

## **MINUTES OF ST HELENS TOWN DEAL BOARD MEETING**

Friday 21 October 2022 | 12:30 – 14:00 | St. Helens Town Hall Chamber

### **Board Members in Attendance:**

Town Deal Board Chairman – John Tabern, Local Businessman and Ambassador  
Councillor David Baines – Leader, St Helens Borough Council  
Pete Frost – Chief Executive, The World of Glass  
Justin Hill – Chief Executive, YMCA St Helens  
Tracy Mawson – Chief Executive, St Helens Chamber  
Councillor Richard McCauley – Cabinet Member Regeneration and Planning, St Helens Borough Council  
Cath Fogarty – Executive Director Corporate Services, St Helens Borough Council  
Marie Rimmer - Member of Parliament for St Helens South and Whiston

### **Observers:**

Callum Heaps – Cities and Growth Unit, BEIS  
Stephen Tant – Cities and Growth Unit, BEIS

### **Project Representatives:**

Rachel Cleal – Healthy Communities Health Innovation Hub  
Leon Guyett – Town Centre Living & Regeneration  
Iain Taylor – Glass Futures 2, SINA Medical Glass  
Richard Thomas – Connected Places

### **Consultant Support:**

Graham Russell – Chief Executive, Amion Consulting  
Kim Power – Principal Planner, ARUP

### **Local Authority Representation:**

Donna Hardiman – Project Officer, St Helens Borough Council  
Robert Gatensbury – Programme Lead, St Helens Borough Council  
Sean Traynor – Director Strategic Growth, St Helens Borough Council  
Donna Wilby – Finance Business Partner, Regeneration, St Helens Borough Council

## **1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS– CHAIRMAN JOHN TABERN**

Chairman, John Tabern welcomed all to the October 2022 meeting of the Town Deal Board.

### **1a. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Conor McGinn MP – Member of Parliament for St Helens North  
Kath O'Dwyer – Chief Executive, St Helens Borough Council  
Lisa Harris – Executive Director for Place Services, St Helens Borough Council  
Jon Ridgeon – Finance Business Support Manager, St Helens Borough Council  
Councillor John Hodgkinson – Member Champion for Local Business  
Richard Katz – Glass Futures 2, SINA  
Rob Huntington – Assistant Chief Executive, St Helens Borough Council  
Steve Coffey – Chief Executive, Torus  
Mary Jefferson – Head of Regeneration, St Helens Borough Council

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following attendees declared conflicts of interest:

John Tabern – Cannington Shaw Restoration Trust

Marie Rimmer – The World of Glass

Tracy Mawson – The World of Glass and Health Innovation Hub

## **3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2022 be approved as a true record.

## **4. MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION LOG**

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes and the action log was noted.

## **5. TRANCHE 2 PROJECTS BUSINESS CASE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

Robert Gatensbury explained that a similar process is being followed to Tranche 1, whereby approval is sought to further develop two Tranche 2 Full Business Cases under delegated authority from the Town Deal Board pursuant to submission to Government on or before 17 November 2022. The proposal is taking forward the Tranche 2 Healthy Communities projects, which are split into the Health Innovation Hub and the Youth Zone.

Marie Rimmer sought an update on progress with the Tranche 1 projects. In response, the Chairman advised that he had enquired with Mick Allen ahead of the meeting and received the positive news that all the Tranche 1 business cases had been approved for positive progression to the next stage in the process, with formal confirmation expected within the next few weeks. Stephen Tant confirmed this position with clarification that it was not final approval but a positive step,

### **5.1 Healthy Communities – Health Innovation Hub**

The Health Innovation Hub comprises two elements:

- Business Connect - the provision of dedicated working and meeting spaces, with associated support for businesses with a Health and Social Care focus to co-locate, network, and collaborate, to accelerate growth within this sector. This will be delivered through reconfiguration and refurbishment of premises within St Helens Chamber.
- Skills Academy - provision of new education floorspace, to deliver additional / enhanced training (and associated engagement and careers information, advice, and guidance) to enable more local people to enter and progress their careers in the Health and Social Care located within new purpose-built facilities at St Helens College Town Centre campus.

Graham Russell gave an overview of the status of the business case, explaining that it is being prepared, and a moderation and assurance exercise is taking place. Graham has been working with his colleague Peter Alford to ensure that Amion can verify the assessment and ensure Treasury Green Book compliance. The Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) is showing a

favourable outcome, with a figure of mid 1 to 2, or even above 2, which puts them in the “good” range for DLUHC assessments.

The Chairman raised a query over the proposal for a new building rather than reuse of an existing property, given the number of vacant units across the town centre. Rachel Cleal stated that a long list of buildings had been considered as options for the project and it is not only about skills but attracting new people into the health and social care sector. A prestigious new building therefore emerged as the evidenced preferred option and the setting within St Helens College provides an opportunity to attract agencies together in a campus setting, with access to multiple services including a creche, and other courses going on which promotes health and social care as a career in a front facing town centre location.

Marie Rimmer welcomed the introduction of health and social care focus on skills, which was much needed, and queried the role and visible presence of the St Helens Cares Partnership as part of this investment. Rachel Cleal explained that St Helens Cares is providing overall direction and will be represented on both sites of the proposal.

Sean Traynor invited Tracy Mawson to provide an overview of the Business Connect element. Tracy Mawson complimented the strategic approach, putting health and social care opportunities together, with Business Connect being about procurement and cross-fertilisation of ideas and innovation.

## **5.2 Healthy Communities – Youth Zone**

Robert Gatensbury gave an overview of the delivery of a Youth Zone as part of a new Community Hub located at the Gamble Building within St Helens town centre. Towns Fund investment will support the creation of a secure and safe space for young people living in some of the most deprived communities in England. As a priority, it will focus on meeting the essential needs of users. It will also create a new focus for informal and structured leisure and recreation activities, while providing a point where young people can access wider support services aimed at promoting enhanced health, wellbeing, and opportunity.

The Chairman enquired as to what specific facilities/services will be provided in the Gamble Building through this project. Robert Gatensbury explained that the flexible space allows for a range of opportunities, which will be more clearly defined following ongoing engagement being undertaken with young people by the Children’s Services.

Sean Traynor advised that the Youth Zone project has evolved significantly from the original Town Investment Plan proposal, which was to be developed by the then project sponsor Torus with a more outdoor/sports-based focus. This current proposal is for youth provision as an indoor offer bridging some identified needs in the town centre. The investment will secure the delivery of a flexible hall for use in group activities and classes, alongside specific activity clusters around music, video, and gaming. The facilities will be fully accessible and co-located with a refreshed library and archive offer for which a Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bid has been submitted to the Government.

Marie Rimmer raised a concern about the level of engagement and consultation that has taken place with young people to-date. Engagement with other organisations who support youth provision, such as the YMCA, was also queried.

Sean Traynor stressed how all parties were disappointed when the original Torus proposal was withdrawn, and the Town Deal Board faced the challenge of taking forward an alternative project that could be identified, a business developed, and the project delivered within the prescribed Town Deal timeframes. Investment in the Gamble Building had

therefore been supported by the Board at its meeting of 18 March 2022, to work alongside the Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bid.

Sean Traynor also advised that consultation has been commissioned Children's Services, which is providing up-to-date engagement activity with young persons, and the Board can be assured that the Council absolutely want to deliver proposals based on the needs of the youth of the town. However, equally, an opportunity for Town Deal investment to complement other future activity to deliver the best outcomes for young people cannot be missed and if an alternative youth zone proposition emerges (post submission of the current business case) then it would be possible to submit a change request for the investment. Cath Fogarty highlighted that there are some delivery challenges and significant risks in terms of the financial viability for these projects given the prescribed short timescales and therefore Programme Leads will need to manage their projects in line with these challenges and risks.

Justin Hill further queried which partner organisations have been engaged in the proposals for the Youth Zone proposal. Robert Gatensbury provided reassurance that further consultation and engagement would take place with relevant partners as part of the Children's Service live youth engagement commission. Sean Traynor further advised that project engagement had been via Children's Services but also that the project was not predicated on Council commissioned activity as the intent would be for communities and organisations to utilise the newly created spaces and facilities in the Gamble Building – so it was not necessary for the Council to prescribe which organisations would be involved at this business case stage.

**Town Deal Board resolved to:**

- (i) Note the progress made in the drafting of Business Cases for the two Tranche 2 Town Deal projects.**
- (ii) Subject to Cabinet approval at its meeting of 9 November 2022, delegate the submission of the two business cases to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on or before the 17 November 2022 to the Town Deal Board Chair in consultation with the Executive Director of Place Services and the Executive Director of Corporate Services (in the capacity of the accountable body representative).**
- (iii) Subject to Cabinet approval at its meeting of 9 November 2022, authorise the Chair of the Board and the Council's Section 151 Officer to submit a signed Summary Document for the two projects to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on or before the deadline of 17 November 2022.**

## **6. BOARD GOVERNANCE**

Robert Gatensbury gave the background to this item advising that Arup, as a Towns Fund delivery partner, were approached in September 2022 to provide advice and facilitate a governance review as the Town Deal is moving to the delivery stage for its projects. The governance review considers various aspects including skills gaps, roles and responsibilities of Board Members and it was initially discussed at a workshop session held on 16 September 2022. The next steps would involve a survey and skills audit of current Board Members, leading to the introduction of an AGM in the New Year.

Kim Power from Arup was introduced to the Town Deal Board and provided a brief overview of the workshop session that took place on 16 September 2022, where the role of the Board

and its relationship with the Council as Accountable Body, as well as stakeholder engagement and Terms of Reference were discussed. The outcomes included a requirement for a skills audit to understand any gaps in the current Town Deal Board. There is also a confidential questionnaire for Board Members to complete, following which a skills matrix and gap analysis can be concluded promptly.

**Town Deal Board:**

- (i) Noted the feedback from the initial Governance Review Workshop and provided comments in response.**
- (ii) Received a presentation and contributed to a facilitated discussion at the Board meeting with the Arup advisor.**
- (iii) Approved the proposed next steps in the review process.**

## **7. CAPACITY FUNDING UPDATE**

Donna Wilby provided an update on the capacity funding asks for the Board to consider. Cath Fogarty stressed the importance of Project Leads keeping the Councils informed of their spend to date, what they anticipate going forward so that the Accountable Body has a current position that is informed.

Tracy Mawson raised a concern on the recommendation for Cannington Shaw, commenting that the approach appears to be inconsistent relative to other projects, thereby setting a precedent and £158,000 is a large contribution. In response, Sean Traynor provided assurance that the issue of unrecoverable VAT for Cannington Shaw had been identified and fully considered when its business case was presented to, and supported by, the Board at its meeting in July 2022. Furthermore, Sean Traynor advised that all project sponsors have been given equal opportunity, on several occasions, to present capacity funding asks and they have been (and will continue to be) considered on a case-by-case basis so there is no precedent. In terms of Cannington Shaw, all alternative solutions have been fully explored and the matter needs to be advanced for the project to go forward having exhausted all other options - this would be the same approach for all projects.

Donna Wilby also responded to a query from Tracy Mawson over the impact of the proposed additional funding for the Cannington Shaw project on its BCR value, advising that this had no impact due to how VAT was considered within the business case process for government grant funding.

Stephen Tant endorsed that as it is public money, the Board must ensure that this is not setting a precedent and give other projects that assurance that this is not the case.

**Town Deal Board resolved to:**

- (i) Approve progression of a funding agreement for £6,000 to the World of Glass to support procurement.**
- (ii) Approve progression of a funding agreement for £12,000 to St Helens College for design fees (inclusive of unrecoverable VAT).**

- (iii) **Approve progression of a funding agreement of £5,000 to St Helens Chamber for design fees.**
- (iv) **Approve contingent allocation from capacity funding of up to £158,000 to support Cannington Shaw with unrecoverable VAT costs.**

## **8. PROJECT HIGHLIGHT REPORTS**

The Chairman asked the respective sponsors to provide a brief overview of each individual project by means of a highlight report, with each report identifying risks and escalating any matters that require Board attention and/or intervention.

### **Cannington Shaw**

John Tabern gave a brief update on this project and explained that the transfer of Cannington Shaw site has been the focus of recent activity.

### **Connected Places**

Richard Thomas introduced himself to the Board and provided an update of the Connected Places project milestones. A final bus station report is being shared with key stakeholders next week and the project is making good progress, with the Reserved Matters planning application to be advanced and early contractor dialogue having commenced. Procurement activity is also underway with colleagues in the Council and ECF (English Cities Fund) to bring forward a parking study. Sean Traynor also advised that social value will be at the forefront of the projects and the impact will be maximised.

### **Digital Infrastructure**

Sean Traynor drew the Board's attention to the highlight report attached for this project and noted the lack of apparent current activity/progress, which will be addressed with the sponsor.

### **Glass Futures 2**

Iain Taylor updated on the medical glass tube manufacturing business and advised that the prospective Investment Zone would provide additional benefits to the project appraisal. Energy costs remain an area of focus as it is not possible to secure gas prices. A phased approach to the development is being considered to unlock the overall vision.

### **Healthy Communities**

Rachel Cleal gave a brief update on the project having discussed it earlier under Item 5 of the meeting, advising that cost appraisals and concept design have been completed. Rachel explained that approval for additional capacity requests will ensure the Skills Academy project costs and designs move from concept phase into initial planning phase, also to ensure legal arrangements can be worked up between all partners involved.

### **Town Centre Living & Regeneration**

Councillor McCauley and Leon Guyett provided updates explaining that the project is progressing well, with RIBA Stage 3 design having commenced in October 2022 and a Reserved Matters application to be submitted early January 2023. An application to the One Public Estate Brownfield Land Release Fund had also been submitted and a successful outcome was envisaged.

### **The World of Glass**

Pete Frost gave a brief overview on progress with the project, explaining that the Board of Trustees have agreed RIBA Stage 3 and that the procurement process was complete with companies invited to tender submitting by 17 October. Pete advised that once a contractor

had been selected, RIBA 4 could start in November; however, progressing the project in a timely manner was now a critical factor to ensure that delivery could occur in readiness for the school summer holidays in 2023. It was therefore hoped that a positive funding decision would be received within 3 weeks so that the World of Glass could appoint the contract for delivery of the project.

**Town Deal Board resolved to:**

- (i) Note the highlight reports received from each Project Sponsor.**
- (ii) Note overall programme progress.**

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman noted that significant progress has been made by the Board pursuant to delivery of the Town Investment Plan.

Marie Rimmer also thanked everyone involved in the projects for their continued hard work and dedication, often with tight deadlines.

## **10. FUTURE MEETING DATES:**

Donna Hardiman will canvas for future quarterly meeting dates and venues over the next 12 months.

The Chairman reiterated the need for future meetings of the Board to be in person.