

TOWN DEAL BOARD

Notes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 7 September 2023 5.00p.m. via Teams

Board Members in Attendance:

<p>Name:</p> <p>Craig Moule (Chair) Cllr Marjory Bisset Cllr Lynn Denham Michelle Dowse Revd Canon Dr Stephen Edwards Sally Ellison MBE Professor David Green Cllr Mrs Lucy Hodgson Cllr Roger Knight Jan Scrine BEM Robin Walker Gary Woodman</p>	<p>Representing:</p> <p>Sanctuary Joint Leader, Worcester City Council Joint Leader, Worcester City Council Heart of Worcestershire College Worcester Cathedral Worcester Community Action University of Worcester Warndon Parish Council St. Peters Parish Council Worcester Civic Society MP for Worcester Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership</p>
<p>Also in Attendance:</p> <p>David Blake David Sutton Zoey West Julian Pugh Ian Smith Candice Pearson</p>	<p>Managing Director, Worcester City Council Deputy Director – Policy and Strategy, Worcester City Council Deputy Director – Economic Development, Worcester City Council Democratic Services, Worcester City Council West Midlands and South-West Cities and Local Growth Unit Consultant for Scala and Corn Exchange</p>

Item No.	Notes	Action
1.	<p>Welcome</p> <p>Craig Moule welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular those attending for the first time, namely Michelle Dowse (Heart of Worcestershire College), Lucy Hodgson (Warndon Parish Council) and Stephen Edwards (Worcester Cathedral).</p>	
2.	<p>Appointment of New Board Members</p> <p>A number of changes were proposed:</p> <p>Nicki Williams had been on the Board both as Deputy CEO at HoW College and as Chair of Worcester BID. HoW College had recently appointed Michelle Dowse as Principal, and she had expressed an interest in representing the College. Nicki would remain a member of</p>	

	<p>the Board in her BID capacity.</p> <p>Jan Scrine stood down as the Warndon Parish Council representative in May, having retired from the Parish Council. Lucy Hodgson had been nominated as the Parish Council's new representative. Meanwhile, Jan had expressed an interest in continuing as a representative of the heritage sector in her capacity as Vice-Chair of Worcester Civic Society.</p> <p>Finally, the Dean of Worcester, Peter Atkinson, retired at the end of August. Stephen Edwards had been nominated to succeed him as interim Vice Dean at Worcester Cathedral and chair of the project board overseeing the Town Investment Plan Cathedral landscaping project.</p> <p>The Board agreed to appoint Michelle Dowse (Heart of Worcestershire College), Stephen Edwards (Worcester Cathedral), Lucy Hodgson (Warndon Parish Council) and Jan Scrine (Worcester Civic Society).</p>	<p>JP/All to note</p>
3.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Roger Knight declared an interest in item 6 (Future High Street Fund – Scala and Corn Exchange) as a trustee of Worcester Theatres.</p>	
4.	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Councillor Simon Geraghty and Nicki Williams.</p>	
5.	<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting</p> <p>The notes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 had been previously circulated and were noted. Craig Moule explained that he had contacted David Blake regarding the Fine Arts Centre, and the points raised by the Board had been duly noted. There were no other matters arising.</p>	
6.	<p>Future High Street Fund – Scala and Corn Exchange</p> <p>David introduced Candice Pearson, who is working with the City Council to support the consultation on the alternative proposal for an arts venue at the Scala and Corn Exchange site. Candice explained her background and her role.</p> <p>Due to escalating costs, the original project can no longer be completed within budget. The City Council's Policy and Resources Committee in July had therefore agreed to stop</p>	

	<p>any further work on the 500-seat auditorium scheme and commission consultation on a c300-seat alternative proposal for an arts venue at the site.</p> <p>Candice is leading on a stakeholder survey, to discuss next steps and encourage expressions of interest. The survey is asking the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should the buildings be used for? • Under what circumstances would you consider taking up space in the buildings? • Would any individual organisation or a consortium be interested in operating the venue? <p>The online consultation will run until early September and the outcome will be reported to the City Council's Policy and Resources Committee on 16 October. Three consultation events will be taking place at the Guildhall. There will be an opportunity for interested parties to have site tours.</p> <p>Candice and David Blake responded to questions and comments from Board members.</p> <p>Robin Walker asked about the deadlines for spending funding and the geographical boundary of the Town Deal. David advised that an extension has been requested and a response is awaited. The DLUHC is expected to make a formal announcement on extensions of time for FHSF projects nationwide in the next few weeks. He will discuss this further with Ian Smith outside the meeting. The City Council will be unable to commit spending for construction work by March 2024. Many other local authorities are in the same position. The boundary has not changed since the original scoping exercise.</p> <p>David Blake added that there have been several welcome approaches from individuals and businesses with a successful track record in operating arts venues. There has been a clear message that construction of a theatre with up to 500 seats will not be viable but there is scope to deliver a new arts venue which will go much of the way to delivering the original brief.</p> <p>Ian Smith advised that he will seek clarification regarding deadlines, extensions and what has to be done by when.</p> <p>David Green explained that the University is keen to work alongside the local arts community and would be very interested in discussing the opportunities to develop an arts centre and cinema. Candice advised that she has spoken to Lisa Stansbie, Pro Vice Chancellor, and would</p>	<p>IS</p>
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	<p>be happy for David to join the discussion. She has also spoken with Ivan McDouall from Heart of Worcestershire College.</p> <p>Lucy Hodgson asked about funding and whether the City Council could borrow to meet the funding gap. David explained that Council has a budget gap of £1.7m for 2023/24, which is expected to rise over the following four years. The Council has developed a savings plan. It could look to borrow from the PWLB, but the repayments would be considerable, and Council Officers are not able to recommend this to Members.</p> <p>Sally Ellison asked about opportunities for community groups to use rooms and spaces within the building. Candice explained that the consultation is focussed on seeking interested parties who are willing to take on the operation of the venue.</p> <p>David Blake added that the report to Policy and Resources Committee in October will explain the outcome of the engagement work which Candice is undertaking. A final decision will be not taken on the operating model at that meeting. but Members will be asked to agree to work continuing to develop a preferred operating model, based on the expressions of interest received. If Members support the recommendation, a further report will be brought to Committee to seek approval to enter into a construction contract and to confirm the preferred operating model.</p> <p>Lynn Denham explained the context in which the decision was taken in July to review the scheme. There have been conversations with local arts organisations, and it is not intended that the future operating model should replicate existing activities elsewhere in the city.</p> <p>In conclusion, David Blake highlighted the link to the consultation which had been provided with the presentation Scala Worcester and there is an open invitation to all Board members to contact Candice if they wish to have a further discussion.</p>	All to note
7.	<p>Terms of Reference</p> <p>David Blake explained that the Board's Terms of Reference had been reviewed. Whilst they continue to comply with Government guidelines, the 'Purpose' section had been revised. Rather than referring to the Town Fund and UKSPF specifically at the beginning, an additional paragraph had been inserted at the end of that section to</p>	

	<p>extend the remit of the board to include oversight of UKSPF, FHSF and any other Levelling Up fund allocations.</p> <p>Board members expressed support for the proposed amendment and agreed to adopt the revised Terms of Reference.</p>	All to note
8.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Robin Walker offered to assist in discussions with Government regarding the extension request for the Scala/Corn Exchange.</p> <p>Jan Scrine asked about the deadline for the Shrub Hill. Ian Smith stated that he understood it to be 2025 or 2026.</p>	
9.	<p>Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>The next meeting will be on Thursday, 7 December 2023 at 5.00p.m. on Teams.</p>	All to note

The meeting closed at 5.55p.m.

Key:

JP = Julian Pugh

IS = Ian Smith