

SOUTHPORT TOWN DEAL BOARD

MEETING HELD ON MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 4TH AUGUST, 2020

PRESENT: Rob Fletcher (in the Chair)
Andrew Booth, Damien Moore, Marion Atkinson,
Rob Anderson, Sophie Bevan, James Brayshaw,
Peter Hampson, Alex Hatchman, David Head,
Dwayne Johnson, Mark Lawler, Agnes Ng,
Susannah Porter and Norman Wallis

49. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Robert Agsteribbe
Mark Basnett
Michelle Brabner
Therese Patten
Greta Fenny
Ian Raikes
Graham Robson

Please note that the meeting took place via Teams video calling.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

51. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Amendment required to 8/7/20 minutes to confirm apologies from Alex Hatchman.

No other comments or corrections received and signed off as a true record. Any matters arising are covered in the agenda

52. PUBLIC CONSULTATION REPORT

Richard Laming (RL) gave an overview of the draft consultation report. Due to the volume of responses there are still a few detailed responses which need analysing before the report can be finalised.

Headlines and context

- 2000 online questionnaires completed. One of the biggest single responses Turley have seen.
- 836 additional comments
- 36 detailed responses
- 5 phone calls

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Profile of respondents gives context to the responses:

- The age profile was largely working age cohort.
- The under 18's didn't really engage, which is not surprising as it is difficult to engage with younger people in this way.
- Overwhelmingly resident response and small number of visitors and businesses.

As it gathered pace the consultation other groups were formed on single issues such as the save STCC Facebook Group (over 5000 members).

Turley are working out a way to include/register these responses into the consultation, but must be mindful of GDPR regulations, so will be anonymised and might be some commentary on their impact.

Top 3 responses for each theme:

World Class Waterfront:

- Improve range of all-weather attractions and at Pleasureland.
- Animating the Marine Lake
- STCC

Thriving Town Centre:

- Focus retail on a smaller footprint
- Replace loss of department stores with other uses
- Invest in the public realm

Thriving economy:

- Invest in all-weather attractions
- Secure future of STCC
- Developing visitor hub at Ainsdale on Sea

Green and Clean:

- Investment in restoration of historic parks – in particular Botanic Gardens
- Interchange – people understand the interchange would encourage active travel and public transport
- Investment in Ainsdale on Sea – nature conversation and celebrate this

Better connected:

- Desire for better rail connections
- Interchange
- Road junctions at Meols cop

Will be able to demonstrate to government that we have asked for opinions and actively engaged. It shows in the number of responses and will show movement from long list to short list of projects.

Recurring responses in comments which weren't areas Turley had looked at include:

- Omission in address the lack of amenities on Southport beach – on reflection this should have been addressed and will be going forward.
- A number highlighted the importance of events to the town – events programme wasn't consulted upon, but many see the economic benefits of this and more events throughout the year

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- Buisness – several responded something needed for young entrepreneurs – this isn't start up space, thinking about micro businesses and accessible work space
- Parking – perceptions of car parking in the town by different groups. Want better distinction between short and long stay and reflected in the pricing structure
- More modern multi storey car park and have it close to the interchange
- Accessibility to all – many responses from people with mobility impairments who place importance on street parking and close to shops – these voices need to be listened to and taken into account
- Cycling – this risen up the political and policy agenda – an idea to create a cycle boulevard and more space for cyclists was supported, but suggested that existing cycle lanes are a deterrent (cycle safety has to be considered)

Turley need to be able to provide a response to these comments. There will be an expectation for clear communication going forward and if issues raised cannot be addressed then we need to be honest and respond to these. Some issues can be addressed through the Masterplan, but not all.

RL noted that the consultation has been badged as a conversation, which is 2 way and ongoing. Need to keep engaging people and responses are still being accepted since the online form closed.

Next steps are to evolve the conversation to 'let's keep talking', which is less about questionnaire and big ideas, but going back out and giving people a flavour of the Town Investment plan – this is what you told us, we've listened and responded through the Masterplan.

Good news stories will be shared throughout the summer to keep people engaged.

Young people will be a focus going into the autumn term, school age children will have an opportunity to comment through their school council, a shadow board of students through the college will evaluate our ideas - this will reflect well in the funding bid. We want to distinguish our bid and demonstrate our commitment to engaging and getting peoples ideas.

Stephen Watson (SW) advised that the Shadow Board (of college students) and schools engagement will take place early September – Michelle Brabner and Ian Raikes are helping drive this. Engagement with neighbouring universities also ongoing.

Need to ensure this engagement isn't tokenism – true opportunity for young people to engage and influence the plan and the bid - whilst also continuing to progress the Masterplan in the coming weeks.

Comments from the board:

Norman Wallis (NW) offered using Pleasureland to host the youth engagement session SW advised he will follow this up .

Marion Atkinson (MA) asked if there was anything, we could do to target the 18 to 29.

RL noted that taking into account the overall age profile in Southport – that is one of the lower age categories and that they are notoriously difficult to target as not in school/college etc.

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MA also noted that RL's comment on being honest with the public on what is and isn't possible under the Town Deal is good, as there are costs associated with these projects and don't want people to think all the projects can go ahead.

Derek McKenzie (DM) commented by way of assurance to the board, he believes this has been a very comprehensive non-statutory consultation. Very significant response in raising the profile of the bid and demonstrates that we are bringing the community with us – and will hold us in excellent stead for the bid.

James Brayshaw (JB): asked if the age 20-30 age group could also have a focus group at Pleasureland too? Small incentives such as a voucher could also be used to help engage younger people

RF noted that this is the age group we need to remain in the town

NW further added that we want to keep that age group in town and consider their future and how best to train them.

Peter Hampson (PH) raised that on the Stand Up for Southport Facebook page, some comments get significant numbers of 'likes' - can this be captured?

RL advised that analysis could be done on this from the information provided. .

PH also asked if it was the Board have agreed on what can and can't be done. As an example – an outdoor pool is very expensive to build and run and do we need to agree general principles on how the projects are prioritised,

SW responded that as a consultation 'conversation there were no parameters on the ideas. But as the priorities are made the narrowing process will take place.

Agnes Ng (AN) noted that the business plans for projects are important as if that is right then private investment will be made.

Dwayne Johnson (DJ) noted that the potential financial ask to the council needs to be thought through in great detail. Revenue consequences of capital programme must be considered.

Andrew Booth (AB) we will be honest that the pot of money is the building block and that some projects can be an idea, but not feasible or practical or affordable

Comments from chat:

SW asked to record his thanks to all board members for the support in raising the profile of, and level of engagement in, the consultation process to date and to Richard Laming and his team

Mark Lawler agreed with the Shadow Board suggestion.

David Head (DH) asked if there are plans to consult further with visitors to the town?

SW advised that the intent is to use some physical space later in August to strengthen that level of response as well (Subject to current circumstances)

DH also shared a link to information on the coastal path in Lytham St Annes:

<https://www.visitstannes.info/about/seafront/sea-defence-work-at-fairhaven-lake-and-church-scar/>

Sophie Bevan: the CA has convened a small session of the LCR Youth Group next week to discuss town centres generally. I'll feedback any useful comments afterwards. We also directed them towards the Southport consultation and will continue to ask them to engage.

SW: with the universities we have not only asked for students but also help with targeted engagement with graduates / alumni. Both those who have stayed locally and those who have moved away.

53. MASTERPLAN INTERIM UPDATE

RL presented an overview of the work since the last meeting and in light of the emerging priorities coming from the consultation responses.

He noted that the Masterplan is not a blueprint for development and is not designed to be prescriptive or specific when for example describing 'space for attraction'. The Masterplan needs a long shelf life in order to have maximum value for the commission.

RL advised that the final public Masterplan might not be as detailed as the plan shared today, to avoid people getting too hung up on the specific details it shows.

The drawings shared show broad use and strategy and the extent of the opportunity and potential for development in the future. Yet there will need to be careful messaging around this, as it will not all happen at once and will be gradual change. It includes difficult sites which may evolve in the 30 year time span.

The Masterplan demonstrates to government and stakeholders that there are opportunities to address issues which have been raised in the consultation and that there are previously developed sites and also underutilised sites which can be used

RL advised that although there are distinctions in use shown in the Masterplan, these are not rigid quarters and that areas should intermesh with one another.

Comments from chat:

Alex Hatchman gave her support for the Masterplan

54. PROJECT PRIORITISATION

SW introduced the confidential draft long project list noting that the qualitative aspect of the bid and the narrative on the vision is as important. The narrative to the whole bid has to feel like Southport throughout – it has to pass the “tippex test”.

SW stressed the confidentiality of the project list is important as they are only project ideas to support discussion and conversation in respect of what the boards priorities and responding to the consultation responses. It is the funnel from a longlist of ideas to a short list which will make up the Masterplan/TIP. SW advised that it has been confirmed that there is a maximum of £50m we can bid for if we want to get the greater opportunity, therefore the draft Masterplan will include options to bid for more than £25m for the Board to agree. The bid will also include background on methodology and how the decision on the longlist of projects was achieved.

SW added that the revenue and capital implications do need to be considered including solutions which may generate revenue funding, which can fund other

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projects or ongoing operational costs which cannot always be covered by the local authority.

Regarding level of detail, a project such as the STCC will have a lot of detail to include in the bid, whereas other projects will be less developed and have less detail.

SW asked for views from the board on the project list and the nominal priority they have been assigned. Looking for perspective from board and a broad consensus.

Comments from the board:

Rob Fletcher (RF) noted that STCC links into many of the other projects and will stimulate the activity in other areas.

AN added that it although it is an important project, but other enabling projects also need to take place for it to be successful.

SW agreed that the sequencing of projects is important. The narrative of bid needs to paint the picture for investors and show progressed conversations on match funding for projects, but guidance suggests that it is not prerequisite to have match funding confirmed at time of bid submission.

PH agreed that STCC is a critical project as it supports other businesses and a driver for out of season business and the current site is falling behind the competition. He also noted that it is the conference centre which is the economic driver rather than the theatre – JB agreed with this point.

RF noted that post Covid people will likely be more flexible where they live and work so this is a great opportunity for Southport.

SW asked what the Board feel about projects away from the town centre such of the Ainsdale gateway and The Sands

AH noted that her preference would be for fewer, but bigger projects that have impact and can be driven hard

JB disagreed with this point and thinks there should be a wider range of projects if more business can be bought in and that there is danger in being too narrow.

SW added that part of priority process will be to access what can we do and what will stimulate other projects. Some projects will happen without support, as an example the Burscough curves is a priority and part of the story, but other funding routes are available for that project which continue to be pursued

NW noted that projects such as the theatre are needed to encourage people to come to the town, which will also encourage investment in transport links.

RL added that the guidance references interchanges, which are very costly projects and perhaps a question back to Arup on whether additional funding will be available for development of this.

PH followed that an interchange does not have to be 'physical' building, and in 20 years when the land becomes available it could be a building

NW went on to say that we don't have to improve everything by 100%, but rather the town could improve 100 things by 1% and motivate other businesses in the

town to do this to improve visitor experience and encourage greater pride in place.

AH noted that it would make sense to align the criteria of what we want to do, with what government want from us that should give us the best chance of being successful

Comments from the chat:

DJ: we need to remember about leverage of funding from other sources - for example the CA have indicated they will support the STCC. this has the potential to interest lots of other private investors and we need to be reaching out to them when we are clear about the vision, strategic priorities

Stuart Barnes: recent media releases about the market and STCC have brought a significant weight of interest and contact from potential investors seeking opportunities in Southport and beyond.

ML: The Digital Hub and Business Start up space are not exclusive. I would suggest these are linked with shared / same priority

SB: regarding the transport interchange would warn against seeing a large capital investment as being the solution - the transport sub group believe a series of separate interventions may provide improved solutions

JB and DJ agreed with AH final point.

55. NEXT STEPS

SW requested that Board members continue their good work of raising the profile of the ongoing consultation. The shape of TIP and bid will continue to be developed, with a balance to be struck on the projects proposed. Will revert to the board with a narrowed list of quantified projects, so if any Board members have any feedback to make offline please send through.

SW confirmed that the council continue to engage with other funding opportunities both public and private.

SW stressed that the next few weeks are critical for the submission and this is an exciting opportunity. He also thanked the Board for their continued time and support.

56. AOB

None raised.

57. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 15th September August 2020, 8:30am, (location or online platform to be re-confirmed nearer the time).