

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Bishop Auckland Stronger Town Board** held in The Spanish Gallery, Market Place, Bishop Auckland on **Monday 20 March 2023 at 2.30 pm**

Present:

D Land (Chair)

Board Members:

Natalie Davison-Terranova
David Madden
Councillor Michael Siddle
Rob Yorke
Mike Matthews
Rev Chris Knight

Bishop Auckland College
The Auckland Project
Mayor, Bishop Auckland Town Council
SDEA and Teescraft
Private Sector Representative
(for Bishop Paul Butler)

Officers:

Graham Wood
Mark Jackson
Craig MacLennan
Jonathan Gilroy
Stephen Bowyer
Anna Czigler

Economic Development Manager, DCC
Head of Transport and Contract Services, DCC
Transport Infrastructure Manager, DCC
CLGU
The Auckland Project
Project Manager

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Walker (AAP), Bishop Paul Butler, Jonathan Ruffer and Amy Harhoff.

2 Declarations of interest

David Maddan declared TAP's interest DDG, Kingsway Square, Market Place hotel, ESAC and Artists' Hub.

Rob Yorke declared that he was the Chair of The Auckland Project (TAP).

Natalie Davison-Terranova declared an interest in the Springboard to Employment Project as she was employed by Bishop Auckland College, a delivery partner in the initiative.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record subject to an amendment to remove the Councillor prefix from David Land in the list of attendees.

Matters Arising

Councillor Siddle referred to future events at the Artists Hub should be considered collaboratively between the County Council, Town Council and TAP to avoid any repetition, however he suggested that events would naturally fall within the Town Councils responsibility.

4 Programme Update

The Board received a Programme Update with regards to recent progress of the ongoing Bishop Auckland projects, including milestones leading up to 2025.

Mark Jackson provided the Board with a programme overview and confirmed that business case summary documents had all been submitted.

Three initial programmes, South Church Enterprise, Springboard to Employment and the Heritage Walking and Cycling Routes were awaiting a confirmation email.

There were some project adjustments to the Durham Dales Gateway and Tindale Triangle which were awaiting approval before the summary documents could be approved.

The business case summary documents had been submitted recently for sign off and would take a minimum of two weeks and up to one month for approval. The assessments would run concurrently, and the process would be completed by the end of April.

The ESAC business case was being progressed with the DfT leading on the assessment. Analysts and commercial colleagues would meet to compare notes during the week commencing 10 April and shortly after that, any amendments to the design would be submitted to the Council. After the planning application was determined there would be a three period for judicial review before the payment could be progressed.

The Board were advised that the Town Centre Diversification projects may need to be approved by Ministers.

There had been some money transferred to the Tindale Triangle from the Durham Dales Gateway as the scope of this project had reduced.

Fortnightly meetings with TAP were undertaken to ensure that each of the projects were and costs were being monitored.

ESAC

In response to a question from the Chair, Craig MacLennan confirmed that good progress was being made and there was a detailed programme up to completion. There had already been positive meeting with Statutory Consultees and aside from the discovery of a badger set, no major issues had arisen.

Chris Knights queried the route and whether it would include the use of the existing bridge over Auckland way. Craig MacLennan advised that the route crossed over level and Auckland would give way to the new road and appropriate crossing facilities were included, with improvements to existing footpaths and the provision of an east west link north to south crossing points.

Public Realm Schemes

Craig MacLennan advised the Board that an interactive map was in the process of being created, which users would be able to hover over and view include graphics of all of the projects, including site photographs, in addition to 2D and 3D montages of the designs.

The Market Place Hotel had been shared in a public meeting in January. The design was cost dependent and subject to planning statutory consultations and approval. In response to a question from the Chair, Jonathan Gilroy confirmed that the summary document had to be reviewed and approved, before progressing to payment which was subject to performance monitoring, tracking progress spend and delivery. There would be periodic calls from the department of communications, with regards to openings and ministerial visits.

In response to a question from Councillor Scott, Mark Jackson advised that the expected opening date of the hotel would be March 2026. The construction of Kingsway car park would be undertaken in conjunction with the hotel.

The Chair suggested that PR be included in the magazine to exhibit the transformation.

Durham Dales Gateway

There had been challenges to meet the scope of the scheme within the original projected costs and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

South Church Enterprise Park

The planning submission would be determined in June but the scheme had also been subject to some increased build costs.

Springboard to Employment

A planning application for the internal layout had been submitted and once determined would trigger the procurement stage.

Natalie Davison-Terranova advised that extensive dry rot had been discovered within the fabric of the front of the building and remedial works were ongoing to address it, however this had impacted progression.

In response to a question from the Chair, Graham Wood confirmed that a conservation area grant of £65,000 had been provided to cover the full cost of remedial works and the scaffolding would be removed after a few months.

Heritage Walking and Cycling Routes

A detailed design would be submitted and subject to consultation, hopefully the route would be shared in June.

Tindale Triangle

An amended route had been submitted to be approved by Government and legal services were in the process of completing legal agreements to protect investors. There were only slight tweaks to individual projects.

Rob Yorke queried whether the Council were intending to retain a section of land to future proof for additional filter lanes as had been done adjacent to the former St Anne's School on Kingsway. Craig MacLennan confirmed that the modelling included housing growth, however he would explore this option with the Council's Head of Corporate Property and Land.

The Chair noted the timescale for completion of the Kingsway Square programme, of which delivery was expected by March 2024. There was an urgency to resolve the design costings issue and move into construction within two months otherwise outside of programme.

The Chair asked if updates on projects could include more detailed information on budget or timing impacts. Mark Jackson confirmed that each project dashboard included a line for cost assurance however there had been significant construction inflation which needed continuously reviewing to ensure projects remained affordable.

The Chair suggested that it would be useful to see some detailed analysis to identify any opportunities for surplus. Graham Wood confirmed that any changes to the schemes would be subject to a variation once schemes were underway.

The Chair would prefer the Board to be consulted if schemes were subject to any compromises due to cost implications.

Mark Jackson advised that the project dashboard could be adapted to provide further details if more helpful.

Councillor Siddle queried future governance arrangements and communications which was out of date with timelines only going up to 2022.

The Chair noted that the pace of the project had picked up significantly more recently, however it was important that people were kept informed of milestones for each project.

Rob Yorke asked whether completion dates could be included in communications. Graham Wood confirmed that a paper on governance would be considered at the next meeting. The formal arrangement with Historic England was coming to an end due consideration was needed to determine how the partnership structure would be maintained.

Councillor Scott asked what the Governance report would cover and Graham Wood advised that guidance from government had been received with regards to reflecting the change in focus from development to delivery phase and replacement arrangements. It would include any overlap and look to streamline with key stakeholders, the Terms of Reference for the Board and how all structures would fit, including responsibilities going forward.

AGREED that the information be noted.

5 Aimsun Traffic Model Presentation

The Board considered a presentation of the Aimsun Traffic model for the ESAC project which had been undertaken to include in the business case.

The models shown were based on high traffic periods and evenings of special events such as Kynren and the ESAC junction was shown that there would be no queuing over three lanes at peak times.

The signalised junction would have the ability to be tailored to cater for levels of traffic at different times of the day according to need.

The traffic had been modelled from the opening of the junction in 2026 up to 2035. Under normal circumstances they would be over ten years however the County Durham Plan was up to 2035.

As part of the scheme roadmarkings would be brought up to standard.

In response to a question, Craig MacLennan advised that although modelling had been done for Tindale Triangle, different software had been used.

AGREED that the presentation be noted.

The meeting ended at 3.50 pm.

6 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held on 28 June 2023 at 2.30pm in the Elgar Room Bishop Auckland Town Hall.