

Meeting Notes

PROJECT	Town Deal – Community Engagement and Consultation Group		
DATE	17 July 2020	LOCATION	Virtual meeting using Zoom

Attendees	
David Pagett-Wright	Chair
Kathy Phillips	Loughborough Heritage Forum
Alison Oliver	Youth Sports Trust
John Hardwick	Federation of Small Businesses
Alan Leather	Canal and River Trust
Joshua Worrell	East Midlands Trains
Stephen Marwood	Environment Agency
Jill Vincent	Charnwood Arts
Sue Blount	Kinch Bus
Nick Allen	East Midlands Trains
Michael Gough	Great Central Railway
Ian McKellar	LATi
James Allen	NHS Property
Eileen Mallon	Strategic Director of Housing, Planning, Regeneration and Regulatory Services
Chris Grace	Town Deal Project Manager
David Marlow	Third Life Economics (Consultant)
Sally Watson	Minute Taker (CBC)

Apologies	
Kirsty Green	East Midlands Trains
Mark Greenwood	NHS Property Services
Toby France	Arriva
Raff Russo	Loc8 Me
Lisa Brown	Loughborough BID
Alison Barlow	Loughborough University
Sylvia Wright	Head of Leisure and Culture (CBC)
Mike Roberts	Communications Manager (CBC)

Meeting Type (Team, Board or other)
Community Engagement and Consultation Group
Meeting Notes
1. Welcome and Apologies
Apologies were noted as above and members of the group introduced themselves.

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2. Project Overview and Update

Chris Grace provided an update on the progress of each group associated with the Town Deal project. The Board had most recently met on 12th June 2020 and had approved the Investment Plan for consultation. The Member Reference Group had met on 22nd June 2020 and had discussed the vision for Loughborough and priority projects and highlighted the need for a robust and considered submission.

Following the last Community Engagement and Consultation Group sessions, the Town Deal team had encouraged proposals for projects to be included within the Investment Plan. The proposals received would be reviewed by the Board on 24th July 2020.

The Government had issued further guidance on Town Deal projects and the Loughborough plan had been in accordance with this, particularly in terms of public engagement. The further guidance had also highlighted the need to account for the economic impact of Covid-19, to demonstrate the likely impact locally and to consider how this impact would be addressed through the Investment Plan.

The Government had created three submission cohorts; 31st July 2020, 31st October 2020 and 31st January 2021. Plans submitted to the first two cohorts could potentially submit to a later cohort, following feedback. Initially the team were working towards a submission date of 31st July 2020, although in order to ensure the strongest proposals possible, the team would now aim to submit in the second cohort of 31st October 2020.

David Marlow provided a presentation on the Investment Plan. The group were informed that an updated strategy would be reviewed by the Board on 24th July 2020, which would include descriptions on how the proposed framework fits in with the Government's own intervention framework, making sure the ambitions for Loughborough were in line with national and regional priorities, a demonstration of the benefits of the proposal to the community and the need for an increase in business involvement.

There had been 12 complete proposals submitted to the team with a combined requirement of £17.1m in capital, and £3.8m in revenue. This was short of the £25m expected allocation. Proposals were at differing stages of advancement and there was a need to ensure these were aligned for submission on 31st October 2020 and in addition, all proposals needed assessment in terms of deliverability. Some of the proposals received were encouraging in terms of the demonstration of Loughborough's assets, although some would require development to ensure this was evident.

The next steps for the Investment Plan included firming up the strategic narrative, appraising existing proposals, encouraging further proposals and ensuring the process contributed positively to post-Covid-19 recovery planning.

It was highlighted that projects would not be developed, managed and delivered by Charnwood Borough Council, but by organisations themselves.

3. Public Consultation Activity and Outcomes

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Chris Grace referred to the research conducted by MEL on the Town Deal process and the following summarises the outcomes and key themes;

- The team encouraged public engagement through the online consultation, focus groups, and an online chat session. Social media, news print and radio were utilised to promote participation.
- Views were sought from residents in and around Loughborough, local businesses and from potential visitors from outside of the Borough.
- The online consultation received 258 responses which was considered good given the short consultation period and the limited response options available due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Respondents felt that there was a need to capitalise on Loughborough's unique selling points, such as the central location, the University and the heritage offer.
- Employment opportunities were considered to be limited in the area.
- Leisure facilities and the retail offering were considered to be in need of improvement.
- Some areas within the town were out of condition and this had implications on perceptions of safety.
- Economic growth should be a priority in the vision for Loughborough.
- The development of a smart, green town was favoured.
- A stronger relationship between the University and other communities in Loughborough would be beneficial.
- A balance was needed between the physical regeneration of Loughborough and the inclusion of communities.
- Opinions for the ambition for Loughborough differed between age groups. Younger groups were more supportive of changes and developments, whereas older age groups expressed some nervousness around this.
- The language used in project documentation was jargonistic and too academic.
- Neighbouring cities were considered to be a threat.

The group began a discussion around the findings of the research conducted by MEL and the following summarises the points raised;

- It was recognised that the requirement to include Covid-19 recovery plans was difficult, as short-term responses to the pandemic could distract from longer term regeneration of

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the town. Projects included within the Investment Plan would need to demonstrate their added value in terms of recovery and funds allocated and this would ensure the Town Deal would assist recovery, as specified by the Government guidelines.

- Proposals would be required to demonstrate longevity, to ensure they would be financially viable in the long term. The consideration of the impact of Covid-19 would be required in order to assess this.
- The team had consulted with local retailers and businesses. It was evident that the pandemic had affected different businesses in different ways and to varying degrees. Through the Government recovery grants scheme, some of these issues had been alleviated, although the long-term impact was not clear.
- There were enhanced opportunities within the heritage, arts and culture sectors as these had recently benefited from additional Government funding in response to Covid-19. The East Midlands Arts Council had been consulted on potential projects for inclusion within the Investment Plan. It was also highlighted that the arts and heritage projects submitted to the team were amongst the strongest received.
- It was suggested that some businesses and organisations could be experiencing difficulties in providing sufficient evidence of benefits prior to the allocation of funding.
- The location of the Loughborough in terms of its neighbouring cities should be viewed more as an opportunity than as a threat. Loughborough's offer and unique selling points could be used to encourage tourism in the area, and the town could capitalise on the footfall in these neighbouring cities.
- The largest age group of respondents was 18-24. The team made efforts to ensure a good and proportional rate of response from across different demographics.

Recommendation Agreed: That the Group noted the results of the consultation and asked the Chair to feedback to the Town Deal Board its views on which matters the Board should be taking notice of in working up further iterations of the Town Investment Plan.

4. Up Front Projects Funding

The Government had announced that Loughborough would receive up front funding for 2020/21 as part of the Town Deal scheme. This was not part of the funding allocated following bid submission but was an additional grant to alleviate hardship and encourage activity related to potential projects and economic recovery. The funds could not be used for feasibility or strategic work. The money would be administered by Charnwood Borough Council and would need to be depleted by the end of March 2021.

Stakeholders were encouraged to submit ideas that could genuinely be completed by the end of March 2021, for allocation of this funding as soon as possible; christopher.grace@charnwood.gov.uk