

## **The Works: Ebbw Vale** **Programme Board Lessons Learned**

The Works Programme Board was formed by Welsh Government (WG) and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) based on goodwill and a shared common purpose to help deliver the overall Works Programme and Vision. It was established in February 2012 in order to improve the governance and strategic direction of the ongoing £170m capital programme.

Using terms of reference developed initially by WG, the Board consisted of four WG members, four BGCBC members, two Non-exec members and the Programme Director:-

Peter Slater, Non-exec member and chair (nominated by BGCBC)

Shonagh Hay, Non-exec member (nominated by WG)

Owen Evans, Director General, WG

John Howells, Director, WG

Rob Hunter, Director, WG

Richard Wilson, Deputy Director, WG

David Waggett, Chief Executive, BGCBC

John Parsons, Director, BGCBC (and SRO for The Works)

Lynn Phillips, Assistant Director, BGCBC

Dave McAuliffe, Chief Finance Officer, BGCBC

Simon Lander, Programme Director

Observers:-

Alison Kitchener, Deputy Director, WG

Don Merrifield, Independent Commercial Advisor, ChandlerKBS

Julian Gronow, Board Secretariat and Works Programme Accountant, BGCBC

Initially WG insisted that BGCBC should chair the Board however this was later changed, by agreement, to one of the Non-exec members. The Programme Board operated until October 2013 at which point the vast majority of the capital programme had been delivered and residual funding from WG had been resolved. During its life the Board held eighteen formal meetings (typically monthly), one of which was a strategy workshop.

At its last meeting in October 2013 Board members considered lessons learned from the Board's perspective. This was done by splitting the Board into three groups - WG, BGCBC and Non-exec members. The outputs from this exercise are shown below:-

### **WG members**

*What went well?*

1. Pooled contingency (+rules) and overcoming annualised funding.

2. Programme management techniques.
3. Board reporting/one set of data for everyone.
4. Shared common objective.
5. Appointment of Non-exec members.
6. Single point of WG contact.
7. Single decision making forum.
8. Simon Lander & Don Merrifield (independent and professional advisors).
9. WG Steering Group.
10. Regular Board meetings

*What didn't go well?*

1. Lack of independent chair at the outset.
2. Lack of formal signed contracts for ongoing projects.
3. Surprises.
4. Varied WG attendance.
5. Overly long awards letters.
6. Lack of trust at outset.

*What would we do differently?*

1. Independent chair from the beginning.
2. WG should have been more open from outset about delivery and compliance.
3. Capture the value engineering properly.

**BGCBC members**

*What went well?*

1. Innovative delivery (e.g. Programme contingency).
2. Inclusion of non-executive members/observers.
3. Broad range of specialism/services.
4. Willingness to work in partnership.
5. Admin/secretariat process/agenda.
6. Members who can facilitate decisions.
7. Better attendance.
8. Non-executive chair.
9. Agreed vision/size of board (4+4+2 + observers).
10. Project management with delivery within envelope.

*What didn't go well?*

1. Admin process over burdensome at times.
2. Board decision making versus WG/Steering Group decision making.

*What would we do differently?*

1. Greater understanding of both parties' requirements (processes, TOR, parameters, scope).
2. Budget contingency in place from outset/Pooled budget.

3. Build relationships earlier.
4. Consider the WG Official as Board Member.
5. Clearer role of observers.
6. Establish vision/mission collectively.
7. Programme Execution Plan from the beginning.

### **Non-exec members**

1. The need for good Governance with an independent chair plus two independent members.
2. Convene a Programme Board early, complete with Programme Director.
3. Maintain consistent attendance as much as possible.
4. Seniority of membership to enable decision making.
5. If there is going to be these kind of projects they must be seen corporately and not by “siloism”.
6. Set specific ground rules and adhere to them.
7. Keep Politicians at arm’s length, make sure of respect for Board Members and associate Ministers with the success (which was late at The Works as the project was considered initially as a failure).
8. The “Board is the Board” and external groups diluted the collaborative working principals although the WG Steering Group helped to keep the Ministers on side.
9. Start with the theory of collaborative working and not “servant and master”.
10. Observers should be just that unless specifically invited to participate
8. The existence of the Programme Board established and maintained collaborative working.