

TOWNS FUND BOARD

Notes and Action Points

Friday 14 January 2022, 8.30-9.30 am via Zoom

Chair:	Abigail Appleton	AA	Principal, Hereford College of Arts
Board Present:	Ellie Chowns	EC	Cabinet Member, Environment and Economy, HC
	Judith Faux	JF	Trustee, HVOSS
	Kath Hey	KH	Councillor, Hereford City Council
	Frank Myers	FM	Herefordshire Business Board / Marches LEP
	James Newby	JNe	Chief Officer, NMITE
	Jesse Norman	JNo	MP for Hereford and South Herefordshire
	Ruth Parry	RP	Director Operations & Marketing, Simple Design Works Ltd
	Lauren Rogers	LR	Project Manager, Rural Media
	Paul Stevens	PS	Hereford Business Improvement District (HBID)
	Will Vaughan	WV	Hereford Pedicabs and Pedicargo
Other Attendees:	Ivan Annibal	IA	Rose Regeneration
	Christian Dangerfield	CD	Rose Regeneration
	Olli Hindle	OH	MHCLG Representative
	David Hitchiner	DH	Leader of the Council, Herefordshire Council
	Joni Hughes	JH	Portfolio Manager, Capital Development, HC
	Andrew Lovegrove	AL	Chief Finance Officer, Herefordshire Council (part)
	Paul Walker	PW	Chief Executive, Herefordshire Council
Board Apologies:	Ian Christie	IC	Big Business Representative/MD, Welsh Water
	Julian Vaughan	JV	The Green Dragon Hotel, Hereford
Board Absent:	Alan Anderson	AA	British Land – Old Market, Hereford
	Felix Smithson	FS	Younger Person’s Representative
Notetaker:	Jan Bailey	JB	Herefordshire Business Board

ITEM	NOTES	ACTION
1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Board members for their trust in choosing her to Chair the Stronger Towns Board. The Chair also thanked those who had helped with inducting her into the role of Chair.</p> <p>Apologies and Absences as noted above.</p>	
2.	<p>Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>None declared.</p> <p>The Chair reminded members that as well as Chair of the Stronger Towns Board, she is also a project sponsor.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting (held 3 December) and Matters Arising</p> <p>3.1 The Chair noted that at the last meeting a request had been made for a communications update to be included on the Agenda for today’s meeting. This hadn’t been done, but Communications Update would be included on the next meeting’s Agenda.</p>	AA/IA

	<p>3.2 The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December were approved as a correct record.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Project Update (refresh)</p> <p>4.1 IA referred to the report previously circulated to Board members and attendees. Since that report had been circulated, he advised there had been some additional items to note:</p> <p>4.1.1 Southside: Approval had now been made through the Project Delivery Group's (PDG) delegated powers to approve specialist consultancy support from capacity funding.</p> <p>4.1.2 River Wye Infrastructure: The project leaders have now signed the Funding Agreement for the 5% Advance Funding and are in the process of compiling their first claim against these funds.</p> <p>4.1.3 Meadow Arts: Dialogue ongoing in relation to procurement rules – in particular that three quotations are not usually expected for commissioning works of art.</p> <p>4.1.4 Powerhouse: Ongoing concerns regarding liability for service charges at Maylord Orchard.</p> <p>4.1.5 Encore: Now in detailed negotiations regarding a potential base. Possibly 'Make or break' negotiations – ie if this option doesn't work out, project may fold.</p> <p>4.1.6 Extreme Sports: Ongoing issues to do with the cycle track and the need to commission technical support (value c £8,000 – Note: not £80,000 as written in circulated report).</p> <p>4.2 IA advised that all projects have now received their 5% Advance Funding Agreements.</p> <p>4.3 IA advised that a meeting of all project leaders took place last Tuesday (11 January) which was very useful and well received. IA suggested that future all-Project meetings are scheduled on a monthly basis. All attendees agreed with this proposal.</p> <p>4.4 The Chair invited attendees to raise any questions, comments or concerns regarding the projects. The following were raised:</p> <p>4.4.1 KH advised that clarification was being sought on defrayal payments and the purchase of the electric buses/chargers.</p> <p>4.4.2 EC asked for clarification from IA as to what Board members could do to support projects at risk. She also asked whether there is any flexibility in terms of timescales for submission of Full Business Cases (FBC).</p> <p>4.4.3 IA replied that in practical terms, there was not much more Board members could do since the issues identified above were in relation to commercial arrangements and negotiations.</p> <p>4.4.4 With regard to timescales, IA confirmed that the deadline for submission of FBCs is one year after receipt of the Heads of Terms Agreement (ie June 2022). If project(s) look as if they will not achieve this deadline, IA advised that the Board can decide to reallocate that money to other projects, or to introduce a new project altogether, but a project amendment form would need to be agreed by DLUHC. IA suggested that any such reallocation decision should be made by the Board by April 2022. IA counselled against introducing an entirely new project as this would mean</p>	<p>IA</p>

	<p>additional liaison with OH and difficult decisions in terms of which project to select. IA reminded the Board that although they were important, the two projects that appear most at risk (Powerhouse/Encore) were relatively small in scale.</p> <p>4.4.5 IA advised that with regard to the technical support funding required by the Cycle Track project this could be met from the 5% advance funding budget, but was contingent on the project manager(s) signing the Advance Funding Agreement. PS suggested an alternative solution could be to fund this from Herefordshire Council/Hereford City Council match funding pots. PS and IA agreed to discuss these options further.</p> <p>4.4.6 LR commented that the role of the Board is to support all projects wherever possible. IA/KH agreed. PW assured the meeting that with regard to these two 'at risk' projects, the Council's officers were working hard to try and resolve the issues. The Chair was pleased to hear this and said that she was aware that the PDG was also doing all it could to support all the projects. The Chair asked for future PDG notes to be circulated to all Board members so that they are aware of the actions being undertaken.</p>	<p>PS/IA</p> <p>FM/JB</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Memorandum of Understanding with Herefordshire Council</p> <p>5.1 The Chair acknowledged that this document had been discussed previously at STF Board meetings. However, she said there was now acceptance that the document should be couched in a less legalistic, more collaborative way.</p> <p>5.2 PW agreed and stated the importance of having a document that sets out how the Council (as Accountable Body) and STF Board work together and collaborate. It was agreed that JH/IA will work with the PDG to develop a more appropriate collaborative document that will identify how the two parties will work together, their responsibilities and timeframes.</p>	<p>JH/IA/PDG</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Levelling Up Fund Development</p> <p>6.1 The Chair reiterated the hope that the successful development of projects in the Stronger Towns Fund would lead to opportunities to attract additional funding, eg from the Levelling Up Fund.</p> <p>6.2 JNo outlined the opportunities potentially available for Herefordshire via the Levelling Up Fund. He indicated that the focus for this fund would be largely on skills and that he had been actively engaged with a number of senior Government officials to help shape the Levelling Up agenda.</p> <p>6.3 JNo indicated that the work being undertaken in Herefordshire, particularly in relation to the NMiTE and the skills focus in our Stronger Towns Bid, could be important factors in any future bids to the Levelling Up fund.</p> <p>6.4 OH added that announcements regarding the next round of Levelling Up funding are expected in spring 2022. Announcements are also expected around this time in relation to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (intended to replace EU funding pots).</p> <p>6.5 EC reminded attendees that these funds would be Herefordshire focused – as opposed to Hereford City only focused – so would require any bids to focus on the needs of the whole county.</p> <p>6.6 JF reminded attendees of opportunities to attract matched funding. She suggested that it would be useful to compile a list of potential sources of funding and their values.</p>	

	<p>6.7 RP stressed the importance of utilising the private sector and volunteering opportunities in relation to upskilling.</p> <p>6.8 JNo noted all of these comments, which he stated would be important to consider when developing a single, coherent, skills-driven strategy for the county.</p>	
7.	<p>Budget</p> <p>7.1 IA referred to the budget information previously circulated with the Agenda for today's meeting. Although Capacity Fund budget projections indicated a deficit position, IA advised Board members that various options are available for certain costs to be met from the 5% Advance Funding so that a deficit position does not arise.</p> <p>7.2 FM agreed and stated that in particular it had been agreed that funding for Rose Regeneration's work would come from the 5% pot.</p> <p>7.3 FM indicated concerns regarding processes for releasing money from the Capacity Fund – in particular that Projects had to sign the Funding Agreement before being allowed access to these funds.</p> <p>7.4 As AL had left the meeting, it was agreed that clarification would be sought from him on this point.</p>	FM/IA/AL
8.	<p>Future Agenda Items</p> <p>8.1 EC asked for Public Engagement to be considered by the Board at a future meeting.</p> <p>8.2 PS stated that he'd like to see greater attention paid to certain governance issues.</p>	
9.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Friday 4 February 2022, via Zoom (please see link below). Please note new timings: 8.30 am – 10.00 am</p> <p>Zoom Link:</p> <p>Topic: Stronger Towns Fund Board Time: Feb 4, 2022 08:30 AM London</p> <p>Join Zoom Meeting https://zoom.us/j/92308176750?pwd=RmRLSzB1ekJUTDloaHNzTkpRcFlvZz09</p> <p>Meeting ID: 923 0817 6750 Passcode: 149463</p>	