

Minutes of the meeting of the MK: BLETCHLEY/FENNY STRATFORD TOWN DEAL
BOARD held on MONDAY 19 JUNE 2023 at 3.00pm.

Present: J Cove (JC) (Chair & Chair - MK Dons SET), P Marland (PM) (Deputy Chair & Leader MKCC), A Ravn-Aagaard (ARA) (Bletchley Resident Associations), H Chipping (HC) (Chief Executive - SEMLEP), I Stewart (IS) (MP for Milton Keynes South), M Bradford (MB) (DLUHC), D Shephard (DS) (Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council), R Robertson (RR) – EWR, H Hupton (HH) (Clerk – West Bletchley Council and I Revell (IR) (CEO - MK Community Foundation)

Also Present: T Aldworth (TA) (Deputy Chief Executive - MKCC), A Sciberras (AS) (MKDP), M Green (MG) (MKDP), P Hammond (PH) (Planning and Placemaking – MKCC), L Smart (LS) (Development and Network Manager MKCC), P Shinkwin (PS) (Senior Engineer – MKCC), G Cox (GC) (Head of Highways - MKCC), G Gibson (GG) (Special Projects Manager – MKCC), S Lloyd (SL) (Head of Economic Development – MKCC), S Gill (SG) (Investment Lead – MKCC), D Canvin (DC)(Programme Manager – MKCC) and E Pierce (EP) (Project Support Officer – MKCC)

Apologies: Everitt (BE) (MP Milton Keynes North), A. Warner (AW) (Milton Keynes College), J Jardine (JJ) (EWR), K Hoctor (KH) (DHLUC), O Mytton (OM) (Deputy Director for Public Health - MKCC)

MINUTES:

TDB127 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members of the Board to the meeting.

TDB128 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

TDB129 PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Chair invited comments on the minutes from 27 February 2023. There were none.

RESOLVED:

The minutes of the above meetings were approved as a correct record with no amendments required.

TDB130 ELECTION OF CHAIR/VICE CHAIR

The Terms of Reference for the Board state that the Chair and Vice Chair must be reviewed on an annual basis.

TA thanked both JC and PM for their work as Chair and Vice Chair to date. Both declared they would be happy to stand again for another year. No further candidates declared an interest in either role and therefore it was declared that both JC and PM were re-elected.

RESOLVED:

That the Board unanimously voted JC and PM to remain in post as Chair and Vice Chair of the Town Deal Board for another year.

TDB131

EWR UPDATE

RR provided the update. At the end of May the route update was announced. Since the non-statutory public consultation on East West Rail in 2021 feedback has been reviewed and changes made to the initial proposals. Formal documents have now been released and can be found on the EWR website. The report describes how the proposals for EWR have developed since the consultation and what the preferred plans are for certain sections of the railway.

****Bletchley is specifically referenced in chapter 6 of the report****

The next steps are to continue to develop proposals which will go to statutory consultation in early 2024. Public drop in events are taking place over the coming months, with the closest one being Woburn Sands on 30 June.

JC enquired why none of the drop in events are taking place in Bletchley and suggested that this is a gap that should be filled. RR advised that this issue has already been raised with the team determining locations. A response has not been provided yet.

Action: RR to feedback to the Board, why Bletchley has been missed off the list of venues for public drop in's when he receives a response.

IR asked if there is rough idea of a date when decisions will be made on the Eastern entrance. RR said there is currently no date and decisions will form part of the next steps in the programme. Further work needs to take place to look at the Eastern entrance to determine if this moves forwards. Once the technical partners have done this additional work EWR will be in a better position to provide more information on the programme of activity. RR suggested that they will hopefully be able to provide an update in 4-6 weeks.

IS advised the Board that he remains supportive of the concept of an Eastern entrance but has strong concerns regarding the plans for Saxon Street and moving the bus station. He suggested that whilst the Eastern entrance concept is still being explored then the wider project options should be revisited.

JC said that this has now been an ongoing conversation for 18 months and enquired if IS in his capacity of Chair of the Transport Select Committee could escalate matters. IS advised that he will continue to have conversations with EWR to try and get some answers.

PH said it would be helpful to highlight that the ongoing development in Bletchley town centre in addition to the sites coming forward through Town Deal process would support the delivery of an Eastern entrance.

ARA enquired about the plans for the Fenny Stratford level crossing, RR advised that subject to some safety assessments and traffic modelling the current proposal is to keep it open.

RESOLVED:

That the Board acknowledged the update from EWR and await confirmation of plans for an Eastern Entrance.

TDB132

DLUHC DEEP DIVE PROCESS

TA provided the update. At the end of May MKCC received confirmation that the Town Deal programme has been selected for a Deep Dive review. This was chosen via a random 5% selection. The audit involved looking at the finer details of the processes that we are expected to adhere to. The documentation was submitted on 12 June and we are confident we have provided a suitable response to the questions asked. Alongside the Deep Dive, the programme team have also had to submit the bi-annual reporting to DLUHC.

Both processes were lengthy but the deadlines were met and we await feedback on both submissions. The Chair thanked the MKCC team for their work on this.

RESOLVED:

That the Board acknowledged the recent submissions to DLUHC.

TDB133

PROGRAMME UPDATE

Innovation Hub

AS provided the update. The approved business case recommended an operator led model and MKDP have been working to soft market test this concept over the last few months. The aim is to define the opportunity, present it to the market and gauge the appetite for Bletchley, before running a selection process.

There were a small number of potential operators but they deal with more traditional office workspaces which is not what the project is all about. It is expected that the chosen operator should help further develop the design and deliver against the Town Deal funding objectives.

JC asked what the options are if an Innovation Hub can't be provided. AS advised that any alternative options would be brought back to Board.

HC advised that there has been a site that has recently opened in Northampton and suggested linking in with them to look at lessons learnt.

RDF

MG provided the update. The brief for the area in in production which will be widely consulted on either over or at the end of the summer.

Currently a Council procurement process is underway for the demolition of Sainsbury's. Timescales are being looked at as well as how best to handle this process. It will be sensitively done with appropriate hoardings put in place. The development brief consultation will be provided at a later date.

On behalf of Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council DS drew attention to well-known local concerns about parking in the town centre which were affecting both residents and businesses. In addition to consideration of parking within the Brunel Centre brief, DS asked that an integrated parking strategy for the whole of Bletchley town centre be developed rather than piecemeal parking plans for the individual projects within the TIP. The Chair concurred with this and the Board then agreed that an integrated strategy was

now a more realistic prospect given the recent changes in land ownership. TA said that the integrated parking strategy will need to be scoped out to see how it sits with the local plan. By the next Board meeting there will be more information which can be shared.

ARA said that City Science produced a very good report with lots of potential options and asked if these options are all going to be considered? JC advised that the City Science report will be taken into account but things have moved on and evolved since the report was written.

JC enquired about the hoardings that will be put in place. MG said that internal discussions had taken place, looking at how these could be used for Town Deal promotion. They are likely to be a mixture of tasteful decoration and information updates.

Transport

GC provided the update. City Science have produced a costed feasibility study of a scheme delivering the project objectives that is affordable under the current budget constraints and deliverable within the timeframe of the funding available.

The biggest project risk involves work required for railway retaining structures. This will involve negotiations and approvals from Network Rail (NR) which historically have proved to be very long and difficult.

The next steps are to refine the plans and re-run the traffic modelling data. GC advised that they will be in a better position in 2 months' time to have final designs and traffic models in place.

GC advised that some discussions have taken place with NR regarding an Eastern entrance. NR have suggested that if it happens there are a couple of options in the pipeline and the designs will accommodate either a low or medium entrance. Proposed designs will require approval from Board before detailed design can take place.

Public consultation will take place at the end of the year, with delivery planned for 2024/25. JC said that we need to be mindful of consultations and ensure they are not running alongside each other.

ARA asked if the project team have access to the EWR reports. GC advised that they did, and nothing is being done in isolation.

ARA further mentioned that the EWR report includes the option of a

bridge and suggested this should be looked at as a consideration in conjunction with MKDP. GC confirmed that the original report mentioned an underpass which was discounted due to cost, the cost of a bridge would be similar so would therefore be an unlikely consideration.

Public Realm Improvements

PH provided the update. Some good progress has been made. It was decided at the B&FSTC meeting that took place recently that the funding split between Queensway and Aylesbury Street would be 80/20. The meeting was very positive with good attendance and engagement.

Two key outcomes required from the meeting were the clarification of subdivision of funding and confirmation and agreement on the intervention areas. Both of these matters were agreed and together will now inform the development of options.

JC suggested MKDP could potentially coordinate with the Public Realm project in relation to the hoardings that will be going up around the Sainsbury's site once demolished.

Redways

PS provided the update. Good progress is being made on the construction of Sections 3 and 4 from the Blue Lagoon Nature Reserve to Water Eaton Road. The Blue Lagoon Car Park will re-open to the public in early July.

Cuttings in section 4 are largely complete although a bird's nest has recently been detected which means work is limited for a couple of weeks. The route should be open in November.

Currently working on the extension of the Redway from Section 4, Water Eaton Road to Bletchley Station; MKCC are assessing whether the route is feasible through EW Rail Alliance Site.

MKCC has also recently secured £1.2m to create a new walking and cycling route connecting Newton Leys to the Blue Lagoon Nature Reserve in Bletchley.

Funding for the new route has been secured through the Government's Active Travel Fund. The new route is expected to open

in 2024 and will create a more direct connection to Bletchley and open up access to the nature reserve for local people.

Tech Park

No representation at the meeting. The project is on track.

Bletchley Park

All funding has been released and the project is nearing completion. The Board meeting took place in the newly constructed facility. The Chair acknowledged the good work that has taken place and provided thanks for allowing the meeting to take place at the venue.

Fibre

The project remains on hold awaiting the result of project Gigabit, expected by the end of 2023.

ARA advised that there is a potential alternative area that could be explored for fibre broadband if necessary.

AMoVS

The project is currently focussing on business engagement, inward investment, and marketing of Bletchley.

An event schedule has been produced, highlighting the series of business events for Bletchley and Fenny Stratford for 2023/24. The next event is taking place on 05 July and planning is already underway.

RESOLVED:

That the Board noted the project updates.

TDB134

LEVELLING UP ROUND 3

MB provided the update. There is no news that can be shared at this time. Round 3 has been committed to, but the finer details are yet to be decided. It won't necessarily be the same as round 2, different options are being considered. Timescales are not confirmed at this stage. Updates will be shared when available.

RESOLVED:

That the Board acknowledged that Levelling Up Round 3 will be happening but no further details are available at this stage.

TDB135 COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

SL and SG provided the update. It was acknowledged that historically communications at times could have been improved, but there is a plan in place moving forwards now we are in the delivery stages.

The key communication channels in the plan are:

- Bletchley based advertising – hoardings, electronic screens.
- Website – regular updates, including project progress and news.
- Social Media – coordinated social media campaign using MKCC and Invest MK channels.
- Newsletter – monthly updates.
- Events – business engagement, public events.

Action: ARA and SG to meet in relation to COBRA communications and how they can be incorporated into the programme.

RESOLVED:

That the Board acknowledged the communications update and the plans in place to move forwards.

TDB136 PROPOSED ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

TA/DS provided the update. The aim of the group is to act as a touchpoint for understanding the ongoing project work. We need to be careful that membership is not conflicting with The Town Deal Board and needs to be closely monitored.

TA advised that the process of electing a Chair needs to be progressed and then a cycle of meetings implemented.

PM said that having Ward Councillors in the group is important as well as the need to ensure the balance of members is appropriate.

The current suggested list of members is quite long and will require slimming down. PM also reiterated that its an advisory group not a decision-making group. The Board is ultimately the decision maker. We therefore need to be careful about managing expectations of the intentions of the group.

The first meeting of the group will take place on a date TBC in July.

The Board unanimously approved the Terms of Reference for the group.

RESOLVED:

That the Board agreed that there is a requirement for the group and approved the Terms of Reference.

TDB137

AOB

There was none.

DATE FOR THE NEXT MEETING:

28 September 2023 Venue TBC

December – Date/Venue TBC

March – Date/Venue TBC

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING at 16:50