

## NOTES

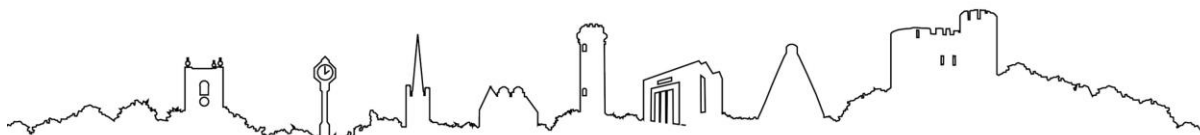
<b>Meeting title</b>	Brierley Hill Town Board
<b>Date &amp; time</b>	Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> November 2024 at 10 am
<b>Venue</b>	MS Teams
<b>Invitees</b>	<p>Tim Sunter – Chair  James Challis – Dudley CVS  Cat Eccles MP  Clare Waldron – Dudley MBC  Clive Skidmore – Property Owner  Councillor Adam Davies  Councillor Matthew Cook  Councillor Wayne Little  Councillor Karen Westwood  Councillor Steve Edwards  Emma Atkins – Dudley MBC  Frank Chamberlain - Project Manager Brierley Hill Community Programme  Hannah Cashmore – Gov office, Business and Trade UK  Helen Martin – Dudley MBC  Jayne Pilkington – Dudley MBC  Jonathan Poole – Savills  Mark Clarke - Dudley MBC  Neil Thomas – Dudley College  Nicky Haigh – Transport for the West Midlands  Paul Hunt – Higgs LLP  Rocco De Gregorio – GLL  Shane Birch-Bastock – Business Owner/Brierley Hill Traders  Steven Bridgewater – Brierley Hill Market  Rick Benton - Resonance</p>

1. Declarations of interest not already declared

None.

2. Apologies

E Atkins, S Bridgewater, H Cashmore, J Challis, R Benton, N Haigh, H Martin, J Poole, Cllrs S Edwards and K Westwood and N Thomas.



Liam Brooker, Transport for the West Midlands, attended the Board meeting in place of Nicky Haigh.

Having received positive feedback on the improvements made in Brierley Hill T Sunter thanked everyone for their efforts in this regard.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

4. Any matters arising not otherwise on the Agenda

None.

5. Levelling Up Fund (LUF)

A Levelling Up Fund award for Brierley Hill Town Centre of £20m was approved by the Conservative Government in November 2023 to provide new educational facilities (to be built by Dudley College), improvements to the Skills Shop in Merry Hill and a connectivity package to connect the High Street to the Merry Hill Centre. The former Government approved the projects, but did not enter the Memorandum of Understanding to release the funding to Dudley Council. Following the recent Budget statement, the new Labour Government confirmed its commitment to fund these projects. The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) asked for costs to be refreshed due to inflation. The Government's intention is to announce the long-term funding settlement to support these projects in the Spring Statement.

The present uncertainty over the Metro delivery to the High Street was to be discussed with MHCLG. The likely outcome was the profile of LUF spend towards the back end of the LUF delivery period in 2027/28. This would provide a pause period whilst WMCA / TfWM assembled the funding package and prepared the delivery plan for Metro to reach the High Street. In advance of the Spring Statement, Dudley MBC had requested MHCLG released £15k of feasibility funding. This would allow the Council to put in place the sub-funding agreement with Dudley College and update Subsidy Control and legal advice on the project. Once the funding agreement was in place, the College would be able to proceed quickly with the design feasibility works once the Spring announcement was made. A response was awaited from MHCLG on this request.

T Sunter asked if the Leadership change at Dudley College would make a difference and M Clarke confirmed that as far as he was aware the College still intended to proceed.



**Connectivity Programme** - T Sunter queried whether there was a risk that some of the funding could be lost depending on the situation with the Metro (2C / foot link). M Clarke confirmed if there was no significant progress then action may need to be taken, however a type of link could still be built.

The impacts of the increasing costs for the College would result in reduced funding to implement the link. T Sunter asked if it was worth linking in a colleague from Housing to review the Housing impacts and outcomes.

S Birch-Bastock asked if the first part of draw down was just the design of the College and M Clarke responded that it was the design work plus fees.

## 6. Future High Streets

MHCLG had approved a national extension to the programme which extended the period to let contracts to March 2025; this would help to maximise the programme spend.

### **Public Realm improvements:-**

**New Library Lift** – The meeting discussed the importance of the lift being opened as soon as possible now that it had been commissioned. The need to have insurance in place and to complete testing was noted, however as there was considerable interest in this project there would be negative publicity if there was a delay. **Action MC to investigate the current situation.**

**Dudley Road** – Before and after pictures were shown noting the parking problems that had been resolved due to the addition of the bollards. The commercial bins had been moved off the pavement and these were to be screened. **Action J Pilkington** to report back to Cllr A Davies regarding the lights as this was linked to the Spend Control parameters that were currently required.

**Round Oak Sculpture** – Work was progressing.

**Link Space** - CCTV cameras had been installed and the noticeboard was now in place. F Chamberlain asked that a key to the noticeboard was made available in order for the Library to add information. A plaque thanking the funders was currently being manufactured.

**Lions Way** - Bollards had now been installed. Cllr A Davies said it was important to incorporate some explanation of why it was called Lions Way into the interpretation panels. **Action J Pilkington** to progress.

**Footpath improvements to St Michael's Church.** Works had now completed for resurfacing the footpaths within the graveyard and to the car park. T Sunter said work was required to restore some of the historic graves. **Action JP to investigate.**



**Bell Street South** – Footway paving and fencing improvement works had been completed.

**Three Crowns Public House** – Repair work to the parapet and windows had commenced and redecoration would be completed before end December 2024.

**101 High Street (Phase 2)** – The joiner had set out the new shop front which was due to be installed in the New Year.

**Level Street Car Park** – Resurfacing works had been completed with trees to be planted shortly. Cllr M Cook confirmed having seen a flatbed lorry gain access to the car park via the pedestrian entrance and queried if there was to be a bollard installed to stop vehicles using this as an access point. **Action JP to investigate.**

**Repair of the Clock at 151-153 High Street** – The Jones Brothers clock was due to be installed w/c 25<sup>th</sup> November.

**110-112 High Street (Former Barclays bank)** – Redecoration work had commenced on site.

Following S Birch-Bastock's enquiry regarding signposting on the High Street, J Pilkington confirmed that wayfinding was currently under review with a view to securing appropriate funding.

Cllr A Davies on behalf of the Board wished to record their thanks to J Pilkington for the improvement work currently underway.

## 7. Metro Business Case Progress (WMCA)

L Brooker gave a presentation detailing the Metro business case progress, noting support for the Metro extension had been provided within the Budget speech. The business case for Dudley to Merry Hill had been approved by the Department for Transport officials in November 2024 and the WMCA Board had provided sign off subject to funding confirmation from the Ministry.

In the meantime enabling works (Parkhead viaduct ground investigation and vegetation clearance) were being undertaken in readiness for receipt of the funding. Phase 2C (the connection to Brierley Hill) was not currently included in the funding scheme. To bring this forward would require very strong housing/economic growth evidence (from Dudley/WMCA) in support of the business case. It was considered critical to work together on this aspect. Lobbying will be necessary to make sure funding for the final section of the route is retained as a priority.



**Action C Eccles MP** to raise the matter with the Treasury and MHCLG to request the release of funding as soon as possible.

It was reassuring that Richard Parker (Mayor of West Midlands) was in support of phase 2C as were the Councillors/Dudley Council and the meeting discussed what further support could be provided.

Cllr A Davies raised the matter of funding from CRSTS2 which become available from 2027 and devolution deal monies and the requirement to consider whether this was the right project for public money spend.

#### 8. Terms of Reference Review

M Clarke updated the Terms of Reference on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2024, in consultation with Tim Sinter and Paul Hunt.

#### 9. Community Activities Update

**Phoenix Project** – The finale featuring an all-day performance and exhibition was held on 7<sup>th</sup> September at four different locations around Brierley Hill. F Chamberlain was thanked for his involvement in the projects.

**Commonwealth Games Legacy Fund** – In support of 8 projects which were proceeding well (to be completed by December 2024) – further details could be obtained from the Brierley Hill Cultural website.

**A Winter's Tale of Brierley Hill** – A CD was being produced featuring 20 songs with a winter theme.

A recent successful Heritage Open day had been held with 7 different sites open to visit.

**Albion Street** had held a community BBQ.

**Primary School Walks** had taken place with 2 schools and 150 students involving a variety of topics – this project was ongoing.

**Remembrance Day** – Approximately 300 people had attended the cenotaph this year.

**Brierley Hill in Bloom** – Continued to flourish with the support of 29 people to assist with planting the 900 plants.

**Action TS** to return leaflets on Marsh Park and War Memorial to J Pilkington.

An AI version of the podcast was being developed by F Chamberlain. **Action FC to send a copy to JP.**



10. Any Other Urgent Business

The MP highlighted an issue at the Red House Glass Cone concerning their increase in rents and felt it was important that the commercial tenants were supported during this time. An email on this matter had been sent to H Martin, her response was awaited. **Action CE (MP)** to provide a copy of the rent increases to the Board Members for their information.

Cllr A Davies said some of the tenants had contacted him regarding this matter. The Councillor understood that it was possible to negotiate the rent increase, however the high increased starting point was understandably concerning.

C Skidmore asked how the improvements in Brierley Hill were being publicised. J Pilkington confirmed she was working with CAPA colleagues to ensure appropriate publicity once works had been completed. C Waldron confirmed photographs were to be taken and the website updated. Communications on the clock and Christmas lights were being promoted on 22<sup>nd</sup> November.

Cllr W Little queried whether a dry run had taken place to make sure the lights worked ahead of the 'switch on' at Brierley Hill – **Action CW to follow this up.**

**Negative Feedback on Social Media** – The communications team had been proactively engaging and providing further information where required to address the negative feedback.

11. Date of Next Meeting – Friday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at 10 am via MS Teams.

