








HEREFORD STRONGER TOWNS BOARD
Notes and Action Points
Tuesday 21 July 2020 at 08.30
Zoom Video Conference


Chair:	Mark Stevenson	MS	Co-Founder, Work Here Ltd
Note Taker:	Melissa Walker	MW	Growth Programme Support Officer, Herefordshire Council
Board Present:	Ellie Chowns	ECH	Cabinet Member Environment, Economy & Skills, H.Council
	Elise Cummings	ECU	NMiTE
	Kath Hey	KH	Councillor, Herefordshire Council
	Will Lindesay	WL	Chief Executive, HVOSS
	Frank Myers	FM	Herefordshire Business Board / Marches LEP
	Jesse Norman	JN	MP for Hereford and South Herefordshire
	Ruth Parry	RP	Director of Operations & Marketing, Simple Design Works Ltd
	Lauren Rogers	LR	Project Manager, Rural Media
	Paul Stevens	PA	Hereford Business Improvement District (HBID)
	Nick Webster	NW	Economic Development Manager, Herefordshire Council
Board Apologies:	David Langley	DL	Chief Partnerships Officer, NMiTE
	Laura Hughes	JH	Director, Signs And Labels
	Will Vaughan	WV	Hereford Pedicabs and Pedicargo
Other Attendees:	Rebecca Collings	RC	Consultant, The Nichols Group
	David Hitchener	DH	Leader of the Council, Herefordshire Council
Other Apologies:	Clare Hannah	CH	MHCLG representative

ITEM	NOTES	ACTION
1.	<p>WELCOME</p> <p>MS welcomed Rebecca Collings and Paul Stevens to the Board.</p> <p>Rebecca Collings will outline her role in the group under agenda item 3.</p> <p>Paul Stevens is attending on behalf of the HBID. He worked in retail for 17 years and also has experience of working in the hospitality industry. PS advised that HBID are in their second five year term following a vote by city centre businesses supporting them. The businesses pay 1.5% of their business rated amount to create a fund to enable HBID to undertake work in the city centre, with the businesses deciding what the money should be spent on. It has been a difficult start to their second term due to the floods and Covid-19 lockdown, and they are focussing on the survival of businesses at present. They represent 500 businesses within Hereford.</p> <p>PS addition to the board was unanimously agreed.</p>	
2.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>MS apologised for the delay in arranging the follow up meeting and the late distribution of the meeting papers.</p> <p><u>Actions from previous meeting</u></p>  <p>20200721 Action Log_STB.xlsx</p>	
3.	<p>REBECCA COLLINGS – MY TOWNS SUPPORT</p>  <p>Item 3. Towns Fund Delivery Partner.pptx</p> <p>RC advised that her role is a co-ordinator for the Towns Fund, she will work with us to enable us to submit a good quality bid. She is part of a consortium of experts brought together by Arup to work on the Towns Fund programme, they can offer a range of specialisms and expertise. The government department feel that they can offer support to us and the other 100 towns going through the process. The towns are all working at slightly different paces and all have quite different challenges.</p>	

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	<p>The Towns Fund Delivery Partner are a free resource appointed by MHCLG to assist towns to submit the best bids. MHCLG want each town to submit a bid that is right for them whilst also meeting certain requirements and expectations. The bids will be assessed by MCHLG, but the consortium provide a gateway to a range of experts that can provide support on specifications and challenges. Clare Hannah is the local rep from MHCLG.</p> <p>They are keen to ensure towns are enabled to put themselves in the right position to achieve funding. They recognise that some towns may not have made this type of bid before so the support has been put in place to help with the process.</p> <p>Page 3 of the presentation provides details of the topic experts, individuals that are able to provide specialist advice on fields that they have been working in for a long time. Page 4 details the core services support available to help us through the programme to meet the requirements. They can help us with the drafting of a strong investment plan. Over the coming months they will become familiar with our plans and progress and will be able to advise when to inject support. Page 5 provides details of resources available from TownsFund.org.uk.</p> <p>The Towns Fund Delivery Partner will be able to offer the opportunity to join sessions with other towns to discuss similar issues, or we may feel it's more appropriate to have one on one sessions. They offer check and challenge sessions, and will be acting as a critical friend.</p> <p>MS asked if anyone had any queries they would like to raise;</p> <p>DH queried if any of the specialists will be able to offer support with looking at what the city will look like in ten years' time, there is likely to be significant change with the introduction of the University and the impact of Covid-19. RC advised that this is a common query at present, they have a strong group leading on vision and strategy, who've been meeting with groups to discuss the context of how the town looks now and what they want to see in the future. Tom Bridges, Arup, brings in the latest academic thinking and wider government focus. The big unknown at present is the Covid-19 impact on the high street in the future, and what trends this might it lead to. DH felt it was good that the national picture is being thought about to. RC advised that they want to recognise each town on their own merit and identify what the local needs are.</p> <p>PS noted that Savills are one of the companies involved, and advised that they have been involved with BID work so will have expertise in this area. RC advised that they have engaged with towns over the last few weeks to understand the priority demands. They are working out how to bring together the expertise to bring help to towns early, where it might change trends.</p> <p>WL queried if MHCLG will draw on the Towns Fund Delivery Partner for any role for decision making. RC advised that they will not be involved with the assessment of the bid, but they will run some check and challenge meetings prior to its submission. They will also be able to share any good and best practise from other town's submissions.</p> <p>MS queried how the board engages with the delivery partner practically on a day to day basis. RC advices that her and CH will be the main contacts, they are due to meet with NW & MS to discuss next steps and establish what they can help with, additional information will be available following this meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: Information from meetings with RC & CH to be fed into the weekly updates provided by MS</p> <p>ACTION: if anyone has any additional queries for RC please forward them to NW & MS</p>	<p>NW, MS</p> <p>ALL</p>
4.	<p>TERMS OF REFERENCE</p>  <p>Agenda Item 4 - Terms of reference - t</p> <p>The sub-group of ECH, CH, FM & JV have met to draft the attached Terms of Reference (ToR). FM highlighted that amendments were required to page 6 in relation to the nominations of the chair and vice-chairs. As it's been agreed that people can nominate / vote for themselves, the word 'remaining' needs to be removed.</p> <p>The ToR have clarified the roles and responsibilities of the board members, and information has been added to reflect the sentiments felt by all board members. JV advised that he was now happy with the content of the ToR, some of the narrative needed strengthening, it is</p>	

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	<p>now more focused on the conversation from the last meeting. In relation to governance, we need to ensure work is signed off in stages.</p> <p>MS asked if anyone had any queries they would like to raise;</p> <p>WL queried if a caveat needs to be included to allow for the board to meet by exception when it isn't possible to achieve the five days' notice, i.e. timing of the bid means we may have to meet to produce things at short notice. JV agreed it would be good to build in as much flexibility as possible.</p> <p>MS suggested the draft is circulated for comments; this was agreed. NW advised that there are a number annexes that relate to HC policy, he will pull them together and circulate so that everyone has the necessary papers.</p> <p>ACTION: NW to circulate the ToR, with related annexes, for comment</p> <p>ACTION: ALL to read through the ToR and submit comments to NW & MS by Friday 24 July</p> <p>MS expressed thanks to all involved in drafting the TOR.</p>	<p>NW</p> <p>ALL</p>
5.	<p>CONSULTANCY SUPPORT AND PROCUREMENT APPROACH</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: flex-start;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Agenda Item 5 - Consultancy support c </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Agenda Item 5 - Annex 1 - TIP templat </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Agenda Item 5 - Annex 1 - TIP Section </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Agenda item 5 - Annex 2.docx </div> </div> <p>NW highlighted that there is considerable work in creating the investment plan, with two sections set out by the government guidance; section one is context analysis, strategy, and engagement and delivery; section two consists of the key details of the projects the Board are proposing should receive Stronger Towns funds.</p> <p>We will need to engage with the wider community, etc. and have a robust evidence base to demonstrate to government the logic behind the vision. Whilst HC has undertaken similar work in the past, they do not have the capacity nor are they best placed to undertake this work, therefore we need additional capacity to enable the board to produce the best plan possible. The Consultancy Support Options paper recommends engaging external consultants to work on behalf of the board, to enable decision making, and assist with the drafting of the investment plan. We need consultants that can demonstrate they have the necessary skills and the time to deliver within the timeframe, and that have an awareness of government objectives for this so that it aligns with priorities, etc. HC can commission this support.</p> <p>The attached paper outlines four procurement options and lists advantages and disadvantages for each of them;</p> <p>Option 1: Procure a single consultant through a government or local authority framework and employ them to undertake the project brief.</p> <p>Option 2: Undertake a mini competition by inviting several companies to tender for the work detailed in the project brief. Invite a minimum of two local and two regional/national companies to participate.</p> <p>Option 3: A variation of options 1 and 2. Intend to undertake options 2 but if sufficiently experienced and qualified local consultants cannot be identified for inclusion within the mini competition the process reverts to procurement of a single consultant through a framework.</p> <p>Option 4: Split the project brief into two distinctive sections. Section 1 – evidence base and community engagement. Section 2 – Development and drafting of the TIP. Undertake mini competitions for both elements.</p> <p>The Government have allocated the council a sum of £162k to undertake the production of the plan. Once the Heads of Terms, etc. are in place it is suggested that £65k is allocated for the consultancy work.</p> <p>The paper recommendation is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board agree to appoint suitable external consultancy support and discuss, and agree the most appropriate procurement option. • The Board instruct the council to commence the procurement option agreed by the Board. The Board appoints two of its members to join the council in the selection of the preferred consultant. 	

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	<p>MS stressed the importance of getting this right to enable a successful TIP. He queried if the board had any queries;</p> <p>FM queried what the remaining sum of £97k from the government allocation will be spent on. NW advised that we will need to produce treasury compliant business cases to meet the business plan for each of the projects, and there is significant cost associated with this.</p> <p>RP queried if there are any local consultants that specialise in this area. NW advised not aware of any local companies that could undertake all four elements of the TIP submission. JV queried the correct process for making a recommendation to the board if any board members are aware of a local company that could deliver this work, or alternatively someone local that could be combined with a national company. ECH highlighted that the cabinet have a commitment to buy local where possible. JN felt that the point of a procurement contest is to fill a gap where we don't know of the expertise locally, it hopefully pulls out the skills of people we may not have heard of.</p> <p>JN felt that option 4 should be avoided as it will add additional time to the process.</p> <p>JN requested additional detail about what the remaining budget of £97k will be spent on, and queried where this relates to the £750k funding allocation. NW outlined that at a recent FAQ event it was stressed that the funding awarded needs to cover all costs, including submission of business cases for each of the projects put forward. There are five criteria that must be met to produce a treasury compliant business case, and it is likely that we will need to appoint support to produce these, to work alongside board members. The projects are likely to vary in scale and complexity, the larger projects will require a more detailed business case. JN clarified that the £65k gets us the initial detail, and then the £95k is for the business cases; NK confirmed this is correct. MS advised that the £750k funding is outside of the Towns Fund, it is council funding to deliver projects. JN suggested these might link with our projects, NW agreed and advised that ideas have already been sought from the board for that funding pot, with the final submission due to be heard on 14 August once it has been through the HC governance process.</p> <p>JN advised that he needed to leave to attend another meeting; he was sorry to miss the discussion about potential big business partners and advised that he has introduced MS to a contact from Welsh Water, who would be very excited to be involved. MS advised that he has attempted to contact Ian Christy at Welsh Water, but as yet has received no response. JN advised that he will encourage them to respond.</p> <p><i>09.30: JN & RC left the meeting.</i></p> <p>MS asked if the board any further questions in relation to the appointment of consultants;</p> <p>FM advised that he is aware of a national consultancy that are looking to hire local people to undertake the work. He felt that this would be the more favourable option, so felt that option 2 should be selected.</p> <p>RP said that when she met with LH and LR they felt that local knowledge would bring in additional ideas and suggestions. PA agreed would push towards local procurement and felt that there could be local consultants that could be pulled together into a consortium. LR highlighted that when we go out to procurement there will be an increased interest in this board and suggested that we need to have comms prepared for this. RP felt that using locals would make it easier to get buy in from the people that we want to collaborate with.</p> <p>NW felt there was a strong push for option 2. If this is the preferred option we will need to identify local consultancy firms that can deliver the brief. He highlighted that the procurement process targets companies to tender for the contract, rather than opening it up for anyone to bid for; he queried if the board were happy with this approach.</p> <p>EC felt that the implication of inviting rather than going out is different to what we just discussed, and that it would be better to put out there to discover potential new delivery partners. FM agreed that opening it up would help to identify national expertise that will embrace local help that knows the area. MS queried how we would support a national company to find local support; FM felt that it would be up to them to outline in their bid how they would find local expertise.</p> <p>NW stressed that we need to have a consultant on board by the end of August, this then gives us three months to get the investment plan in place. This gives us six weeks to appoint.</p>	

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	<p>MS outlined the critical dates in the timeline; to hit the online submission deadline of 29 January 2021 the final draft proposal needs to be completed by 04 December, so that it can be submitted to HC and go through the required governance process. It is important that the board are involved and have input at each stage. NW advised that there is likely to be some overlap in the work streams.</p> <p>NW & MS will work to gather the necessary information to produce the tender documents. If it is launched at the start of August this will enable us to have someone in place by the end of August. Board members will be involved in the assessment process, it is likely a sub-group will be formed to undertake this work.</p> <p>ACTION: NW & MS to work on producing the tender documents ready for launch early August</p> <p>ACTION: NW to set out requirements for sub group to assess tenders received</p> <p>It was queried what information can be shared if any board members are aware of potential suppliers that could undertake this work. NW advised that a brief has been produced, but he will need to check with the procurement team what can be shared ahead of launch to ensure that no one gets an advantage over others.</p> <p>ACTION: NW to query what information can be shared with potential suppliers, and let board members know</p>	<p>NW, MS</p> <p>NW</p> <p>NW</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>PLAN ON PAGE</p>  <p>Agenda Item 6 - Plan on page.pdf</p> <p>Discussed under item 5. It was queried if everyone is comfortable with the dates and work outlined in the plan; confirmed.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>BUDGET</p> <p>Discussed under item 5: Total budget is £162k, of which £65k is to be allocated for consultants. Budget will also be required to produce the business cases for each project.</p> <p>Budget will also be required for Comms and Branding; suggested budget £5k. MS queried if the board were happy with this allocation. It was supported in principle, but it was felt that we need to know what is proposed prior to allocating budget.</p> <p><u>Secretariat Support</u></p> <p>MS advised that secretariat support is required for setting up meetings, arranging zoom calls, distributing papers and taking minutes, working closely with NW & MS. He queried if the board felt it should go out to a third party for secretariat support or if it should continue to use HC support.</p> <p>FM queried the availability of MW, as aware that she supports a number of other boards. NW advised that time has been allocated within MW's existing workload and that there is flexibility within the team for others to take on some of MW's other work if required. FM commented that dedicated resource that reacts only to the board would be preferable.</p> <p>ECH felt it was preferable to spend the limited budget on the project rather than secretarial support. WL stated that it's a difficult one to resolve but that he was happy to move forward with the offer of support from HC. KH commented that as assurance has been received from NW that time will be allocated it would be sensible to stick with the present set up. PS, LR & RP confirmed they were happy to go with HC support.</p> <p>JV advised that this issue had come up in the ToR discussions, his only concern was around transparency around agenda setting. He was more comfortable that we are now clear on agenda setting going forward. There needs to be a clear reason for why items are added to the agenda, and papers need to be circulated with plenty of time to allow comment prior to the meeting. MS acknowledged this was a good point.</p> <p>MS advised that as not all board members are present he will go out to them for comment. If we feel in the future that the secretariat support is not working out we will need to consider a third party.</p> <p>ACTION: MS to contact board members not present at the meeting to query their opinion on secretariat support; HC support vs third party support</p>	<p>MS</p>

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8.	<p>COMMS AND BRANDING</p> <p>The sub-group of LH, RP & LR have met to discuss comms and branding requirements. Highlights of the discussions include; what do we want people to feel when they hear about the board, this is key for the public perception of the boards' independence.</p> <p>What are the main objectives in phase 1, what are the comms and branding tasks for phase 2? We need to prioritise the tasks, and establish what can be done in house and what is needed via paid for support, local support, national support, etc.</p> <p>It was felt that social media is vital in today's world, but we also need to recognise that not all residents have access to information online so we need to identify / use other resources also. Existing channels could be used, i.e. talk nights at De Koffie Pot. We need to pinpoint what comms are required to reach all communities, i.e. face to face, print, digital, etc.</p> <p>Branding will be really important and is a powerful tool.</p> <p>The sooner we can get something out the better as at present there is very little information available about the Towns Fund. Practically we need a comms policy or statement to progress things, and we need values that are common in everything we do. The sub group will pull together what is required in relation to brand values, statement, etc. to enable something to be put out asap. It was queried if this is work that the consultant will deliver in the future.</p> <p>ECH agreed that the immediate priority is do something asap to raise awareness. She advised that she has a regular column in the Hereford Times and will try to promote it via that, she highlighted that JN also has a regular column in there.</p> <p>ECH queried what we are called; Government have dropped the word stronger from the funding and it is now known as the Towns Fund, however, Hereford is not a town. RP suggested Stronger Hereford. It was agreed that suggestions should be shared for agreement by the board.</p> <p>FM advised that the LEP have a substantial PR support contract, and he has queried if they can provide us with free support.</p> <p>KH advised that Hereford City Council are in the process of launching a new website, and advised that we are welcome to add content to promote the Towns Fund work.</p>	
9.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS - MS</p> <p><u>Big business</u> – Mark Stevenson The board have previously discussed attracting a representative from large business, suggestions so far include;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arctic Circle • Welsh Water • Western Power Distribution • Heineken <p>As yet no response has been received from Heineken following our initial contact. It is understood the details have been forwarded to the local manager.</p> <p>ACTION: MS to circulate to the board the companies bios for comments</p> <p><u>Vice Chair</u> – Mark Stevenson The appointment of the vice chair/s is still to be agreed, the board were asked if one or two vice chairs should be appointed; all agreed on two vice chairs.</p> <p>ACTION: MS to send an email out to the board asking for nominations for the vice chair roles</p> <p><u>Sub Groups</u> – Mark Stevenson MS queried how to get the board involved with sub groups and how to understand where they fit.</p> <p>ACTION: NW to distribute information on sub groups</p> <p><u>Arts and Culture</u> – Lauren Rogers LR queried how to share information she has on Arts and Culture. MS advised it should be forward to MS & NW for circulation.</p> <p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u> – Mark Stevenson It was advised that a schedule of forward dates is to be arranged; it was agreed that they should be arranged for every three weeks.</p>	<p>MS</p> <p>MS</p> <p>NW</p>