

**Workington Towns Deal Board Meeting**  
**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022 10am**  
**Draft Minutes**

Attendance

Board Members

Cllr Alan Barry	Cumbria County Council
John Coughlan (Chair)	TSP Engineering Ltd
Mike Egerton	Sovereign Centros
Valerie Hallard	Churches Together in Workington
Cllr Mike Heaslip	Allerdale Borough Council
Mark Jenkinson MP	MP for Workington
Cllr Mike Johnson	Allerdale Borough Council
Jo Lappin	Cumbria LEP
Jonny Lowe	Iggesund
Chris Natrass	Lakes College
Cllr Paul Scott	Allerdale Borough Council
David Taylor	Allerdale Investment Partnership

Officers/Support

Julie Alexander	Allerdale Borough Council
Kevin Kerrigan	Allerdale Borough Council
Brittany Mason	BEIS
Corrine Watson	Cumbria County Council

1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed all Board Members and their supporting officers to the meeting, which had been rescheduled following cancellation of the September meeting.

Apologies

Michael Barry, Catherine Nicholson, and Bridget Johns.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Actions

The board agreed the minutes of the last meeting (17<sup>th</sup> June 2022).

### 3. Project Updates

Written reports produced by the relevant project teams were circulated prior to the meeting.

#### Digital Accelerator

Chris Nattrass confirmed that work was proceeding in line with the project plan. Design work on the refurbishment and repurposing of facilities has been completed and is currently at procurement stage. Digital training will range from higher level educational programmes to shorter specific courses, and engagement work is ongoing to ensure accessibility to a wider Workington audience. The aim to be operational as close to the end of March 2023 as possible. (Typing error in report referred to 2022).

Cllr Alan Barry queried the costs of items and whether given the current economic situation quotes would remain deliverable. CN was confident that there were contingencies in the budget to address this issue. The project does not involve the construction of new buildings so is not as vulnerable as some of the other projects, although the lead time for the delivery of some digital equipment could be significant and this is a concern. The board will be notified if this becomes an issue.

#### Public Realm and Connectivity Project

Kevin Kerrigan detailed further progress on the project since the issue of the written report 3 weeks ago. The grant funding agreement between CCC and ABC is currently being finalised.

Stakeholder engagement has commenced in line with the plan, ABC and CCC staff visiting all business owners on Murray Road and hosting a drop-in session for business owners at the Carnegie. Feedback on the proposal from this initial is generally positive although there are some concerns about potential disruption during construction works. The project team will look to address these concerns and are now working towards the next stage of wider public consultation. Corrine Watson confirmed that most of the issues raised had been anticipated and further design work was now being undertaken.

Cllr Barry sought clarification of the proposed mitigation to the risk around cost pressure. It was confirmed this was the potential to reduce the scope of the works to meet the funding envelope allocated to the project.

Jo Lappin raised the issue of schemes being run by local government being put at risk because of the transition to the new Cumberland authority with potential impacts on capacity and capability. JL noted that in terms of the proposed mitigation for cost pressure the availability of underspends from other projects was perhaps unlikely. What would happen to any underspend was also queried.

Kevin agreed Local Government Review (LGR) could present an identified risk to the WTD, although mitigation was provided through the LGR work programme which accounts for ongoing regeneration schemes operating throughout the county. Optimistic that there would be no interruption to the schemes.

KK agreed that underspends on projects were unlikely however if a project did present insurmountable issues so that it could not proceed, there may be the potential to redistribute funding to other projects. At this stage there is no suggestion this will be the case. , but this is considered unlikely.

In relation to the identified risk relating to Upton Street, Cllr Heaslip indicated he would be willing to provide a declaration as to the history of Upton Street as a public highway. *Post meeting note: The project manager has advised that the County Council's legal team has now been able to confirm the status of Upton Street as an adopted highway.*

#### Clean Energy and Logistics (Port of Workington)

Kevin reported that the Grant funding agreement between ABC and CCC was nearly finalised. A Phase 1 ecological assessment and topographical survey had been undertaken.

Work in respect of a potential Investment zone at the port is ongoing involving the LEP, ABC, CCC – there is a potential synergy between the town deal and investment zone initiatives.

Jo Lappin stressed the importance of looking at the functionality of the port and constraints to port access to achieve wider long-term opportunities, otherwise the port would not achieve maximum returns and benefits, as has been previously discussed.

#### Innovation Centre

Kevin reported to the group that the Construction Services Agreement is ready for signing and a survey of the site is scheduled for mid-November. This will include a ground penetrating radar survey and intrusive ground investigations which will help inform project costs. Comms will be needed as the carpark will have to be closed, but this will also be an opportunity to publicise the Town Deal.

The Council is in discussions with another party in respect of a complementary development alongside the innovation centre and is sharing the costs of the ground investigation works. At this stage there is no agreement in place and the third party does not wish to issue any communications at present.

Construction costs are a key risk and there is the potential that this scheme could exceed the budget. Value engineering opportunities are being examined as part of the work to design to RIBA stage 3 and create a cost plan. There is a lot of work to do, and the project is at an intensive phase of survey and design and development work.

Alan Barry asked whether a partner had been identified to run the IC. Kevin confirmed that market engagement work with potential operators had been undertaken to gauge the market and help finalise the invitation to tender document for the operator. The project team was looking to align the award of contract to the developer and operator so that the operator would be in place during the construction process ensuring that it would be fit for purpose for their operating model.

Given the scale of costs involved further approval from ABC would be needed as the accountable body and also in its delivery role. Sign off would also be needed from the shadow authority.

Jo raised queries relating to risk and mitigation and the underwriting of revenue costs, and how these would influence design and layout. Kevin indicated that there was some revenue allocation in the Town Deal, and there would be a need to understand this at the point of awarding the contract.

David Taylor referred to the involvement of Oxford Innovation in the process. Whilst not formally involved, OI has participated in the engagement process and is aware of the prospective invitation to tender. Care had been taken to ensure that the procurement process is not prejudiced.

Jo was of the view that companies familiar to operating in similar markets to our own is crucial to the success of the project, rather than from SE, research, and high demand areas.

John Coughlan confirmed that Kevin would take on board comments and include them in the risk register.

### Sports Village

The project has fallen a little behind schedule due to issues resolving around the company structure that will take forward the next phase of work, and further professional development work is needed.

The Grant Funding Agreement has been agreed and is awaiting a signature. The project plan requires that fans and stakeholders must be kept involved and informed. A website has been commissioned and a hoarding advertising the website will be erected at Borough Park.

A positive meeting has been held with the Football Foundation in respect of funding for the Community pitch and an approved consultant has been appointed to work on the bid. Progress on the issues highlighted in the report will be reported to the next meeting.

John Coughlan thanked Kevin for comprehensive feedback on the projects. Lots of background work being undertaken and inevitably complications will arise. LGR may lead to challenges.

#### 4. Update on former Opera House Site

Kevin outlined the difficulties in maintaining public safety, with access to Tiffin Lane being repeatedly breached despite its closure. The contract to acquire the site relied on all party wall issues being resolved, so it is only now that the site is within ABC ownership. Work by Story Contracting to finish and secure the site enabling the reopening of Tiffin Lane is due to start late October. At present there is no long-term plan, but the site will be secure and safe and represent an opportunity for regeneration projects.

#### 5. Update on Workington Gateway project

Kevin provided an update to the board. The Workington Gateway project complements and has strategic links to the TD projects, particularly the POW

and Public Realm schemes. The Gateway project was unsuccessful in securing funding from round 1 Leveling Up Funding (LUF), although the scheme received good feedback. ABC has worked with CCC to submit a bid to round 2 of the LUF. Key elements include the Ramsay Brow Junction, Hall Brow, the cycle way through Hall Park and Lighting-Up of Curwen Hall/Hall Park. Capital works also involve the establishment of glass houses and raised beds within the walled garden which will be operated by West House as a horticultural-based social enterprise. The bid is currently being assessed by government and a decision is expected this autumn.

6. Any other business

Kevin outlined the Investment Zone initiative launched as part of the government's mini budget which includes financial incentives through capital allowances, tax relief, and exemptions on NI contributions, Stamp duty, and land tax. There is a very short timescale to submit an expression of interest in the initiative and work is underway by CCC to identify sites across the Cumberland Area with input from the district councils. The bid must be submitted by CCC as an upper tier authority, and there must be a commitment from the Local Planning Authority to expedite planning issues. In developing the Expression of Interest, the proposal must demonstrate benefits and what controls are in place to address displacement of businesses. The LEP are also involved.

It was recognised that there was correlation between IZ and TDF in relation to the POW, and the TDF could demonstrate early deliverability through addressing land remediation.

Corrine Watson underlined the challenge of meeting very tight timescales (guidance only issued on Sunday Evening) and planning permission for development having to be in place or be in place by June 2023 to demonstrate deliverability. This is not an opportunity for sites looking for investment further down the line.

John Coughlan suggested that land at Derwent Howe should be considered for inclusion in an investment zone, with the potential for development associated with the National Nuclear Laboratory.

It was explained that the focus was on undeveloped sites with clear delivery plans, but not causing displacement of activities from elsewhere which would disadvantage other areas. IZ are expected to generate above what is already happening.

David Taylor suggested that Kevin circulate the guidance after the meeting.

*Post meeting note – links circulated:*

[Investment Zones in England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/investment-zones-in-england)

[Investment Zones: expression of interest guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/investment-zones-expression-of-interest-guidance)

With experience of the original enterprise zones Mike Heaslip was of the view that it was the tax breaks that were the most attractive feature and made the scheme successful, not because of simpler planning system and deregulation.

John Coughlan thanked the group for all their ongoing work and input.

## 6. Future Meetings

Next Board meeting –Friday 16 December 2022 , to be held via MS Teams .

The meeting ended at 11:05am