

Grays Towns Fund Board

Notes of meeting / Key action points

9am to 11am, 3 July 2020

Microsoft Teams meeting

Attendance

Board Members:

- Justin Thomas, New River
- Cllr Mark Coxshall, Thurrock Council
- Lucy Harris, Creative People and Places Partnership
- Teresa O'Keeffe, Love Grays Partnership
- Jackie Doyle-Price MP
- External Support
- Rebecca Collings - The Nichols Group
- Nigel Stewardson, MHCLG

Council Support:

- Andy Millard, Director of Place
- David Moore, Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery
- Rebecca Ellsmore, Programmes and Projects Manager
- Brian Priestley – Programme Manager, Thurrock Council
- Irina Blanks, Senior Project Officer

Apologies:

- Kristina Jackson, Thurrock CVS
- Cllr M Kerin, Thurrock Council
- Rhiannon Mort, SELEP

1.	Welcome and Apologies	Action
JT	JT Welcomed everyone and apologies were noted	
2.	Review meeting notes and actions	
JT	<p>Justin went through meeting notes and actions.</p> <p>Board discussed Thameside Cultural Hub and agreed to revisit previous meetings notes to check latest discussion. JDP questioned whether the Thameside should be included.</p> <p>Meeting notes from February Meeting:</p> <p>Board discussed relocating library to the town centre to open up the front of the ground floor of the Theatre.</p>	

	<p>Board wanted to find out how much would refurbishment of the Thameside cost. Board also noted that Thameside would fall under category of Strengthening Cultural asset.</p> <p>Board mentioned Thameside can become a cultural centre of Grays.</p>	
3.	Future High Street Fund Update & Other Funds	
JT	<p>DM provided update on FHSF. Business case due to be submitted at the end of the month for a bid of up to £25M. Business case looks at areas around High Street, Station House, underpass development, infrastructure, public realm as well as lower priority CO1 area and with reference to the major plans to redevelop the Town centre. Not all schemes are likely to succeed, therefore Towns Fund Board is keen to pick up unsuccessful elements of the bid.</p> <p>DM confirmed total amount of the bid we are submitting is expected to be c£27M, and MHCLG are expected to prioritise that money down. First priorities (High Street, Station House, underpass development and public realm) are valued at £20M, with CO1 a £6M.</p> <p>JDP asked why the underpass was included in the FHSF when it had already been successfully awarded money from the LGF. DM explained that This will complement the Local Growth Fund money secured from the LEP for the Underpass programme. The development site (on the new Plaza) will be funded by FHSF, and could help to increase security for the underpass. Objectives of this board to develop Grays are tied into the availability of other funding streams, projects and resources in Grays. Board would like to have an overview of the other major projects and programmes in Grays to see overall development picture. Board would like to be informed about development and progress of these other projects. Board requested that the FHSF presentation made by DM is circulated to the TF Board</p>	
	Action: TC to provide overview of Grays Regeneration projects and funding opportunities (in particular the FHSF projects).	TC
	<p>JT provided update on New River Shopping Centre development – and raised concerns that their developments need to be coordinated with activity around the underpass development. New River is planning to submit further pre-application detail to the TC planning team, followed by feedback and public consultation sessions. New River would like to ensure all the Towns Fund and FHSF proposals are well coordinated, with New River’s development as the shopping centre application will require significant amounts of capital. The shopping centre development will also require a new Sub Station for the subsequent power supply which was the subject of a separate bid for funding from MHCLG, via SELEP as a ‘shovel ready’ project.</p> <p>Board asked for a Gantt chart/timetable to be produced by an external project manager for all the Town’s Regeneration projects, including the New River development.</p>	
	Action: TC to provide a programme showing timescales of funding streams and regeneration projects.	TC
	<p>A further part of the town centre regeneration scheme will be to lower the level of the High Street north of the railway line, so the “underpass” effectively become a “bridge”. . Board asked for clarity over which parts of the developments are funded by the Towns Fund. Board would also like to</p>	

	<p>understand how the Town Fund activity ties into the broader developments across the town.</p> <p>NS – agreed that MHCLG would like to see collaboration and joint working between different projects in the area.</p> <p>DM explained that MHCLG had also made available further funding for the Towns Fund Boards, with £750,000 for capital schemes that can be spent by 31st of March 2021.</p> <p>Board asked for a list of all different funding streams and projects available in Grays: including, Local Growth Fund, FHSF, and Towns Fund projects. Action point</p>	
4.	Towns Fund Guidance and Prospectus	
DM	<p>DM updated the Board on the latest guidance for Towns Fund produced by MHCLG. Bids can be submitted in three cohorts. Grays was currently listed as Cohort 2 (Oct/Nov submission). Board discussed timetables and decided that they would prefer to wait to hear the outcome of the FHSF bid, to be able to absorb unfunded projects. NS stressed that he would need to take the Board's decision to a meeting with MHCLG later today.</p> <p>Board noted the possibility of bidding for up to £50m, and recognised that bid would be submitted a different route (directly to MHCLG), with more rigorous checks. The Board wanted to understand what value the current projects were. NS pointed out that further information was in the Guidance.</p>	
	Action: The Board asked for project costs to be collated even if only approximate estimates and submitted to the Board for review.	TC
	<p>NS stressed that if the Board decides to go for £50M projects then MHCLG will be expecting exceptional submissions, and they will need to reflect a more strategic outlook and a wider regional connectivity.</p> <p>Nigel confirmed if the initial bid was unsuccessful, there would be a second chance to resubmit.</p> <p>Board voted and agreed to go for Cohort 3 (submission in Jan 2021) but only on the basis that this gave time for the Board to assess what projects were not picked up by the FHSF. Approval was not based on the desire to target the potential additional £25mil of further funding because the Board has not yet established what the first £25mil is to be spent on</p>	
	Action: Board asked for a paper to be circulated with suggestions on projects for the £750,000 capital funding, on the basis that funding should be spent by 31st March 2021.	TC
5.	Prioritise projects	
JT	<p>Board would like to have a single point of contact, with responsibility for servicing the needs of the Towns Fund Board. Board agreed to use some of the initial funding received to pay for the post.</p> <p>DM pointed out that further resource is expected soon through a commissioned partner (and this could provide resource for the single contact role). Further Council admin resource is also being found to support the Board.</p>	
	Action: TC to obtain quote from LSH for a dedicated project manager	TC

	<p>Board asked for further information on how we start spending money the initial funding and what consultancy work is being put in place to develop the Town Investment plan.</p> <p>DM took the Board through a presentation of projects, outlining the board's previous deliberations and checking that the projects were still appropriate and required by the Board, especially considering the impact of the COVID 19 outbreak.</p> <p>Board asked for the power point slides to be circulated and to see indicative costs against the projects, to help the Board to understand whether they should bid for £25m or more funding. Board asked for the list to be circulated within next 10 working days.</p> <p>AM suggested the Board could benefit from understanding the broader vision for Grays, to help provide context and setting for the Towns Fund projects and the TIP.</p> <p>Board noted that there had been previous work done on visions for Grays (e.g. via NRR's consultations and via Council's master planning). A draft vision is to be collated from the previous versions and circulated to the Board for comment.</p>	
	Action: TC to collate a table of potential capital projects including a brief description and indicative cost within next 10 working days	TC
	Action: TC to circulate power point presentation with minutes	TC
6.	Approach to consultation	
JT	<p>Asked officers to re-circulate list for Advisory group. Council were asked to outline how/when we should engage with Advisory group, (seen as being after the range of capital projects have been agreed).</p>	
	Action: Re circulate list for Advisory group. Board to review and suggest new members	TC/ Board
7.	Budget	
JT	<p>JT reemphasised requirement for a single point of contact for the Board, a resource to help drive actions and Board members forward. Some strategic guidance is also available from Arup.</p> <p>DM reiterated that this support is likely to come from the Council's commissioned partner.</p> <p>Board agreed that a priority role for the appointed project manager is the creation of a working budget for the Towns Fund Board.</p>	
	Action: TC to secure a fee proposal from commissioned partner to provide dedicated resource and present to the Board for approval.	TC
8.	Arup Support	
RC	<p>Overview: RC emphasised that there will be a great deal of work needed to submit a high quality investment plan, and it would be better to get it right first time. MHCLG have appointed a consortium of experts, led by ARUP, specifically for the Towns Fund programme. This group will give expert strategic advice and guidance. Whole range of expertise is available on topic specific knowledge. Expertise can cover, support with visioning and strategy,</p>	

	<p>project prioritization, drafting business case. Can provide help with setting priorities and desirable outcomes.</p> <p>RC stressed there are also opportunities to share best practise and learn from other Towns Fund Boards. Getting in touch with them and learning what other towns are doing that we can benefit from. Grays Board could benefit from speaking to other Boards that submit in Cohort 1, to understand what worked for them and what feedback they received from MHCLG. RC is a Programme Manager by trade and will act as a critical friend.</p>	
9.	Revised Timetable and actions	
JT	Action: Seek additional admin support for the Board	TC
	Action: Meeting Notes to be shared with the Board within next 5 working days	TC
	Action: Circulate FHSF power Point Slides from meeting	TC
	Action: Provide cost of projects for FHSF, circulate paper that shows projects, costs and locations.	TC
	Action: New Programme Lead to produce an extended Timetable - Gantt chart with the key dates and projects under different funding streams (underpass, FHSF, shovel ready projects, Towns Fund projects)	TC
	Action: Recirculate advisory group, within 10 days, Board to review and suggest new members by email discussion before next meeting	TC/ Board
	Action: Appoint a programme lead/single point of contact, and reflect in the budget. Before next meeting	TC
	Action: Prepare and distribute Projects review document. Provide brief against each project, identify capital or revenue cost. Board to decide if project to be accepted or not by email discussion before next meeting	TC/ Board
	Action: Strategic vision for the Towns Fund Board to be circulated, Scoping and commissioning.	TC
	Action: Strategic review to be added as an agenda item, to explore vision of £25M or decide if the Board should bid for a larger amount	TC
10.	AOB	
JT	NS invited Board Members to join a live stream at 2.15 PM about Towns Fund Guidance.	