

Dewsbury Town Deal Board: Minutes of meeting

Thursday 29 January 2020
6.30 – 8.30, Dewsbury Town Hall

Present:

Cllr Shabir Pandor (Interim Chair); Abdul Aslam, Nancy Barratt, Iqbal Bhana, Bruce Bird, Martin Broadest, Paul Burnett, Simon Cash, Paul Ellis, Cllr Eric Firth, Marie Gilluley, Martin Hathaway, Trevor Mitchell, , Carles Palermo, Jackie Ramsey, Cllr John Taylor, Heather Waddington.

Apologies:

Mark Eastwood MP, Adrian Hague, Shahid Nurgat.

Officer support: (Kirklees Council)

Karl Battersby, Naz Parker, Simon Taylor, Chris Duffill.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Pandor (SP) welcomed attendees to the meeting and following brief introductions confirmed that would act as Interim Chair of the Board until a long-term/permanent Chair could be appointed.

2. Officer presentation

Simon Taylor (ST) gave a presentation on the background to the Town Deal process. Dewsbury was one of 101 towns selected by Government with the potential to secure up to £25m of Government investment in activity including urban/physical regeneration; skills and enterprise infrastructure; and connectivity.

Discussions were ongoing with the Government around an appropriate boundary for the initiative. One option was to utilise the North Kirklees Growth Zone (NKGZ) boundary which extended beyond the town centre/urban core and was identified as a priority area in the Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan. Government officials had proposed a narrower definition.

ST noted that the launch of the Dewsbury Blueprint was on 5th February and proposals for the town centre in particular would be unveiled in detail then.

3. Discussion

Cllr Taylor queried whether the NKGZ boundary included Thornhill and other areas to the south of Dewsbury; or whether full ward boundaries should be adopted.

Cllr Firth (EF) asked about the fit between the Town Deal and the Transforming Cities Bid; and highlighted concerns around local bus services that could impact on future connectivity to the town. Heather Waddington (HW) also highlighted the need for the TD proposals to consider the fit with wider skills and business support initiatives including the emerging UK Shared Prosperity Fund that would replace EU Structural Funds for these areas of activity.

Jacqui Ramsey (JR) asked what plans were in place for community engagement. ST noted that there had been extensive community engagement activity previously and that more was planned around the Dewsbury Blueprint proposals; the Town Deal would be aligned with this.

Marie Gilluley (MG) further highlighted the importance of ensuring that young people had the opportunity to be heard as part of any consultation activity. MG also emphasised the impact that the January rail timetable changes were having on the College and asked whether there should be appropriate representation from the transport sector on the Board.

Nancy Barratt (NB) emphasised the role of culture and heritage in the future regeneration of the town centre and asked whether the Town Deal funding could be used to support relevant cultural projects. ST concurred but advised that further guidance on funding was not anticipated from the Government until the Spring.

EF asked whether the TD funding could be used to support provision of wi-fi, particularly in the town centre. Naz Parkar (NP) confirmed that this would be considered as the short-list of projects was developed through the Investment Plan.

Iqbal Bhana (IB) asked whether the TD proposals would build on the town's manufacturing/engineering strengths and whether its manufacturing heritage was an important USP for the TD bid. Chris Duffill (CD) confirmed that it would.

Bruce Bird (BB) highlighted the need for the Investment Plan to be underpinned by a compelling narrative which captures Dewsbury's strengths and unique selling proposition. Should this for example focus on Dewsbury as a dormitory town or on its wider economic role?

4. Future Election of Chair and Vice Chair

SP reiterated his desire to step aside as interim Chair at the next meeting if a high calibre, private sector leader could be identified. CD noted that the Chair of the Greater Grimsby Town Deal Board (David Ross, founder of Carphone Warehouse) had played an influential role. Council officers will consult further on this matter and report back to the next meeting.

5. Terms of reference and composition of Board

Detailed terms of reference would be developed and presented for agreement at the next meeting.

Martin Hathaway (MH) asked whether it would be appropriate for the full Board to operate as a wider consultative body with a smaller Executive in order to streamline the current arrangements.

There was a further discussion around representation from the health sector and disabled user groups on the TD Board. The lack of gender diversity within the existing membership was highlighted; along with the risk of engaging 'the usual faces' in the process. It was agreed that members would prepare a short/summary biography setting out their relevant experience and potential contribution to the work of the Board.

6. Investment Plan

CD presented a paper on the Investment Plan to be submitted to Government in June 2020. This will set out the overall narrative/strategy and vision for the town; highlight how existing and planned investment from a range of sources is contributing to achieving the vision; and set out how Town Deal funding will add value to/accelerate this process. The Investment Plan will detail a series of priority projects/interventions that will be developed into detailed business cases for subsequent submission to Government. The Board agreed to commission consultants to support preparation of the Investment Plan; the brief will be shared with Board members for comment.

7. Secretariat support

It is proposed to provide a dedicated secretariat for the Board but also a wider package of support to build its capacity and foster partnership working. Detailed proposals will be presented at the next meeting.

8. Future meetings

The Chair proposed that the next meeting of the Board would be in 6-8 weeks. There would be ongoing communication with the Board around progress/actions and developing the brief for the Investment Plan during this period.

9. AOB

There was no further business and the Chair closed the meeting.
