Bishop Auckland Stronger Town Board

Date **Monday 10 June 2024**
Time **3.00 pm**
Venue **The Elgar Room - Bishop Auckland Town Hall**

Business

1. Apologies for absence
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2. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2024 (Pages 3 - 8)
3. Matters Arising
4. Declarations of interest
5. Programme Update - DCC / Project Sponsors
6. Town Centre Diversification
    - Artists Hub – Edward Perry
    - Market Place Hotel – Edward Perry

7. Governance Review
8. Any Other Business
9. Date and Time of Meetings
    - Monday 9 September 2024 at 3.00pm
    - Monday 9 December 2024 at 3.00pm

Amy Harhoff
Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth

County Hall
Durham
31 May 2024

To: **The Members of the Bishop Auckland Stronger Town Board**

Contact: Kirsty Charlton **Tel: 03000 269705**

Bishop Auckland Stronger Town Board

At a Meeting of **Bishop Auckland Stronger Town Board** held in Conference Suite, Spanish Gallery, Bishop Auckland on **Monday 18 March 2024 at 3.30 pm**

Present:

D Land (Chair)

Board Members:

David Madden	The Auckland Project (TAP)
Councillor Elizabeth Scott	Portfolio Holder for Economy and Partnerships, DCC
Councillor Sam Zair	Mayor, Bishop Auckland Town Council (BATC)
Rob Yorke	SDEA and Teescraft
Revd. Dr Chris Knights	Brighter Bishop Partnership
Nik Turner	Believe Housing
Jonathan Ruffer	The Auckland Project
Shaun Hope	Bishop Auckland College

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
Andrew Walker	Programme Manager, DCC
Judith Layfield	Bishop Auckland College
Stephen Bowyer	The Auckland Project
Sarah Harris	Town Clerk, BATC

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Susan Robinson, Amy Harhoff, Mike Matthews and Karen Graham.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2023 were agreed as a correct record subject to an amendment as follows;

S Harris requested a report be considered in March 2024 which included proposed changes to the Art Hub to consider whether a change request was needed for the project.

3 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 and S Hope declared an interest in the Springboard to Employment Project as employees of Bishop Auckland College, a delivery partner in the initiative.

4 Programme Update DCC / Project Sponsors

The Board received a presentation which 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) Springboard to Employment
f) Heritage Walking and Cycling
g) Tindale Triangle

With regards to ESAC and the Bishop Gateway, C McLennan advised that communications would be issued prior to ground investigations to explain the benefits of the project. In response to a question from the Chair he advised that there were significant costs due to EVCP standards at 5% which would equate to around 600 spaces in a car park which was essentially an overflow and would result in a lot of spaces that were not used.

With regards to the Public Realm element of Town Centre Diversification, C MacLennan advised that preliminary design proposals had been provided to the Town Council and were ready for design details and then wider public consultation. The biggest risk was the traffic order which only required a minimum amount of objections to trigger a public enquiry. A couple of businesses had expressed a preference for vehicular access on evenings.

C MacLennan advised that the improved lighting scheme in the marketplace could proceed immediately with board approval and provided further details regarding the design and installation. In response to concerns from Councillor Zair regarding the use of generators during events, C MacLennan advised that consideration would be given to the installation of pop up power supplies lighting columns and ongoing maintenance.

The Board received further updates on Durham Dales Gateway and the South Church Enterprise Park scheme which had been considered by Cabinet in March.

With regards to Springboard to Employment, J Layfield advised that work had started however there was a delay waiting for birds eggs to hatch.

C MacLennan confirmed that there was an opportunity for a joint consult with the future High Street Funded public realm work given the route through North Newgate Street however one had the inclusion of a TRO which would require a wider consultation.

Resolved

The Board agreed to proceed with the lighting installation in the marketplace.

5 Town Centre Diversification

Art Hub

The Chair advised that a paper had been circulated earlier in the day with proposals for TAP to refurbish number 43 Market Place (an unused/vacant property) into an artist's hub, which would in turn support the creation of an artists-led community, supporting the development of local artists, curators and communities, through the provision of space for creative practice, curatorial opportunities, performance, and an ambitious artist-led program of various scaled events in the town, exhibitions, projects and activity. The reason for this submission is that what had started off as three year project only had two years remaining for completion. G Wood advised the Board that there was a formal process to go through in terms of changes to the elements to be funded.

D Maddan was invited to present the report and advised that the deadline to deliver the original project was at 24 months and therefore there had been some adjustments to it would be delivered. The outputs would remain the same, but reached it in a different way. The changes were felt to be within the 30% local delegation tolerance and therefore there was no requirement for change request from DLUHC.

Two promotional videos had been made and one which was aimed at visitors was viewed by the Board. In response to a question from Councillor Scott, D Madden advised that a second video had been made, which was aimed at businesses. The Chair advised that the videos would be shared on social media in 20-30 second clips. Referring to press reports of a County Council survey on empty shops in town centres, Bishop Auckland had come second to Peterlee. In his opinion, generating footfall had to be a priority. R Yorke

added that positive feedback had been received on the videos. D Maddan advised that the videos were easily edited.

J Gilroy advised that as the changes would result in amendments to Captial/Revenue expenditure, further cost information would need to be submitted to DLUHC to ensure that the changes were acceptable. This was not a straightforward process. D Maddan advised that the targets would still be achievable if the costs remained at 600k for revenue and £300k for capital. In response to questions from S Harris, D Maddan assured the Board that the project could be delivered within the restricted timescales and TAP would collaborate with all partners, including the Town Council.

S Harris asked for assurances that events funded through the Artist Hub project would be free to attend. R Yorke suggested that it was more important to create a sustainable events programme to continue without having to rely on funding and ticketed events may need to be held in order to do so. D Maddan confirmed that the end goal was to entice visitors and increase economic benefits and any ticket sales would be discretionary. This was an opportunity to launch a sustainable events programme and should not be constrained to free events.

Councillor Zair was concerned at the 12 months lost and was not comfortable being asked to approve significant financial changes having only had sight of the report that day. He added that there was already a good outdoor market and therefore no reason to encourage indoor markets and he also supported free events which had been successful in the past. R Yorke suggested that the free events had been discontinued, proving they were not sustainable and therefore funding could not be restricted to free events.

D Madden continued to the presentation slide to confirm that TAP had agreed to invest £6m in the development of a 70 bedroom limited service hotel plus parking and had submitted a pre application on 8 March 2024. and Historic England had been consulted. The grant funding element had not been finalised, but he was confident the project could be delivered by March 2026.

In response to a question from the Chair he confirmed that a limited service hotel had smaller sized rooms with a small food and beverage outlet and bar combined with a reception. It was more efficient to run and more appropriate for business use offering a place to sleep and have breakfast. The benefits were that customers could go into town to use drinking and eating facilities.

G Wood advised that in terms of funding and subsidy control package, TAP would be the project sponsor and would seek to access property reuse funding. Any grant would be subject to a viability assessment and an indicative figure had been submitted but detailed development costs and appraisals were required and would be submitted by the end of March. Councillor Scott advised that this was a positive move and queried the

response from Historic England. D Maddan advised that they would be producing a report which would be submitted to the planning authority but they were minded not to object. He provided some background information to the to pre application work which had determined that the listing on the hotel had almost certainly been overstated and its special character was reduced as most of the structure had been altered from the time it was special in the 18th century, negating the value of its historic structure. The Chair concluded that once the hotel was occupied, the town would welcome additional footfall.

Resolved

The Board agreed to submit a change request to DLUCH in relation to the delivery of the Artist Hub.

6 DLUCH Discovery Visit and Governance Review

The Board were advised that a successful visit from DLUHC had recently been completed following which the offer of centrally funded consultancy support to assist with the Governance Review had been made. This would not result in any cost to the Bishop Auckland Programme. The exercise would take 10-12 weeks and it was intended that recommendations would be considered at the next meeting. Board representatives were invited to join a steering group to help progress the review.

The Board agreed that R Yorke, S Harris and N Turner would assist in the Governance Review.

7 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Monday 10 June 2024 at an earlier time of 3.00pm.

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