

 Swindon & Wiltshire LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP	Minutes of Infrastructure, Ideas and Place (IIP) Subgroup Meeting 26 September 2022
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Date: Monday, 26 September 2022

Time: 10am – 12 noon

Venue: via Microsoft Teams call

Name of Member	Organisation	Attendance
Rory Bowen (RB)	Wiltshire Council	✓
Paddy Bradley (PB)	SWLEP CEO	✓
David Dewart	Swindon Borough Council	✓
Tom Harrison (TH)	PA Consulting	✓ - left at 11am
Victoria Moloney (VM)	Wiltshire Council	✓ - left at 10.55am
Prof Maik Schneider (MS)	University of Bath	✓
Suzanne Wigmore (SW)	SWLEP Director	✓
Guest(s)		
Chair	Suzanne Wigmore (SW)	
Minutes	Deborah House (DKH)	

Item	Narrative	Deadline
1.0	Welcome, introductions and apologies	
	The meeting opened at 10.02pm. SW welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made and apologies noted.	
2.0	Minutes and Matters arising	
2.1	Approval of minutes from 6 July 2022.	
2.2	Matters Arising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RB and PB to hold initial discussions on local authority representation on the Business Environment Subgroup and the wider business support landscape. COMPLETE Meeting held on 5 September and LA representation will now be included in the Business Environment Subgroup. <i>Update: when the meeting reached commercially sensitive discussions, the LA representatives would be asked</i> 	

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	<p><i>to leave. The Growing Places Infrastructure Fund (GPIF) had moved across to the Business Environment Subgroup.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RB to go back to Rob Murphy, Wiltshire Council, to ascertain whether there was any further support required of SWLEP on the Devizes Gateway. <i>Update: support is appreciated, but the Network Rail work being undertaken is technical in nature so no further support required from SWLEP at this stage.</i> ON AGENDA 	
3.0 Ideas		
3.1	<p>Sustainable Technologies update:</p> <p>Innovation Centre for the Circular Economy (ICCE) PB spoke to the meeting and gave some background to the initiative. The Board had agreed £200,000 funding from the Local Growth Fund for development work to produce a business case for a circular economy facility at the site at Wroughton. Recycling Technologies, which was involved in the processing of plastic waste, and the Universities of Bath and Oxford got together with the aim to produce materials which were organic or produced from waste and which could then be used in industrial processes. The Business Case identified how this might be done but identified a key risk about the availability of capital to make it happen. In order to meet the criteria of the LGF monies, a capital project had to be developed and there was little chance of that at Wroughton.</p> <p>PB sits on the Board of ICCE Ltd, which includes representatives from universities, independent strategy advisers, technology businesses, property development and accountancy.</p> <p>The organisation recognised the recycling of medical waste as a viable option and pharma companies had shown interest. Sharps, such as needles, were stored separately in any case and would make the process therefore easier.</p> <p>In particular, the organisation was interested in PPE waste and was progressing a scheme to work with pharma businesses as well as the potential for the significant PPE waste generated by NHS Trusts in the area. The company was close to a financially viable product. This would qualify as a capital project and remove SWLEP's current liability for the initial £200,000 used to develop the business case.</p>	
3.2	<p>Proposed Westbury Site Development Group PB spoke to the meeting. The Hills Group had a waste recycling and storage facility in Westbury and had ambitions to develop a waste to energy facility, which involved burning waste in an incinerator. The company had had varying degrees of success in progressing this idea through planning,</p>	

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	<p>leaving some uncertainty about the best course of action to use the waste on the site rather than transporting it to different parts of England and Europe.</p> <p>PB has brought the Department of Chemistry at the University of Bath and the South West Net Zero Hub to the table to discuss alternative methods of making best use of the land and the resource in the form of waste products. These discussions involved alternatives to burning the waste in an incinerator, but still producing energy from the waste products.</p> <p>This setup would produce a net zero solution; the process was operated on site and generated new products. SWLEP was in discussion with a French investment company, Meridiam and its investment vehicle, The Urban Renewal Fund (TURF), and had introduced it to the Hills Group to see if it would provide finance to get the project started. A Group had been formed with PB as the Chair, involving partners interested in developing the site. Although this project was not as far advanced as the ICCE work, it could be a bigger exemplar for the country as a whole.</p> <p>Action: PB to continue to update Subgroup as appropriate.</p>	As appropriate
4.0 Infrastructure		
	Rail	
4.1	<p>Update on Corsham and Devizes rail station developments</p> <p>RB spoke to the meeting. The Strategic Outline Business Case had led to further development work being led by Network Rail in partnership to find solutions to the challenges, such as timetabling, infrastructure, land ownership, and costs etc.</p> <p>The Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) for Corsham was still in draft form but would be submitted into DFT late October/early November.</p> <p>The timeframe for decisions on Corsham was still uncertain.</p>	
4.2	<p>Interest in Bristol to Oxford rail link</p> <p>PB spoke to the meeting and explained the geographical reach and the purpose of the two organisations: the Western Gateway (regional political partnership) and the Western Gateway (sub-national transport body). Although they had different purposes and memberships they had come together to work on rail for the area. Joint groups were in place under the overarching Rail and Freight Forum, and included subgroups for road, maritime and air and rail.</p>	

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	<p>GWR and Southwest passenger numbers were not as good as before the pandemic, but GWR was interested in re-igniting a regional link from Bristol, through Bath, Corsham, Chippenham, and Swindon towards Oxford, but avoiding Didcot. The existing Transwilt line travelled down to the southern ports and England's Economic Heartland (EEH) was looking at rail links down to Swindon and thus to Southampton. But it was as yet many years away.</p> <p>Projects of this nature were financed through various routes, private money, rail company funds or a government body like DfT. However, it would take longer if only through the public financing route. There were already privately owned rail stations in this country, but these tended to have a strong retail offering, which was not likely to be the case in Corsham. Passenger numbers were still down, and there was a need to defend Salisbury and Westbury against Exeter, as taking these cities off the line would speed up journeys to London making Exeter within more acceptable commuting distance.</p>	
5.0 Place		
	<p>Taken out of order.</p> <p>Updates from Place Boards:</p> <p>5.4 Salisbury Place Board VM spoke to the meeting and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the final meeting of the year was taking place this week; there was now a locally driven agenda with new products and a more diverse tourism season to include the Winter Solstice; People Friendly Streets project was being considered again; Fisherton Gateway was an industrial site just next to a shopping environment needing improvement; work was continuing with the River Park project. It would be unsightly whilst work was underway but would eventually be an attractive asset; and ongoing discussions with Highways England regarding the A36 on various options to decrease traffic coming through the city centre. <p>5.3 Swindon Town Advisory and Engagement Group PB spoke to the meeting. The Swindon Town Advisory and Engagement Group had emerged from the Towns Fund Board set up to oversee the process and production of Business Plans for the use of the £19m from the Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund. The Towns Fund Board had been independently chaired with Swindon Borough Council as the Accountable Body for the funding. Six Business Plans had been processed</p>	

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5.5	<p>in one year, but once they were approved and projects were underway there was no need for the Board.</p> <p>The next iteration would be in an advisory capacity; this would comprise 50% businesses and community organisations, including three youth groups, Police and Crime Commissioner, health groups, both Swindon MPs, and three members from the Borough including the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the opposition. The initial meeting was held last week. PB chairs the meeting with Pam Webb from VAS Swindon acting as Vice Chair and would meet quarterly. The aim was to provide independent advice about projects to Swindon Borough Council and provide ideas for engagement.</p> <p>Trowbridge Partnership Board</p> <p>RB spoke to the meeting and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this Partnership Board was in the early stages and had met for only the second time on 14 October; • the Future High Streets Fund had four work strands; • a Working Group had been established with the Town Council to discuss details on menu of options for way finding, design etc; • commercial vacant unit fund had been launched so were awaiting feedback on how partners were feeling about that; • discussion around how Trowbridge can position itself and its USP. Multimedia and live performances etc as a particular selling point; • work underway on place positioning, marketing and comms; • Wiltshire Council was speaking to the College to involve students; • Wiltshire Towns Programme – action plans had gone out to all town councils. Salisbury and Chippenham were well advanced in their thinking; • a presentation from Lance Allen at Trowbridge to scope out the its priorities, so Wiltshire Council could get a feel for where that would sit in the overall plan; • asset transfer work was ongoing; • there were discussions with the new owners of the Shires, who were asset managers, and already owned Borough Parade; • the River Biss corridor work was progressing through Future High Streets fund; and • the joined-up approach had the advantage of leveraging in more funding. <p>There was discussion on the government's newly launched Investment Zones programme. Government had indicated that it would be a short process with little turnaround time. The Expression of Interest (Eoi) process had not yet happened, but both Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council were in discussions about submitting Eols. However,</p>	

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5.1 and 5.2	<p>neither council was on the target list, which was rare, and were considering the effort involved if there was little chance of success.</p> <p>These Investment Zones would also be in addition to Free Ports and Enterprise Zones. There would probably be incentives and there were reduced planning restrictions. The question was raised on where that left aspirations for NetZero and the Natural Capital Project. Ecological constraints around the planning process took the longest to settle. Removing those requirements on biodiversity etc when there they were only just being considered more seriously raised some issues. Defra was backing away from the ELMS process with farmers not having to re-wild, but may make payments across all, as it wanted to preserve land for food production.</p> <p>Summary of the bids submitted by Councils for funding on:</p> <p>Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund</p> <p>RB spoke to the meeting and highlighted the two bids in the pipeline from Wiltshire Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Salisbury cultural quarter. Frontage, connectivity and the public realm. Bars £19m. Bar at City Hall had not provided the income it should. Waiting to hear back from those. Assuming autumn statement • Melksham House – funding was less than £5m. Melksham House was a historic building which Wiltshire Council wanted to bring back into use, with a mixture of office and community space. <p>DD advised that Swindon also had two bids, but these were heavily oversubscribed. Therefore, it was thought that the chances of success were quite low. Both were around leisure centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oasis Leisure Centre – Severn Capital, the developer, had wanted to demolish the Centre and build a bigger leisure complex. However, as the Oasis was now a listed building, demolition was out of the question. Focus was now on restoration, but this would cost several £millions extra and cost more to operate. There was therefore a significant funding gap. The Levelling Up Fund could fill that gap and the Oasis would then act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the North Star area. <p>If this funding was not forthcoming, Swindon Borough Council would use the surrounding land development to bring the Oasis</p>	

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	<p>back as the complex was really important to the people of Swindon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 of the Health Hydro – Swindon’s Health Hydro was also a listed building and was very important for the social history of the town. £6.5m restoration fund was already being used, but Phase 2 was for the wider vision of the health offer. The NHS, charities and private companies would have a presence in the building. The bid had support from the NHS Trust and the Integrated Care Board. <p>Swindon Borough Council believed in this concept, so if not successful, would find another way to push ahead. It was seen as a template for the future, combining leisure and health.</p> <p>PB advised the meeting that SWLEP’s Growth Hub was doing work with businesses to help with the process of bidding for funding.</p>	
6.0	<p>Interest from External Investor</p> <p>The French company, TURF, was an investment company which had just opened an office in the UK. The company had strong social environmental priorities and involved itself in projects where there was training and upskilling and not with anything which was environmental harmful. It looked for a return on investment but also at improving the fabric of society and had been known to take on social housing projects. It had considered the project at Wroughton but had decided that it was too complex. However, it had expressed an interest in the Salisbury Hospital Trust development. The company was not a passive investor, but active in protecting its investment. It remained to be seen whether this project would progress, but debate and discussion had started.</p> <p>Action: PB to update meeting on progress.</p>	As appropriate
7.0	<p>AOB and Items for the next meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment zones • Free ports • Update on Broadband Gigaclear • ICCE Ltd • iCAST • Natural Capital PhD Study presentation – update to this group in between the Board updates <p>PB stated that the area had two Secretaries of State in the new Government: the Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP, Secretary of State for</p>	

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	<p>Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, and the Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC, MP, retaining his role as the Secretary of State for Wales.</p> <p>The Western Gateway rail work involved staff from both Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council, as well as SWLEP. James Cooke of the Western Gateway would be attending the Board to present an overview of its work and update on work with SWLEP.</p>	
	<p>Next meeting: Thursday, 3 November – 10.30am to 12.30pm</p> <p>Dates for 2023: Wednesday, 18 January – 10am to 12noon Wednesday, 8 March - 10am to 12noon Wednesday, 10 May - 10am to 12noon Wednesday, 5 July - 10am to 12noon Wednesday, 13 September - 10am to 12noon Wednesday, 8 November - 10am to 12noon</p>	
	Meeting closed at 11.22am.	

APPROVED
3 November 2022