### Minutes

### MEETING: Oldham Town Centre Board AGM DATE: 10th January 2023

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VENUE: Education Suite, Gallery Oldham TIME: 14:30

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| **PRESENT** | Ashraf, Kashif | President of Oldham Chamber of Commerce, Greater Manchester Chamber / Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Asian Business Leaders |
|  | Bennett, Katie | Manager, Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre |
|  | Clifford, Paul | Director of Economy, Oldham Council |
|  | Da Silva, Anna | Chief Executive Officer, Northern Roots Charity |
|  | Henshaw, Luke | Representative, Oldham Youth Council |
|  | Hewitt, Sara | Town Centre and Markets Manager,  Oldham Council |
|  | Hughes, Margaret | Owner, Zutti Fashion **(Vice-Chair)** |
|  | Khan, Nawaz | Regeneration Team Leader, Oldham Council |
|  | Lees-Jones, William | Managing Director, J.W. Lees & Co. **(Chair)** |
|  | Lewis, Chris | Senior Youth Work Manager, Oldham Council |
|  | Lockwood, Stuart | Chief Executive, Oldham Community Leisure |
|  | Penn, Jennifer | Regeneration Officer, Oldham Council |
|  | Rahim, Fazal | Project Coordinator, Oldham Interfaith Forum |
|  | Riley, Michelle | Owner, Cob and Coal Tap / Fox and Pine |
|  | Roberts, Paul | Spindles Programme Director, Hive Projects |
|  | Robinson, Joanne | Regeneration Officer (Technical),  Oldham Council |
|  | Rothwell, Frank | Managing Director, Manchester Cabins / Chairman and Owner, Oldham Athletic F.C. |
|  | Windsor-Welsh, Laura | Strategic Locality Lead (Oldham),  Action Together |
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| **APOLOGIES** | Abrahams, MP Debbie | Oldham East and Saddleworth Constituency |
|  | Akhtar, Councillor Shoab | Cabinet Member for Employment and Enterprise, Oldham Council |
|  | Ali, Councillor Mohon | Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Oldham Council |
|  | Aspinall, Gail | Capital Programme and Special Projects Manager, Oldham Council |
|  | Barton, Emma | Executive Director for Place and Economic Growth, Oldham Council |
|  | Beckett, Jessica | Communications Manager, Oldham Council |
|  | Bloor, Jon | Assistant Director for Economic Growth, Oldham Council |
|  | Catherall, Harry | Chief Executive, Oldham Council |
|  | Chadderton, Councillor Amanda | Leader, Oldham Council |
|  | Courtie, Pete | Relationship Manager, Arts Council England |
|  | Dad, Nasir | Director of Environment, Oldham Council |
|  | Francis, Alun | Principal and Chief Executive, Oldham College |
|  | Fraser, Nigel | Regeneration Team Leader (Capital Projects), Oldham Council |
|  | Garrick, Jesse | Greater Manchester Area Lead, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy |
|  | Jago, David | Director of Finance / Chief Officer,  Northern Care Alliance |
|  | Kipling, Shelley | Assistant Chief Executive, Oldham Council |
|  | Knowles, Aaron | Greater Manchester Area Coordinator, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities |
|  | Lewis, Christopher | Strategic Lead for Creating a Better Place, Oldham Council |
|  | Lightfoot, Andrew | Deputy Chief Executive,  Greater Manchester Combined Authority |
|  | McMahon, MP Jim | Oldham West and Royton Constituency |
|  | Nicholson, Leo | Representative, Oldham Youth Council |
|  | Owen, Joel | Development Director, First Choice Homes Oldham |
|  | Parker, Guy | Executive Policy and Research Officer,  Oldham Council |
|  | Patterson, John | Chief Clinical Officer, NHS Oldham CCG |
|  | Popplewell, Grace | Greater Manchester Deputy Area Lead, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy |
|  | Rayner, MP Angela | Ashton-under-Lyne Constituency |
|  | Stephens, Katrina | Director of Public Health, Oldham Council |
|  | Windsor-Welsh, Liz | Chief Executive, Action Together |
|  | Yousaf, Adnan | Real Estate Manager, The Cross Group, Chambers Business Centre |

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| ITEM |  |
| 1.0 | **Introductions and apologies for absence (William Lees-Jones)** |
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| 2.0 | **Welcome (William Lees-Jones)** |
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| 3.0 | **Oldham Town Centre Board Governance (Paul Clifford)**  William Lees-Jones (Chair) and Margaret Hughes (Vice-Chair) were thanked for their voluntary service to date. The Board voted unanimously in favour of William and Margaret remaining in their respective posts for the next twelve months. |
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| 4.0 | **Notice of any urgent business to be accepted onto the agenda and reasons for that urgency (William Lees-Jones)**  None |
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| 5.0 | **Declarations of Interest (William Lees-Jones)**  Anna Da Silva: Chief Executive Officer, Northern Roots  Stuart Lockwood: Board of Directors, Northern Roots  Fazal Rahim: stall owner, Tommyfield Market |
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| 6.0 | **Minutes of the previous meeting (William Lees-Jones)** |
|  | The minutes dated 22nd June 2022 were agreed as a true record and approved for publication online at ‘www.oldham.gov.uk/townsfund’ by the Board.  The action agreed at the meeting in June was to submit full business cases and project summary documents for the Towns Fund projects to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), with signatures from the Chair and Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance at Oldham Council). This was completed and all four projects subsequently passed the Government’s review of the business cases. Oldham Council then received initial payments for the three projects forecasting spend in the 2022/23 financial year: relocating Tommyfield Market, the flexible workspace, and the Northern Roots urban farm and eco-park. |
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| 7.0 | **Procedural business and any items accepted as urgent business**  **(William Lees-Jones)**  Terms of Reference were last refreshed in November 2021 when members voted to broaden the remit of, and thus rename, the Board.  **ACTION:** Terms of Reference, membership list, and member roles / responsibilities / training opportunities to be reviewed and tabled during the next meeting in May  *(Nawaz Khan / Jennifer Penn)* |
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| 8.0 | **Substantive business (Nawaz Khan)**  Board members reviewed the project outputs, outcomes, funding profiles and risks reported to Government in December through monitoring and evaluation returns for Q1 and Q2 of the 2022/23 financial year. The returns for the Towns Fund - and the returns for the separate Future High Streets Fund - were signed off by the Section 151 Officer. The Board agreed to finalise the Towns Fund returns by adding the Chair’s signature to the documents after the AGM.  **ACTION:** Towns Fundmonitoring and evaluation returns for Q1 and Q2 of 2022/23 to be signed by the Chair and submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities *(William Lees-Jones / Jennifer Penn)*   1. **Northern Roots (Anna da Silva)**   Project status: “ongoing - delayed”  Separate planning consents for the bike hub and the top third of the site were secured in 2022. The application for the latter had to be referred to the Rt. Hon. Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for consideration because Northern Roots sits within the greenbelt. The Secretary of State confirmed that he did not wish to call in the application for further review and Oldham Council subsequently issued approval of planning permission for the scheme.  In 2022 Northern Roots became a registered charity with its own IT system and multiple funders, including the [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (providers of revenue for the next four years).](https://esmeefairbairn.org.uk/) Education work and arts and culture events were trialled with local communities, care leavers and ex-offenders. The year ended successfully, with Northern Roots winning the prestigious Landscape Institute Awards ‘Partnership and Collaboration Award’ in November.  The site will be transformed in 2023, with the bike hub and urban farm opening in the summer. The bike hub works will commence in Q1 of 2023/24 rather than Q4 of 2022/23 due to access issues necessitating an amended planning consent. There will be social prescribing with Hilltop Surgery in Fitton Hill and, subject to funding, major events and activities.  With the visitor centre scheduled to open in autumn/winter 2024, work is underway to develop a procurement strategy, confirm the retail and catering offers, and secure high-value funding to complement the Towns Fund capital grant.  There are many opportunities for third parties to use the Northern Roots site and work in partnership with the charity. Officers from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and DLUHC gave very positive feedback during a tour of the site earlier that day.   1. **Flexible workspace (Paul Roberts)**   Project status: “ongoing - on track”  Oldham Council entered into a main works contract with Willmott Dixon in December 2022. Workspace totalling 3,200m2 will be delivered by January 2024 to create over 200 jobs and boost footfall in the town centre. The offer will be complementary to that being planned for the Prudential Building on Union Street through the Future High Streets Fund.   1. **Relocating Tommyfield Market (Paul Roberts)**   Project status: “ongoing - on track”  The project outputs will be delivered by January 2025, which is slightly later than planned due to infrastructure challenges including work by Electricity North West to relocate high voltage cables in the town centre. Once cable works end later this month, work will commence to demolish the former TJ Hughes retail unit and install a new front onto Parliament Square. The main construction works will commence in the summer, with negotiations with suppliers / contractors ongoing to address the challenges of inflation. The project will safeguard 168 jobs and repurpose 8,000 m2 of floorspace.  Fazal Rahim reported that some traders had experienced access and loading difficulties in recent days, linked to the highway / public realm improvements taking place through Oldham Council’s Accessible Oldham project (part of the Future High Streets Fund programme). He requested more regular and more detailed communications for traders and shoppers. He commented that recent promotional photos on social media had featured only indoor traders and stated that traders and supporters of the market project were keen to receive specific details including timescales and space allowances for traders’ existing equipment.  Acknowledging the feedback, Sara Hewitt committed to further consultation and engagement to build upon communications during December and discussions with individual traders about their specific access difficulties earlier that week.  William Lees-Jones commented that comprehensive project management would address pressing issues such as the attractiveness of the commercial deal, the application process for stallholders, and the requirements of those used to trading outdoors.  Margaret Hughes commented that the market had once attracted day visitors by coach and remained an important part of the day-time economy, particularly by maintaining and boosting footfall whilst many takeaways / eateries remained shuttered / closed until 4pm.  Michelle Riley asked for clarity about rent reductions offered during a recent event for traders involving the Leader of the Council. The announcement had reportedly left traders with different rental terms and contracts, with only some having accepted the rent reduction due to an after-clause citing back payments upon acceptance of new contracts.  Paul Clifford committed to regular communications with traders before the relocation into Spindles at the end of 2024.  Frank Rothwell commented that long-established market traders could need support to compete with similar traders already operating from inside Spindles.  **ACTION:** Accessible Oldham project leads and contractor (Rowan Ashworth Limited) to be contacted to agree / plan more regular communications with market traders / shoppers during highway and public realm works *(Nawaz Khan / Sara Hewitt)*  **ACTION:** meeting to be arranged with market traders to discuss progress with, and commercial aspects of, the market relocation *(Sara Hewitt / Nawaz Khan / Paul Clifford)*  William Lees-Jones reminded the Board that there was always the potential to invite other people to become members. His involvement with the Greater Manchester (GM) Business Advisory Panel indicated that local people and businesses could have confidence in the plans to attract people into Oldham town centre, especially whilst other boroughs pursued the likes of out-of-town retail. Christmas footfall for the town centre was said to have been encouraging and confirmed that Oldham continues to attract visitors from other parts of GM.  Anna da Silva commented that a place marketing approach and 20- or 30-year strategic vision were essential to Oldham’s success and capable of strengthening the offers of individual projects like Northern Roots. Kashif Ashraf added that a tourist information point in the town centre had once provided locals and visitors with much-needed details about events and facilities. He called for a modern equivalent / alternative to boost civic pride and increase support for projects promising jobs for local people. Paul Clifford and William Lees-Jones concurred, stating that it was important to build on recent successes including ‘Made in Oldham’ and explore more targeted marketing campaigns.  **ACTION:** “Oldham town centre - general update” and “Oldham town centre - regeneration update” to become standing items on the agenda *(Nawaz Khan /*  *Paul Clifford)*   1. **Flexible performance space (Nawaz Khan)**   Overall status: “ongoing - delayed”  DLUHC has approved the business case for the project, meaning that the Towns Fund capital grant for the anchor institution in Oldham’s Cultural Quarter is confirmed. Work is ongoing following completion of RIBA Stage 3 design work.  Oldham Coliseum Theatre was one of many arts and culture organisations not to be included in the Arts Council England National Portfolio for 2023-26, meaning its application for £1.84m over the three-year period was unsuccessful. This news will be factored into the financial and operational plans for the project. Ultimately the new performance space must generate revenue to ensure financial viability and sustainability, and offer capacity linked to demand. The project will create 100 FTE jobs and include a 400-seater auditorium complemented by rehearsal space and education / arts facilities. The operator will be expected to enter a lease agreement with the Council, just as there is a lease arrangement between the Coliseum and the Council for the existing theatre.  Michelle Riley commented that a new performance space with fewer seats than the existing theatre could be interpreted as a downgrading of Oldham’s cultural offer, even though the final business case was informed by the Coliseum’s audience figures and considered viable by DLUHC. Likewise, the public might question the need for the flexible performance space *and* the events space in Spindles unless marketed as unique and complementary offers. The Council must alleviate concerns and manage risks carefully. Criticism is perhaps inevitable whatever the final scheme, as demonstrated by decades of complaints about the dilapidation of the Prudential Building and recent complaints about fresh plans for the same building’s redevelopment.  **ACTION:** communication risks and relevant mitigations to be captured in the risk register for the flexible performance space project *(Nawaz Khan / Nigel Fraser)*  Nawaz Khan confirmed that social value outputs and outcomes are prescribed and achieved through procurement strategies and contractor agreements. There is a well-documented process designed to ensure local spend in and through the supply chain. Projects typically involve ‘meet the buyer’ events for local contractors and sub-contractors. This has already been the case for the Spindles redevelopment with social value mandated through the procurement process and contractor Willmott Dixon holding a ‘meet the buyer’ event to engage local suppliers.  **ACTION:** social value information for Towns Fund projects to be brought to a future meeting *(Paul Clifford / Nawaz Khan)* |
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| 9.0 | **Levelling Up Fund (Nawaz Khan)**  The announcement of the successful Levelling Up Fund round two bids had been expected in October, and then December. In a recent letter to MPs, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Dehenna Davison, said a decision on where the money would be distributed would come by the end of January. Two Expressions of Interest (EoI) were entered into the competitive process for Oldham, each worth £20m: ‘Green Infrastructure and Technology’ (Oldham East and Saddleworth Constituency) and ‘Creative Improvement District’ (Oldham West and Royton Constituency).  The Government will grant up to £2.1 billion to successful bids, up from the original budget of at least £1.7 billion. The Council recently responded to EoI queries about State Aid and subsidy control. If successful, the Council will need to develop full business cases and deliver project spend by March 2025. The Government could part-fund some bids, as it did with the Towns Fund. Devolution through the GM Combined Authority is perhaps more likely than further rounds of the Levelling Up Fund.  Informal feedback suggests that Oldham is performing well compared to its counterparts in GM, in the sense that capital and revenue from different sources is pooled / targeted collectively rather than dissipated, thanks to joined up and complementary projects and programmes.  **ACTION:** the outcome of the bids to the Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund to be communicated to the Board once announced *(Nawaz Khan)* |
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| 10.0 | **Action review / next steps (William Lees-Jones)**  The opportunity to deliver a town centre update during a business breakfast event at Oldham Athletic on 23rd February offered by Kashif Ashraf and Frank Rothwell was noted.  **ACTION:** “In-depth project focus” to become a standing item on the agenda, to allow for a focus upon one project per meeting, to be supported by detailed designs, programmes, financial information, etc. (*Nawaz Khan / project leads*)  **ACTION:** details of the new strategic investment partner for residential developments in the town centre to be brought to the next meeting *(Paul Clifford)* |
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| 11.0 | **Time and date of future meetings in 2023: TBA**  Meetings will be held at venues in Oldham town centre during May (post-elections), September and December.  **ACTION:** the next meeting to be arranged for May (after the elections) and preceded or followed on the day by a tour of Northern Roots *(Jennifer Penn / Anna da Silva)* |