



# Walsall Council

## **ACTION NOTES**

**Title of Meeting:** Bloxwich & Walsall Town Deal Board Meeting

**Date:** Tuesday 5 March 2024 14:30 – 16:00pm

**Venue:** Microsoft Teams ‘Virtual’ Meeting

**Quorum -** Minimum of 6 voting members, with at least one representative from: Private, Local Government and Communities membership categories, together with Walsall Council.

## **VOTING MEMBERS**

Manjit Jhooty – Jhoots Pharmacy (Chair)  
Tarra Simmons (TS) – The Midcounties Co-operative  
Robert Judson (RJ) – Homeserve  
Dave Brown – (DB) Walsall Council  
David Moore – (DM) Walsall Council  
David Bengé – (DBE) OneWalsall  
Rupert Fairfax – (RF) Fairfax Saddles / Chair of Bloxwich Advisory Board  
Karl Woodward – (KW) Reach All Ltd / Chair of Walsall Advisory Board  
Jatinder Sharma – (JS) Walsall College  
Ray Flynn – (RF) University of Wolverhampton  
Shaun Darcy – (SD) Walsall Council  
Mark Lavender – (ML) Walsall Council  
Kevin Davis – (KD) Chief Executive Vine Trust  
Leo Pollak – (LP) West Midlands Combined Authority  
Eddie Hughes (EH) – Member of Parliament

## **ADVISORY MEMBERS**

Alison Guerra (AG) – Walsall Council  
Richard Ackerley (RA) – Walsall Council  
Kelly Valente (KV) – Walsall Council  
Keith Beech (KB) – Walsall Council  
Natasha Mann (NM) – Walsall Council  
Claire Wills (CW) – Walsall Council  
Liz Stuffins (LS) – Walsall Council  
Helen Kirk (HK) – Walsall Council  
Deb Rajania (DR) – Walsall College  
Eleanor Cooper (EC) – Walsall Council  
James Dennison (JD) – Canal & River Trust  
Kaye Davies (KD) – Walsall Council  
Richard McVittie (RM) – Walsall Council  
Isabel Clark (IC) – Walsall Council  
Surinder Kaur (SK) – Walsall Council (Note taker)  
Phillipa Venables (PV) – Walsall Council  
Anthony Dennant (AD) – Mercian Trust  
James Norris – Walsall College

## **Recorded & Shared Meeting Session – DARFT VERSION**

### **Guests:**

Paul Baker -WHG

John Bedford -WHG

Hannah Cashmore - Assistant area lead for the West Midlands area team, DLUHC

**Apologies**, David Bengue, Jat Sharma, Eleanor Cooper, James Dennison, Cllr Andrews, Kevin Davies, Tarra Simmons, and Eddie Hughes (MP).

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The first part of this meeting will be in public session for agenda items 1- 6 then the meeting moved into private session.

(Exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)

### **Town Deal Board Meeting Notes**

#### **SHARED SESSION**

##### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Hannah Cashmore from DLUHC to observe

##### **2. Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

##### **3. Minutes (Public) of the previous meeting and actions update.**

Shared public minutes from the last meeting on 07 February 2024.

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record by Manjit Jhooty and Karl Woodward seconded this.

**Chair:** Matters arising, ML confirmed that a link allowing the public to pose questions / make comments to the board has now been added to the web site where the public can view the video of the meetings.

**ML:** There are no current requirement or plans to hold the Town Deal Board meetings in public, however it is a requirement for there to be transparency, achieved through publishing the notes of meetings on the website. We have chosen to increase transparency levels by record and sharing the open section of the meeting's agenda discussions on YouTube, accessible through the TownDeal website.

**Chair and the Board agreed with the above.**

##### **4. Bloxwich Advisory Board – Chair's update**

Rupert Fairfax provided an update:

Since the last Town Deal Board, the Bloxwich Advisory met on the 29 February 2024, lasted 1 hour and 35 minutes and considered:

##### **Project Updates**

Meeting takes place on a monthly basis, a bid was presented which took up most of the meeting, considerable amount of time spent discussing the item.

## **Recorded & Shared Meeting Session – DARFT VERSION**

**Power BI:** A brief update was given on Verto, the team are looking to provide project updates as dashboard reports, allowing all to see what was taking place with the projects.

**Green Bloxwich:** Work in the development of the designs and layouts for the parks landscaping and sports facilities are progressing well. Work has now started on the initial designs for the refurbishment of the Lodge and the Pavilion. Communications with potential user groups continuing.

**Incubation Centre:** Planning application had been submitted for the Bloxwich Launchpad and is progressing well. Planned works contract to go out to tender later this month.

**Construction Skills through Regeneration Programme** progressing well and features later on the agenda.

### **5. Walsall Advisory Board – Chair’s update:**

Since the last Town Deal Board, the Walsall Advisory Board met on the 20 February 2024, and considered.

**Power BI:** The risks, milestones and finances aspects of the programme were demonstrated, was reiterated to the Project Leads to ensure the budgets and the forecasts are realistic and achievable.

**Active Public Spaces Programme:** RIBA 4 planning stage completed, regarding the expenditure, this is on budget.

**Adult Learning Centre:** In terms of the employment hub at 46 Park Street, this has been completed and named as ‘The Link’, opened to the public at the beginning of January 2024, official opening was attended and launched by Andy Street and various dignitaries on Thursday 15 February 2024.

**Construction Skills Academy:** Now open, success and good amount of interest, students in the building very positive and the demand has been overwhelming.

**Advanced Vehicle Centre:** There are some challenges in terms of the College. For the Council there have been further developments and discussed around that in terms of how we can support and overcome these challenges. One of the biggest factors has been the cost inflation of these projects and schemes.

**Digital Skills Programme:** The refurbishment work started on the 8th of January 2024 and is progressing, eager to open to the students in April 2024.

**Creative Industries Centre:** Pre- Development RIBA Stage 4 detailed technical design now completed, works start in March 2024. Using Construction West Midlands Framework to procure main contractor and all have expressed interest to tender. Tender to be launched early March 24, Start on Site June 2024, Anticipated construction completion May 2025, Occupancy and in operation by Urban Hax June 2025

**Connected Gateway:** Design brief was supported by the Council’s Asset Strategy Group 29 January 2024, and a report will go to Cabinet in March 2024. The former M & S site will be used as an Adult Learning Centre. To have improved access for the train and bus station, entrance will have signage of the train station, better space, and modern entrance into the Saddlers centre.

## **Joint Bloxwich & Walsall Programmes**

**Active travel and connectivity:** Improvements being completed to Elmore Green and Croxdene Roads, including two new pedestrian crossings and cycle ways. Plans for the widening of the A34 bridge near to Homeserve are being developed and will hopefully start during the summer. Work to progress the new bus shelters between Bloxwich & Walsall are being progressed. Well received and a success.

**Canals:** Weather dependent, to be continued in May.

**Community Capital Programme** - 2 projects been approved and can move to the contracting stage with applicants also being assisted by the external funding team to secure additional resources. This aims to reduce the call on towns funding, freeing up funding for other applicants. All projects were progressing well and on target, with no concerns.

**Finances:** Are being shared, nothing of concern at this time.

## **6. Marketing & Communications – Update**

NM/Colleagues to update Board members briefly on progress and coverage.

**RJ:** Natasha Mann and I met again, the outreach to the communicates continues and social media is a success and is working well. Further social media interactions around the great efforts that are happening in the borough and the plan is coming together. At the moment there are short range and tactical and responsive and make sure that we got the right cadence of communication. Undertaking strong work from the team and especially in the last six months, seen a real change in the amount of content going out there and engagement.

**NM:** Thanks to RJ for his time and have shared some positive suggestions. Been supportive meeting regularly to discuss ideas and recommendations for us to improve the comms and marketing aspect to engage with the public.

**Date and time of Next Town Deal Board Meeting – 01.05.2024@14:30**

**Shared Session closed at: 14:50**

**(Exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act, 1972) (as amended)**