**Dudley Towns Fund Board**

**Minutes**

**17th March 2023**

**Present**

Andrew Lovett (Chair), Helen Martin, Bill Kirk, Adam Westwood, Derek Grove, Phil Thomas, Rob Ellis, Neil Fulton, Clare Marshall, Samantha Raggatt,

**1. Apologies for Absence** – Neil Thomas, Mick Donovan, Pete Bond, Councillor Patrick Harley, Kat Rose, Stuart Everton, Balvinder Heran, Traci Dix-Williams.

**2. Introductions**

**3. Declarations of Interest**

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

**4. Minutes of the Board Meeting, 16th December 2022**

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

**5. Matters Arising**

It was noted that the Levelling Up Fund applications submitted by Dudley MBC were not successful. Initial feedback has been received and further discussions are to be had ahead of Round 3.

**6. Towns Fund Project Update**

Adam Westwood updated the Board on progress to-date. See report issued for the meeting.

Land Assembly - Discussions continue. The land has been included with the CPO paperwork and continue to work with Highways to progress the adoption.

Demolition of the Hippodrome – delays due to the removal of asbestos and works not expected to be complete until Easter 2023. This has further delayed the start of the demolition but allows consideration of an alternative approach but still to fit within the overall programme.

Martial Arts Buildings – Discussions continue.

Banqueting Suite – Necessary CPO authority signed by Council Cabinet on 14th December. There has been some delay to the CPO to be issued but now expected late April 2023, with public inquiry likely to take place October/November 2023.

Programme – Alliance team now on board and have timescales for design and construction. Acquisition of land April 2024 but will start earlier.

Hippodrome site available for building now as it is Council owned land.

It is acknowledged that completion in October 2025 does not meet with the beginning of the academic year and changes to this are being discussed.

Financial – A £25 million budget. The Alliance team have done due diligence and able to deliver a smaller scheme within budget.

Risk – This is being managed through each of the workstreams on the project. Land assembly still a risk. No risk of losing the money given if a delay to 2025 as it is not required to be spent until the end of the financial year 2025/26.

Zoo land – Now have a valuation to cover for charities act. Returned to solicitors to complete Heads of Terms and lease.

Procurement – Alliance team, contract signed and now with DMBC Legal. The contract needs to be signed before the start of demolition.

Governance – update at next meeting.

**9 Any Other Business**

HM provided feedback on LUF bids. Geographical spread of allocations appears to reflect where there have been several previous successful funding allocations then less likely to succeed, and one only successful bid per area. Additional bid criteria added mid assessment. Initial feedback suggests areas to focus on with resubmissions are economic business cases. No details yet on when round 3 will be or the criteria. May not be open bids but allocated off round 2 submissions given allocations made via budget announcements.

In terms of budget announcements; a £60m commitment to Metro to Brierley Hill and agreement to Levelling Up Zone along metro corridor. Details to follow in terms of what this actually means, and which of the fiscal measures may be activated.

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

The next meeting of the Dudley Towns Fund Board is scheduled for 12.30pm on Friday 9th June 2023 at the Institute of Technology.

Subsequent meetings for 2023 are scheduled for 15 September and 15 December, all at 11:00am. These meetings will also be held at the Institute of Technology, subject to availability.