

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Crewe Town Board**
held on Friday, 16th October, 2020

PRESENT

D Kinsman (Chairman)

J Adlen, A Butler, R Carter, P Colman, Reverend D Edwards, S Hepton, M Hills, A Knight, Councillor N Mannion, K Mullan MP, Councillor J Rhodes and S Yates

ALSO PRESENT

Kim Cooper, Lindsay Lewis and Pete Turner

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Baxter, Democratic Services Officer
Jez Goodman, Development & Regeneration Delivery Manager
Chris Jarvis, Head of Economic Development
Frank Jordan, Executive Director - Place
Peter Skates, Director of Growth & Enterprise
Carol Young, Senior Investment & Interim Programme Manager

12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Prior to the start virtual meeting, the Chairman welcome Charles Jarvis who had recently been appointed as Head of Economic Development at Cheshire East Council.

Apologies for absence were received from Jasbir Dhesi and Martin Wood.

13 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS VIRTUAL MEETING INCLUDING ACTIONS

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

The Chairman went through the list of actions from the previous virtual meeting and updated members on the status of each action accordingly.

14 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

It was moved and seconded that Simon Yates be appointed Vice Chairman of the Board.

RESOLVED

That Simon Yates be appointed Vice Chairman.

15 TIP SUB-GROUP

Simon Yates attended the virtual meeting and gave a verbal update in respect of the TIP Sub-Group. Within his update he reported on the following matters:-

- Overview of the purpose of the Sub-Group including the following:-
 - (i) To act as a means of quick and efficient engagement for Hatch (External Advisors for the TIP);
 - (ii) To strengthen the relationship between Board members and Hatch;
 - (iii) To focus on the delivery success of the TIP;
 - (iv) To act as a sounding board on issues and challenges;
 - (v) To facilitate discussions between Board Members and Hatch by people more readily available to Hatch
 - (vi) To have an oversight of Hatch's performance so that the Sub-Group could report directly back to the Board on how well Hatch was performing.
- Hatch progress update including:-
 - Evidence review and narrative
 - Strategic consultations
 - Strategic framework
 - List of projects and priorities
 - Engagement & Communications Plan
 - Approach to TIP document design/look
 - Timescales

In respect of the evidence review and narrative Hatch provided information on the progress made so far. Travel patterns were highlighted as an important issue in terms of determining how people were arriving into Crewe to work and then leaving to go home and based on discussions with Cheshire East Council officers it was clear further evidence around transport data was required.

In-depth discussions took place on whether the TIP should put in a bid at £25,000,000 or to go up to £50,000,000. The Chairman was concerned that a view might be formed that Crewe wasn't ambitious enough if the higher figure wasn't aimed for particularly given the allocation of the HS2 hub station.

Kim Cooper from ARUP advised that the TIP had to demonstrate that it was exceptional in order to achieve the higher amount. In addition it had to be seen to be transformative both at regional and national levels. Members felt it was important to see examples of the £50,000,000 projects being put forward by other towns in order to get a feel for the type of projects being put forward. The Board were advised that once the heads of terms from cohort one had been signed off shortly it might be advisable to delay making a decision until then. Once the heads of terms had been agreed the TIP would be published online and therefore the projects would be in the public arena.

In addition to this it was commented that the decision about how much money to ask for from Government needed to be driven by the quality and range of projects developed and put forward. It was felt that there was an opportunity to produce a holistic plan for Crewe with a broader investment plan but the Board should be more selective as to what went into the TIP. It was suggested that a gap funding approach should be considered and adopted whereby contributions to specific schemes were requested rather than asking for funding for the total cost of each project.

Kieran Mullen MP welcomed the comments and advised it was important to keep in mind the overall funding available from central Government from under other sources. In terms of the provision of funding for bridges he felt Network Rail and the DfT should be stepping in and funding for these projects should be pursued through separate funding bids.

As Cheshire East Council was the accountable body the Chairman asked for officers thoughts on the amount to bid for. In response the Executive Director-Place agreed with the consensus that there was a need for Crewe's ambition to be bold, but it was important to get a clearly defined programme in place as this would then set the bid level.

It was agreed that it was too early to make a decision in respect of the amount and as Hatch were not present further discussions outside of the meeting were necessary in order to keep them informed of the views of the Board. Clearly members needed to see what was on the table in terms of a list setting out examples of projects to enable them to come to a firmer view on what would be the appropriate amount to ask Government for.

It was queried if a list had been produced in terms of examples of smaller £1,000,000 projects which other towns had put forward. In response examples were given of smaller projects relating to lighting of natural assets, creation of skills/health hubs and improving crossings around dual carriageways and so forth. It was agreed a full list of would be circulated to Members outside of the meeting along with a list providing examples of larger projects. Concerns were raised these projects may have revenue implications and it was agreed that this was an issue and guidance was in the process of being produced as several questions had been asked around that issue.

In terms of the strategic framework there had been a lengthy debate on the strapline, and it was agreed this would be placed on hold for a few weeks and that the objectives for the TIP which had been produced were not in priority order.

In terms of the list of projects and priorities, Hatch had been capturing as much as information as possible. A number of the schemes on the list that Hatch had devised were schemes which either appeared in the future high street fund or in bids to the heritage lottery fund thus it was acknowledged that there was a considerable amount of work to be done in order to avoid repetition. It was agreed this list would be circulated by Simon Yates after the meeting.

There were further discussions on the boundary for the TIP which was considered important because any projects submitted had to be within the boundary plan. A boundary plan had recently been circulated and it was clear that a further discussion was required to review this.

In terms of timescales any ideas for projects had to be submitted to Hatch by 3 November and outcomes from these submissions would be brought to the next TIP Sub-Group meeting on the 6 November and then to the Board meeting the following week. As the timescales were short discussions needed to take place with Hatch in respect of the mechanism for shortlisting the projects. With regard to the submission of project ideas it was queried as to how defined Hatch were expecting them to be. In response it was advised there had to be some pragmatism around the detail of any projects put forward. Further to this clarification was sought as to what factors made projects more attractive and if was there any guidance available?

In response the Board were advised it was less about the type of project but more about responding to evidence-based need and what the needs of Crewe were. A golden thread of a narrative was seen as key to being successful.

Finally, in respect of engagement, a press pack was in preparation and ready for circulation, a matrix of contacts had been identified and the next stage was to identify any gaps.

The TIP Sub-Group had agreed the Chairman should approach the Council with a view to spending some of the funding on creating a website and this should be done as soon as possible. It was agreed that this would be discussed in more detail under the next item.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

Consideration was given to a written report updating members on the Communications & Engagement Sub-Group and communications in general.

Carol Young, Policy and Partnerships Manager at Cheshire East Council attended the virtual meeting and highlighted at the previous virtual meeting discussions had taken place in respect of establishing a Communication & Engagement Sub-Group to support the development of the TIP and to help drive future regeneration of Crewe forward.

She suggested the need to think about producing a Communication Plan which would set out key messages and set out timescales and milestones so it was clear when publicity campaigns were in operation as well as the importance of developing campaigns alongside those timelines for when want to release information.

She explained that providing access to the public as well, including accessing information on projects would allow them to be more engaged and cuts down enquiry time if information is available online. A number of tools and resources could be used for example a web presence/newsletters.

She emphasised that a lot of good work already had already taken place particularly in respect of the Crewe branding. There was also the possibility of tapping into wider campaigns and using links to other websites as well as utilising partner videos to promote Crewe and partner networks. She requested that discussions focus on how to move the Group forward, its direction, membership, purpose and terms of reference as well as agreeing to some objectives.

It was pointed out that a meeting was taking place later in the day round the website and that further discussions around that subject should take place there. In terms of the substance of the group it was felt that discussions on this should take place outside of the virtual meeting given the time constraints.

In terms of the website the Chairman commented that the short-term plan was to use Crewe Town Council's website with the longer-term vision to have a website which showcased the ambition of Crewe. Initially elements would focus on the Crewe Town Board and the towns fund but the platform would then be extended to the wider regeneration efforts of Crewe.

In response Carol Young confirmed that the first stage was to access Cheshire East Council's website whereby the public could access papers immediately and this was already in place. The next step was to work with Crewe Town Council and then in the medium to longer term look to the procurement of a bespoke website.

With regard to the procurement process the Chairman asked if there was a mechanism in place for money to be transferred from Cheshire East Council to the Crewe Town Council to allow the Town Council to undertake the procurement process. In response it was stated that this would be considered at the meeting taking place later in the day.

Further comments were made in respect of the web and whether or not it would build in the work already undertaken by Wayne Hemmingway. It was confirmed it would.

It was agreed that further discussions would need to take place about funding.

There were concerns that the communication element wasn't as cohesive as it could be and more involvement with key people would be more efficient rather than repeating discussions. It was agreed that discussions after the virtual meeting would take place to co-ordinate diaries so that the meeting taking place later in the day involved all relevant people.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

17 STRATEGIC UPDATE FROM CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Peter Skates, the Director of Growth & Enterprise at Cheshire East Council attended the virtual meeting and gave verbal update in respect of Royal Arcade. He reported all the documentation had been completed.

The Council now had an agreed programme which he hoped to share next week with Board members. The planning application hopefully would be submitted by April 2021 in hybrid form with the remaining element of the commercial development being in outline. Subject to the successful discharge of conditions and a successful planning application consent by October, construction on the bus station and multi storey car park would commence by December 2021. The new interim bus station would become operational in Spring 2022 and the new bus station and multi storey car park operational by April 2023.

The Council intended to push the developer to get the remaining element of the commercial development into a planning application no later than May 2022 and the commercial element of the scheme would hopefully be completed by March 2025. He advised that he would circulate key milestones to members next week.

In addition, he reported that the Council was taking a report forward on a number of items relating to Crewe. A report was being considered by the Environment & Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny Committee on Monday ahead of a report going to Cabinet on 10 November. It provided the

opportunity for some recommendations to be put forward around the future high streets and stronger towns funding.

A report would be taken forward requesting provisional delegated authority to accept the grant for accelerated funding for Lyceum Square and the same for the high streets funding should the Council be successful, and that delegated authority would be in place to accept it in order to keep the momentum going.

The Council would also look to advise the Committee and Cabinet about the role of the Board and the fact that Cheshire East Council was the accountable body for the Board and to seek to delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Executive Director and with the approval of the Board to submit to the Towns Investment Plan to Government in the future and to submit a bid for the towns fund to Government.

In respect of the existing bus station, the Council were in discussions with Arriva about the proposal for their early exit from the lease which was due to expire in early April 2021. The Council had undertaken some initial surveys and was in the process of obtaining costings and reviewing them within the team to see what early interventions from the Council would be required but clearly there were some significant costs. It was important to note that the inclusion of the demolition of the bus garages on Delamere Street had been written into the development agreement under Royal Arcade to take commence by March 2021.

Finally in terms of the market hall the appointment of market asset management as the operator had been confirmed and there was an invitation to the Board to attend a site visit possibly at the end of November/December to look at progress of the market hall.

Members welcomed the opportunity to visit the market hall and it was very much felt that the update was seen as a good news story with things moving in the right direction. The Chairman thanked the Director for addressing a number of the short-term issues.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

18 FORWARD PLANNING

In respect of forward planning it was suggested that unless someone had a pressing issue that they wanted to include on the agenda for future meetings, the Chairman asked that this be dealt with outside of the meeting. Future items would be dictated as to what was taking pace outside of the Board meetings.

19 AOB

The Chairman felt it was important to make reference to Covid-19 and the impact the virus had had on the country. He raised concerns that people could not just be accepted to 'get on with it' as they had done for the previous six months. Collectively the community needed to come together to protect the short-term future of Crewe as well as its long-term future. He acknowledged that it might be out of the remit of the Board to raise this point but felt the Board played a role in making a difference to the lives of those people living in Crewe, by leading and by being proactive in doing something that ensured the community of Crewe survived the next six months.

In response Kieran Mullan MP, stated that he had established a weekly charities/communities hall prior to lockdown and during. A number of charities involved in this working together and if anyone wanted to be involved then to contact him.

In addition it was noted that Crewe Town Council had supported the community by delivering prescriptions, distribution of PPE to care homes and so forth. The Events Officer was looking at arranging Covid friendly events and it was hoped broadcasts would take place informing people what was happening outside of Crewe for example the role of the Board and the work the Town Council was undertaking.

The Executive Director-Place felt several important points had been raised and it was important to instil confidence in local communities, therefore it was essential that as much as possible was done to get the key messages out. He suggested forward planning at a strategic level whereby all could share their thoughts on how to provide confidence during the winter to local communities would be essential. In the early days the Board had been used as a really helpful communication and exchange mechanism.

Councillor N Mannion advised that Macclesfield Town Council and, Cheshire East Council and local hospitality groups were working on a recovery plan for the Town Council in the short term and he suggested that both Macclesfield and Crewe Town Councils could work collaboratively over the next 6 to 12 months.

In addition to the earlier points raised, the Director for Growth & Enterprise commented that he led a multi-disciplinary team in Cheshire East around business and town centre recovery. It was essential to work together and liaise with the town council in order to create vitality and bring people back into the town centre. It was agreed that support to retailers was essential

Some of issues raised related to the NHS and people directorate of Cheshire East Council rather than place and the Council had comprehensive winter plans to support communities. If anyone wanted further information the documents were available on both the Council's website and the NHS website.

Further comments were made in respect of the role of the Board and there being an opportunity which would send a clear message to local communities that the Board had a clear vision independent from the work already being undertaken by individuals.

The Chairman welcomed the thoughts of Board members and further consideration as to how to take things forward need to take place outside of the meeting. Whether the Board was the right vehicle was not clear but collectively he felt it would be positive if something could be done to ensure Crewe was supported over the next 6 months otherwise a lot of what was being looked at by the Board might become worthless.

It was suggested that the Communication & Engagement Sub-Group could discuss the points raised at its meeting later on in the afternoon.

20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting be held on Friday 13 November 2020 commencing at 9.30am.

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 11.55 am

D Kinsman (Chairman)