NEWARK AND SHERWOOD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of **Newark Town Funds Board** held in the Newark College, Friary Road, Newark NG24 1PB on Friday, 26 November 2021 at 8.00 am.

PRESENT:	Board Members Councillor D.J. Lloyd – Leader of NSDC – Co-Chairman Steff Wright, Chief Executive, Gusto UK
IN ATTENDANCE:	Matt Lamb – Director – Planning & Growth (NSDC) Neil Cuttell – Business Manager – Economic Growth (NSDC) Frances Davies – Town Investment Plan Programme Manager (NSDC) Joelle Davies – Group Manager - Economic Growth & Infrastructure Team (NCC) Fiona Anderson – Nottingham Trent University Tom Marsden, Lincoln College Group Richard Gelsthorpe – Managing Director (Pratt & Gelsthorpe Ltd.)
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:	Ben Sumner – Nottingham AC Michael Durban – Nottingham AC Frank Horsley – Head of Business & Innovation (D2N2) Kevin Guthrie – Guthrie Therapy Darren Burke – Masdings Sandhya Ward – Homes England Paul Gascoine – Head of Emerging & Developing Markets (Homes England) John Latham – Director of DVC Projects (University of Lincoln) Jackie Insley – Sherwood & Newark Citizens' Advice Darren Scott – Futures for You Sanjiv Kohli – Deputy CX/s151 Officer (NSDC) Gary Headland – CEO (Lincoln College Group) Tony Aspbury - Chairman of Development Committee (Newark Showground) Tom Cartledge – Co-Chairman of the Board Derek Higton – NCC Cllr. Keith Girling – Deputy Leader (NSDC) Linny Beaumont – Canal River Trust David Jones – Chief People Officer (Timico) Timothy Calvert – Currys Ian Dagley – Hoval Paul Holmes – Wirtgen Group Alan Mellor – Clerk to Newark Town Council

8 WELCOME

Tom Marsden welcomed those in attendance to the Newark College and introduced two students, Lewis and Shelby, who were enrolled on the IASTI course. Lewis' studies were in relation to the Pilot Pathway and Shelby's studies the Engineering Pathway.

The students addressed the Board advising that they currently studied together, as the pathways complemented each other until they would eventually split off into separate courses, but both acted as an introduction to aviation. They advised of some of the activities they had taken part in, including flying. It was noted that the college was soon to take possession of a simulator.

Both students highly recommended the course and the opportunities on offer once completed. They noted that there were only very few similar courses on offer in the country.

In response to what career path the course could lead to, Shelby advised that it did not limit her to aviation engineering. She added that it could lead to a career in space engineering which was her passion.

Lewis advised that the course offered the student a knowledge of aviation history, noting his particular interest in spitfires, and that this helped with coursework. He noted that the pilot pathway could lead to a career as a commercial or a military pilot.

The Board thanked the students for their presentation.

TM noted the high calibre of students on the course and that it offered them opportunities to vastly broaden their horizons. In relation to the aforementioned simulator, he stated that it was hoped that all students would be flying solo by the time they enrolled in year 2 of the course but that additional funding would be needed to progress that. He was exploring options to secure this.

9 INTRODUCTION OF NEW FACES

Joelle Davies – Group Manager for the Economic Growth & Infrastructure Team at Nottinghamshire County Council.

Frances Davies – Town Investment Plan Programme Manager – Newark & Sherwood District Council.

10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

11 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 22 JULY 2021

AGREED that the Minutes be accepted as a correct record.

12 PRIORITY BUSINESS CASE APPROVAL AND UPDATED ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

The Board considered the report presented by Matt Lamb, Director – Planning & Growth which sought to provide an update on the various initiatives that were being undertaken in Newark Town Centre.

ML advised that the YMCA and the Newark Construction College Business Cases had been signed off by the Council's s151 Officer.

The Full Business Case (FBC) for the Stodman Street Development was now ready for signing off by the s151 Officer.

The Outline Business Case (OBC) for the IASTI was also in and the Assurance Framework was expected shortly, again delegated to the s151 Officer for signing off.

ML further advised that the Business Cases for the 20 Minute Town; SiScLog (Newark Gateway site); Castle Gatehouse; and Cultural Heart of Newark were under development.

It was reported that the deadline for all Summary Documents for Business Cases to be signed off was the end of March 2022. It was, however, noted that the Government were keen on the March deadline with respect to OBC's, with a period of time to follow for conclusion of FBC's. Project Sponsors will be asked irrespective to keep to currently agreed timetables. Ensuring spend within the prescribed and agreed profile with government remains important.

In relation to the Assurance Framework, ML advised that explicit wording had been included which would allow a drawdown of monies for both OBCs and FBCs which was crucial for the continued development of some projects, for example the IASTI project.

ML noted the inclusion of the Newark Southern Link Road within the Towns Fund projects, advising that the funding allocated was from the Levelling Up Fund Phase 1 bids. Works to secure funding and implement the scheme would now happen at pace.

AGREED that:

(a) Board Members welcome and note the update provided;

(b) Board Members approve, subject to the recommendation(s) of the Council's s151 Officer and Quod Consulting, the Full Business Case (FBC) for 32 Stodman Street which seeks £2 million of Towns Fund Grant;

(c) Board Members approve, subject to the recommendation(s) of the Council's s151 Officer and Quod Consulting, the OBC for the International Air & Space Technology Institute (IASTI); further to approve the £500,000 Town Fund grant payment for 2021/22;

(d) delegated authority be given to the Council's s151 Officer to approve a final Full Business Case (FBC) for the IASTI (Newark); and

(e) the revised Towns Fund Assurance Framework (November 2021), as detailed in Appendix A to the report be adopted.

13 PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT PLAN AND CARBON REDUCTION PLAN

The Board considered the report presented by the Neil Cuttell, the Business Manager – Economic Growth & Visitor Economy which sought to inform them of the creation of a Private Sector Engagement Plan and Clean Growth Charter as part of the Newark Town Fund Programme. The two draft documents were attached to the report for review and consideration.

NC advised that the Heads of Terms from Government with the offer of £25m was conditional on meeting a number of requirements, two of which being the Private Sector Engagement Plan and the Clean Growth Charter. This was to ensure the inclusion and involvement of the private sector and to detail how projects would address clean growth principles.

ML noted that all the Business Cases already had included within them green credentials but the aforementioned Charter was to capture that at a strategic level.
ML commented that private sector engagement was already embedded into all projects, with it being critical for multiple projects.

The Board held a general debate as to the reasons why they believed that private industry engagement and energy in the projects and the wider Towns Fund initiative had waned since the Board was initially established.

ML suggested that when the projects were still being decided and developed, businesses still had opportunity to influence them. Now this was at the delivery stage their influence was much less apparent. He noted that some of individuals within the Newark Business Club remained interested and engaged.

TM noted that many businesses were in 'survival mode' since the pandemic and had little capacity to think into the future.

In noting the high turnout for the first meeting of the Sherwood Levelling-Up Steering Board ML stated that work needed to be done to re-engage with the Newark Board and suggested that a refresh was required.

SW raised the question of whether the existing projects were not considered to be exciting by business people. He added that he was unsure as to what the actual vision for Newark was and how we could communicate it. He understood the individual projects but there was no overall vision which captured them all and the ultimate aim for the town. Business people would listen to what the projects were about but then go back to running their day to day operations. TM commented that one of the aims of the town projects was to increase economic growth, reiterating his earlier comment of businesses being in 'survival mode'. Noting the above, ML queried whether visible interventions would help the situation and whether the Council leading some communications was appropriate, with private sector members being better placed to take on ambassadorial and promotional roles. TM added that students and young people could perform this function. FD added that perhaps the narrative of the overall vision needed to be better explained to local businesses.

The low turnout for the meeting was discussed, with it being suggested that a face to face meeting and time of day had perhaps been a factor. For future meetings it was suggested that a hybrid approach be taken and that a different day and time also be looked at. There was a need to knit the public and private sector together and that progress on the projects needed to be more tangible to generate interest and engagement.

SW stated that in addition to the business community being involved, representatives from other communities in the town should be invited, with the aim of uniting the town and changing people's perception. He added that the projects were about building the future of the town and not about looking backwards. TM agreed with the comments, adding that the future of hospitality in Lincoln was currently being developed, noting that an increase in tourism would support the retail offer and present real opportunities for economic growth.

In acknowledging the above, SW highlighted the issue of difficulties and tensions between the different factions of travellers within the town with all parties agreeing that they needed to be understood and addressed.

In considering the above ML advised that work would be undertaken on: Vision/Communication/Board Membership. It was agreed that a joint communication campaign needed to be undertaken, with it being suggested that it include positive messages from the Business Club, IASTI/Lincoln College Group and the YMCA. JD further suggested that there be a standing item on the Agenda in relation to communications.

ML noted that the Council had a nervousness in relation to announcing projects that had not yet secured the funding via the Business Case sign-off process. FD noted that private businesses were often frustrated with the bureaucratic measures that public bodies had to undertake to secure funding and queried whether it was possible to separate out the two issues. One to deal with governance and funding issues, with the other one being of a more promotional nature.

AGREED that:

(a) the Draft Private Sector Engagement Plan and Clean Growth Charter be approved; and

(b) delegated authority be given to the Co-Chairs to sign off the final versions of the document after Board member feedback.

(c) the Town Investment Programme Manager would take the lead on facilitating a workshop on visioning and communication and draw together with the NSDC communications team a joint PR campaign with key partners communications teams.

14 TOWN CENTRES AND FUNDING UPDATES

The Board considered the report presented by the Business Manager – Economic Growth & Visitor Economy, which sought to provide an update on the various initiatives that were being undertaken in Newark Town Centre. These included: Reopening High Streets Safely/Welcome Back Fund; Heritage Action Zone; Business Resilience Programme; High Street Diversification Fund Grant; Footfall; Tourism; and other work programmes (teenage market; 2021 Future First Expo; and review of the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy).

NC noted that in relation to the Welcome Back Fund, monies had again been received in 2020/2021. The investment of the funds had been devolved to Parish and Town Councils. In relation to the footfall cameras, these had proved worthwhile.

It was suggested that students from Kickstart be invited to a future meeting of the Board, noting that it was run by Volunteer It Yourself, an organisation which challenged young people 14-24 to learn trade and employability skills through helping to fix local community facilities in need of repair.

SW advised that Gustos were running a Community Fund Project which offered an amount of £500 to help within communities. To-date, £60k had been awarded and the impact of little project had proved very successful.

DJL advised of EEM, a national procurement framework for the public sector, a non-profit organisation offering efficiency savings. It offered funding to groups which would not ordinarily be able to access funding without being a properly constituted group.

NC advised that work was being undertaken in relation to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for 2023 when it may be possible to offer specific incentives for specific types of businesses and that this would need to be undertaken in a targeted way, either by type or business or company. It was noted that an ownership survey had been carried out in the town and that buildings were being let to businesses. Landlords were keeping rents low to retain tenants, but were currently not proactively carrying out necessary repairs. ML stated that one incentive may be that for every empty property a landlord brought back into use, they could be offered lower business rates. In noting the proposal, TM again sought clarity on the overall vision for the town as all proposals, incentives etc. needed to link together, citing the evening economy and policing resources.

In determining the overall vision, it was suggested that the end to end visitor journey and demographic of visitors would need to be considered.

AGREED that the Board support the ongoing initiatives that were being rolled out in the town centre.

15 TOWN FUNDING UPDATE - REDISTRIBUTION OF TOWNS FUND OPTIONS

The Board considered the report presented by the Co-Chairman which sought to outline the options identified for the redistribution of the unallocated Town Fund resource of £1m which was no longer being used for the relocation of the Police Station project. Paragraph 2.2 of the report highlighted that the Cities and Local Growth Unit of central Government had requested how the fund was now intended to be used with paragraph 2.3 setting out the 3 options available.

In considering the report, the Board discussed Option B - “seek to redistribute the resource to another Towns Deal project(s) where it has been identified that higher costs due to inflation will be fatal to a project”. It was noted that the Castle Gatehouse Project would fall into that category with it being suggested that a sum of £300k of the resource be allocated accordingly, leaving a residual amount of £700k unallocated.

Noting that this would be a capital spend TM referred to the IASTI project and that any additional resources would be to fund design and not building works so could not benefit from this additional resource.

FD advised that a conversation had been held with Government officials who were supportive of resource being reallocated to the Gatehouse Project as they were aware of the potential effects of cost increases, noting that it would be more difficult to secure reallocation to other projects. It was also noted that the submission of forms to request authority to undertake the reallocation was time sensitive and must be carried out as soon as possible.

SW advised that Gustos were looking into totally new ways of construction in order to deliver low energy usage, adding that there needed to be a reduction in the carbon footprint of constructing the building and its subsequent use. He acknowledged that this would be costly but would deliver innovation and supplement the green agenda. ML commented that, if possible, he would welcome SW's thoughts on how this could be achieve.

AGREED that:

(a) Option B be followed in the first instance and redistribute the resource to other Towns Fund projects to ensure that they come forward where it had been identified that higher costs could prove fatal to the project; and

(b) any residual resource, after pursuing Option B, be reallocated to expand the scope and ambition of current projects in the Towns Fund Programme.

16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

Meeting closed at 9.49 am.