Minutes

MEETING **OLDHAM TOWN DEAL BOARD MEETING**

DATE 4th December 2020

VENUE Virtual meeting held over Microsoft Teams TIME 10.00

**PRESENT**

**APOLOGIES**

Bailey, Jack Barrett, Suzanne Barton, Emma Beckett, Jessica Bloor, Jon

Courtie, Pete Cox, Stephen

DaSilva, Anna Flanagan, Mike

Francis, Alun Harris, Liam Holbrook, Peter Khan, Nawaz Lewis, Chris Lister, Graham Lockwood, Stuart Lovat, Bill McMahon, MP Jim Parker, Guy

Penn, Jennifer Sheperd, Christina

Wallin, Anna Wildman, Susan Wilkins, Carolyn

Windsor-Welsh, Liz

Abrahams, MP Debbie Dawson, Beverley

Eastwood, Richard Fielding, Councillor Sean Frith, Roger

Hewitt, Sara Hodcroft, David

Hunt, Andrew Jago, David

Representative, Office of MP Jim McMahon Regeneration Officer, Oldham Council Director of Economy, Oldham Council Communications Manager, Oldham Council

Head of Lifelong Learning, Employment and Skills, Oldham Council

Relationship Manager, Arts Council England Head of Economic and Social Development, Mott MacDonald

Northern Roots Project Director, Oldham Council Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre Manager *(Vice-Chair)*

Principal and Chief Executive, Oldham College Member, Oldham Youth Council

Chief Executive, Social Enterprise UK *(Chair)* Regeneration Team Leader, Oldham Council Lead Youth Worker, Oldham Council

Arts and Cultural Adviser, Artbuilding Projects Chief Executive, Oldham Community Leisure Regional Director, The Regenda Group

MP for Oldham West and Royton Executive Policy and Research Officer, Oldham Council

Regeneration Officer, Oldham Council

Deputy Area Lead North West, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Senior Consultant, Mott MacDonald

Interim Chief Executive, Oldham Coliseum Theatre Chief Executive, Oldham Council / Accountable Officer, NHS Oldham CCG

Chief Executive, Action Together

MP for Oldham East and Saddleworth Senior Manager (Capital and Projects), Arts Council England

Equity Partner, Pearson Solicitors Leader, Oldham Council

Head of Regeneration and Development, Oldham Council

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

Green Oldham Policy and Delivery Manager, Oldham Council

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

Jenkins, Rosie Lightfoot, Andrew

Lockwood, Helen Patterson, John Rahim, Fazal Rayner, MP Angela Riley, Michelle Yousaf, Adnan

Local Growth Policy Advisor, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Deputy Chief Executive,

Greater Manchester Combined Authority Deputy Chief Executive, Oldham Council Chief Clinical Officer, NHS Oldham CCG Project Coordinator, Oldham Interfaith Forum MP for Ashton-under-Lyne

Owner, Cob and Coal Tap

Real Estate Manager, The Cross Group

ITEM

# Welcome, introductions and apologies (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. The Chair opened the meeting and gave the apologies. He expressed his sincere thanks to the many Board members who provided constructive feedback on the draft Town Investment Plan (TIP) from 13th- 27th November. He explained that the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Arup would also offer feedback later that day during a check and challenge session involving the Chair, Vice- Chair, Oldham Council (‘the Council’) and Mott MacDonald.

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

* 1. None.

# Declarations of interest (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. None.

# Minutes of the previous meeting (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. The minutes of the last meeting on 5th November were agreed as a true record and approved for publication to [www.oldham.gov.uk/towndeal.](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/towndeal)

# Community engagement activity (Liz Windsor-Welsh)

* 1. The Community Engagement Sub-Group last met on 19th November to review the stakeholder consultation/engagement plan for Northern Roots. There had been good debate about extending the reach of the consultation and linking to equalities networks across the borough. Based on the success of the meeting, the Sub-Group will review the consultation/engagement plans for the other projects in the same way.
  2. Kathleen Kelly, Director of Collaboration for LocalMotion, has offered to help the Sub-Group and Board to explore community wealth-building and social value opportunities. LocalMotion involves six funders working in partnership to develop new, radical and innovative ideas to support communities and drive systemic change.
  3. The Chair suggested inviting Kathleen Kelly to a meeting of the Sub- Group dedicated to community wealth-building. He also proposed a session between the Board, LocalMotion and local stakeholders to promote innovative thinking about social value and community wealth- building, factoring in opportunities like the Towns Fund and Local Access funding programmes. Ideally the session will involve mapping out experience, expertise and opportunities to help develop a system-wide approach to ensuring that communities have meaningful stakes in projects. It will require a focus upon active participation and authentic engagement in the context of Covid-19 and the commitment to doing more than simply consulting communities about how projects might look and feel. The session might also be an opportunity to explore flexible, complementary revenue funding for the five projects to address the fact that 90% of the Towns Fund award will be capital funding.
  4. When the Chair invited views on the last meeting of the Sub-Group, Stuart Lockwood said he had found the session productive. He and the Vice-Chair had offered space in Oldham Leisure Centre and Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre for information displays once permitted by social distancing guidelines. Like many of the points made during the session, the offer applied to all projects rather than Northern Roots alone.
  5. Bill Lovat expressed his support for a session on community wealth- building involving LocalMotion, commenting that the housing sector had begun to deliver social investment through community-led homes (community assets). In his opinion, Oldham has an advantage over other towns because of recent investment in community assets and groups, rather than in physical assets alone.
  6. Anna da Silva thanked the Sub-Group for the feedback on the Northern Roots plans and stated her intention to accept the generous offers of space for events/displays from the Vice-Chair and Stuart Lockwood. She mentioned a consultation on Northern Roots biking facilities, designed to help inform project delivery and a funding bid (https://northern- roots.uk/get-involved/bike-hub-and-trails/). She thanked those members of the Board who, along with many residents and the Council’s Research, Engagement and Consultation Team, had already provided feedback.

# Capital Acceleration Grant update (Nawaz Khan)

* 1. The Council has until 31st March 2021 to spend in full the £1m capital grant that has been received from Government for a property acquisition, with no special conditions attached. Negotiations are ongoing with the owner about purchasing a building at a key gateway site in Oldham town centre. Details cannot be made public because the purchase/demolition remains subject to contract and Cabinet approval in 2021. The Council is in regular contact with the Cities and Local Growth Unit about overcoming obstacles in order to meet the challenging yet achievable deadline.

# Town Investment Plan review (Stephen Cox / Anna Wallin / Peter Holbrook / Nawaz Khan)

* 1. The Chair explained that the draft TIP had been shared on 13th November despite its imperfections, in order to give Board members ample time in which to provide feedback. He thanked members for supplying detailed and constructive comments and explained that there would be a vote later in the meeting to submit the TIP to Government on 11th December. If the submitted TIP does not meet the standard required, the Government will ask the Board to revise the TIP for resubmission in 2021.
  2. Anna Wallin and Stephen Cox gave a presentation to explain the process used to produce the TIP on behalf of the Board. They summarised each section of the TIP in turn and thanked the Board members for their feedback, confirming that nearly all comments received by 27th November would be used to strengthen the narrative.
  3. When the Chair invited members to discuss the TIP, MP Jim McMahon extended his thanks to everyone involved in developing the bid. He commended the Board members for their outstanding commitment and proactive approach to taking people with them on the journey of developing the bid. He commented that the future of retail, hospitality, and town centre living remains very uncertain, and gave credit to the Council for purchasing Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre to deliver office space and other facilities to support economic recovery from Covid-

19. He added that the relocation of a medical centre into Middleton’s shopping centre had boosted footfall to the benefit of retailers.

* 1. MP Jim McMahon commented that the TIP is a succinct funding bid that cannot capture all developments taking place across Oldham and Greater Manchester (GM) with implications for Oldham’s economy. He feels it is important, however, to position the TIP projects within the context of confirmed town centre developments such as retail space at Prince’s Gate (Oldham Mumps), a climbing centre, a linear urban park and a secondary school. Developments must be mapped to understand and manage their collective impacts upon the town centre, including the housing market and the edge-of-town retail park off Union Street.
  2. MP Jim McMahon stated that, looking ahead, there could perhaps be a role for the Board to support local businesses. This might help to reduce the number of businesses that cease trading when initial business rate discounts end, which has traditionally been a problem on Yorkshire Street and in Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre. The Board could perhaps also focus upon heritage buildings in an expensive state of disrepair, such as the Prudential and Lyceum buildings on Union Street.
  3. Alun Francis stated that he had always called for job creation and private sector growth to be the focus of the TIP, particularly to help guarantee employment for those who embark on study and training programmes with Oldham College. In his view, the TIP lacks that focus and fails to acknowledge fully the competition from nearby towns and the strategic framework that typically directs investment towards Manchester city centre rather than Oldham (and is arguably now vulnerable to the impacts of the pandemic). In his opinion, the apprenticeship figures appear

superficial because they are not connected to job opportunities. It is for these reasons that Oldham College supports the submission of the TIP but with reservations.

* 1. Alun Francis offered to support the drafting of the office project business case and, more generally, to collaborate to bring about a tangible focus on job creation. In his view, major changes are required for Oldham and the NW to benefit from the levelling up agenda, including a rethink of the traditional university model and extra funding for Further Education.
  2. Emma Barton expressed her sincere thanks to the Board members for their support, commenting that it had been invaluable to receive feedback whilst drafting the TIP at pace. Final comments and typing/formatting errors should be emailed to [jennifer.penn@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:jennifer.penn@oldham.gov.uk) before TIP submission on 11th December. The period between submission and feedback from the Government in February/March is an opportunity to work together to set out a clear pathway for employment, education and skills, and to further the strategic mapping work alluded to by MP Jim McMahon. Project specifics can be considered after Christmas to help inform the business cases being produced from early spring.
  3. The Chair thanked the Board for working pragmatically within the constraints of the Towns Fund guidance whilst driving an agenda that truly benefits local people. He remains committed to the Towns Fund as a transformational programme that targets job creation but so much more besides. The session on community wealth-building and the development of the business cases will require a firm focus upon maximising returns for communities. The immediate concern, however, must be to secure the capital from Government and to plan regular Board meetings in 2021 for ongoing discussion and debate.
  4. MP Jim McMahon gave his support to Alun Francis, agreeing that local businesses often fail to benefit from support models applied across GM. He suggested that permanent homeworking might boost district centres yet damage principal centres like Oldham, and then commented that the performance of the wider economy will ultimately determine the success of Oldham town centre’s regeneration. He supported the plans for an employment and skills strategy, expressing the view that Oldham needs an economic anchor if it is to retain people and attract back those young people who choose to study/train elsewhere. He offered to work alongside the Council, Oldham College and others to agree a position and secure funding for Oldham rather than waiting for direction from the city-region level.
  5. The Chair acknowledged the shared frustrations but repeated the positive message from Government that Oldham’s TIP is one of the strongest seen to date. Whilst imperfect, it balances idealism, ambition and pragmatism and includes the strong links to the GM Local Industrial Strategy initially reported to be an essential requirement by BEIS.
  6. Alun Francis called for additional work beyond the Towns Fund to create economic growth with better quality jobs to address local deprivation. He expressed his desire for Oldham College to be part of the debate about levelling up to ensure that Oldham has its own position. He considers the

work to be vital because some researchers believe that employment rates could take up to seven years to return to pre-pandemic levels.

* 1. Christina Sheperd concurred with the points made by Alun Francis and MP Jim McMahon, revealing that the strongest of the TIPs assessed to date had positioned proposals in the context of wider investment to demonstrate confidence amongst public and private investors. The strongest TIPs had also included evidence of need and support for the projects from local communities and stakeholders. Oldham’s TIP should make clear any links between Towns Fund outcomes and outputs and other schemes, for example if apprenticeships set to be created using Towns Fund investment will be linked to jobs being created through other local projects. As the TIP is for more than £25m, it must be strong throughout to withstand the intense scrutiny at the assessment stage.
  2. Nawaz Khan explained that the TIP has been developed following stringent guidelines and in a fixed template with a 10,000-word limit. The template is the reason why the town centre vision comes later in the document than first envisaged. Encouragingly, work is underway with Manchester’s inward investment promotion agency, MIDAS, and the Local Growth Hub to focus the discussions about skills and employment. The TIP will offer a snapshot of other developments that should help to identify skills and training gaps e.g. relating to construction.
  3. The Chair held a vote to submit the TIP, subject to minor revisions during w/c 7th December, to Government by 11.59pm on 11th December. The Board gave its unanimous approval to submission of the TIP and received the Chair’s firm commitment to future debate and discussion about the skills agenda and strategic opportunities for Oldham.

# Recommendations and next steps (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. The following recommendations were agreed:
     1. Oldham Council to refresh the Towns Fund Frequently Asked Questions at [www.oldham.gov.uk/towndeal](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/towndeal) during w/c 7th December 2020.
     2. Oldham Town Deal Board to accept the Town Investment Plan circulated on 13th November 2020 as the final version for submission to Government by 11th December 2020, *subject to minor revisions following the Board meeting and check and challenge session with Arup/BEIS on 4th December 2020.*
     3. Oldham Council to arrange the online publication of the Town Investment Plan during w/c 14th December 2020, supported by a press release.
     4. Oldham Town Deal Board Community Engagement Sub-Group to meet in January 2021 for a session with LocalMotion about social value and community wealth-building.
     5. Oldham Council to arrange a session in February 2021 dedicated to social value and community wealth-building for the Oldham Town Deal Board, LocalMotion and other local stakeholders.

# AOB (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. MP Jim McMahon urged the Council to plan the relocation of staff from the Civic Centre carefully, given the implications for operations at both the Civic Centre and the Queen Elizabeth Hall. He stated his preference for relocating the Council Chambers and Mayor’s Parlour from the Civic Centre to the Lyceum, an underutilised heritage building with original features. The Chair thanked MP Jim McMahon for this point and his earlier comments.
  2. The Chair extended his sincere thanks to the Board, Mott MacDonald and the Council for their work on the TIP. He acknowledged that the Board had been unable to develop the TIP in the manner first envisaged back in February because of the unprecedented circumstances brought about by the pandemic. In his opinion, however, the Board could be proud of having developed a TIP that presents a clear and coherent vision for a rejuvenated town centre and has been held up as an example of best practice to other bidders by Arup/BEIS.
  3. Graham Lister and Stuart Lockwood thanked Mott MacDonald and the Council for producing a TIP that, in their opinion, reads well and should impress the assessors.

# Close of meeting (Peter Holbrook)

* 1. The meeting closed at 11.40.

**Next meeting:** 10.00-12.00 on Friday, 5th February 2021