**Dudley Towns Fund Board**

**Minutes**

**16 December 2022**

**Present**

Traci Dix-Williams, Rob Ellis, Neil Fulton, Derek Grove, Andrew Lovett (Chair), Helen Martin, Mark Price, Neil Thomas, and Amanda Tomlinson.

**In Attendance**

Clare Marshall, Samantha Raggatt, Vicky Smith, Phil Thomas, and Jo Turner (minutes).

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Board members Pete Bond, Ian Chadwell, Stuart Everton, Jeremy Knight-Adams, Marco Longhi MP, Kat Rose, and James Treasure, and from Mick Donovan, Cllr Patrick Harley, Balvinder Heran, Bill Kirk, James Pearson, Jack Stevens, and Adam Westwood.

**2 Introductions**

Introductions were made.

**3 Declarations of Interest**

Derek Grove declared that Dudley Zoo own some of the land under discussion at today’s meeting.

Neil Thomas declared his role as Principal & CEO of Dudley College, a partner organisation.

**4 Minutes of the Board Meeting, 16 September 2022**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2022 be approved as a correct record.

**5 Matters Arising**

It was noted that an update report on the Dudley-wide regeneration strategy will be provided in the New Year.

**6 Towns Fund Project Update**

Vicky Smith updated the Board on progress to-date. The Board noted the ongoing negotiations with land owners, the removal of asbestos from Dudley Hippodrome, which should be complete by Easter 2023, and the ongoing process to adopt Zoo Drive.

The Board welcomed the appointment of the Alliance Board, details of which will be provided in January. The Board noted that reports from the Alliance will be provided at future meetings, including project changes for sign-offs.

The Board also noted the unsuccessful bid for NHS funding. A future application is possible and the NHS section of the project can be delayed to a future date.

The key risks of budget shortfall, planning status and land acquisition were also highlighted.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

**7 Towns Fund Guidance**

Following receipt of supplementary guidance from Government in November, it was agreed that membership of the Dudley Towns Fund Board and its Terms of Reference should be reviewed.

The Board noted the resignation of Cllr Simon Phipps and agreed a replacement should be approached.

Discussion took place about publishing Towns Fund Board agendas, reports and minutes. It was also noted that project amendment requests should be presented to Board for approval, and that terms of office should be agreed for all members, including the Chair.

RESOLVED: That i) Vicky Smith update the Terms of Reference for approval at the next Board meeting; and

ii) a Ward member be invited to join the Board.

**8 Levelling Up Fund Application**

Helen Martin provided an overview of the Levelling Up Fund application, which is awaiting a decision from Government.

**9 Any Other Business**

It was noted that each local authority will be following their own plans rather than the Black Country Plan, which will be reviewed in terms of what can be provided for Dudley.

Neil Thomas explained the plan to reclassify colleges as public bodies, which may impact the approval process for projects. The Board were reassured that Dudley College has sought legal advice regarding their part in the Dudley Towns Fund project.

**10 Date and Time of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Dudley Towns Fund Board is scheduled for 11:00am on Friday 17 March 2023.

Subsequent meetings for 2023 are scheduled for 9 June, 15 September and 15 December, all at 11:00am. It was noted that meetings will be held at the Institute of Technology, subject to availability.