Minutes

MEETING **OLDHAM TOWN DEAL BOARD MEETING**

DATE 5th November 2020

VENUE Virtual meeting held over Microsoft Teams TIME 11.00

**PRESENT**

**APOLOGIES**

Bailey, Jack Barton, Emma Beckett, Jessica Courtie, Pete Cox, Stephen

Da Silva, Anna

Fielding, Councillor Sean Flanagan, Mike

Francis, Alun Frith, Roger

Harris, Liam Holbrook, Peter Hunt, Andrew

Jenkins, Rosie

Khan, Nawaz Lewis, Chris Lockwood, Stuart Lovat, Bill Parker, Guy

Penn, Jennifer Rahim, Fazal Wallin, Anna Wildman, Susan Windsor-Welsh, Liz

Abrahams, MP Debbie Bloor, Jon

Dawson, Beverley

Eastwood, Richard Hewitt, Sara Hodcroft, David

Jago, David

Lightfoot, Andrew

Lister, Graham McMahon, MP Jim

Representative, Office of MP Jim McMahon Director of Economy, Oldham Council Communications Manager, Oldham Council Relationship Manager, Arts Council England Head of Economic and Social Development, Mott MacDonald

Northern Roots Project Director, Oldham Council Leader, Oldham Council

Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre Manager

*(Vice-Chair)*

Principal and Chief Executive, Oldham College Head of Regeneration and Development, Oldham Council

Member, Oldham Youth Council

Chief Executive, Social Enterprise UK *(Chair)* Green Oldham Policy and Delivery Manager, Oldham Council

Local Growth Policy Advisor, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Regeneration Team Leader, Oldham Council Lead Youth Worker, Oldham Council

Chief Executive, Oldham Community Leisure Regional Director, The Regenda Group Executive Policy and Research Officer, Oldham Council

Regeneration Officer, Oldham Council Project Coordinator, Oldham Interfaith Forum Senior Consultant, Mott MacDonald

Interim Chief Executive, Oldham Coliseum Theatre Chief Executive, Action Together

MP for Oldham East and Saddleworth

Head of Lifelong Learning, Employment and Skills, Oldham Council

Senior Manager (Capital and Projects), Arts Council England

Equity Partner, Pearson Solicitors

Markets and Town Centre Manager, Oldham Council Principal (Strategic Planning and Infrastructure), Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Director of Finance/Chief Officer, Northern Care Alliance (Royal Oldham Hospital)

Deputy Chief Executive,

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Arts and Cultural Adviser, Artbuilding Projects MP for Oldham West and Royton

Patterson, John Rayner, MP Angela Riley, Michelle Sheperd, Christina

Yousaf, Adnan

Chief Clinical Officer, NHS Oldham CCG MP for Ashton-under-Lyne

Owner, Cob and Coal Tap

Deputy Area Lead North West, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Real Estate Manager, The Cross Group

ITEM

# Welcome, introductions and apologies (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. The Chair opened the meeting and gave the apologies. He advised that David Jago has replaced Nicola Firth as Director of Finance/Chief Officer at Northern Care Alliance (Royal Oldham Hospital) and will attend Board meetings from December.
	2. The Chair apologised for cancelling the August meeting in the absence of a major update on the Towns Fund, and in the context of Covid-19 and changes in personnel at the Government’s Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). He also thanked Board members for their flexibility following the decision to delay the October meeting until November, in order to follow the Town Investment Plan (TIP) check and challenge session and regeneration announcements by Oldham Council (‘the Council’).
	3. The Board’s Terms of Reference and Towns Fund FAQs have been published on the Council’s website since the last meeting. The FAQs will be updated after this meeting to reflect the outcomes and the recent decision to submit the TIP by 11th December as part of Cohort 2a.

# Notice of urgent business to be accepted onto the agenda (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. None

# Declarations of interest (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. The Vice-Chair declared a new conflict of interest on the basis that the Council has purchased Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre. Board members noted the information and approved the Chair’s motion for the Vice-Chair to retain his position.

# Minutes of the previous meeting on 24th July 2020 (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. When the Board meeting in August was cancelled, Board members were asked to review the draft minutes of the meeting in July by email. The minutes were approved and published at [www.oldham.gov.uk/towndeal.](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/towndeal)

# Capital acceleration grant update (Roger Frith)

* 1. Councillor Fielding thanked the Council’s Regeneration Team for securing the £1m capital grant, which Roger Frith then described using presentation slides shared with the Board over Microsoft Teams. The Council has until 31st March 2021 to spend in full the grant received from the Government in October for the town centre property acquisition proposed with the Board’s support in August. The purchase/demolition will be subject to contract and Cabinet approval in January 2021. The Board will receive full details as soon as confidential negotiations with the building’s owner have concluded, most likely early in the New Year. It is anticipated that the Council will work with a registered housing provider or private sector partner to deliver a residential scheme on the cleared site, which should attract additional inward investment in the long-term.
	2. If the project cannot be progressed for completion by March 2021, the Council will need to find an alternative with strong links to the aims of the Towns Fund and the contents of the TIP, in consultation with the Board and the Government.

# Town centre update (Roger Frith)

* 1. In August 2020, the Council revisited the Creating a Better Place strategic framework, prompting a refresh of the Oldham Town Centre Vision by Simpson Haugh and Planit IE to incorporate more homes and new green space on the site of Tommyfield Market. Importantly, the refreshed Vision reflects public feedback from a consultation in 2017 that extensive green space would give the town centre a much-needed unique selling point.
	2. To help facilitate delivery of the Vision, the Council purchased Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre as an asset during October 2020. The shopping centre is the third largest in Greater Manchester (GM) after the Trafford Centre and the Arndale Centre but suffers from growing vacancy rates and diminishing footfall. The Council plans to convert some of the vacant units into a home for Tommyfield Market, plus the office space for private occupiers and Council staff as endorsed by the Board for the TIP previously. The conversions will release the Tommyfield Market and Civic Centre sites for redevelopment in support of housing and green space ambitions.
	3. The Council would like the Board to consider endorsing a fifth project for the TIP: the permanent relocation of Tommyfield Market into Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre, requiring a Towns Fund contribution of

£7m towards an overall cost of c. £10m. The purchase of the shopping centre concluded at the end of October, meaning that the Council shared limited details of the project with BEIS and Arup during the check and challenge session on 16th October, in the context of seeking formal endorsement from the Board today. The Board has previously endorsed four projects that set the value of the TIP above the original allocation of

£25m: Northern Roots (£8m), minewater heat network (£4m), flexible performance space (£16m) and office space (£6m). Adding the market relocation project would increase the value of the TIP from £34m to £41m.

* 1. Faizal Rahim declared an interest based on his family’s business interests at Tommyfield Market. He expressed support for finding a new home for the outdoor traders whose businesses attract shoppers from as far afield as Bury, Halifax, Huddersfield and Rochdale at weekends.
	2. Roger Frith confirmed that discussions are ongoing with traders to find a suitable location for the outdoor market and promised to provide regular updates to the Board. The proposal to relocate the indoor market follows engagement and consultation with traders over several years and responds to the poor condition of the market hall. Many traders prefer the new proposal to the previous plan to redevelop the existing market hall, as they would have faced a disruptive decant into temporary accommodation during the building works and unaffordable rents in the new market hall. The relocation into Spindles will concentrate footfall in the town centre to boost business for traders and improve connectivity between the shopping centre and Parliament Square.
	3. The drafting of the TIP is continuing at pace following workshops between the Council, Mott MacDonald and BEIS/Arup over the summer. A new executive summary positions the projects in relation to local, regional and national policies/strategies and community needs. Mott MacDonald will remain on board to finalise the TIP by 11th December. If the TIP doesn’t meet the Government’s requirements, the Board will be asked to revise it for resubmission in 2021. The final award will be 90% capital funding and 10% revenue funding. The Council continues to call upon BEIS to offer upfront revenue for the development of the project business cases.
	4. Stephen Cox stated that, during the check and challenge session, BEIS and Arup had requested more evidence of local support and demand for projects, and more clarity about projects’ local, regional and national impacts. The projects must be presented as responses to identified local needs, that can only be delivered with investment from the public sector

i.e. the Towns Fund. The theory of change must articulate where Oldham wants to be and how it will be accountable in terms of resource use. Feedback from Cohort 1 is limited but one of the seven Town Deals announced in October exceeds £25m (£39.5m awarded to Blackpool).

# Community engagement sub-group update (Liz Windsor-Welsh)

* 1. All individuals who were invited to join the Community Engagement Sub- Group attended the first meeting in September and signed off the Sub- Group Terms of Reference and Board Engagement Principles. At the next meeting on 19th November, members will review the stakeholder consultation/engagement plan for Northern Roots. This check and challenge process should ensure that there are no gaps in the approach and that the activities will reach a diverse cross-section of the population. Given that the Sub-Group has a specific focus on communities, the Board must make plans to engage other stakeholders like businesses.
	2. The Sub-Group’s work programme will include dates for project leads to present their engagement/consultation plans for check and challenge. If the Board endorses the market relocation for the TIP, the Council will need to develop and share a stakeholder consultation/engagement plan that acknowledges the major impacts of the project upon local people.
	3. Board members are encouraged to share any engagement/consultation evidence/data that could strengthen the rationale for the projects. The TIP must acknowledge that the projects have been endorsed by the Board as long-term ambitions pre-dating the launch of the Towns Fund, with their foundations in the town centre masterplan consultation during 2017 and firm links to Creating a Better Place, the Oldham Town Centre Vision and, in some cases, the GM Local Industrial Strategy. The TIP must include plans to invite different sectors of the community to shape and influence project design and delivery.
	4. Andrew Hunt will attend the next Sub-Group meeting as a stakeholder for Northern Roots and as the minewater heat network project lead with emerging plans for community engagement/consultation. The consultant preparing the techno-economic study for the minewater heat network has spoken extensively to future energy customers and other stakeholders. Therefore, the focus of future engagement activity is likely to be local environmental groups.
	5. Stuart Lockwood offered to help shape the leisure aspects of Northern Roots, explaining that projects can sometimes fall short of meeting expectations and exceed budgets. Liz Windsor-Welsh responded by inviting Stuart to the virtual meeting of the Sub-Group from 13.30-15.00 on 19th November. Board members who are interested in certain projects are welcome to attend the check and challenge sessions once dates are in the diary.
	6. Rosie Jenkins commented that the TIP should provide evidence of historical, current and future engagement and consultation. Roger Frith concurred and explained that the TIP will reference the forthcoming consultation on layout options for the shopping centre.
	7. The Chair commented that the Blackpool and Preston TIPs make an impact on the reader because of their colourful designs and clear narratives. Stephen Cox confirmed that the Oldham TIP is being enhanced by graphic designers to make it consistent with other TIPs being prepared by Mott MacDonald. The Board will review and approve the TIP prior to submission in December.

# Project updates

**Northern Roots urban farm and eco-park (Anna da Silva)**

* 1. Good progress is being made even during the pandemic. There is a new masterplan of complementary projects and activities that has been developed following research, business planning and options appraisals. The planning application will be submitted this financial year for a decision in the summer. Work is underway to appoint a planning consultant, architect and other specialists.
	2. Community and stakeholder engagement began three years ago, and the plans being shared with the Community Engagement Sub-Group later this month are the next stages of a long-term, iterative process. As the pandemic has impacted upon the delivery of meaningful, accessible consultation, now is the time for fresh thinking and innovation. An important next step will be communicating to stakeholders which aspects of Northern Roots are fixed and which are very much open for co-design and influence.
	3. Other sources of capital and revenue funding are being targeted, such as a second grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Northern Roots is also on the shortlist for the Places to Ride grant scheme managed by Sports England, the Green Recovery Challenge Fund managed by Defra to promote green jobs and skills, and a GM social prescribing fund.
	4. There is a wealth of raw data and information available for the project business case planned for next year. Many pilot activities involving volunteers are also in progress, such as beekeeping, community growing and a creative writing competition that closes on Friday. The prize for the competition is an Oldham Community Leisure membership kindly donated by Stuart Lockwood.

# Minewater heat network (Andrew Hunt)

* 1. The emerging conclusion from the techno-economic study is that the core option for the minewater heat network is viable. There is a national grant scheme to make such projects viable for investment in the face of low Internal Rates of Return (IRR). The proposal for Oldham shows a positive IRR but not the minimum 5%. The Towns Fund contribution of

£4m is essential because there is no slack within the project budget, especially now that the additional subsidy is a known requirement.

* 1. The energy centre is likely to be developed on Rhodes Bank and should attract visitors. Early indications are that the system will generate 4MW, which is even more than the original estimate (3MW).
	2. The St. Mary’s district heating network is owned by First Choice Homes and supplies nearly 1,400 homes on the local housing estate. Modelling shows that linking the new and existing networks together to form a single network for the town centre is financially viable and technically feasible. Thus, work is underway to explore building out the core scheme to introduce pipes at an extra capital cost (value TBC). Next steps will include detailed technical design and an appraisal of delivery model options. Like Northern Roots, the project has the potential to deliver local, regional *and* national benefits.

# Flexible performance space (Susan Wildman)

* 1. A new partnership board involving the Council, Arts Council England (ACE) and Oldham Coliseum Theatre is developing a cultural strategy for Oldham. Linked to this, the Coliseum has received for comments a vision for performing arts in Oldham (“Making Space” by Graham Lister).
	2. An assessment of three options has confirmed that the preferred location for the flexible performance space is Greaves Street in the Cultural Quarter. The aim is to redevelop vacant listed buildings at a cost of £16m in a way that safeguards heritage and offers carbon savings compared to a new development.
	3. The second national lockdown means that the Coliseum will remain closed until early 2021; the Christmas programme incorporating Covid safety measures approved by the Council has been postponed. The Coliseum received emergency funding from ACE during the first lockdown and has since secured extra support from the Culture Recovery Fund to support its operations in the current financial year.
	4. Both the Coliseum and the Council view culture as a platform for re- building after the pandemic, so the focus is upon planning for 2021 in line with the emerging cultural strategy. In future, the Coliseum is likely to continue to produce online/digital content first developed during lockdown and invite local community groups to produce material for the stage. The engagement activity postponed in March because of lockdown will be delivered as soon as possible, with an emphasis on growing and diversifying audiences.

# Office space (Roger Frith)

* 1. The project was first endorsed by the Board in February 2020, in direct response to the loss of office accommodation and workers from the town centre in recent years. The cost of the project includes the cost of new offices for Council staff. An appropriate name is required for the space, which will ultimately complement the digital start-up hub planned for Union Street as described in the bid to the Future High Streets Fund. The project will build upon existing facilities such as Hack Oldham and learn from similar initiatives in GM, such as the Sharp Project in Newton Heath and planned redevelopment of the former Marks and Spencer store in Stockport. Liz Windsor-Welsh suggested reaching out to the owners of the new co-working space at the Positive Steps building.
	2. In response to feedback during the check and challenge session, work is underway to demonstrate the demand for the new space amongst possible future occupiers, in conjunction with MIDAS, the inward investment promotion agency for Manchester. The project offers strong links to the GM Local Industrial Strategy and could form part of a broader enterprise zone for Oldham.

\* Liz Windsor-Welsh and Pete Courtie left the meeting \*

* 1. Alun Francis queried the lack of engagement with Further Education providers on the plans for the enterprise hub and enterprise zone. The Chair explained that the plans for both were in the very early stages and Roger Frith committed to engaging the sector representatives in the processes over the coming months and years.

# Town Investment Plan discussion (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. The Chair invited views on the projects and their budgets, commenting that the risk and reward profiles would be higher if the TIP was submitted at £41m to factor in the market project instead of £34m.
	2. Susan Wildman expressed support for increasing the value of the TIP to

£41m in order to target investment for five major capital projects capable of delivering local, regional and national benefits. When asked if others were bidding for similar amounts, the Chair advised that BEIS had not shared much information about Cohort 1 bids but, equally, had not flagged the expected value of the Oldham TIP as an issue during the check and challenge session. Stephen Cox commented that most bids in Cohort 1 had been in the region of £25m, citing awards of £21.9m for Torquay and £22.9m for Peterborough. In his experience, however, smaller bids were being developed in areas with less developed strategic regeneration plans and limited experience of the competitive bidding process. He added that bids in later cohorts could possibly be larger than those in Cohort 1 as bidders take advantage of the extra time available.

* 1. The Chair commented that the value of the TIP had increased since February because individual project costs had been refined. The Board had not increased the value purely to capitalise on the ability of towns to submit bids over £25m. Although a sizeable investment, £41m is not perhaps overly ambitious in the context of needing to kickstart the economy following the pandemic and the Government’s levelling up agenda. The Board must strike a balance between ambition and pragmatism, in the context of the pandemic, and be mindful that revising the bid after submission is an option.
	2. Rosie Jenkins stressed the importance of demonstrating the regional and national impacts of the individual projects, and of ensuring that the TIP is a quality document from start to finish.
	3. When asked by the Chair about ambitions for Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre, the Vice-Chair expressed his support for repurposing the centre to include a market and office space. The previous owners had held ambitions to repurpose the centre and the timing of the Council’s purchase means that diversifying the centre into something of a community hub is now a welcome reality. Retail is changing rapidly and will look very different in 5-10 years’ time, explaining why some shopping centres already contain libraries, police stations and GP surgeries alongside shops. The quality of the projects in the TIP is the most important factor, and the costs must be accepted as part and parcel of the suggestions. In his view as both Vice-Chair and centre manager, there is good reason to be optimistic and confident about the bid to the Towns Fund and the future of the shopping mall.

# Recommendations and next steps (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. The following recommendations were agreed:
		1. Oldham Town Deal Board to endorse for inclusion in the TIP a fifth project: the relocation of Tommyfield Market
		2. Oldham Council to circulate the confidential working draft of the TIP to the Oldham Town Deal Board during w/c 9th November
		3. Action Together to circulate the work programme for the Community Engagement Sub-Group, once available
		4. Oldham Council to present the TIP for formal sign-off by the Oldham Town Deal Board during the meeting on 4th December
		5. Oldham Council to schedule a meeting of the Oldham Town Deal Board for late February/early March (the date will be subject to change depending on the Government’s schedule for assessing Cohort 2a TIPs)
		6. Oldham Council to refresh the Towns Fund FAQs in consultation with the Chair/Vice-Chair of the Oldham Town Deal Board and the Chair of the Community Engagement Sub-Group
		7. Oldham Council to arrange a separate meeting about engagement, consultation and communications
	2. The Chair reminded the Board members to treat the working draft of the TIP as strictly confidential due to its commercial sensitivities, in line with the Board’s Terms of Reference. The Chair and Roger Frith encouraged all Board members to send through open and constructive feedback on the TIP during November. Susan Wildman and Stuart Lockwood commented that they looked forward to receiving the TIP as an ambitious document looking to the future with positivity.

# AOB (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. The Chair encouraged the Board members to contact him and/or the Vice-Chair with questions, comments or suggestions between meetings. He thanked the Vice-Chair, the team at the Council and all Board members for their support to date.

# Close of meeting (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. **Next meeting:** 10.00-12.00 on Friday, 4th December 2020