

# Dudley Town Board Minutes

Friday 10 June 2022 – 10.30am  
at Black Country & Marches Institute of Technology

## Board Members

## Guest Attendees

Andrew Lovett (Chair)	Ian Chadwell	Cllr Patrick Harley
Marco Longhi MP	Rob Ellis	Balvinder Heran
Neil Thomas	Traci Dix-Williams	Bill Kirk
Helen Martin	Pete Bond	Clare Marshall
Stuart Everton	Hugh Burton	Mick Donovan
Amanda Tomlinson	Jeremy Knight-Adams	Jack Stevens
Corin Crane	Tony O'Callaghan	Phil Thomas
Nick Mallinson	Mark Price	Vicky Smith
Derek Grove		James Pearson
Cllr Simon Phipps		
Kat Rose		

- Apologies for Absence – J Knight-Adams, P Bond, J Stevens, Councillor P Harley, Cllr S Phipps, N Mallinson, S Everton, M Longhi MP, C Crane, T Dix-Williams, I Chadwell, C Marshall, J Fleet, B Heran, M Donovan, J Pearson, T O'Callaghan.
- Introductions and Welcome to Mark Price

Meeting attendees introduced themselves and gave a brief description of their role for the benefit of new Board members, Mark Price (Provision House) and Kat Rose (Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust).

M Price gave an overview of Provision House, a charity in the Black Country providing furniture, household essentials, clothing, food, advice and training to those in need. Provision House had forged links with similar organisations providing access to a range of services for vulnerable people.
- Declarations of Interest

Derek Grove declared an interest in the proposed land acquisition.
- Minutes of the Board Meeting, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the last meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022 be approved as a correct record.
- Matters Arising

None.

## 6. Town Fund Project Update

V Smith provided an update on the Towns Fund Bid which had been submitted on 19<sup>th</sup> April, with the first tranche of funding due in June 2022. One clarification question had been received from the Department of Levelling Up Housing & Communities (DLUHC) to finalise their assessment; the deadline for a response was 28<sup>th</sup> June.

**Appointment of Alliance Board** – The aim was to appoint the whole Alliance Board by the end of November 2022.

NT detailed a new collaborative way of working which had proved successful with previous projects. A larger proportion of time was spent on the design phase followed by a shorter build phase ensuring collective buy in from all parties; the process was underpinned by an insurance scheme thus mitigating any cost increases.

**Land Acquisition** – Negotiations were progressing alongside the CPO process.

**Demolition** – Work was programmed to commence in December 2022 and scheduled to take 3 months. In answer to a query, no contact had been received from the Save the Hippodrome group recently.

**High Level Risks** – Increased construction costs due to inflationary pressures. Current project cost estimates identified a need for additional gap funding to deliver the building to its current specification. N Thomas confirmed that work to identify funding from other sources to address any shortfall was being progressed, with a fall-back position to reduce the height of the building and redistribute classes if necessary.

**Removal of Restrictive Covenant using appropriate powers** – Positive meetings had been held with legal advisors.

**Programme/Timescales – Without use of CPO** – Site acquired in November 2022, construction contract in December 2022, site clearance in June 2023, construction to commence October 2023, operational by March 2025.

**Programme/Timescales - if CPO required** – Alliance agreement signed December 2022, demolition of Hippodrome in February 2023, full site acquired in July 2023 to be cleared and remediated by November 2023, construction to commence in December 2023, operational by May 2025.

Provision was to be increased over years 1 to 3 so as not to operate from a standing start.

In answer to a query over experience/feedback from other Local Authorities having bid for funding, it was noted that Dudley's bid was the highest amount awarded for a single project and that other bids were not at as an advanced stage as the Dudley bid.

Attached as Appendix 1 are the Health Innovation Dudley presentation slides.

7. Levelling Up Fund Application

The Government had established a levelling up fund for investment in local infrastructure that had a visible impact on people and their communities. Originally four bids were being progressed with the assistance of Arcadis, however this had now been reduced to three. Each bid required the support of the MP (with bids put forward for Lye, Halesowen and Dudley). The decision was taken not to submit a bid for Brierley Hill in this round, however work on the projects identified was to be continued. The Dudley bid was currently being revised pending consultation with the MP. The bid submission deadline is 6<sup>th</sup> July and, if the bids are successful, delivery is to be achieved in this financial year.

At the present time there was no guarantee that there would be a third round of bids as the consultants advised that round 2 will be oversubscribed. The short timeframe would curtail the projects that could be put forward.

Over the longer term the aim was to repurpose the top end of High Street by increasing night time economy, leisure and housing. The Council's aim was to provide road links and improve public spaces. The Metro/public transport connectivity links were expected to have a positive impact. Council representatives attended the MiPiM conference in March to attract investors to the borough and were now proactively following up leads.

Following discussion it was agreed that it would be beneficial if the details of the bids could be shared at an early opportunity in order to link organisations that were interested in providing assistance. H Martin said the aim was not to duplicate but to work collaboratively and it would be useful to review the overall vision to regenerate the borough and grow a stronger visitor economy.

**Action: V Smith** to prepare a presentation on strategy for redevelopment of the borough for consideration at the next Board meeting.

8. Any Other Business

**Metro** – V Smith confirmed the programme finish date was targeted to be during 2025.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting – Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at 10.30 am at the Black Country Living Museum.