

# Stocksbridge Town Deal Board

**DATE AND TIME:** Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023, 10:30am

**LOCATION:** Towns Fund Office, Stocksbridge Library, Manchester Road, Stocksbridge

**CO-CHAIRS:** Miriam Cates  
Yuri Matischen

## **ATTENDEES:**

### **Board members attending:**

- Miriam Cates, MP for Penistone and Stocksbridge (MC)
- Yuri Matischen, MD MLSBG (YM)
- Sean McClean Director of Regen SCC (Attending for KM) (SM)
- Neil Curtis, Community representative (NC)
- Cllr Julie Grocutt, Sheffield City Council Stocksbridge Town Council
- Gail Larking, Manchester Road Rep (shared role) (GL)
- Kathryn Giles Bowman, Manchester Road Rep (shared role) (KGB)
- Ian Sanderson, SLR Outlets (IS)
- Graham Silverwood, Stocksbridge Training and Enterprise Partnership & Stocksbridge Community Leisure Centre (GS)
- Dave Cates, Redemption Media (DC)

### **Also attending:**

- Howard Varns, Programme Manager, SCC (HV)
- Sam Townsend, Sheffield City Region (Cities and Local Growth Unit)
- Natalia Govorukhina – Finance and Commercial Business Partner (NG)
- Dermot Reader – Project Manager (DR)
- Amanda Holmes, Communications Officer, SCC (AH)
- Matt Dixon, Constituency Office Manager for MC (MD)
- Sam Townsend, Sheffield City Region (Cities and Local Growth Unit)

### **Apologies:**

- Kate Martin (SCC) (KM)
- John Crawshaw, Crawshaws Butchers (JC)



# Minutes

1. **Item:** Welcome and confirmation of the minutes of the previous meeting and discuss any issues arising **Miriam Cates**

Previous minutes agreed with no issues arising.

2. **Item:** Declaration of interest – to declare any interests in items on the agenda **Miriam Cates**

No interests declared.

3. **Item:** Publication of Minutes **Howard Varns**

In January 2023 the TF Board started to meet every other month. Board members agreed that this was working well. This change in meeting arrangements has however resulted in elongating the time frame between the previous meeting's minutes being approved at Board meetings. HV suggested a new sign off procedure could be adopted by the Board whereby the Co-Chairs are given a draft of the minutes within 14 working days of the Board meeting. This would enable minutes to be published in draft and then formally signed off as a true record at the following meeting by all Board members. This would enable more timely updates on the Towns Fund to be made available to the local community but still ensure the robustness of the agreement (sign-off) from all Board members on the minutes. This was agreed.

**Action:** HV to implement new procedure re sign off procedure for minutes.

4. **Item:** Project Update: Partner Funding: **Howard V**

HV updated the Board around Partner Funding. This includes Gainshare funding from SYMCA to support the Town Centre projects as well as further SYMCA funding to support the concessionary fare scheme which will assist the viability and deliverability of the Towns Fund Hopper Bus project. The exact amount of funding is to be agreed and based on a forecast of concessionary fare users. HV outlined that this support is hugely important to the sustainability of the project and good news.

JG asked if routes for the bus service had been agreed and HV said that this would ultimately be decided by the operator as we are offering a grant and asking for proposals back from interested parties. However, the analysis and data the Board had would be made available for prospective operators to consider. Comms have been prepared around this next stage in the Hopper Bus project.

HV added that partner funding had also been committed in principle by Yorkshire Water to assist with the bus project and making Underbank and Langsett Reservoir more accessible for walkers and visitors via public transport.

## 5. Developing Tracks, Trails and Activities in Partnership with Yorkshire at Underbank

HV updated the Board on the good progress which has been made around this project. Investment areas have been identified with Yorkshire Water which focus on creating an improved crossing route from Bramhall Lane to Underbank Reservoir and developing and improving infrastructure and amenities and activities at the reservoir itself. HV talked through the options that were being considered in readiness for a consultation session planned for October. He outlined that the next stage of work is to test the numerous investment options with the local community and users and then develop delivery plans. These investment options include:

- A circular route around the reservoir
- Sensory / family trails which could be animated to provide a family friendly activity and engagement
- New bridleways
- Organised a programme of water based activities
- A new area of free parking for visitors (relieving pressure on the on-road parking at busy times)

Board members agreed the plans were progressing well and offered greater benefits to the town in a much more cost-effective way than any previous options that have been explored.

IS said that he would like to see a circular route which is 100% off road. HV said is likely a very small proportion will not be off-road as YW report that this is a significant engineering challenge and likely cost prohibitive as requires a measure like installing a section of a walkway on stilts. The reservoir being a compensation reservoir, where levels can change quickly and significantly, also adds to this issue.

HV added that YW have in principle committed to a partnership approach to funding the right projects and are working up more accurately cost and delivery options for each project/ measure. It was discussed that a meeting to confirm the partnership approach and programme would be arranged with senior YW Directors and MC & HV once the more detailed analysis had been completed. This is expected to take place early November if diaries allow and if positive, will result in a final investment decision soon. YW believe they can start to mobilise works in December/ January.

All members agreed the project would deliver positive benefits for the town and enhance a beautiful part of Stocksbridge. JG added that residents in this part of Stocksbridge have long been keen to see a better crossing route and better walking and cycling tracks, and that residents will see a real benefit in better parking facilities away from their homes also.

**Actions: HV to liaise with YW to arrange a senior team meeting. AH to plan engagement for October.**

## 6. Land Acquisition and new Town Square

Howard V

HV provided an update to the Board about the land acquisitions required to deliver the Library and Community hub building as well as the placemaking scheme and proposals for a new Town Square. Progress has been around most of the properties required. DC and AH will be attending the St Lukes Trustees meeting later this month around the purchase of their property which is needed to deliver the new Library and Community Hub.

IS asked if a CPO should run alongside all discussions. SM added that a CPO is an option, but it is hoped that land acquisitions can be satisfactorily resolved in a timely way. HV confirmed that negotiations were taking place under CPO terms.

HV outlined the new plans for a Town Square. This would be an addition to the Placemaking Project and would neighbour the Library and Community Hub Building on land currently occupied by the former Factory Shop which is currently empty and available for sale. This could also create additional car parking as well as an attractive, flexible open space on Manchester Road which could be used for multiple uses. Town Square space for events including local markets and outdoor performances were discussed. The challenging levels would mean this area would be stepped. The procurement of the land and the development costs of the project will be significant and require the reallocation of funding across the programme.

SM said that high quality public realm and positively animating public spaces is proven to bring people into the centre of town, citing the example of Pound Park in Sheffield city centre and that in the context of the Board and community targeting a massive upgrade to the high street that this would massively contribute to greater economic benefits for the community.

HV outlined that delivering a new Town Square would necessitate re-profiling funding from projects and the Board would need to confirm its priority and where funding should be re-focussed from. Re-allocation and changes to the phasing of projects could ensure projects still deliver their outputs and the full vision for the Town Centre, the main priority, is delivered. Board agreed this was the right approach and that the funding and consultation supported this view and that the Town Centre was the priority for residents and businesses and its regeneration would have the greatest benefit to the community.

DC said that the sporting projects are also hugely important to the town, and he would like to see these remain if possible.

JG said that the policies on car parking are applied across the board in Sheffield with no real understanding of the circumstances in communities like Stocksbridge where public transport is limited and the challenging topography make it difficult for people to access different parts of the town, therefore the reliance on car ownership is much higher. JG

felt the Council needs to recognise this. HV committed to invite an officer to Board to discuss parking policy but also confirmed that irrespective of policy, both the physical space available, and funding limits, meant that achieving significantly more parking capacity was very difficult. It was also discussed that the existing parking behaviours displayed by residents and business took away spaces from possible customers/ visitors and that changes to behaviours and enforcement needed to be considered to create more parking capacity also.

**Actions:** Board agreed to fund the development of the Community Hub, the new Market Square, additional parking capacity and the upgrades to the Precinct and public space/ street scene and that funding should be reallocated from:

1. The Cricket Pavilion project. The latest cost plan from the ECB suggests this can be develop for £700k. Previous cost plans suggested £1m was needed so this would reallocate £300K.
2. The Tracks, Trails and Activities project. Previously budgets of £2.7m were thought to be needed however with the change in project approach, and the likely joint work with Yorkshire Water, this can be reset to £1.5m and therefore £1.2m can be reallocated to the Town Centre projects.
3. Other lower priority (although important) areas of the programme should commence later in the programme of activity to ensure the Town Centre projects can be contracted and committed to fully first. Then the others will commence. A programming discussion will be arranged for a future session.

#### 4. **Item: Projects Update: Summary**

Howard V

**Community Hub and Town Centre Placemaking:** Land acquisition had already been discussed and the potential creation of a new Town Square. The internal layout of the Library and Community Hub needs to be confirmed and was discussed and IS said that as project champion he would like HV to ensure he is closely involved in these conversations. It is likely that planning will now be submitted in later October/ early November.

**Sports Hub:** Options around delivery of the Cricket Pavilion are being considered but the ECB have not provided to-date the information required to progress. Options for a new location for the 3G pitch is also under review as it seems that Bracken Moor will not be suitable. Grant agreements should be issued to the Rugby and Football clubs shortly and they will both start work on their projects in the Spring.

**Oxley Park P2:** The design team are finalising detailed design work of the skatepark ahead of submitting the planning application in November/December. Target for start on site is October for the footpaths and March 2024 for the skatepark. Comms are planned around this start date as well as local consultation sessions around the planning submission.

## 5. **Item:** Communications Update

AH provided a Comms update around recent media coverage, upcoming coverage on BBC Sunday Politics and some key milestones including:

- Oxley Park Phase 2 commencement of work
- Engagement around Oxley Park re local residents
- Submission of planning for the Hub building
- Engagement around Tracks and Activities Project.
- Hopper Bus Project

New branding guidelines have been circulated by DHLUC which will have implications for the hoarding on building work in the Town Centre. AH updated that engagement with businesses owners around the shop front surveys had been very positive.

Concerns were raised by AH, JG as well as KGB and GL about the recent activities of a Council employed Business Information Officer engaging with local businesses about the Towns Fund projects without being briefed or updated, and not engaging with the TF team about planned meetings. This officer had previously misrepresented the Towns Fund plans in 2022 also. This officer also seems to be criticising the Council's own policies. IS felt that this Officer should not be working in Stocksbridge and found it difficult to accept that the Council could permit this.

JG said that the Board has appointed members from the Manchester Rd business community specifically for the purpose of having a dialogue with business owners and this officer should not be working in Stocksbridge if voicing personal opinion or contradicting policy. SM agreed that discussions needed be held within the Council to resolve this.

**Action:** SM to review this with the appropriate Director at the Council and ask for this Officer to cease engaging on any issue relating to the Towns Fund, and on issues and policies that he shows no awareness of.

## 6. **Item:** Financial update

Natalia G

NG and HV provided an update on costs to date.

### **Item:** AOB

All

- SM updated that details around the Pathfinder Project were still being worked on and the Board will be updated as soon as this is concluded.
- JG reported concerns about the recent false and misleading information propagated by the Upper Don Trust about the Towns Fund. JG confirmed that the Board had

directly written, publicly published responses to them, and held face-to-face discussions with the group. JG believed an understanding had been reached as a result which the Upper Don group accepted which was that Towns Fund funding was not going to be invested in the way the Upper Don Trust lobbied. They had also accepted that this decision had been made and that it was the prerogative of the Towns Fund Board to make this decision. It was therefore extremely disappointing that this group continue to openly mislead the Community, especially when most of this group are not even Stocksbridge residents or business owners. Board members agreed that this was likely an emotional reaction linked to their disappointment at not receiving money/ funding but nevertheless, these continued behaviours were now just an attempt to waste people's time and agitate the local community and therefore vexatious. So, with regret, the Towns Fund and the objectives and priorities of the Board are now best served by not engaging with this group and their statements any further.

7. **Item:** Next Meeting: October 9<sup>th</sup>, Stocksbridge Library.