

Meeting minutes

PROJECT	Town Deal		
DATE	27th November 2020	LOCATION	Virtual meeting using Zoom

Attendees	
Board Members	
Dr Nik Kotecha (Co-Chair)	Morningside Pharmaceuticals
Cllr Jonathan Morgan (Co-Chair)	Charnwood Borough Council
Cllr Jenny Bokor	Chair of MRG
Prof. Tracy Bhamra	Loughborough University
Lez Cope Newman	Loughborough BID
Jane Hunt MP	MP for Loughborough
Jo Maher	Loughborough College
David Pagett-Wright	Chair of CECG
Cllr TJ Pendleton, CC	Leicestershire County Council
Andy Reed	LLEP
Martin Traynor	Economy & Skills Group
Officer Attendees	
Rob Mitchell	Charnwood Borough Council
Eileen Mallon	Charnwood Borough Council
Richard Bennett	Charnwood Borough Council
Chris Grace	Charnwood Borough Council
Mike Roberts	Charnwood Borough Council
Helen Harris	Leicestershire County Council
Mandip Rai	LLEP
Peter Sutton	MHCLG
Nicky Conway	Minute Taker (Charnwood Borough Council)

Apologies
Tom Purnell, (Helen Harris acting as substitute), Sylvia Wright

Meeting Type (Team, Board or other)
Board Meeting

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<p>Meeting Minutes</p>
<p>2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record.</p>
<p>3. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Item 7 - Upfront Funding Update – Jo Maher and Prof. Tracy Bhamra declared conflicts of interest prior to the Board’s consideration of this item as representatives of Loughborough College and Loughborough University respectively.</p>
<p>Agenda Variance</p> <p>It was agreed that to consider item 5 (Town Deal Forthcoming Process and Next Steps) before item 4 (Town Deal Cohort 1 Submissions and Outcomes).</p>
<p>4. Town Deal Forthcoming Process and Next Steps (item 5 on agenda)</p> <p>Eileen Mallon introduced this report and stated that after receiving initial feedback from MHCLG it would be appropriate for Peter Sutton to give the Board a verbal update in his role as MHCLG representative.</p> <p>Peter Sutton explained that he would provide the initial feedback following the appraisal of Loughborough Town Investment Plan (TIP) submission by MHCLG and that written communication of this information would be provided next week. He stated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an assessment of all cohort 2 TIPs had been completed, and the department had identified that whilst there were some strong aspects to Loughborough’s TIP there were some key areas where the TIP was not scoring high enough in the criteria to reach an overall pass mark at present. • although the long-term vision was ambitious and distinctive to the town, the ‘active healthy living’ and ‘town of innovation’ themes were not articulated sufficiently or linked clearly to the project selection. There were also sections where the timescales did not match. The link between the vision and the projects could be made more explicit and the ‘golden thread’ more fully explained. • in general, the Loughborough TIP required simplification, more coherence, and explanations in plain English for townspeople to understand. A clearer relationship between the vision and how the projects inter-related to this was required. • there were two options for the Board to consider; it could submit revisions, clarifications and additional information within a two-week window, and if the TIP reached the necessary standard, it could then move towards the deal stage. However the red-amber-green scoring system used by MHCLG meant that in the areas where the Plan had scored red, the maximum it could score after receiving additional information would be amber and this could impact the overall score of the TIP. If the TIP scored amber overall it would be eligible for a reasonable deal but would not get higher than £25mill for investment. • if the Board chose the second option and re-drafted the TIP for re-submission by 30th January, the department would review the whole document in its entirety, and this could unlock higher levels of investment and further support from BEIS and ARUP.

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- if submission of additional information within the two-week window resulted in the TIP still scoring red, the TIP could be fully re-submitted but there were resource implications as it was unlikely feedback would be received from the Department until near to Christmas.

Peter Sutton explained that it was important for the Board to have this information now and consider the implications for unlocking higher levels of investment.

Board Members sought clarification from officers and discussed the following:

- whether the 'check and challenge' sessions had highlighted any of the issues seen by MHCLG and if ARUP had been involved in the appraisal process. It was clarified that ARUP supported Town Deals in the initial stages, with its 'check and challenge' sessions but were not involved in the appraisal process. The assessment was completed by two assessors and a moderator. At the two sessions with ARUP, issues had been raised and prior to the second session, officers had resolved the issues and shared the final draft of the TIP with ARUP prior to its submission to MHCLG.
- the implications of choosing to submit additional information within the two-week window, and how it could impact the scoring and opportunities for obtaining higher investment. The feedback from MHCLG suggested submission of additional information within the two-week window would not achieve the investment required to support the TIP vision for the town.
- whether recently announced funding in the Comprehensive Spending Review by the Government could impact future funding and Town Deal funding. It was noted that it was too early to say what interaction the Spending Review funding would have with town deals. Concerns were raised that if the Loughborough TIP could not obtain full funding from the Town Deal this could impact opportunities for other future funding.
- it was disappointing to hear that the bid could not proceed at this stage. It was important to consider other Cohort 1 submissions where bidders had been successful – it was noted that by varying the agenda to consider item 5 first, this discussion could inform the consideration of item 4.

Lez Cope Newman joined the meeting.

- that if the TIP did not score green overall it would not be able to access higher investment. By being limited to scoring amber for areas currently scoring red, if further information was submitted within the two-week window the town would obtain a reasonable deal, but it would be below the level of ambition in the recently submitted Loughborough TIP and hamper the delivery of the long-term vision.
- whether it would be beneficial to de-emphasise the sports / active healthy living theme in line with current government policy, although it was noted that the vision needed to reflect the individuality of the town.
- the advantages to re-writing the TIP with an independent BID writer and having a fresh pair of eyes to review the final draft of the TIP prior to submission.
- that it was important to remember that there were strong aspects to the TIP and that including the University as a focus of the TIP was not inappropriate if this matched the vision for the town.
- concerns were raised about the validity of the vision and themes in the TIP and how much required re-writing. It was noted that the vision did not necessarily require changing, as it was essential that the vision reflected the town's distinctive character and its future

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plans. The initial feedback received from MHCLG suggested that the narrative and how the projects related to the vision required simplification.

Peter Sutton concluded that if the Board chose to resubmit the TIP by 30th January, further support would be available from ARUP and BEIS. He noted that the 30th January was a 'hard' deadline and that it would be appropriate to have conversations around some of the broader aspects of the Board discussion today if the Board chose this option.

Rob Mitchell noted that it was disappointing, and it was clear that some amendments were required, but he encouraged the Board to remain ambitious and enthusiastic for the project, and that it was still a tremendous opportunity for the town. In considering the level of resources required by the Council to support the borough during the second pandemic wave, he advised that it would be challenging to submit additional information within the two-week window and would be more advantageous to re-draft the TIP for resubmission by 30th January 2021. This would allow for a fresh pair of eyes to consider the final draft, further support from BEIS and 'check and challenge' sessions with ARUP.

Eileen Mallon noted that it was challenging to understand the scoring system as it had not been shared with the Council and was likely to include certain judgements alongside comparison with other TIPs. On reviewing other successful TIPS, the Loughborough TIP did appear more ambitious and complex but it had been based on consultation with the communities and residents to reflect their needs and to meet the brief provided by MHCLG.

Recommendation Agreed:

1. that the Town Investment Plan is redrafted and resubmitted to the MHCLG by 30th January 2021;
2. that the forthcoming process included having a fresh pair of eyes to review the TIP, ensuring the projects tied into the vision, reflected what the town requires and a general simplification of the narrative to maximise the amount of investment obtained.

5. Town Deal Cohort 1 Submissions and Outcomes (item 4 on the agenda)

Chris Grace presented this update and explained his feedback would be based on his professional interpretation of other TIPs and noted that the government had announced the introduction of a Cohort 2a in the Towns Fund Guidance when it became apparent that many towns had not been able to meet the Cohort 2 deadline in October.

He highlighted the following to the Board:

- it had been challenging to obtain information about other TIP submissions, submission numbers for Cohort 2 had not been confirmed and the numbers submitted in Cohort 1 had only recently been confirmed.
- the submitted TIPs in Cohort 1 varied in approach and how the TIP reflected the character of the towns. There was a strong emphasis around classic projects – town centre regeneration, skills and enterprise - and less emphasis on other areas. The Government's thematics had been strongly adhered to.
- It was noteworthy that no town deal location had been awarded the full amount that had been asked for in its TIP.

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- with reference to Blackpool, Peterborough, Darlington, Torquay and Warrington, there was a strong focus on town centre regeneration and skills and enterprise.
- of the TIPs submitted not one particularly stood out as the plans were a reflection of the local area and its needs. It was appropriate to consider other successful TIPs but the TIP for Loughborough should reflect what was required for the town.

Board Members raised the following points:

- that other TIPs had chosen different approaches; some had mirrored their Council's corporate plans and whether the Borough Council's master plan should be referenced in the Loughborough TIP.
- that some TIPs had very clear summaries, with clearly identified gaps and solutions. The Warrington TIP had placed their vision halfway through the document to tell its story well and had included a one-page summary explaining theme, strength, issue and need to emphasise the link to its vision. This approach could be applied to Loughborough's TIP.
- other successful TIPs had similar projects to ones included in the Loughborough TIP so it was clear that the Loughborough projects submitted were appropriate, more clarity of vision and narrative was required.
- whether the Loughborough TIP had been too ambitious and had focused on the investment required as being the first step in what the town could achieve as a healthy living demonstrator. Concerns were raised that in re-writing the narrative it was important not to suggest that the town deal funding only was required to fulfil the long-term vision for Loughborough, in case future funding was impacted by this view.
- whether some projects grouped together should be 'uncoupled' and not to be afraid of having a long list of projects.

Peter Sutton noted that although he couldn't comment on other TIPs, the Plan didn't need to be complex, detail was welcomed, and that the Board should consider how the Plan could be presented clearly for the understanding of the assessors and the person in the street.

Rob Mitchell noted that MHCLG had been clear on what was required and that when comparing the Loughborough submission with other successful TIPS, the plan did not appear to require radical alteration but a reformatting and presenting of the narrative in a different way.

Having considered this item and the preceding item and sought clarification from officers and Peter Sutton, MCHLG representative, Board Members reflected that the Loughborough TIP required some modification to its vision and narrative but that the projects included were essentially sound. The detail from the letter of MHCLG, once received, would provide reassurance of the direction of travel and that there were benefits in utilising approaches taken by other successful TIPs.

Recommendation Agreed: That the Town Deal Board noted its discussion and the content of the report.

6. Future Resources for Delivery of a Town Deal

Richard Bennett introduced this report and drew the Board's attention to the future funding programme and the following points:

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- that there was sufficient resources available from the existing capacity funding to service demand to the end of 2020/21.
- that the Board consider using the some of the underspend (£11k) to fund an extension to the backfilling arrangements for the secondee to the Town Deal Manager post until 31 March 2021.
- that no further resources had been identified for the programme of the Project Team beyond the current financial year.
- that it was important to stress that individual projects would need to be sufficiently resourced and supported by the lead organisations responsible and that the amount of support required could vary between projects.

It was noted that the Board took ownership for the approval of the TIP, and that the contract with David Marlow had come to an end. However the feedback received regarding the Loughborough TIP submission would be provided by officers to David Marlow as he had requested.

Recommendations Agreed:

1. That Board agreed the use of £11k of Town Deal budget to fund the backfilling of the Business Relations and Economic Growth Officer (Post M316) to 31 March 2021.
2. That the Board noted the financial position in relation to the management and delivery of the Town Deal and accepts the proposal to receive a status report on each project once the bid has been determined by MHCLG.
3. That a report be submitted to the Board, at an appropriate future meeting, setting out the status of each project, requirements for business cases and any further work required to bring forward these projects including timescales.

7. Upfront Funding Update

Eileen Mallon presented this report and noted that 4 projects had been identified and prioritised, with the top priority (Careers and Enterprise Hub) being put forward for approval. MHCLG had then confirmed it would release the £750,000 to be spent on the project.

Chris Grace drew the Board's attention to the details of the project as noted in the report. He stated that its purpose was to function as more than a Careers Hub but to also encourage business start-ups and enterprise knowledge sharing. Jo Maher provided further details regarding the fitting out of the premises and timelines for completion of the project.

It was suggested that businesses seeking to recruit apprentices could use the Hub, and that the County Council's Work Club could be involved to help with tuition and other careers activities, (*contact details to be supplied to Jo Maher*).

Recommendation agreed: that Board noted the content of the report and that the Borough Council had allocated the spend of £750,000 as per the priority order for projects previously agreed by the Board.

8. AOB

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It was requested that the letter from MHCLG was circulated to the Board on its receipt by the Council.

9. Date of Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for 22nd January 2021.

It was requested that an additional Board meeting be arranged prior to the scheduled meeting for the Board's consideration of the re-written TIP prior to its submission by 30th January 2021.

Follow up actions

1	<u>ITEM 6 – Future Resources for Delivery of a Town Deal</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Officers submit a report to the Board, at an appropriate future meeting, setting out the status of each project, requirements for business cases and any further work required to bring forward these projects including timescales.
2	<u>ITEM 7 – Upfront Funding Update</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That Jo Maher contacts the appropriate officer of the County Council's careers team to discuss support from the Work Clubs
3	<u>ITEM 8 – AOB</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the letter from MHCLG providing feedback from the appraisal of the Loughborough TIP is circulated to the Board.
4	<u>ITEM 9 – date of future meetings</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the Clerk in consultation with officers and members, agrees a date and arranges an additional meeting of the Board.