

Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Deal

Update Report

The most recent full meetings of the Town Deal Board took place on 27 February 2023 and 19 June 2023 and the next board meeting will be on 28 September 2023. Agendas and minutes can be found on Milton Keynes City Council's website within the ModGov system using the meeting dates or by consulting the Town Deal website at <https://groundbreakingbletchleyandfenny.co.uk/about/meetings>.

At the most recent meeting the chair and vice-chair of the board were re-elected for another year and a short update was provided by a representative of EWR following the announcement of the route update in May 2023. (This information has already been disseminated to town council members separately.) It was confirmed at the meeting that there is still no date for decision making on an Eastern entrance to Bletchley station but it was suggested an update could be provided un 4-6 weeks from the date of the meeting.

It was noted that the Town Deal programme had been selected for a Deep Dive review by DLUHC as part of a random 5% of Town Deals. Information had been submitted to DLUHC under this process alongside the bi-annual reports to DLUHC.

A programme update followed and full details are in the draft minutes although the clerk has requested an amendment to the minutes to include an item of any other business which was dealt with under the **Revolving Development Fund** item concerning the town council's request that an integrated parking strategy be adopted for the town centre rather than piecemeal parking arrangements for each project. The development brief for the Brunel/Sainsbury's site was already in preparation and consultation on this brief was now anticipated after the end of the summer in early autumn. Following engagement with the town council in June the board heard that the funding split between Queensway and Aylesbury Street had been agreed as an 80/20 split and that the intervention areas had been agreed. It was noted that public consultation on **the Public Realm Improvement** project should be co-ordinated with the Brunel Development Brief consultation.

An extensive review on the Redways project was given with updates on sections 3 and 4 from the Blue Lagoon Reserve to Water Eaton Road. It was anticipated the Blue Lagoon Car Park would re-open to the public in early July. Work continued on the feasibility of the route for the extension of the Redway from Section 4 to Bletchley station via the EW Rail Alliance Site. As previously reported to council MKCC had secured funding of £1.2m from the Government's Active Travel Fund for section 2 of the Redways connecting Newton Leys to the Blue Lagoon Reserve. It is hoped this route will open in 2024.

There were short reports on the **Innovation Hub, Tech Park, Bletchley Park** and the **Fibre delivery** projects with no significant developments at this stage.

The **Active Marketing of Vacant Sites** was focussing on business engagement, inward investment and marketing of Bletchley. A business event was due to be held at the IOT on 5 July 2023. (The clerk attended this event on behalf of the council and feedback from local businesses was very similar to that provided on previous occasions.)

The report on the **Transport Hub** noted that City Science had produced a costed feasibility study of the scheme delivering the project objectives affordable under the current budget constrains and deliverable within the timeframe of the Town Deal funding. However the most significant risk to this project was work required for railway retaining structure which would involve negotiation and approvals from Network Rail. Next steps would be to refine

the plans and re-run traffic modelling. It was hoped public consultation could take place at the end of the year with delivery planned for 2024-25.

The Board was advised that there is no news which could be shared on Levelling Up Funding Round 3. DLUHC had committed to providing funding but the finer details and timescales had not been agreed.

The Board discussed communication and engagement and it was acknowledged that historically communications could have been improved. A communications plan had now been agreed which would include Bletchley based advertising, the Town Deal website, Social media, a monthly newsletter and business and public events.

The town council's proposal for a community advisory group to support Town Deal decision making had been considered by officers. The Board agreed to set up the group to act as a touchpoint for understanding ongoing project work and terms of reference were approved. Discussion included composition of the groups, potential conflicts of interest and the need to manage expectations as the Board was the decision maker.

Councillors are invited to contact the clerk with any questions on this report or any other aspect of the Town Deal.

D Shephard
Town Clerk
20 July 2023