

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Crewe Town Board**
held on Friday, 25th November, 2022 at Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT

John Adlen, Doug Kinsman (Chair), Andy Butler, Rick Carter, Paul Colman, Jasbir Dhesi, Sally Hepton, Guy Kilminster, Councillor Nick Mannion, Councillor Jill Rhodes and Simon Yates

ALSO PRESENT

Peter Turner and Lindsay Lewis

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Jez Goodman, Development & Regeneration Delivery Manager
Rhiannon Hilton, Communications Officer
Dr Charles Jarvis, Head of Economic Development
Karen Shuker, Democratic Services Officer

45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (1 MINUTE)

Apologies for absence were received from Ellie Cox, Mark Hills, Charles Jarvis, Dr Kieran Mullen MP, Peter Skates, Martin Woods and Carol Young.

46 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (1 MINUTE)

As the Towns Fund Progress Update had become a standing item on the agenda, it was agreed that the following declarations of interest would be recorded and used for all future meetings where this item would be discussed:

Councillor Nick Mannion, in the interest of openness, declared that he is an elected Member of Cheshire East Council which is the accountable body for the programme and requested that this standing declaration be recorded for any Cheshire East Councillors who may attend the meeting in future. Cllr Mannion also declared that he chairs the Council's Economy and Growth Committee which has regeneration within its remit.

In the interests of openness Councillor Jill Rhodes declared an interest as a political appointee of Cheshire East Council and Crewe Town Council.

In the interests of openness Simon Yates declared an interest in the Always Ahead Charity (for Flag Lane Baths).

Jasbir Dhesi declared that Cheshire College is a named beneficiary of the ice cream element of the heritage project and that the college is also supportive of a number of the other projects.

47 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (3 MINUTES)

RESOLVED:

That subject to the following amendment to Minute 39 Towns Fund Progress Update and Project Review, the minutes be approved as a correct record:

Dr Kieran Mullen MP stated that he disagreed with the process, with specific regard to timescales and the presentation of information, which meant that he felt he was not in a position to make an informed decision at today's meeting, and therefore abstained from the vote.

48 TOWNS FUND PROGRESS UPDATE & PROJECT REVIEW (1 HOUR)

Following the briefings and discussions relating to its Towns Fund Cost & Delivery Risk Review, at the previous meeting on 28th October Crewe Town Board (CTB) had agreed that:

1) CTB would submit a request to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), through Cheshire East Council as the accountable body, to withdraw the Lyceum Powerhouse project from its programme and the funding would be reallocated across other projects;

2) CTB agreed to delegate the decision on the amount of funding to be reprofiled across the remaining programme to the Chair and Vice Chair of Crewe Town Board, in consultation with the Towns Fund Sub-Group (TFSG).

Further briefing and communication regarding the proposed withdrawal of the Lyceum Powerhouse project had followed, including with the project team, local councillors, key stakeholders (through the Crewe Cultural Forum) and, informally, with DLUHC representatives. The Town Board's decision was also endorsed by the accountable body (Cheshire East Council) at its Economy & Growth Committee meeting of 15th November.

Following on from the last Board Meeting and the decision to withdraw the Lyceum Powerhouse project and reallocate the resources, the Towns Fund/TIP Subgroup met on 31st October and 18th November to consider the next steps. After substantial discussion and the gathering of construction inflation evidence, the following was agreed:

1) Reallocation of grant monies would be made to protect each project's outputs and outcomes from the impact of inflation;

2) Reallocation of grant monies would be used to meet the recommendations of the independent consultancies commissioned to carry out a review of risks;

3) Projects would be supported through a recognition of actual inflation since the initial project submissions and a forecast of construction inflation for the delivery years demonstrating fiscal responsibility over the medium term;

4) Reallocation of grant monies would not be used to rescope projects with all projects, except Repurposing Our High Streets (ROHS), being managed in the same way;

In response to comments and feedback received from board members it was reported that

- Warm and Healthy Homes – This was one of the projects where the budget had been reduced so had been scaled down significantly, but this was a project that would still be impacted by the increase and inflationary cost in building materials. The money could not be used as a contingency fund and technically this would not be in line with the guidelines from the DLUHC, as money would need to be allocated along the way.
- Caution was needed to make sure there was no project scope creep in respect of any further improvements;
- The proposals outlined above had been done so with support from Cheshire East Council's finance team
- Communications – the proposals for the reallocation of monies needed to be open, transparent, fair and in an equitable way which was the rationale behind what was discussed in today's meeting.
- Next steps would be trying to predict inflation using what had gone on already and what was expected in the future. There was the possibility that the same exercise would need to be repeated in the future.

The Development & Regeneration Delivery Manager provided a wider update on the projects. Although there were concerns around inflationary and delivery risks in the current climate, the board were reassured that the Currie and Brown report and the Ekosgen reports had looked at and addressed those risks as far as possible. There was also close monitoring by officers using the evidence that was available within the industry.

Next steps would include:

- Communications would be rolled out in the new year should approval be given to the reallocation of funds by government.
- Performance reporting was required by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) every six months for every Towns Fund programme. Crewe Town Board would need to formally approve submission of these reports. The first of these reports would be submitted to DLUHC by 16 December 2022.

RESOLVED (Unanimously):

That Crewe Town Board agrees to the approach set out in the proposals outlined, and agree to this forming the basis of a Project Adjustment Request submission to DLUHC.

49 BOARD REMIT MOVING FORWARD OUTSIDE OF THE TOWNS FUND (15 MINUTES)

The board received an update on the Towns Fund: Supplementary Guidance on the role of Town Deal Boards in the delivery phase. Board members discussed the requirement to review its remit and objectives once the projects had been approved for the delivery stage. It was agreed that the Board had an important ongoing part to play to make sure that projects stayed on course and there was always a chance that the board may have to review the programme of projects again.

The frequency of meetings, structural aspects, and the desire for the Board to contribute to other projects were discussed. It was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair would reflect on the comments made by board members, research what other town boards were doing and provide a range of options going forward which board members would be consulted on.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

50 COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT SUB-GROUP UPDATE (10 MINUTES)

Since the last board meeting there had been updates made to the website on project descriptions. The homepage and the rest of the content had also been refreshed so that there was the most up to date narrative available.

There had been a piece written on Cheshire East Councils regeneration programme recently which had included a note on the towns fund. There was an update on Pocket Parks which included the council having worked with the Wishing Well project and managing to secure the planting of tree

as part of the Queens Platinum Jubilee, which had been planted next to the Jubilee Garden site.

Communications had gone out to residents in respect of some preliminary work being carried out on Flag Lane Baths which was due to start next week.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

51 **STRATEGIC UPDATE FROM CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL (10 MINUTES)**

The Development & Regeneration Delivery Manager attended the meeting and gave a verbal update in respect of:-

Ly2 – Site clearance works were due to commence on 3rd January 2023 and fencing to be erected on 16 January 2023 which would mean there would be no parking after this date. It was due to re-open in June.

Flag Lane Baths- Work was due to commence on the 28 November 2022 which would include the removal of asbestos etc.

Flag Lane Link (FHSP) – Works would likely be delayed until March 2023 due to utility company delays.

YouthZone – A planning application had been submitted for Oak Street.

DCMS Youth Investment Fund announcement was imminent.

Cumberland Arena – A planning application had been submitted.

History Centre – The National Lottery Heritage Fund announcement was expected imminently.

Two planning applications had been submitted 1) for demolition, new public realm, new court entrance and replacement car parking 2) for History Centre building.

Pocket Parks – Consultation was now completed on the first phase with an 89% approval rating. An additional advanced payment of £10k was proposed for Jubilee site/Wishing Well.

Mill Street Project – There would be a public consultation with Guinness residents on the 19 January 2023, with wider public consultation scheduled for the 26/27 January 2023.

In addition there would be a further consultation carried out by the Cheshire East Highways team following funding received from the Department of Transport to look at Active Travel schemes.

Royal Arcade Phase 1 (Bus Station and MSCP)

- Works continuing pre/post-Christmas, with some restrictions, but no road closures.
- Existing bus station would be closing on the 3 January 2023, with temporary bus stands and access arrangements would be in place until December 2023 when the bus station would be completed.
- Heritage Wall consultation had been completed and a final revised design would be confirmed shortly.

Southern Gateway – Planning applications had been submitted with a decision expected in January 2023.

Levelling Up Fund – Announcement on bids was expected pre-Christmas.

Share Prosperity Fund – Cheshire East Council was still waiting for the outcome of submission which had been submitted on 1 August 2022.

Repurposing High Street – Iain Nicholson had been appointed as a consultant on an interim basis to help support the development and roll out of projects to help engage with local agents, property owners and prospective businesses.

As the project was a grants scheme it would need approval by members and a report would be going to the Economy & Growth Committee on 17th January 2023.

RESOLVED:-

That the update be noted.

52 AOB (5 MINUTES)

There were no other items of business.

53 DATE OF NEXT VIRTUAL MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next virtual meeting take place on Friday 6 January 2023 commencing at 9.30am.

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 11.45 am

D Kinsman (Chair)