NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Newark Town Funds Board** held in the Civic Rooms 2, 3 & 4, Castle House, Greath North Road, Newark NG24 1BY on Thursday, 17 March 2022 at 9.00 am.

PRESENT:

Board Members
Councillor D.J. Lloyd – Leader of NSDC and Board Co-Chairman
Steff Wright – Chief Executive (Gusto UK)
Tom Marsden – Director of Strategic Growth (Lincoln College Group)
Sanjiv Kohli – Deputy CX, Director – Resources, s151 Officer (NSDC)
Alan Mellor – Town Clerk (Newark Town Council)
Tony Aspbury – Chairman of Development Committee (Newark & Nottinghamshire Agricultural Society)
Todd Cauthorne – Nottinghamshire YMCA
Fiona Anderson – Head of Civic Engagement (NTU)
Mick Baker – Chairman (Farndon Parish Council)
Mr. Foxton – Representative from Masdings of Newark

IN ATTENDANCE:

Matt Lamb – Director – Planning & Growth (NSDC)
Neil Cuttell – Business Manager – Economic Growth & Tourism (NSDC)
Jane Hutchinson – Town Centre Development Manager (NSDC)
Frances Davies – Town Investment Plan Programme Manager (NSDC)
Joelle Davis – Group Manager – Economic Growth & Infrastructure (NCC)
Ian Fisher – DWP
Jerry Hague – Newark & Sherwood CVS
Sandhya Ward – Homes England
Frank Horsely – Head of Business & Innovation (D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership)
John Latham – Director of DVC Projects (University of Lincoln)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillor Keith Girling (NSDC)
Tom Cartledge – Co-Chairman (Handley House)
Alan Leather (Canal River Trust)
Ben Sumner & Michael Durban (Nottingham University)
Ian Dagley & Ross Halley (Hoval)
David Jones (Digital Space)
Gary Headland (Lincoln College Group)
Jackie Insley – Chief Officer (Sherwood & Newark CA)
Jo Bradley (Nottinghamshire YMCA)
Johanne Thomas & Richard Coppell (Urban & Civic)
Kevin Guthrie (Newark Business Club)
Lesley Owen-Jones (Heritage Fund)
Linny Beaumont (Canal River Trust)
Nikki Burley (Newark Emmaus Trust)
Ronnie White (Balderton Parish Council)

17 WELCOME

Councillor David Lloyd – Co-Chairman of the Group welcomed everyone to the meeting.

18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Fiona Anderson declared an interest in Smart Innovation Supply Chain and Logistics Zone (SisClog).

19 MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 2021 AND 13 JANUARY 2022 (EXECUTIVE BOARD)

AGREED that the Minutes of the Newark Town Board held on 26 November 2021 and the Newark Town Executive Board held on 13 January 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

20 BUSINESS CASE UPDATES AND APPROVALS OF SUMMARY DOCUMENTS PRIOR TO SUBMISSION TO DLUHC: SISCLOG, NEWARK CULTURAL HEART AND CASTLE GATEHOUSE

The Board considered the report presented by Frances Davies, the Town Investment Plan Programme Manager, which sought the Board's approval of the outline business cases for SISCLO, Newark Cultural Heart and the Castle Gatehouse projects in order to progress them to Summary Documents for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. It was reported that the Summary Documents for the YMCA Community & Activity Village, the International Air & Space Training Institute, Cycle Town and 32 Stodman Street projects had already been submitted. The report set out purpose of each of the remaining projects and the progress made to-date.

AGREED (unanimously) that:

(a) the update to the Towns Fund projects be welcomed and noted; and

(b) approval be given to progress the Outline Business Cases for the SISCLOG, Newark Cultural Health and Castle Gatehouse projects to Summary Document Stage and submission to DLUHC for the draw-down of funds, subject to assurance by Quod and NSDC's s151 Officer.

21 TOWNS FUND COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

The Board considered the report presented by Frances Davies, the Town Investment Plan Programme Manager which sought to update the Board on the work carried out to date on the communications of the Towns Fund projects, including a dedicated website and suite of project videos.

The report set out that following the Executive Town Board meeting held on 13 January 2022 specialist support had been engaged to develop a communications plan which was due for completion at the end of March 2022. In addition the creation of a dedicated website had been commissioned, aimed at informing the residents, workers and visitors of Newark about the progress of the projects, such website to be live by the end of March 2022. The website would include a suite of videos – one for each project – and a single 'parent video' to provide context. The role of the Newark Town Board was reported in paragraph 5 of the report with the four made pillars for change, as identified by the Town Investment Plan, being listed in sub-paragraph 5.2.

In considering the report the Board discussed how people could be 'driven' to the website and also how other social media was being used to highlight the projects. It was suggested that videos also be uploaded on to TikTok and YouTube. Additionally, a leaflet drop and an advert in the Newark Advertiser were suggested. The Town Investment Plan Programme Manager acknowledged the suggestions, advising she would speak with the website developers. The Director – Planning & Growth commented that the work of the Board was known nationally but had not been recognised at a local level. Fiona Anderson suggested that there be 3 or 4 bullet points for each topic which could be discussed. She commented that both Mansfield and Ashfield District Councils had reached the same stage – "how to engage the public".

Alan Mellor stated that websites needed to be kept up-to-date and that thought must be given on how all the information could be linked together rather than on separate websites.

The Director – Planning & Growth noted that there were 9 Town Fund Projects. He acknowledged that success would be aligned with how they effected the town centre and not the wider town. He noted that the Newark Heart project would need to evolve for the benefit of the wider town.

In relation to membership on the Board, Councillor Lloyd comments that if an individual/organisation had not attended for 3 or more meetings they should be removed from the Board and that the entire membership required refreshing. He noted that people did not know what the Board were doing and that advocates and ambassadors were needed who brought into the projects.

In noting the ability to now meet face to face, Tony Aspbury suggested that an presentation be given at an exhibition or the Board go into local schools or the college.

In acknowledging the previous comments, Steff Wright commented that the projects were not fast moving so change was sometimes slow. He noted that the YMCA project was due to be opened and that it would make an ideal venue to promote the fund and future opportunities. In agreeing with the comments Tom Marsden suggested that a plan be made of when progress could be communicated and how this would be best achieved and to who. He added that the Board needed to drive the message forward and that he would willing to speak to individuals/ organisations/businesses.

The Board agreed that the momentum of the projects and future aspirations needed to be maintained.

AGREED that:

(a) the update on communications of the towns fund projects be noted and welcomed:

(b) support to launch the new website and project videos by visiting the site, watching the videos and sharing within their networks as appropriate be approved.

22 NEWARK TOWN BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE UPDATE

The Board considered the report presented by Frances Davies, the Town Investment Plan Programme Manager, which sought their approval for the annual refresh of the Newark Town Board Terms of Reference, including the direction it creates for the Board.

The report set out the Statement of Purpose of the Board and that it was timely for a review of the membership to be undertaken. It was noted that the Town Investment Plan Programme Manager was undertaking such a review and would contact each Board member to see if they still wished to be involved. It was further noted that an additional clause had been added to the members' responsibilities in that they must attend at least one meeting each year to ensure consistency and commitment.

Steff Wright queried whether there would be any opportunity for existing or new Board members to put forward future projects. The Board noted that there was funding for the existing 9 projects. The TofR update would enable the Board to discuss how to access other funding streams to progress the remaining 21 projects. Tom Marsden added that additional projects may be added by Board members if they attend the meetings.

It was agreed that a list of existing members be brought to the next meeting of the Board and that future funding could at a national level or from devolution/regional. The Director stated that the Board were a catalyst to enhance the area until local businesses began to make changes themselves.

In relation to the promotion of projects on the website, it was suggested that the information should include those projects identified but not yet being progressed and that members of the public be encouraged to put forward their own ideas. Information needed to engage the reader; be short yet informative and set at a high level.

In discussing how and who to engage with in the future, Fiona Anderson suggested that it be correlated around communications. That contact be made with residents groups and associations, not just individuals. Contact could also be made with voluntary organisations

Councillor Lloyd noted that the governance of the Board would be off-putting to some organisations or individuals and that it would be beneficial to ask any potential new members how they would wish to be involved. Steff Wright agreed, adding that engagement needed to be aligned to possible future funding pots. The Board would need to engage with organisations who could facilitate new ideas and opportunities.

It was also suggested that future meetings should last no longer than one hour and that governance meetings be held remotely. Young people and students would not necessarily be able to progress projects but were needed for their enthusiasm and ideas. Sceptics were also needed to question the decisions being made by the Board.

Steff Wright advised of a Young People's Green Growth Event at the Midlands Enging. The Director – Planning & Growth and Steff Wright agreed that they could be used as a sounding board in the future. The Board agreed that young people and children asked fundamental questions and that it would be beneficial to revisit the schools who had fed into the original projects.

The Business Manager – Economic Growth & Tourism advised that his team were again hosting an Expo in the autumn and that it would provide a captive audience.

In closing the discussion, the Town Investment Plan Programme Manager summarised the main points:

- What the preferred day was and time for meetings.
- That future meetings be more structured with 4 being held each year in March, June, December and one other.
- That a minimum level of attendance be set e.g. 1 per year or have an empowered deputy
- That governance issues be dealt with either by virtual meeting or email.
- That future meetings be focussed on promotion of interesting issues.
- That flexibility be built in to future meetings – venue/time of day/hybrid attendance
- Possible change of Board name e.g. Board governance decisions; rest could be steering groups.

AGREED that:

(a) the Board approve the proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference and accept the Terms of Reference March 2022 as the most current version of the document; and

(b) the Board commits to a further revision of the Terms of Reference in no longer than 12 months, by March 2023.

23 PRESENTATION FROM PROJECT SPONSORS

Air & Space Institute – Newark
(formerly International Air & Space Technology Institute)

The Board received a presentation from Tom Marsden on the latest position with regard to the ASI, noting its change of name.

Councillor Lloyd queried as to whether potential employers would come on board without the building being completed. Tom Marsden advised that when a student had finished the course they would still not be a qualified commercial pilot, noting that the cost to do so was in the region of £100k. The training offered would enable the student to progress to that level. He noted that it was hoped that public funding for commercial pilot training would be available in the future. He added, that engineering was different as it enabled the student to enter the workplace with an appropriate qualification e.g. similar to ground staff at airports.

There were currently 70 students with perhaps 50% of those being from the Newark area. Free transport would be offered in subsequent years thereby attracting students from further afield.

In noting the above the Director – Planning & Growth advised that the Board would need to challenge the information e.g. how many of the students were local and where they went on to after the course was finished. Was it acceptable to say that if the student wanted to become a pilot they would need to go elsewhere to finish their training. The skills and qualifications gained at the ASI would enable them to be employed as an engineer or ground staff. A review of the communications around this would need to be undertaken. Tom Marsden advised that talks were ongoing as to how funding could be secured to take the course to a degree level. He noted it was a dynamic situation which was being shaped as it evolved. He also noted that talks were being held with the RAF; East Midlands Airport, and Manchester Airport as to their level of interest.

Alan Mellor suggested that an invitation be extended to the Town Councillor so that they can see what training is being offered to students and what the future facility will look like when built.

Steff Wright commented that he had long held reservations about the project due to aviation being carbon heavy but acknowledged the benefits of training students as engineers and ground staff. He noted, however, that Newark was not close to an airport. Tom Marsden advised that both East Midlands and Doncaster airports were only 30 minutes' drive away and that relevant businesses would be encouraged to relocate to the area – where the knowledge and expertise was. He also confirmed that it was an aspiration to work in partnership with Rolls Royce.

It was suggested that NSK be approached also as they made ball bearings for use in engineering and the Digital Skills Council.

In relation to the change of branding, the Director advised that the reason for the change needed to be clearly explained. He also noted that the military interest was important as the Government had been impressed that the RAF had shown an interest in the project. He advised that a prospectus would be written of what the ASI was and then the relevant organisations would be targeted.

Cycle Town

The Town Investment Plan Programme Manager provided an update on the Cycle Town project.

In considering the presentation Tom Marsden queried as to the cost of each bike and the docking stations. It was noted that the bikes were £1k each with docking stations as approximately £50k each.

In noting that Newark was flat and therefore good for cycling, Tony Aspbury added that road safety would need to be addressed and integrated into the wider planning agenda. The Director acknowledged the comment and highlight 2 risks.

i) growing demand without fixing the infrastructure – what evidence of demand – some infrastructure not capable of being fixed due to medieval nature of infrastructure.
ii) bike crime in the town. Crime rate for cycle thefts is lower than in other areas which Brompton's operate in. Could Brompton be invited onto the Board?

Tom Marsden queried whether the there was a link with Sustrans or the cycle routes in Lincolnshire. He noted that infrastructure was often problematic in many towns and that discussions should be held with Highways England about the inclusion of cycle routes.

Tony Aspbury suggested that the Travel Route Plan needed to be given consideration and also the behaviour or cyclists and pedestrians in relation to future infrastructure planning.

In noting that there was a cycle track at the YMCA facility, Todd Cauthorn advised that the original cycling plan had been amended, following consultation. British Cycling did not like racing circuits and following discussions with them and local clubs, a Learn to Ride Section for children and families was developed. There was also a pump track and facilities for BMX entry level cycling. There was no longer a tarmac track as it had been replaced with a hard green trail using a similar route which links into the Sustrans route.

The Chairman noted that the YMCA facility was due for completion in the Spring and queried whether the Board could come to view the facilities. Todd Cauthorn advised that there was a tour at the end of the month and also one in April. Alternatively, a separate tour for the Towns Fund Board could be arranged. The Board agreed that a separate tour when the works were nearing completion would be the favoured option.

Alan Mellor reiterated that the infrastructure to allow people to cycle safely needed to be addressed and that until it was, fewer people would cycle. He queried whether it was possible to include a cycle route at Middlebeck to allow people to cycle to Newark. The Director advised that this had been factored in but until demand was proven, the funds to develop a route would not be available. Tony Aspbury suggested that selective improvements be made.

<u>Newark Cultural Heart</u>

The Board received a presentation from the Town Centre Development Manager on the latest position with regard to the Newark Cultural Heart Project.

Neil Cuttell commented on the work undertaken by Newark Town Council, specifically Alan Mellor and Ian Harrison, on the work they had undertaken, noting the Town Council's investment of £200k. He added that events would be 'little and often' with a consultation being carried out with the public and stakeholders to develop the events programme.

The Chairman queried as to the level of anecdotal evidence on what type of events worked, adding that conversations with local businesses were important to ascertain what type of event generated them business. The Director summarised the main points:

- Activity/Vibrancy (not just planned events);
- Does it work? How does it work?
- Speak to traders. Some will work/some won't work.
- Collection of data.
- If event of value, how will it be paid for on an ongoing basis – concessions/ subsidy/part funded?

Tony Aspbury noted that at the end of the shopping day and the beginning of the evening the market was sometimes a 'wasteland'. He mooted the idea of late opening hours from between 5pm to 7 or 8pm.

In relation to the Town Centre environment he agreed with the potential for seating areas but noted that the pavements required repair; that the handling of empty shops needed to be reviewed; that ideally there should be a link between the town centre and the riverside.

Alan Mellor advised that it was difficult to access performance indicators but that the market seemed to be a barometer of success noting that it would be beneficial if the market place could be sustained as an open retail space. He added that there needed to be more diverse use of the space, noting that Steam Punk wished to return because there was more to offer in Newark than in Lincoln. He acknowledged and agreed with the comments about the state of disrepair of the pavements, saying that the Stodman Street area was disgraceful. Newark Town Council had put aside £50k to help towards their repair but it was difficult to engage with Nottinghamshire County Council about the issue.

The Director advised that the Outline Business Case had to cost out an option – what physically needed to be done and that to just fix the market would cost approximately £300k, hence the need for a longevity of funding.

It was suggested that consideration be given as to what could be done to improve footfall during the lull time as previously referred to.

Southern Link Road (SLR)

The Director noted that this project had not been funded by the Town Fund but had received £20m from the Levelling Up Fund. The deal had now been signed with the first tranche having been released the previous week. The final design was likely to be June 2022, with tenders due to be submitted from contractors in September/October 2022. These would be in relation to the A1 end of the development. It was anticipated that it would be January 2023 when works would commence on site with completion in 2024. He added that works to the A46 bypass would be in 2025. He noted that if all these works went ahead there would be disruption to the road infrastructure in and around the area.

Whilst acknowledging the planned works, Alan Mellor commented that the town would again be swapped with construction traffic. He suggested that the completion of the SLR could provide an opportunity for traffic to be re-routed off the A46 e.g. a one way system rather than using temporary traffic lights within the town itself.

24 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Football Project Update

Steff Wright advised that he was involved with trying to pull together the 2 senior clubs in Newark and that progress was being made. The project was looking to improve the football facilities at the YMCA which could enable teams to share the facilities and host semi-professional matches.

Meeting closed at 12.00 pm.

Chairman