**Procurement of Higher Education Partner for**

Agenda Item 5

For Noting

**Dudley Towns Fund Project**

Report of Lowell Williams, Consultant to the Towns Fund Board

**1 Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to brief the Board on the progress in securing a higher education institute (HEI) to partner in the Dudley Towns Fund project.

**2 Recommendation**

2.1 The Board is asked to note the progress to date.

**3 Procurement process**

3.1 Dudley College of Technology issued an OJEU notice for the selection of the HEI partner on 31st July 2020. The procurement process itself has two parts.

3.2 Part one asked applicants to complete an expression of interest (EOI) to be submitted no later than the 31st August 2020. The EOI mainly collected technical information concerning the applicant HEI. There were two scored sections in the EOI, one which related to the university’s relevant experience (70%), the other which related to the university’s experience of supporting learners off-campus (30%). A project specification was included with the EOI, as well as a detailed timetable, arrangements for applicants to ask questions and other technical details.

3.3 Part two asks shortlisted applicants to complete an invitation to negotiate (ITN). In the ITN applicants have been asked to complete an executive summary along with eight sections addressing the following;

-        the vision for the centre (25%);

-        the curriculum offer (25%);

-        flexible learning approaches (10%);

-        sustainability (10%);

-        widening participation (10%);

-        social values indicators (10%);

-        access to wider education (10%);

-        student number/ financial forecast spreadsheet (not scored).

3.4 There is a tight turnaround for receipt of the ITN returns which are due on the 16th September 2020. Applicants have been invited to present their proposals to a panel of Towns Board members on 18th September 2020. The panel is Andrew Lovett, Helen Martin, Corin Crane, Neil Thomas and Lowell Williams, with technical support from Andrew Comyn and Debbie Goode.

**4 Applications to date**

4.1 EOIs were received from Birmingham City University, the University of Wolverhampton and Worcester University.

4.2 Based on the EOIs all three applicants have been invited to progress to stage two which is the Invitation to Negotiate.

4.3 Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the procurement process on 21st September 2020.

**5 Post selection arrangements**

5.1 Following the procurement process and a standstill period, the intention is to award a collaboration contract (CC) to the selected HEI partner. The CC provides a framework which allows the HEI to work in partnership with the college, DMBC and the Towns Board in developing the final details of the project. The HEI has a key role to play in shaping the project, including finalising the Town Investment Plan (TIP) and agreeing the specification and design of the building itself. The CC is intended to be a straightforward document.

 5.2 At an appropriate point of time in the project’s development the HEI will be offered a service concession contract (SCC) to operate from the new HE Centre. As with the CC the HEI partner will to help shape the SCC itself. It is anticipated that the SCC will be agreed and signed with the HEI in the autumn of 2021.