

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Bishop Auckland Stronger Town Board** held in The Elgar Room - Bishop Auckland Town Hall on **Thursday 28 September 2023 at 3.30 pm**

Present:

D Land (Chair)

Board Members:

Natalie Davison-Terranova	Bishop Auckland College (BAC)
David Madden	The Auckland Project (TAP)
Councillor Sam Zair	Mayor, Bishop Auckland Town Council
Rob Yorke	SDEA and Teescraft
Mike Matthews	Private Sector Representative
Rt Revd Paul Butler	Brighter Bishop Partnership
Nik Turner	Believe Housing

Officers:

Graham Wood	Economic Development Manager, DCC
Mark Jackson	Head of Transport and Contract Services, DCC
Craig MacLennan	Transport Infrastructure Manager, DCC
Jonathan Gilroy	CLGU
Stephen Bowyer	The Auckland Project
Anna Czigler	Project Manager
Judith Layfield	Bishop Auckland College

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from J Ruffer and A Harhoff.

2 Declarations of interest

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

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

J Layfield declared an interest in the Springboard to Employment Project as employees of Bishop Auckland College, a delivery partner in the initiative.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2023 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendments.

Nik Turner represented Believe Housing and not BAC as stated.

The second amendment was in respect to the expiry date of planning consent for the Bishop Marra's statue. Planning consent would expire in October 2023 and not October 2024 as stated.

Matters Arising

Rt Revd P Butler was concerned that this had led him to believe there was sufficient time to raise the additional funding required to complete the project. G Wood confirmed that the contribution made by the Board was towards technical and road safety studies, with other funding made up from S106 contributions and the Councils Neighbourhood Budget. There had been a rise in the cost of steel which had led to the shortfall and he would investigate the latest position and circulate further details.

The Board requested details of the costs to ensure that any residual funding could be returned. G Wood confirmed that the other sources of funding granted for the original cost estimate had been secured.

4 Programme Update

M Jackson provided the project update and confirmed that there continued to be regular meetings to safeguard timescales.

The hotel was the highest priority and whilst there were procurement risks across each of the schemes, they were being managed at this time.

5 Presentation on STF Projects:

The Board received a detailed presentation which included updates on the following items (see slides for details).

- a) ESAC
- b) Town Centre Diversification
- c) Durham Dales Gateway
- d) South Church Enterprise Park
- e) Heritage Walking and Cycling
- f) Tindale Triangle

In relation to ESAC D Land referred to highest risk associated with the programme timelines and the reliance on planning consent. C MacLennan advised that the design and build tender would run simultaneously to ensure construction in October 2024.

Environmental risks were a sensitive area and a badger set found during site investigations. Once on site, completion was expected to take 18 months.

R Yorke referred to the installation of EVCP's and ongoing concerns about the power needed to deliver the number of required spaces. M Jackson confirmed that the requirement of 20% was based on expected use however for a car park which had 800 spaces, this would require a significant amount of power and therefore there were ongoing discussions to address this issue.

With regards to Town Centre Diversification the Board were advised of a lighting scheme that would replace the outdated scheme at the Town Hall, with columns that would have a heritage aspect and an inner ring to project seasonal images or accommodate imagery for events. S Harris advised that the Town Council were keen to be involved in the design of the scheme.

With regards to TRO's, schemes would need to be designed to avoid public inquiries, which would cause significant delays. It was confirmed that current restrictions would remain and Councillor Zair suggested that strict enforcement and consideration of a reduced speed limit was required for successful outdoor seating areas.

In response to whether the columns would allow for the installation of CCTV or hanging baskets, G Wood advised that they would be required to meet necessary stress tests and have permission granted.

The Chair raised the issue of the attraction and retention of visitors and D Madden demonstrated a communications project which was subject to discussion under item 6. The video consisted of promotional material which had been targeted at business operators to assist with generating investment interest. The video had been completed within two weeks of being commissioned. The Board agreed that the communication video was excellent and would generate positive publicity with news outlets.

6 Advanced Funding - Pop-up Retail Scheme

The Board received a report of G Wood, Economic Development Manager, which provided an update on the delivery of the Stronger Town Board-Quick Wins – Pop up retail projects.

The report proposed an adjustment to the delivery of the agreed quick wins to expedite progression through to completion.

Proposals submitted by South Durham Enterprise Agency proposed the reuse of a vacant retail unit in Newgate Street providing a pop-up retail opportunity within the town. Earlier in 2023 the Enterprise Agency confirmed that they were unable to progress the project through to delivery and confirmed the balance of funds held once legal and design fees had been accounted for.

The Board were advised that £215,461.30 remained available under this project budget and that two projects had been presented for consideration;

D Madden presented the Board with details of the Art Hub events and Town Promo as outlined in the report and demonstrated by the video.

J Layfield, presented the Board with details of the food and beverage initiative put forward by Bishop Auckland College as outlined in the report.

In response to questions from the Board, it was confirmed that tenders were expected to be received the following week and that two prices had been requested. One cost was being obtained for the original project and another which would include the food and beverage initiative. Should the Board not accept the proposal, the original project would remain unaffected, albeit without the kitchen and restaurant.

In response to a query from Councillor Zair, the Board were advised that this was capital budget.

The Chair confirmed that South Durham Enterprise Agency had originally proposed the reuse of a vacant retail unit in Newgate Street providing a pop up retail opportunity within the town. R Yorke advised that TAP did not want to replicate what BAC were doing whilst operating opposite one another and therefore decided to pull out of the scheme for the money to be utilised elsewhere. TAP wanted to ensure visitor numbers which could only be generated with marketing.

In response to a question from Councillor Scott, J Layfield advised that the McIntyres project would not be delayed if the Board did not approve their

proposal, it would simply be delivered without the additional facility. Contractors would start work at the end of October.

D Madden advised that TAP's proposal would increase visitor numbers and revenue in the town. He advised that there were already significant numbers of Artisan producers in the County, which had been incorporated into other projects. It was his opinion that the only shortfall across the programme was that of promoting the town to potential operators, developers, visitors and tourists. He proposed the money was spent on generating interest and in turn increasing footfall.

As per the Terms of Reference D Madden, J Layfield and N Davison-Terranova withdrew from the meeting for deliberation of the proposal and took no part in the decision.

The remaining Board Members discussed both proposals at length observing the following;

- The ability for BAC to deliver a similar proposal to the original programme
- The lack of a detailed estimated cost for the revised pop-up retail project
- The high quality of the promotional video and the need to consider how interest from business sectors is achieved in order to increase footfall
- The potential to transfer any identified surplus budget to cover the current shortfall for the Bishop Marras Statue

J Gilroy advised that the funding for the Quick Wins projects had conditions attached that required it to be spent on capital projects.

RESOLVED

- a) That the designation of Bishop Auckland College as the alternate project sponsor to complete delivery of the agreed pop-up retail project based on its fit with the existing approved project be **APPROVED** subject to confirmation of costs.

Items 7 – 10 were deferred and the Chair requested an earlier start time to allow the Governance Review to be properly considered.