### Minutes

### MEETING: Oldham Town Centre Board DATE: 22 May 2023

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VENUE: Crompton Suite, Civic Centre, Oldham TIME: 15:30

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| **PRESENT** | Ashraf, Kashif | President of Oldham Chamber of Commerce, Greater Manchester Chamber / Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Asian Business Leaders |
|  | Bloor, Jon | Assistant Director for Economic Growth, Oldham Council |
|  | Chilton, Sarah | Chief of Staff, Office of MP Debbie Abrahams |
|  | Clifford, Paul | Director of Economy, Oldham Council |
|  | Da Silva, Anna | Chief Executive Officer, Northern Roots Charity |
|  | Hughes, Margaret | Owner, Zutti Fashion **(Vice-Chair)** |
|  | 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 |
|  | Patterson, John | Chief Clinical Officer, NHS Oldham CCG |
|  | Penn, Jennifer | Regeneration Officer, Oldham Council |
|  | Riley, Michelle | Owner, Cob and Coal Tap / Fox and Pine |
|  | Robinson, Joanne | Regeneration Officer (Technical),  Oldham Council |
|  | Rothwell, Frank | Managing Director, Manchester Cabins / Chairman and Owner, Oldham Athletic F.C. |
|  | Wharton, Jake | Communications Officer, Oldham Council |
|  | Yousaf, Adnan | Real Estate Manager, The Cross Group, Chambers Business Centre |
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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 |
|  | Bennett, Katie | Manager, Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre |
|  | Beverley, Delroy | Chief Executive Officer, First Choice Homes Oldham |
|  | 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 |
|  | Fraser, Nigel | Regeneration Team Leader (Capital Projects), Oldham Council |
|  | Garrick, Jesse | Greater Manchester Area Lead, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy |
|  | Henshaw, Luke | Representative, Oldham Youth Council |
|  | Hewitt, Sara | Town Centre and Markets Manager,  Oldham Council |
|  | 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 |
|  | Popplewell, Grace | Greater Manchester Deputy Area Lead, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy |
|  | Rahim, Fazal | Project Coordinator, Oldham Interfaith Forum |
|  | Rayner, MP Angela | Ashton-under-Lyne Constituency |
|  | Roberts, Paul | Spindles Programme Director, Hive Projects |
|  | Stephens, Katrina | Director of Public Health, Oldham Council |
|  | Windsor-Welsh, Liz | Chief Executive, Action Together |
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| ITEM |  |
| 1.0 | **Introductions and apologies for absence (William Lees-Jones)**  Introductions were made and apologies were noted. The Chair and Vice-Chair thanked Anna da Silva for the informative tour of Northern Roots prior to the meeting. |
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| 2.0 | **Welcome (William Lees-Jones)** |
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| 3.0 | **Notice of any urgent business to be accepted onto the agenda and reasons for that urgency (William Lees-Jones)**  None. |
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| 4.0 | **Declarations of Interest (William Lees-Jones)**  Anna da Silva: Chief Executive Officer, Northern Roots  Stuart Lockwood: Board of Directors, Northern Roots |
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| 5.0 | **Minutes of the previous meeting (William Lees-Jones)**  The minutes dated 10th January 2023 were agreed as a true record and approved for publication online at oldham.gov.uk. |
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| 6.0 | **Review of actions from the previous meeting (William Lees-Jones)**  a)Terms of Reference, membership list, and member roles, responsibilities, and training opportunities to be reviewed and tabled during the next meeting. *This action will be progressed as part of a wider review of partnerships and governance following the local elections on 4th May. The event was Oldham’s first all-out election since May 2004, with all 60 seats being contested. Councillor Arooj Shah was voted in as Leader of the Labour Party and is set to become Leader of Oldham Council for a second time during a meeting of Full Council on 24th May.*  b) 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. *Completed.*  c) 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. *Completed. Council officers meet regularly with the market traders’ association.*  d) Meeting to be arranged with market traders to discuss progress with, and commercial aspects of, the market relocation. *Completed. Council officers meet regularly with the market traders’ association.*  e) “Oldham town centre - general update” and “Oldham town centre - regeneration update” to become standing items on the agenda. *Completed.*  f) Communication risks and relevant mitigations to be captured in the risk register for the flexible performance space project. *Completed.*  g) Social value information for Towns Fund projects to be brought to a future meeting.  *Agenda item 8.*  h) The outcome of the bids to the Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund to  be communicated to the Board once announced. *Agenda item 8.*  i) “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. *The tour of Northern Roots was*  *today’s in-depth project focus.*  j) Details of the new strategic investment partner for residential developments in the  town centre to be brought to the next meeting. *Agenda item 8.* |
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| 7.0 | **Procedural business and any items accepted as urgent business**  **(William Lees-Jones)**  As outlined during agenda item 6:  **ACTION:** Terms of Reference, membership list, and member roles, responsibilities, and training opportunities to be reviewed and tabled during the next meeting. |
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| 8.0 | **Town centre update – regeneration (Paul Clifford / Jon Bloor)**  **Creating a Better Place**  The £285m programme promises to revitalise the town centre and deliver 2,000 new homes (private / social / affordable mix), 1,000 new jobs and 100 apprenticeships. Funding sources include the Future High Streets Fund, Levelling Up Fund, Towns Fund, and Council capital budget. Board members are encouraged to view the promotional video prepared for the UK’s Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (REiiF) event on 16-18 May: <https://www.oldham.gov.uk/ukreiif>. The REiiF stand generated a lot of interest and communications from potential investors.  The Spindles renovation is in two phases, with the first phase being workspace plus Hive social enterprise and foundational economy space, on track for completion by December 2023. Willmott Dixon will be contracted in July to deliver the market, events space and archives by December 2024. The market will be on two levels, with the food and beverage offer on the ground floor, capable of operating independently. Enabling works are underway such as the demolition of TJHughes, piling works and ground condition assessments. The events space will add a new dynamic to the night-time economy.  The linear park (Jubilee Park) (4ha) will be funded from sources including the Levelling Up Fund and highways budgets to enhance Oldham’s green credentials. The park will be adjacent to the Star Academy / Eton College site. It will be overlooked by some of the new residential accommodation to give the town centre a community feel.  The Old Library renovations have been underway for 6-8 months and external works are nearly complete. The building will house the Council’s civic facilities following a decant from the Civic Centre, a meeting area and a young people’s performance space, connecting through to Gallery Oldham and the new theatre. The youth space will be separate from the civic space to minimise and manage the risk of disruption to events and activities from members of the public or demonstrators.  **Future High Streets Fund**  **Prudential Building:** Listed Building Consent was secured in March 2022 and the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is ongoing. Bat surveys are underway to discharge planning conditions. Enabling works should start in December 2023, which has implications for the funding deadline (March 2024). The end use will be enterprise workspace to complement the office space in Spindles.  **Egyptian Room**: the food hall will have a diverse offer that complements the new market’s food and beverage offer. It will boost the night-time economy by replicating successes in towns like Altrincham and Stockport. Fit out works commenced in December 2022 and project completion is on track for September/October 2023.  **Accessible Oldham:** the Snipe Inn has been acquired and will be demolished to improve access to the town centre from the bus station. Public realm improvements and planting around the market hall are nearly complete. The area will be more family-friendly and accessible than before. The linear park will have a similar planting scheme.  **Levelling Up Fund**  £20m has been secured for a Green Technology and Innovation Network to maximise net zero carbon opportunities in Oldham by positioning the borough as a sustainable destination for green businesses. The spend deadline is March 2025. The projects will complement the Green New Deal and give the town centre a USP:  1) Greenway and Jubilee Park: a sustainable network through Oldham town centre incorporating Jubilee Park and facilitating a shift towards active travel  2) Green Shoots Business Centre: 2,285m2 incubation space for green businesses in sectors such as energy generation and battery recycling.  3) Northern Roots Learning Centre: 813m2 education space to strengthen environmental skills through vocational courses  **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**  UKSPF has replaced the ESF / ERDF programmes. It has three investment priorities: community and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. Oldham has secured around £3m under the first priority:   * Accessible Oldham scheme to increase accessibility into and around the town centre, primarily on the Eastern Gateway.  New park staff to maintain and improve the public realm. * Active Travel Oldham to increase the take up of active travel, promote modal shift away from cars, and increase access to Northern Roots. * Support for local arts, culture and heritage events and co-designed community-led events including satellite sessions from Oldham Theatre Workshops and the Illuminate Festival.  Includes a Cultural Strategy Co-Ordinator post for two years. * SME facilities at the Prudential Building or Hive.   **ACTION:** Jon Bloor to arrange a session to enable Oldham Youth Council to inform the design of the greenways, in recognition of its recent motion about green, brown and blue infrastructure.  Kashif Ashraf congratulated Oldham Council on securing the funding and encouraged the promotion of existing attractions, businesses and facilities alongside forthcoming projects. He commented that tourist information in Oldham Library could be made more visible and interactive, for example if replicated inside Spindles.  Jon Bloor agreed that messaging for residents needed to be as strong as that for investors. The addition of homes, a new theatre and more would give Oldham town centre a community feel similar to that in the district centres, and help distinguish it from Manchester/other towns. Jon Bloor added that the role of ambassadors such as Frank Rothwell (business) and Anwar Ali OBE (social enterprise and foundational economy) would be critical to the success of the place marketing strategy, which now had its own task group. The Council’s Communications Team worked hard to promote not only Oldham but the five district centres.  Maggie Hughes described the challenge of blending the retail, leisure and housing offers, particularly in respect of locating much-needed HMOs for users with complex needs and drug/alcohol dependencies. She also shared customers’ reports of anti-social behaviour on Yorkshire Street. Paul Clifford concurred that there would always be a need for balance and managing public perceptions of crime.  William Lees-Jones requested an insight into the performance of businesses in the town centre, commenting that he received regular updates about the top 100 UK towns and cities for independent businesses. With major retailers closing branches nationwide, Oldham needs a clear strategy for promoting and attracting multiple retailers *and* independents. Stuart Lockwood requested a breakdown of how many units are available to let and how many are occupied, and types of retailers.  **ACTION**: Paul Clifford to bring an update to the next meeting about town centre occupancy levels and targets for the high street and shopping centre.  Maggie Hughes explained that her business thrives because families visit for uniforms for six local senior schools yet browse other ranges such as menswear. Independent businesses need similar USPs to thrive.  Michelle Riley spoke of her aspirations for a unit in Manchester city centre, perhaps in Ancoats. Some areas like Salford have fixed regeneration patterns to determine the preferred types of businesses, creating micro-communities with clothes shops, bars, restaurants, hairdressers and more. This could work in the area around Mumps Bridge, especially if independents were supported to secure permission for change of use. Maggie Hughes concurred and stated that Yorkshire Street and Tommyfield Market had different but complementary offers. Paul Clifford suggested that existing services would wrap around the new housing, park, etc.  **Strategic investment partner (residential)**  Oldham Council is seeking a partner for place-shaping and housing development plus engagement. Final due diligence and internal approvals are underway to secure a developer / promoter with a proven track record by June, on a 15-year term. There are three main sites plus eight opportunity sites.  **Social value (procurement)**  Oldham Council has committed to achieving £19.5m social value through projects/developments and has achieved £15.5m to date, from apprenticeships and learner engagement to support for charities. The Hive and foundational economy space in Spindles must seek maximum social value returns. |
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| 9.0 | **Town centre update – general (Jon Bloor)**  **High Street Task Force (HSTF)**  HSTF is an alliance of place-making experts, commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to help transform high streets across the country and complement the Towns Fund. Oldham Council is addressing the recommendations through a new Place Marketing Strategy, which seeks to improve the profile and perceptions of the borough and give Oldham town centre a USP.  **ACTION:** Paul Clifford to bring the Place Marketing Strategy to the next meeting.  **Communications, events and footfall**  There were 6,000 visitors to the REiiF event and lots of web enquiries from potential investors during and after the three days.  The free Coronation event in the town centre on 6th May attracted 4,000 people and was one of only two events in Greater Manchester. Business sales in and around Parliament Square were up by 20% and the event was covered by BBC Northwest Tonight. Kashif Ashraf had attended the event and enjoyed the street party element that united people of all backgrounds and ages. He supports holding regular events to deter people from seeking alternatives to Oldham.  Festival Oldham is a free, family-friendly event in the town centre from 12-4pm on 3rd June. Now in its 26th year, the event will showcase street theatre, music and visual arts and attract around 8,000 people.  Trevor Haye from the Town Centre Team has begun working with businesses and internal colleagues to address barriers to growth, such as flytipped rubbish on Horsedge Street that’s attracting rats. This has been well-received and will continue.  Paul Clifford commented that the Council’s business newsletter and social media promotions would work better as collaborations with businesses rather than one-way communications from the Council to traders. The traders in the new market will have a traders’ charter and other businesses will need a similar voice.  Kashif Ashraf and Frank Rothwell explained that market traders had appreciated their recent visit and spoken positively about the move into Spindles.  Maggie Hughes reported a negative experience with a traffic warden for one customer, and suggested those types of incidents would drive shoppers away to towns like Bury.  Jon Bloor gave the following performance figures compared to pre-pandemic: footfall – 25% down; sales – 25% down; and occupancy – 5% down (78%). Adnan Yousaf commented that occupancy rates could drop further unless steps were taken to attract new investors but also incentivise existing businesses to stay in Oldham.  Jon Bloor commented that shopping patterns have changed, and collective promotion and endeavour is vital if Oldham is to appeal to its diverse and youthful community. Money from the UKSPF will support new events to complement longstanding favourites such as Illuminate Festival.  William Lees-Jones and Maggie Hughes commented that businesses locked into unfair energy deals would not benefit if energy prices fell in future.  **ACTION:** Paul Clifford and Jon Bloor to develop some communications for businesses around fair energy prices and deals.  Kashif Ashraf suggested that mobile phone charging pods as seen at Manchester United could be introduced in public buildings such as Gallery Oldham, funded by advertisements. Those types of new and existing facilities should be promoted widely. |
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| 10.0 | **Substantive business – Towns Fund**   1. Northern Roots (Anna da Silva)   Northern Roots has secured five or six new grants since January. The largest grant (£191k) is from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and is to help ensure the viability and sustainability of the charity (e.g. business modelling and branding) and broaden community engagement. Additional HLF funding in the millions could follow.  There are 20 residents acting as project ambassadors. The first social prescribing pilot project is confirmed with Dr. John Patterson’s GP surgery in Fitton Hill.  The first phase of the farm is underway. Repairs are being made following vandalism of polytunnels and plants in recent days. Next year will see an extension to the Illuminate Festival event which attracted around 600 people, plus more extensive planting.  Inflation is a challenge for the visitor and learning centres but a works contract is due and the target opening date is Spring 2025.  William Lees-Jones commented on the staggering scale of the site and ambitions for land which once housed mills / landfill waste. He commented that the project could be a fantastic strategic investment and noted that RHS Bridgewater in Salford had already welcomed a million visitors since opening. Kashif Ashraf concurred, adding that the project would boost Oldham’s green credentials. Northern Roots could eventually be copied / franchised by other locations with post-industrial sites not in active use.   1. Flexible workspace (Jon Bloor)   There will be some early access from November. See also – agenda item 8.  **ACTION:** Paul Roberts to be asked to provide an in-depth review of the flexible workspace during the next meeting in September.   1. Relocating Tommyfield Market (Jon Bloor)   See agenda item 8.   1. Flexible performance space (Paul Clifford)   In February 2023, Oldham Council’s Cabinet recommitted to developing a new theatre on Union Street. The planning application is due at committee in July 2023. Oldham Coliseum has agreed to be the anchor tenant for the new theatre and is part of the Council’s Performance Space Partnership Board working to support the development of the new space. The name of the new theatre is TBC. There is a decant strategy for the old theatre. The building will be mothballed pending a decision about its future. |
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| 11.0 | **Action review / next steps**  In addition to the actions recorded above:  **ACTION:** Towns Fundmonitoring and evaluation returns for Q3 and Q4 of 2022/23 to be signed by the Chair and Section 151 Officer and submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by 9th June. |
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| 12.0 | **Any other business**  None |
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| 13.0 | **Time and date of next meeting(s)** |
|  | 1-3pm on Tuesday, 12th September (Crompton Suite, Civic Centre)  1-3pm on Monday, 4th December (Crompton Suite, Civic Centre) |