

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Crewe Town Board**
held on Friday, 8th January, 2021

PRESENT

Doug Kinsman (Chairman)

John Adlen, Andy Butler, Rick Carter, Paul Colman, Jasbir Dhesi, Reverend David Edwards, Sally Hepton, Guy Kilminster, Adam Knight, Councillor Nick Mannion, Dr Kieran Mullan MP, Councillor Jill Rhodes and Simon Yates

ALSO PRESENT

Dr Ricardo Gomez, Lindsay Lewis and Pete Turner

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Sarah Baxter, Democratic Services Officer
Jez Goodman, Development & Regeneration Delivery Manager
Rhiannon Hilton, Communications Officer
Dr Charles Jarvis, Head of Economic Development
Peter Skates, Director of Growth & Enterprise
Carol Young, Senior Investment & Interim Programme Manager

Prior to the start of the meeting the Chairman reported that he and some of the other members of the Board had recently had the opportunity to visit the market hall. He commended and congratulated Cheshire East Council, the Town Council, the market operator, the architect and the team behind the construction. Not only did he feel it was a fantastic achievement, but it set a statement of intent for where Crewe should be in the future and reflected the clearly the vision of a group people who shared the same vision and passion for the market hall.

47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (1 MINUTE)

Prior to the start of the virtual meeting, the Chairman welcomed Guy Kilminster to the meeting. Guy was the Corporate Manager Health Improvement at Cheshire East Council and would be attending meetings of the Board in place of Dr Matt Tyrer who was currently occupied with work relating to the COVID pandemic.

The Chairman also offered his congratulations to Cheshire East Council in respect of their successful bid regarding the Future High Streets fund bid in which Crewe had been awarded over £14,000,000 of regeneration funding.

He also congratulated the Communication & Engagement team's recent successful launch of the website-www.weareallcrewe.co.uk which was now up and running. Particular thanks were extended to Lindsay Lewis for her work on achieving this.

Due to the tight deadlines combined with the Christmas break, the Chairman advised it had not been possible to circulate the final narrative in relation to stage one of the TIP. It was felt necessary in order to obtain a high quality document and the design should not be rushed, therefore it would not be considered at the virtual meeting today.

Apologies for absence were received from Mark Hills and Frank Jordan.

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (1 MINUTE)

There were no declarations of interest.

49 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS VIRTUAL MEETING INCLUDING ACTIONS (10 MINUTES)

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the virtual meeting held on 11 December 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.

50 TIP DRAFT VERSION 2 (45 MINUTES)

Dr Ricardo Gomez attended the virtual meeting and gave a verbal update on the progress with the Towns Investment Plan (TIP) including the next steps. On behalf of Hatch he thanked project leads for their hard work over the Christmas period particularly in respect of responding to comments on material for section two of the TIP. Hatch had now completed an intensive process of editing the submitted information which had been circulated to the Check and Challenge Group. He advised that there would be a period of time to refine the individual projects but he hoped this would be minimal.

In terms of section two as it was essentially a technical submission he had not thought it was necessary to bring this to the Board for members consideration. Essentially the key details would be included within section one. In respect of timescales Hatch had until the end of the month to refine section two of the submission. Finally an impact/outcome set of tools would be developed in order to provide consistency across the projects in terms of key outcomes generated which would deliver an additional layer of outcomes and impact evidence to include in the TIP.

Reference was made in respect of the need for robust baselines with a good set of baseline indicators which changes could be tracked against, particularly with regard to the health aspect.

In response to this comment Dr Gomez stated that very few projects had referred to health and well-being defining their project outcomes. Representatives from Hatch had taken part in a Town Fund delivery partner session which provided guidance on how to complete part two. The clear message was that there had to be an understanding not every project would have a clear baseline or quantified outcome. It was important to emphasise there were multiple ways in which investments in Crewe could deliver a positive impact on residents health and well-being, however it would be a question that would needed to be addressed by the Check and Challenge session taking place the following week.

Further reference was made to the background detail and the arguments positioned around the projects and the TIP and whether or not these were transferrable into other projects if the same base could be used to be better prepared for the future.

In response to this Dr Gomez stated the process undertaken in the past three months had pushed the Board on in terms of identifying what needed to be invested in and what the key challenges were prior to Hatch being appointed. Hatch's role had been to assist the Board's focus as well as helping to identify a set of linked investments particularly alongside the work Cheshire East Council had already done in Crewe. The Future High Street Fund projects had enabled a coherent package of measures to tackle the critical issues in Crewe that had existed for a long time period of time. As a result he felt the Board was in a much stronger position with a set of comprehensive projects for a ten year investment period. The revised section one of the TIP drew together all of the matters identified as additional measures which had resulted in a comprehensive set of projects and priorities with evidence which clearly underpinned the case for tackling those issues.

In terms of section one he advised that over the Christmas period, time was spent editing the document in response to feedback received from the Check and Challenge session as well as comments provided by the Board. It was anticipated that the revised draft of section one would be completed later today or by Monday at the latest. With regard to timescales Dr Gomez suggested that the word document be circulated to the Board shortly for a further and final set of comments. In conjunction with this he proposed to share this word document with Open who would be responsible for working on the final design document to be circulated at the same time. The Chairman felt that the design document should be discussed at the TIP Sub-Group prior to consideration by the Board. Based on the assumption that section one would be completed by the end of the day it would then be submitted to the Check and Challenge session on Wednesday 13 January 2021. The section one document in word and design form would be finalised for sign off by Friday 22 January 2021 with

final minor amendments with Open taking place the week commencing Monday 25 January 2021. It was suggested that the Board should make any final minor comments by Monday 18 January 2021.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

51 TIP DOCUMENT DESIGN (10 MINUTES)

This item was not discussed due to the document requiring further minor amendments.

52 ECONOMIES FOR HEALTHIER LIVES (20 MINUTES)

Guy Kilminster, the Corporate Manager for Health Improvement at Cheshire East Council attended the virtual meeting and gave a verbal report on how the health of people could be improved through economic development in Crewe.

He advised the Board that a funding opportunity had been identified in early December and that agreement had been reached for officers to work on a submission bid for this funding with a submission deadline of 15 January 2021. Conversations with Dr Charles Jarvis had taken place and it was felt important to involve the Board with the bid due to the potential alignment with work being undertaken around the TIP and the ambition of economic and regeneration of Crewe.

It was noted that funding of £1,700,000 was available from the Health Foundation with the intention that only four projects with a maximum award of £500,000 up to a period of 3 years per project would be offered this funding. He highlighted the key objectives of the programme which included:-

- improving the capacity and capability of economic development and public health professionals to take joint action to use economic development to improve health;
- developing a better understanding of the mechanisms through which economic development interventions affect health outcomes;
- supporting the development of metrics to monitor the health impacts of economic development interventions;
- building understanding of how to translate the evidence base into practical action;
- capturing learning from the programme to be used to inform and change practice across the UK through wider dissemination by the Health Foundation.

It was clear there was an issue with improving health through economic development and currently there were no toolkits in existence which would

aid the process. The Board were advised that this was an opportunity to fund up to 4 projects as well as developing a suite of tools and matrix that could be used across the country by others going through a similar process. In addition if successful the funding could be used to undertake work that was unable to be fulfilled under the terms of the TIP. A suggestion was put forward that capacity should be placed into the economic development team either through the creation of a single post or joint posts to work with economic development colleagues and the Board. It was also suggested that the Cheshire East Social Action Partnership be involved in the engagement with the community aspect. This bid would provide an opportunity to use any potential funding to use Crewe for a pilot study as to how the health and wellbeing of the population could be improved through economic development, through the TIP, through the Future High Streets Fund and any other investment.

The Chairman welcomed the opportunity to bid for funding which would assist in assessing the long term impact on economic regeneration which wasn't always present in some of the projects put forward. He felt that programme 'dovetailed' well into the Towns Fund however he was concerned at the limited amount of funding available in contrast to the amount of work requested and the competitive nature of the bidding process.

Further comments were made in respect of the consultation and engagement process with the community, the Board and Council which in the past had been a barrier as well as suggested the financial allocation put forward regarding this area of the bid which potentially needed to be increased. Members welcomed the fact that this was an opportunity to address and improve the social and economic issues faced within Crewe. In addition Dr K Mullan MP, advised he had previous experience working on a project with the Health Foundation and would be more than happy to give his feedback from his perspective. Finally the Board endorsed the suggestion made by Dr R Gomez that reference to the bid should be included within the TIP.

It was agreed that Members if they had any further feedback should be emailed to Guy Kilminster by 12 noon on Wednesday 13 January 2021.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and any feedback in relation to the document circulated be emailed to Guy no later than 12 noon on Wednesday 13 January 2021.

53 COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT SUB-GROUP UPDATE (20 MINUTES)

Reverend David Edwards attended the virtual meeting and provided a verbal update to the Board.

Reverend Edwards went on to give a presentation on the website. He confirmed the website was now live and the feedback received so far had been positive. He thanked everyone for their hard work on the website particularly Lindsay Lewis.

The purpose of the website was also to support the Board's ongoing engagement and partnership arrangements in the community. The inclusion of 'mini surveys' represented the first step in keeping the conversation going between now and when the decision from Government was made. The titles of the surveys reflected the key themes emerging from the TIP with each set of questions designed to steer debate helpful to the process.

Jane Dalton and Groundswell would continue collating responses until the end of January. The Sub-Group was progressing with their social media presence on Facebook and Twitter working closely with Cheshire College South and West for resources in respect of the development and monitoring of the Sub-Groups social presence. In addition the Director of Marketing and Skills Partnership at the College had been invited to be part of the Sub-Group. In terms of content of the website the Board were asked for their feedback and what content they would like to see on the webpages.

Members offered their congratulations on the work undertaken so far and made the following comments:-

- Whether information on the future high streets fund would be included on the website. It was agreed that the website would be a good place to showcase the Future High Streets Fund but further discussions with Cheshire East Council needed to take place first;
- The creation of a 'feedback loop' in respect of the surveys;
- Social media eg Facebook would be the best method of publicising the website;
- Inclusion of a journey of projects developing over the next few years, for example photographs of how work was progressing similar to the market hall;

Further discussions took place on the feedback process, the content of the website and how it seemed logical to include as much information as possible as long as duplication was avoided as well as ensuring as many people as possible were including in the engagement process, particularly those who did not have access to the internet. Advertising of the website was considered to be essential and it was suggested that billboards could be erected to publicise the website's existence in order to promote the transformational change Crewe was undergoing.

Rhiannon Hilton, the Communications Officer at Cheshire East Council attended the virtual meeting and presented a report outlining the strategic objectives and communication and engagement plan.

The Chairman welcomed the report and felt it was an essential document given the importance of communication for the Board. In terms of the approval process he felt all elected Members on the Board needed to be included. Discussions took place as to how this approach could be streamlined given the tight timescales for issuing press releases. It was suggested a set number of Board members sign off the generic sentences within the press releases and if individuals wanted individual quotes to be included they would need to make sure they were submitted in time. It was felt important that politics didn't play a role when press issues had to be released and that the role of the Board was apolitical.

The Chairman felt previously press releases were being circulated without all members of the Board being fully aware. The adoption of a protocol would hopefully avoid this in the future. Members were asked to formally agree in principle the recommendations contained within the report and that the Sub-Group could make further amendments before presenting the final document.

Dr Mullan MP suggested the strategy allow for Board members to retain the right to release statements and make comments in a personal capacity but where possible all Board members be encouraged to communicate as part of the overall strategy. Where statements were being released which contained comments from political persons then those comments should be balanced.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the update be noted that the recommendations contained within the report be endorsed in principle subject to a final version of the strategy being circulated to Board members for sign off;
- (2) That any further communication channels Board members would like to see to be emailed to the Communication & Engagement Sub-Group.

54 STRATEGIC UPDATE FROM CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL (10 MINUTES)

Peter Skates, the Director of Growth & Enterprise attended the virtual meeting and gave a verbal update on Royal Arcade. He advised that demolition was progressing with no issues and that the programme was on schedule. Pre-application discussions were ongoing with the developer and planning colleagues and the proposal was to produce a timetable of engagement with stakeholders, Members and the Board in due course. The suggestion to utilise hoardings on the construction site in order to promote the branding was welcomed.

Work on the market hall was continuing and many members of the Board had undertaken a site visit. The opening of the hall was dependent on the

situation in respect of lockdown. With regard to the bus station it was anticipated that by the end of the following week the handover from Arriva to the Council of the bus station would be completed and the demolition of the sheds should commence sometime in February.

With respect to Lyceum Square, Adam Knight reported Cheshire East Council had undertaken a competitive tender process to appoint an urban architect. Through the process he advised Gillespie's, an independent landscaping architectural design practice had been appointed. A pre-implementation meeting had taken place before Christmas and it was hoped initial visuals would be available shortly.

Jez Goodman, the Development & Regeneration Delivery Manager gave a verbal update on the Future High Streets Fund. He explained that last Summer, Cheshire East Council had put forward a business case to MHCLG for up to £20,000,000 worth of funding for ten projects in Crewe town centre. On 26 December, MHCLG announced the Council had been allocated £14.1m 'in principle' from its Future High Streets Fund to support town centre regeneration in Crewe.

In making this award 'in principle', MHCLG had now introduced an additional stage in the process, which required Cheshire East Council to determine how it wished to allocate the funding across the projects contained in its original submission. MHCLG had advised that the deliverability of projects should be the key determinant. Given that an announcement was originally expected to be made last summer, and that all grant funding must be spent by 31 March 2024, the ability of a project to be delivered within this tighter timeframe was the main consideration. Engagement would take place with project leads to test the deliverability and analyse any projects that could be amended or scaled down.

MHCLG now required Cheshire East Council to provide revised plans by 26 February 2021 but had encouraged an earlier response. It was suggested that a briefing note on this matter could be circulated to the Board to provide further background information and at the next meeting he would provide an update to the Board in respect of timescales and so forth.

Dr Mullan MP felt the Board should wait for the later date to respond the MCHLG and be given the opportunity to input into the projects to ensure there was cohesion between the TIP projects and the Future High Street Fund projects. Officers agreed that this request could be accommodated as long as there was sufficient time to respond to the deadlines.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

55 COVID (5 MINUTES)

There was no further update in respect of this matter.

56 AOB (5 MINUTES)

John Adlen gave a verbal update on the LEP funding. He advised that £400,000 was available per year and the idea was to get ahead of Government funding opportunities by making sure projects and business cases were ready to go when Government funding opportunities arose.

He advised that within the last two years funding opportunities had been mainly used for transport and infrastructure, however this year, bids were encouraged from different areas for example housing. Discussions had taken place with Place Directors at each of the Local Authorities as to how bids could be encouraged from the Place teams. Further conversations as to how a bid could be pulled together had taken place with Cheshire East Council with the key criteria being that match funding of a minimum 50% was required. Possible proposals for the bid had been considered including railway crossings and bridges. Feasibility work around that area for a future levelling up fund bid and for a future DfT bid would need to be undertaken. He outlined the timescales for allocating the first £200,000 at the LEP's strategy meeting in February with the remaining £200,000 being held back until later in the year in order to maintain flexibility. Work would be undertaken with the TIP Sub-Group alongside Cheshire East Council officers with support and advice on the process being provided by the LEP. A potential submission for a bid could take place by the end of January.

The Chairman acknowledged there needed to be further separate discussions outside of the meeting with Cheshire East Council in respect of the town centre regeneration. Dr Charles Jarvis, Head of Economic Development stated he would take this away and work with the LEP and others from the Board and within the Council to develop a proposal for consideration.

Clarification was provided in terms of what the content of the feasibility study should be. It was stated that the two biggest challenges for Crewe was the local transport network and the reconfiguration of the town centre and that was what the focus should be on. The Chairman enquired who would be responsible for the bid. Dr Charles Jarvis confirmed that it was his and the team in Cheshire East's responsibility to bring people together to identify the projects working alongside John Adlen. It was agreed that he would take this forward as an action.

The Chairman made the Board aware that the Local Transport Plan was out for consultation and that the Board needed to make a clear submission on the consultation. Dr Mullan MP, offered to assist the Chairman with this process. Concerns were raised that members from their own perspective should respond to the LTP consultation rather than the Board collectively. In response to this, the consensus was that it was considered important for the Board to formally respond to the consultation and it would be remiss of the Board if a response was not provided. It was suggested any priorities

the Board had arrived at should be reflected within the LTP. Furthermore to alleviate any concerns regarding the LTP consultation a transport sub-group of the Board could be established if Board members felt they did not want to be involved in a formal submission.

Further to this the Chairman reported that Andrew Ross, Director of Highways & Infrastructure would hopefully attend the next Board meeting and provide feedback in terms of progressing the bridge plan and traffic analysis. He also asked the Board to give some thought to future objectives, including strategic objectives that members might like to achieve over the next 12 months. He reported 30% of children living in one/two wards within Crewe lived below the poverty line and the Board should act as a catalyst to setting a target which aimed to reduce this.

Councillor N Mannion informed the Board a number of employees at the Council had worked over the Christmas period when normally they would be on leave. He asked that the thanks and appreciation of the Board to those who had worked over Christmas be formally recorded.

57 DATE OF NEXT VIRTUAL MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next virtual meeting take place on Friday 5 February 2021 commencing at 9.30am.

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am and concluded at 12.20 pm

Doug Kinsman (Chairman)