NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Newark Town Funds Board** held in the Newark Rugby Club, Kelham Road, Newark NG24 1WN on Wednesday, 15 June 2022 at 4.30 pm.

PRESENT:

Tom Cartledge – Co-Chairman
Councillor David Lloyd - Leader of NSDC and Board Co-Chairman

Board Members
Tony Aspbury - Chairman of Development Committee (Newark & Nottinghamshire Agricultural Society)
Linny Beaumont (Canal & River Trust)
Kerry Clarke – School Teacher/Resident
Keith Girling – Deputy Leader of NSDC
Matthew Gleadell – Town Clerk (Newark Town Council)
Sanjiv Kohli – Deputy CX, Director – Resources, s151 Officer (NSDC)
Tom Marsden – Director of Strategic Growth (Lincoln College Group)

Also in Attendance
Mick Baker – Chairman of Farndon Parish Council
Neil Cuttell – Business Manager – Economic Growth & Tourism (NSDC)
Frances Davies – Town Investment Plan Programme Manager (NSDC)
Matt Lamb – Director – Planning & Growth (NSDC)
Mel Phythian (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Joelle Davies (NCC)
John Latham (Lincoln College Group)
Johanne Thomas (Urban & Civic)
Sarah Lacey (NSDC)
Jo Bradley (Nottinghamshire YMCA)
Jerry Hague (N&S CVS)
Michael Durban (University of Nottingham)
Frank Horsley (D2N2)
Craig Berens (Nottinghamshire YMCA)
Graham Metcalfe (DWP)
Paul Gascoine (Homes England)
Steff Wright (Gustos)
Ben Sumner (University of Nottingham)
Nikki Burley (Emmaus Trust)
Jane Hutchinson (NSDC)
Matthew Ellis-Mather (Magnet Expert Ltd.)
Kevin Guthrie (Newark Business Club)
Darren Burke (Masdings)
Jackie Insley (Citizens' Advice)
David Jones (Timico)
John Robinson – Chief Executive (NSDC)

25 WELCOME

Tom Cartledge, co-Chairman of the Group welcomed everyone to the meeting. He gave a summary of the work undertaken and progress made by the Board during the previous 12 months, noting the forthcoming larger opening of the YMCA facility and that the Air & Space Institute (ASI) was now oversubscribed.

He commented that prior to the pandemic and associated lockdowns the Board had significantly more private sector partners, querying how partnership working could be re-energised.

Matt Lamb, the District Council's Director – Planning & Growth, advised that only one business case remained outstanding, all others had been submitted for consideration. He also advised that there were 2 key risk milestones in relation to the Southern Link Road: Final Design; and Return of Tenders. It was anticipated that works would commence on site in January 2023 with the road being open to traffic in March 2024. It was also noted that works on the A46 by-pass would commence in March 2025.

26 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17 MARCH 2022

AGREED that the Minutes of the Newark Town Board held on 17 March 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

27 TOWNS FUND PROJECTS COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

The Board considered the presentation by the Town Investment Plan Programme Manager which sought to explain the proposed identified communication interventions from 2022 through to the completion of the towns funding in March 2026.

In order to achieve the proposals, the Council's preferred option was to recruit a skilled and experienced communications officer to a new position on a fixed term contract, which would provide consistent capacity and capability. The funding for the post would be taken from part of the Programme Management RDEL. The Director – Planning & Growth added that the role would assist in the re-energising of the Board.

In considering the presentation Members of the Board commented that the role must focus on communication for the wider Newark area and not for the current projects which had no communication resource of their own.

In relation to the cost of the proposal it was reported that the salary and on-costs would be approximately £50k, leaving £15k in the Programme Management RDEL.

As an alternative, it was suggested that a suitable consultant be engaged to carry out the identified communication interventions.

AGREED that a comparison exercise be carried out between employing an individual on a fixed term basis and engaging a suitably qualified consultant prior to a final decision being made on how to fulfil the identified communication interventions.

28 TOWNS FUND PROJECTS UPDATE

The Board considered the presentation by the Town Investment Plan Programme Manager which sought to provide an update on the Towns Fund Projects and Future Projects.

It was reported that all summary documents had been submitted except the one for SISCLOG and that this was due to market pressures necessitating changes to the development plan. It was noted that the Council had hosted a successful Logistics Conference on 14 June to continue the dialogue with the sector. There had been positive responses to the proposals and some useful ideas and perspectives shared.

It was reported and noted that 10 priority projects had been identified to be brought forward with the Town Deal funding. There was further opportunities available at present and that it was opportune to select other projects from the initial TIP.

The 4 cornerstones of the TIP were noted as: skills, education and business; connectivity; town centre, regeneration and culture; and town centre residential. Details of the existing projects were noted and how these been linked to those cornerstones.

Recommendations for future projects were noted as: repurposing of upper-floors of buildings around the market square; development of a Riverside Place Strategy; and roll out of ultra-fast broadband.

SISCLOG
It was noted that it would provide valuable high-tech office and industrial unit space at a key strategic location in the town and that its potential needed to be shared as widely as possible.

A46 Dualling
There was some traction on this and more information from the DfT could be released shortly. Further Council reports would likely be considered during the September cabinet cycles.

The Town Investment Plan Programme Manager advised that if anyone had any new projects they wished to bring forward that they let her know. These could then be 'pitched' to the wider group at the next meeting.

In noting the above it was confirmed that new funding had not been received. Board Members queried whether it was their role to suggest new projects when the existing ones were not completed and that was more of the role of the wider audience. The Director – Planning & Growth added that pillars of intervention had been identified and a catalyst for development. What needed to be done was giving the market confidence on how to develop the vision and environment for Newark and that a sense-check of the current projects would be beneficial.

In noting the comments a Member advised that a fusion power plant would likely be placed in the neighbouring district of Bassetlaw, adding that the provision of energy and associated works therefrom should be considered when discussing future projects.

The Board agreed that they needed to be cautious in their approach to new projects. They had been established to oversee the spending of the original funding of £25m and should be mindful that they did not morph from the original purpose to that of another. It could be that if future funding was to be secured more consultations would be needed with a focus on the whole district.

It was agreed that the governance of the Board needed to be addressed but the original purpose remained unchanged, it was to ensure delivery of the agreed projects. It was agreed that the importance of delivery should not be overlooked given the changing political landscape in the region, when plans were progressing at pace for devolved local governance in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, with the likely loss of the D2N2 as a result.

AGREED that the presentation and above comments be noted.

29 SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (SPF) AND LEVELLING UP ROUND TWO (LUF) OPPORTUNITIES

The Board considered the presentation given by the Director – Planning & Growth which sought to provide an update on the Levelling-Up White Paper, the launch of the Levelling-Up Fund 2 and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund & Multiply.

The presentation set out the various aims of levelling-up together with focus areas and mission for each of those. The themes of the Round 2 Fund were reported and noted as: Transport; Regeneration; and Town Centres & Culture. Prescribed bids for funding had to be submitted by 6 July and would either Pass or Fail. Details of the rules surrounding the bidding criteria were provided together with the overarching proposals for the area, which was within the Ollerton and Clipstone areas of the district.

Details of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund were provided and what areas must be contained within an Investment Plan, these being noted as: communities and place (active travel, high streets, sports); supporting local business (open markets, visitor economy); and people and skills (from year 3 only 2024/25 given Multiply which is an adult numeracy programme).

The Government's agenda for devolution was again discussed in more detail. It was noted that Nottinghamshire County Council had submitted their desired topics for devolvement for consideration with the majority being authorised. Proof of delivery of existing topics would likely form part of the bidding process, so the ability to show that the group had documentation to prove they were able to deliver on projects was vital.

In noting the comment that monies had to match powers under the devolution plans, the s151 Officer advised that this had been built into the deal. He added that a number of s151 Officers were hesitant about the future proposals as it required them to take a more commercial view than they would normally.

AGREED that the presentation and future funding opportunities be noted.

30 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

UPDATES

Construction College

The number of students enrolling has ensured its success. The facility will be at capacity after 2 years which is ahead of schedule. The Town Fund accelerated funds grant had kick-started the college.

ASI

An increase in construction costs has led to a delay. Construction should now commence at the start of 2023, approximately 6 months away. Students were still being recruited. Business interest was increasing. A good proportion of students were picking-up seasonal work at East Midlands Airport. Students were not only from Newark. Private landlords in the area had been in contact asking about provision of accommodation.

It was noted that the release of any good news needed to be scheduled so as its release was not impacted by the purdah period for the forthcoming May 2023 elections. It was also noted that whilst the Board was Newark based, the projects it delivered had a wider impact beyond the town.

Delivery of Existing Projects

How can the Board assist with delivering projects e.g. Newark Heart project would benefit from greater advocacy by the board members, and a communication of the key aims of the project to increase the vibrancy of the town centre and the footfall and dwell time of visitors.

Next Meeting

Reflect on venue.
Refresh on membership and scope.
Encourage private sector/medium businesses to contribute/participate.

Possible Agenda Items:

Progress on delivery of existing projects (delivery will build credibility)
How to progress the energy of the Board
Creation of next platform/governance – ahead of devolution.

Meeting closed at 6.06 pm.