

Meeting minutes

PROJECT	Town Deal		
DATE	21st October 2021	LOCATION	Virtual meeting using Zoom

Attendees	
Board Members	
Dr Nik Kotecha (Co-Chair – in the Chair)	Morningside Pharmaceuticals
Cllr Jenny Bokor	Chair of MRG
Lez Cope-Newman	Loughborough BID
Jo Maher	Loughborough College
David Pagett-Wright	Chair of CCEG
Prof. Chris Rielly	Loughborough University
Deborah Taylor (CC)	Leicestershire County Council
Martin Traynor	Economy & Skills Group
Officer Attendees	
Eileen Mallon	Charnwood Borough Council
Simon Jackson	Charnwood Borough Council
Richard Bennett	Charnwood Borough Council
Chris Grace	Charnwood Borough Council
Peter McClaren	Leicestershire County Council
Nicky Conway	Minute Taker (Charnwood Borough Council)

Apologies
<p>Cllr Jonathan Morgan (co-chair, Charnwood Borough Council), Jane Hunt MP MP for Loughborough, Andy Reed (LLEP)</p> <p>Mandip Rai (LLEP), Rob Mitchell (Charnwood Borough Council), Mike Roberts (Charnwood Borough Council).</p> <p><i>There were initially some connection issues for Peter McLaren and Mrs D Taylor CC.</i></p>
Meeting Type (Team, Board or other)
Board Meeting
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<p>2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record. There were no matters arising.</p>

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3. Declarations of Interest

During the discussion of item 5 on the agenda, Chris Rielly declared an interest as the Project Lead for Healthy and Innovative Loughborough project.

4. Local Assurance Framework

Richard Bennett introduced this report and summarised the position with the Local Assurance Framework. He noted that at its last meeting the Board had given delegated authority to the Co-Chairs to approve the final version of the Local Assurance Framework (LAF) and it had been approved on 6th October 2021.

With respect to the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Board and Sub-Groups, these had been collated into the LAF but were not attached to the report appendices. The TORs had been amended in accordance with the decisions of the Board at its meeting on 27th September and the Delivery Sub-Group TOR had been further subject to minor amendments which had been approved by the Co-Chairs of the Town Deal Board using their delegated authority. The amended TOR had been shared with Board members on 18th October prior to publication on the Town Deal website.

It was confirmed that although the LAF had been designed in line with the Local Government Governance and Accountability Framework and the Frameworks prepared by frontrunner Town Deals, it was unique to Loughborough. It had been drafted in consultation with the Accountable Body's S151 and Monitoring Officers and had been reviewed by a representative of BEIS whose feedback had been positive. The LAF had required prompt approval to ensure it could be part of the papers submitted to the DLUHC on 15th October 2021.

Recommendation Agreed: that the Board endorses the decision of the Co-chairs to approve the Local Assurance Framework.

5. Programme Update

Richard Bennett introduced this report and provided a comprehensive summary to the Board of the current position. He noted that:

- the Project team were in the process of procuring a second consultant to provide tailored programme support to individual projects based on a skills and knowledge needs assessment by MACE.
- a programme plan setting out the milestones for the next funding window was in development and would be submitted to the Board at its next meeting.
- the Living Loughborough Project had decided to submit its project in the April 2022 funding window.

Deborah Taylor CC left the meeting.

A verbal update with respect to the Business Case submissions for the Bellfoundry and Bedford Square projects was provided. It was explained that some information had been identified by MACE as missing from the business cases or had not been included in the appropriate sections of the Summary Documents. Both Project Leads had been advised of the remedial actions

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necessary and the Delivery Sub-Group then agreed to submit the two projects with the Chair and S151 Officer's delegated authority approval. It was noted that the release of funding would be conditional on these actions being resolved.

The Co-Chair of the Town Deal Board and Chair of the Delivery Sub-Group noted that he and the S151 Officer had met to review the project submission documents on 15th October and had approved the submission of the Summary Documents for the Bellfoundry and Bedford Square projects to DLUHC with assurance that the amendments required would be completed.

Summary of Board Discussion:

- it had been challenging for some Project Leads to understand what support they could receive and what was required of them due to changing circumstances. Factors discussed included delays in the construction supply industry, changes to project team membership, availability of consultants, and extremely short submission deadlines. These concerns were recognised and it was understood that some factors were outside of the Project Lead's and Programme Team's control. All Project Leads were being asked to consider carefully, taking into account these factors, whether it was possible for their project to meet the January 2022 submission deadline.
- the strength of the Loughborough Town Deal relied on all projects being successful in their delivery. It could be beneficial to share experiences of business case assessments by MACE, identify key themes and lessons to be learnt with all Project Leads whilst protecting the confidentiality of sensitive business information.
- the Programme team were continuing to prioritise communication with Project Leads but wished to clarify that in some cases the changes to deadlines and lack of available information was as a result of sudden Government changes to the Town Deal process.
- MACE had been employed using the SCAPE procurement framework and had worked quickly to set up the appraisal framework and assess the business cases in time for submission by 15th October. It was acknowledged that their focus had been to meet this deadline and would now be liaising with all Project Leads to identify knowledge and skills gaps and the support required to prepare for the next funding submission windows.
- it was challenging at present to identify what project support was required by the individual projects. The Green Book standard was complex and required a certain level of skill to use when preparing a business case. MACE would not approve a business case as robust if these standards had not been met and this was appropriate when allocating public funds.
- all project business cases were required to be submitted within one year (by 27th August 2022). The Government had provided three funding windows as it recognised some projects may wish to submit for funding earlier. Projects identified at the start as fast-track projects would not be penalised if they did not subsequently submit their business cases until later in the Town Deal process. Adhering to robust due diligence processes and applying the Green Book standards were just as important as speedy delivery.
- as the deadlines for project submission to meet the January 2022 funding window was tight, the procurement of the second consultant to support individual Project Leads in drafting robust business cases was time critical. If the deadlines could not be met it could be appropriate for individual projects to share contacts and experiences in the interim. The second consultant had been identified using SCAPE procurement framework. Any delay to letting the contract would be due to procurement processes and the release of the programme funding by the government, which was scheduled in November, and obtaining approval to spend from the DSG. It was possible within its

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TOR to expedite this by email exchange. It was difficult to determine the cost of the support required as the needs of each Project Lead had not yet been clarified. The Project Team Manager would be meeting with MACE in the next few days to determine their views on the support required and it was anticipated this could be resolved within two – three weeks.

- it was clarified that the Government would provide the funding and it was the responsibility of the Board and the S151 Officer to review the business cases and determine if the money was being used appropriately for the outcomes listed in the TIP. The Government would routinely receive a summary of outcomes and funding profiles over the life of a project but could at any time decide to review projects in detail. It was therefore critical for the Board and the Accountable Body to have a robust due diligence process.
- as the assurance assessment was completed prior to submission of the business case to the Government it was not anticipated that the release of funding would be delayed. To release the funding, the Projects leads would be subject to a Grant Funding agreement with the Accountable Body.
- Project Leads were encouraged to liaise proactively with MACE and officers if they required more support or information.

Jo Maher stated that Loughborough College would be willing to share consultants, knowledge and best practice with other Town Deal Project Leads.

It was noted that Mal Hussain had left the Council and that Chris Grace had agreed to take on the role of Town Deal Project Manager until a replacement could be recruited. The Board thanked Mal for his work particularly in submitting the two business cases on deadline and welcomed Chris to the project.

Jo Maher left the meeting.

Deborah Taylor CC re-joined the meeting during the discussion of this item.

Recommendation Agreed: that the Board notes the updates in this report.

6. Communications and Engagement Update

Richard Bennett introduced this report and summarised the details of the communications and engagement plan for the next phase of the Town Deal.

It was noted that DLUHC and ARUP considered communication was important.

Recommendation Agreed: that the Board notes the report.

6. Communications Budget Proposals

Richard Bennett introduced this report and stated that it put forward a notional budget to support communications and engagement for the Loughborough Town Deal over the next five years. The cost was currently being absorbed by the Council's general budgets, and some areas of expertise was usually outsourced. As the Delivery Sub-Group had responsibility for approving

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expenditure of the programme support fund, their approval would be sought once more details were clarified.

It was noted that to ensure that the budget covered necessary communications a strategic review could be beneficial, as the costs were believed to be conservative at this stage. It was important to use social media to expand communication and engagement and the Council would be using its corporate social media channels to do this. Board members and Project Leads could also use their own social media platforms to further communicate Town Deal news but it was acknowledged that caution would be required to ensure the message was appropriately communicated. Guidance could be sought from the Council’s Communications Manager.

Recommendation Agreed: That the Board noted the indicative budget for communications and engagement and asks the Delivery Sub-Group to consider this as part of the five year programmes support budget setting process.

7. AOB

The Co-chair updated the Board on his recent attendance at the ARUP ‘All Chairs’ meeting with regional Town Deal Chairs to share experiences. He noted that the Loughborough Town Deal compared favourably to other Town Deals in terms of its allocation of 5% programme funding, the creation of a delivery sub-group and its position in the Town Deal process. The importance of communication and ensuring the town residents understood the Town Deal was high on all Board’s agendas. From 30th November ARUP would no longer be supporting the meetings but it had been decided by the Chairs to continue to meet and share experiences.

The DSG members and officers were thanked for their hard work in ensuring the Town Deal met the shortened DLUHC deadlines successfully.

Date of Future Meetings

Once the programme plan had been finalised it was proposed that meetings for the Town Deal Board and sub-groups would be arranged covering the next six months.

Follow up actions

	<p><u>ITEM 5</u> Jo Maher stated that Loughborough College would be willing to share consultants, knowledge and best practice with other Town Deal Project Leads.</p> <p>Officers to submit a programme plan setting out the milestones for the next funding window to the Board at its next meeting.</p>
	<p><u>ITEM 7</u> Clerk to arrange future meetings in accordance with the Programme Plan for the Town Deal Board and subgroups.</p>