

Meeting Minutes

PROJECT	Town Deal – Member Reference Group		
DATE	20 July 2020	LOCATION	Virtual meeting using Zoom

Attendees	
Councillor Bokor (Chair)	Lead Member Loughborough
County Councillor Max Hunt	Loughborough North West
County Councillor Jewel Miah	Loughborough East
Councillor Sandie Forrest	Loughborough Storer
Councillor Alice Brennan	Loughborough Shelthorpe
Councillor Kat Goddard	Loughborough Ashby
Councillor Colin Hamilton	Loughborough Hastings
Councillor Christine Harris	Loughborough Lemyngton
Councillor Geoff Parsons	Loughborough Nanpantan
Councillor Emma Ward	Dishley and Hathern
Eileen Mallon	Strategic Director of Housing, Planning, Regeneration and Regulatory Services
Richard Bennett	Head of Planning and Regeneration
Sylvia Wright	Head of Leisure and Culture
Mike Roberts	Communications Manager
Chris Grace	Town Deal Project Manager
David Marlow	Third Life Economics (Consultant)
Sally Watson	Minute Taker (Charnwood Borough Council)

Apologies	
Councillor Richard Bailey	Loughborough Outwoods
Sylvia Wright	Head of Leisure and Culture
Mike Roberts	Communications Manager

Meeting Type (Team, Board or other)
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<p>2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22nd June 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and there were no matters arising.</p>

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3. Project Overview and Update

Chris Grace provided information on the recent guidance for Town Deals projects issued by Central Government. 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, which would have been achievable, although in order to ensure the strongest proposals possible, the team would now aim to submit in the second cohort of 31st October 2020 as requested by the Co-Chairs of the Town Deal Board.

Some Councillors felt that it would be preferable to submit the bid to the first cohort, as originally planned. However, it was stated that the team felt more confident that they could submit the highest quality proposals to the later cohort of 31st October 2020, in order to maximise the potential funding. It was anticipated that of the 101 Town Deal submissions nationally, 18 would submit to cohort one, with the majority submitting to cohort two. It was expected that the 18 submissions to cohort one would be published online and the Council would have the opportunity to view these whilst preparing to submit to cohort two. In addition, submitting to a later cohort would give the Council more of an opportunity to popularise the Town Deal plan amongst residents.

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.

The 12 complete projects submitted to the team had been encouraging and were in line with the guidance framework. Councillors felt that there were more projects in the community that could benefit from Town Deal funding, although without proposal submissions, it was not possible for the team to consider these.

Recommendation Agreed: That the Member Reference Group noted the content of the report.

4. Public Consultation Activity and Outcomes

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.

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- 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.
- Overall, it was felt that there was support for the Town Deal plan for Loughborough.

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 as a percentage of the total population, the response rate for the consultation was low. This had previously been identified as a risk by the Town Deal team. It was explained that engagement was an ongoing process and that the team held regular Community Engagement and Consultation Groups in order to connect to local communities. In addition, the team had made efforts to publicise and promote the consultation and felt that this had been sufficient given the current restrictions.
- Regarding the responses received from members of the public through consultation and

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focus groups, it was acknowledged that the themes that had emerged largely reflected the ideas of the Member Reference Group at its last meeting. It was suggested that some of the issues reported by the public through the consultation were not suitable for Town Deal funding, such as the repairing and cleaning of public spaces, as this would be actioned through other departments at the Council. The Council was a facilitator of the funds available and would not deliver the projects selected directly.

- A pro-forma for project proposals was available on the [Loughborough Town Deal website](#) and should be completed and returned to Chris Grace. This would be circulated with the minutes of this meeting for Councillors to promote.
- The Town Deal Board was considering the future of Loughborough in terms of the ways in which society was likely to change. For example, as society becomes greener, there would be more requirements to facilitate this, such as electric car charging points. Changes in society as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic were also being considered.
- The team acknowledged the significance of schemes which were entirely revenue-based, which could be used to promote social mobility in Loughborough. However, it was reiterated that without the submission of such projects, it would not be possible to undertake this type of work.

Councillors were asked to forward any further ideas or suggestions to Chris Grace; christopher.grace@charnwood.gov.uk.

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.

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.

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.

5. Upfront Projects Funding

The Government had announced that Loughborough would receive up front funding of £750k 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 and was for capital funding only. The money would be administered by Charnwood Borough Council and would need to be depleted by the end of March 2021 and so projects proposed should be 'shovel ready'. The Council would need to communicate their intentions to Central Government by 14th August 2020.

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As part of this scheme, a proposal was suggested to regenerate the Limehurst depot, which was Council-owned and could be demolished in accordance with the guidelines. This proposal would be put towards the Board for consideration.

Recommendation Agreed: That the availability of the grant was welcomed and that the Chair asked the Town Deal Board to work closely with the Borough Council in deciding how it should be spent, including Limehurst depot.