

# Minutes of Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board

**7 March 2024 at 6.01pm  
in the Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Taylor (Chair);  
Councillors Owen (Vice-Chair), Akpoteni, Davies, Dhatt  
and J Singh.

**Officers:** Tammy Stokes (Assistant Director Spatial Planning and  
Growth), Jenna Langford (Business Manager  
Regeneration and Growth), Alex Goddard (Scrutiny  
Lead Officer) and Anthony Lloyd (Democratic Services  
Officer).

8/24 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors  
Ashraf, Hemingway, Hussain, Kordala and Rahman.

9/24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

10/24 **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 8  
February 2024 are confirmed as a correct record.

## 11/24 **Additional Item of Business**

There were no urgent additional items of business to consider.

## 12/24 **Long Term Plan for Towns - Smethwick**

In October 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced their “Long-Term Plan for Towns” that sought to introduce an investment programme of £1.1 billion into 55 towns. The funding had been allocated using the Levelling Up Needs Index which had considered metrics covering skills, pay, productivity and health as well as the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Smethwick, one of the towns of Sandwell, had been selected to receive the funding.

The Government intended to provide £20m of endowment style funding, of which 25% would be revenue and 75% would be capital, over a 10-year period to provide long-term certainty to deliver a range of interventions. Sandwell Council, as the Local Authority, would be the accountable body for the funding and would remain responsible for ensuring good use of public funds.

Three broad investment themes were identified by Government: Safety and Security; High Streets, Heritage and Regeneration; and Transport and Connectivity.

A Long-Term Plan Board was required to be established and would be in operation by 1 April 2024. The Chair of the Board and the core members had been identified within the draft terms of reference and governance arrangements. The Smethwick Town Deal Board would be repurposed to fulfil the requirements of the Plan and an emphasis would be placed on grass root community representation. 15 Members in total would sit on the Board including MP representation, Councillor representation, Police and Crime Commissioner representation and business and community leaders.

Additionally, a Long-Term Plan was required to be submitted to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by 1 August 2024 and the investment boundaries had to be confirmed by April 2024. The Long-

Term plan was a 10-year vision with a three-year investment plan.

Further discussion ensued and the following points were made:-

- The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities would be consulted following any changes to ward boundaries and officers would confirm what the process would be;
- the amended plan proposed included all open green spaces within Smethwick;
- match funding could be levered, and philanthropic investment would also be utilised if possible;
- regular updates would be provided to members;
- a prudent approach would be taken given the short timescales, however more bespoke projects would be considered once capacity and resources were at the desired level;
- sub-groups of the Long-Term Plan Board would be created to ensure representations could be made from a wide range of community representatives;
- officers had reached out to the SHAPE forum to seek youth representation on the Board;
- contact with the West Bromwich Business Improvement District would be considered as an exemplar organisation.

Members thanked officers for their attendance and hard work.

**Resolved that:-**

- (1) the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth and WMCA considers prioritising local businesses and skills to fulfil any projects arising from the Long-Term Plan;
- (2) regular updates are provided to the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board;
- (3) the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth and WMCA ensures that appropriate consultation is carried out throughout the

implementation of the Long-Term Plan including representations from young people;

- (4) the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth and WMCA considers collaboration with local Business Improvement Districts (BIDS); and
- (5) the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth is requested to seek clarification from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on whether, once approved, the investment boundary is fixed or if it can be adapted, especially in light of the upcoming review of Sandwell ward boundaries.

#### 13/24      **Tracking and Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations**

The Board noted the status of actions and recommendations it had made. Further updates would be reported to future meetings of the Board.

#### 14/24      **Cabinet Forward Plan and Board Work Programme**

The Board received the Cabinet Forward Plan and Board Work Programme.

Members noted an interest in several of the Levelling Up Fund reports to be considered at Cabinet and as a result, requested that consideration of the Levelling Up Fund be added to the Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board Work Programme for the 2024/25 municipal year.

**Resolved** that items in relation to the Levelling Up Fund be added to the Economy, Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board Work Programme for the 2024/25 municipal year.

Meeting ended at 6.48pm.

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