

Bridgwater Town Deal Board

25th January 2022

3:30pm till 5pm

Teams Meeting

Minutes

1) Introduction and Apologies

In Attendance:

- Cllr Christine Lawrence,
- David Mears,
- David Ralph,
- Doug Bamsey,
- Gavin Roberts,
- Justin Sargent,
- Cllr Mick Lerry,
- Paul Edwards,
- Ruth Lambert (Chair)
- Cllr Gill Slocombe,

Supporting the board:

- Keith Thomas,
- Nathaniel Lucas,
- Katherine Schollar,
- Jaycee Ellis.

Apologies: Jonica Walkinshaw, David Northey, Stephanie Parsons and Paul Moore.

2) Project Confirmation Update

- Due to reallocation of town deal monies, government required us to resubmit our cashflow spreadsheets to show the change in allocation. This has been done and sent to government and are currently awaiting approval.
 - Not expecting any major problems as it is only a change in allocation and not a change in the projects.

3) Tidal Barrier Project Assurance Update

- The Bridgwater Tidal Barrier business case has now been through Assurance Group to which they have signed it off.
 - The Tidal Barrier business case will now go to SDC Executive tomorrow (26th January 2022) for final agreement before being submitted to government.
- The Transport and Work Act Order (planning permission) approval was given last week.
 - Allows the scheme to move forward with confidence.
 - The summary paper will be updated following the approval of the Transport and Work Act Order.
- Will continue to update the board on the progression with this.

- The drawdown of funding for this project won't be until the next financial year (2022/2023).
- There will be a press release to follow Executives decision which will mention the project is subject to governments final decision.
 - Press release to be circulated to board.
- The project is expected to start in late 2023.

4) Dunball Junction Business Case Summary

- The Dunball Junction scheme was £4.7m but is now expected to be £5.2m, a £500k increase due to inflation.
 - The £400k town deal contribution will cover the majority of the price increase for the scheme.
- A board member raised a query regarding a statement in the summary document regarding the submission date of the 14th January to government. As we don't plan to drawdown any funding for this project in this financial year, that submission date isn't relevant for us.
- Dunball Junction has been prepared by County with a detailed business case as part of the LUF (Levelling Up Funding) as part of a wider improvement bid.
- Cost benefit ratios are high for transport modelling schemes.
 - The revised costs will affect the cost benefit ratio slightly.
- County are in discussions with government regarding the design progress of the works. Cycling lane connections issues are still due to be resolved as there is a possibility that further land may be required, although it may not affect the delivery of Dunball Junction.
- County will be able to proceed with the project fairly promptly.
- Dunball Junction Papers will go to Assurance Group next Monday (31st January) and, subject to assurance group comments, will be submitted to executive shortly after.

The board have agreed to the above proposal.

5) Project Partners Presentations

Engine Room 2.0 – Deb Richardson

- The Engine Room was incorporated in 1997 and will be celebrating their 25 years of the business this year.
- The delivery of the programme will be given in three different strands:
 - Community Engagement.
 - Talent Development.
 - Creative Production
- Expecting to open the first floor in March 2022.
- They are currently working with the architect to produce designs for the building.
- Ambition to expand their facilities and open the second floor of the building.
- Later ambition to have a solar array in the long term.
- A desire to open a third studio space for unlocking further potential of the ground floor.
- Looking to change the access of the ground floor – have looked at investing in energy-saving windows and bi-fold doors.
 - The new windows will help control heat in the building, especially will help ventilation in Summer.
 - They are harder to break and will be cheaper to replace.
 - The new windows will still allow projection in the night-time economy – this can help improve the perception of the town.
- A new projector will allow the local artist/performers work to be shown.

- Want to look at investing in new mobile facilities to go across Sedgemoor.
- Want to enhance visitor experience, removing the wall between the main room and studio 1 will open up the space.
- Want to be able to accommodate to double capacity in the café, providing food for participants using healthy and local food providers.
- Providing experience for visitors on the high street.
- QS ready to help with costings.
- Planning permissions/building control will be needed to change windows and proposed changes.
- First phase of the project is underway.
 - Completed the installation of stairs and fit out of first floor, the lift is due to go in on the 14th February.
 - SDC provided match for the first phase.
- Cultural partnerships have been made between the town hall and arts centre and have been able to create a link between the facilities.
 - There will also be a good connection to the Celebration Mile.
- About to engage with schools in Sedgemoor to start a project regarding the effect of COVID explained through photography as public health have recognise it has had a huge impact.
- Also have a group called Womad who give music performances of different cultures/genres in different schools.
- Engine Room is able to reach a whole new audience by going out to other venues.

Arts Centre – David Mears

- The condition survey has taken place and are just waiting on the report to be sent back to them.
 - Hoping this is in about a week or so including an outline of the costings.
- A focus group for this project has now been put together of which Bridgwater Town Council is working closely with them.
 - They are looking on how to make the best use of the building with the space that they have.
 - Potentially looking to reopen aspects of the building and repurpose them.
 - Possibly look to expand the arts studios as well.
- Looking to make a connection with the Courtyard gardens.

Town Hall – David Mears

- The Town Hall theatre building is 160 years old; it is also a listed building.
 - Planning consent for the proposed works is being developed.
- The designers for the town hall have been out to visit the town hall to evaluate the building – DM to expect designs back by the end of February.
 - On this visit, it was recognised that the foundations of the building aren't all level which will become a challenge.
 - Designers have managed to find a natural route through the town hall – understanding how to unlock further space.
 - Ambition is to install a lift within the theatre.
 - Also, to make the town hall an information/drop-in centre
 - The current chair structure/system in the town hall theatre is very outdated, are looking to get a theatre type chair structure with about 445 seats.
 - The chairs are currently kept in storage below the auditorium, new seating arrangements would allow that space to be free and allow for an extension for the dressing rooms.
 - Ambition to improve the toilets as they are under accommodated.

- BTC are investing in solar panels, which will require listed building consent.
- A desire to remove fossil fuel heating and include more sustainable heating. BTC received a Climate Emergency grant from SCC to help fund this.
- Will look to repaint the town hall and replace the lights and windows.
- There is a connection with the town hall facilities with the research that has been done for the Bridgwater Step-Up project. SDC to share the report with DM.
- Town Hall lease offices to partners.
 - Mind in Somerset lease one and they hold their AGMs in there.
 - Other partners who lease an office within the building include: Fuse performance, Bridgwater Chamber of Commerce and Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival.
- The town hall has also been a testing centre and is now a hub for people to get their booster for the COVID vaccination.
- The town hall is a multi-versatile space, including performance spaces, offices and meeting rooms.

6) Forward Meeting Plan – Progress Review

- Refer to business case programme.
 - Will look to share updates in advance of board meetings.
 - Will update if anything raises issues/concerns in the Business Case Programme.
- Currently undergoing market research for Bridgwater Step-Up.
 - Not yet able to confirm a location for it, although looking into various property options.
 - The initial building was bought by NHS. A meeting has been set up with them to understand their proposals further. Appears that their plans would be to use it as a community mental health service. This then makes connection with town hall and engine room for drop-in spaces.
 - Unlikely this will be brought to the February board as initially planned. Will be looking to bring this to board in March/April.
 - It was agreed that the Town Hall and Step-Up facility should work together to ensure there is a coordinated effort to offer small business space in the town.
- Town wardens is expected to be brought to board in February.
 - Aim to get this detail out to board members promptly.
 - Get the project underway for BAU (business as usual) for SDC in unitary and for visibility – no planning consent etc.
- Town wardens will be first Town Deal specific business case, more detail will be given in the business case.

7) Local Engagement – Update

- Will bring local engagement forward in the next board meeting with more detail.
- Since the last board meeting there is now a nominated responsible officer for each town board project.
 - KT is procured for the town deal to take the board right up to the business case stage for each project. The nominated officers will help develop the projects as they are being delivered.
- There will be a forum of community partners who will oversee business case as well and provide additional perspective and insight.
 - This will develop over next couple weeks and an updated will be provided at the next meeting.
- Bridgwater Town Team have expressed an interested in their involvement for the business engagement event and to involve Bridgwater retailers.
- Late spring early summer for consultation on design works.

8) AOB

- There are concerns regarding inflation in other capital costs/risk registers for projects.
Concerns for capital costs.
 - External projects risks will be managed by the project lead/project manager of that specific project – it will be their responsibility to resolve.
 - If projects face a cost increase due to inflation, board will need to re-evaluation costs which may need to be done in phases.
- Carnival has been able to secure CRF (Community Renewal Fund) support which will help get the project through planning and feasibility works.
- Additional funding has been committed to the Docks Regeneration, similar to Dunball Junction, it is at a bigger risk for inflation of costs – although will be addressed when necessary.
- Will be using SDC match funding in order to take the Celebration Mile through further design and feasibility works.
 - This will help project as much capital funding as possible in order to secure/use it for the delivery of the projects.
- Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival have been chosen to represent in the Queen's Jubilee Pageant this year.
- Board members to contact JE regarding availability for February 28th due to February board possibly needing to be rearranged.