC that will support the transport connectivity. It will be a difficult conversation as not everything can be delivered.</p> <p>RC advised that the next step is to work out the must do's and to prioritise the projects, some projects may tick many of these themes / criteria. The point of checking if anything is missing is the ability to zone in on the important issues to take forward.</p> <p>JV felt we need a response to get to WV's point about the best way to get to a short list of priorities we can focus on. Going out with this list for consultation would not be achievable. Need a concise point for consultation.</p> <p>DH commented that we want to increase the financial prosperity of people in Herefordshire, and to increase average earnings. One example for tourism could be a centre of history around the cathedral, this would attract tourism which in turn would attract culture, restaurants, etc. and as a result Hereford becomes a more attractive place for people to visit, and to live and work. Another area he works with is the Hereford Enterprise Zone whose aim to increase employment, wealth, etc. which again in turn attracts people to the county. He felt that we don't need Economic Benefits in the key themes as the knock on effect of the projects we deliver will be increased wealth, prosperity, wellbeing, sustainability, etc. all as a result of making it an exciting place to live and work, educate their family, etc.</p> <p>LT need to think of similar impacts in other towns that are also going through this process, how can our visitor economy evolve and be more experienced to meet the requirements of changing tastes and habits, how is our town going to be competitive against other towns. We need to think about benchmarking against towns similar to ours.</p> <p>WV felt an easy way to achieve this is to all agree a course of values that support the brand we're creating, i.e. culture, environment, economy, history. This could be a tag line that goes in with our branding, could be an easier way to get the public to go along with what we're proposing by having key themes that go along with that.</p> <p>RC has made notes, will discuss with NW about how to develop this further and narrow it down for our eventual vision.</p> <p>MS stressed that we must not forget that community of 60k out there, we need to consider what they feel is required to grow the city. EC stressed that this is important to the county as a whole, it is important to the entire population of the county not just the 60k from the city. Hereford is the centre connection for the entire county.</p>	
4.	<p>PROCUREMENT – Nick Webster</p> <p>It was agreed at the last meeting that we would go out for Expression of Interest (EOI) for provision of consultancy work. A brief has been created and this will be shared with firms for submission of a tender. LR queried when the board will see a copy of the tender: NW will circulate once completed.</p> <p>ACTION: NW to circulate finalised version of the Consultancy Brief to the Board</p> <p>EOI were received from four local companies, two of whom meet the requirements and will be invited to submit tenders. The invite will also be extended to two national companies. The aim is that the consultant will be appointed in the first week in September.</p> <p>Once in place they will be invited to attend the Board meetings to provide updates, but they will also be expected to provide regular updates outside of the Board meetings.</p>	NW
5.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS - Chair</p> <p>PS stressed that it is important to remember Hereford is a city, not a town. The cathedral is not our unique selling point, it is the Mappa Mundi and the chained library that is more important and dynamic.</p> <p>JV advised he was encouraged by the discussion about visitor economy, and felt this provides a unique opportunity to bring the countryside into the city. DL agreed the visitor economy is important, and urged that we don't forget about the opportunity to create new</p>	

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	<p>opportunities for current and new citizens, beyond those that already exist.</p> <p>LH understood about the history but felt that we need to think bigger than that. Hereford is so much more than the cathedral and apples and cattle, we are a diverse board and we all have different end goals, we need to aim big.</p> <p>LR advised that she is part of the Herefordshire Cultural Partnership (HCP); they are applying for Cultural Compact for Herefordshire, which is due to be signed off the following week. This is essentially a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between HCP, HC, and the Arts Council England which will help with broadening the connections the cultural sector has. It provides an opportunity to link with other partners and support investment opportunities.</p> <p>ACTION: LR to circulate a copy of the HCP MOU once it has been signed</p> <p>JN supported what's been said re inclusive approach and the important of heritage. He felt there was an opportunity to tie together heritage, history, green measures, social transition, education, etc. and if we get that right we will be successful. We need to clarify our values.</p> <p>RP stated that whilst she understood the importance of attracting people to Hereford, she was conscious that we mustn't forget those living and working her already. She queried if NW had any analytical data available that shows the current situation within the county. NW advised that this is one of the areas of work the consultancy firm will be asked to complete, but offered to ask the HC data team if they have any information available that can be shared.</p> <p>ACTION: NW to ask HC Data Team for any analytical data available showing the current situation within the county</p> <p>WV stressed that we need to aim high and that it's important to be dynamic and vibrant. It's vital we remember what's happened recently and that we're not scared of doing something that is excellent. This could be amazing, we have to get behind it and remember why we are here.</p> <p>FM highlighted that there is another group working on the visitor economy. Hereford has always had all this wonderful stuff around but it is still one of the lowest paid areas in the country. He was worried we lose site of the aims of this. He also expressed concern regarding bandwidth and our ability to handle the work that needs to be undertaken over the next few months.</p>	<p>LR</p> <p>NW</p>