

Meeting minutes

PROJECT	Town Deal		
DATE	29th Sep 2023	LOCATION	MS Teams

Attendees	
Board Members	
Dr Nik Kotecha (Chair)	Randalsun Capital Ltd
Jo Maher	Loughborough College
David Pagett-Wright	Chair of the CCEG
Andy Reed	LLEP
Prof. Chris Rielly	Loughborough University
Deborah Taylor (CC)	Leicestershire County Council
Cllr Jenni Tillotson	Lead Member for Economic Development, Regeneration and Town Centres
Martin Traynor	Economy and Skills Group
Officer Attendees	
Phoebe Dawson	LLEP
Maria Curran	Charnwood Borough Council
Chris Grace	Charnwood Borough Council
Mike Roberts	Charnwood Borough Council
Nicky Conway	Minute Taker (Charnwood Borough Council)

Meeting Type (Team, Board or other)
Board Meeting
1. Apologies
Lez Cope-Newman (Loughborough BID), Jane Hunt (MP for Loughborough), Cllr Miah (Leader of the Council), Jo Dexter (BEIS), Tom Purnell (LCC), Rob Mitchell (Charnwood Borough Council) Simon Jackson (S151 Officer), Justin Henry (Charnwood Borough Council).
2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising
The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a correct record. Noted that Town Deal Board Members were included on the distribution list for project update communications.
3. Declarations of Interest
Jo Maher declared an interest as the Loughborough College representative and Loughborough University with a project included in the Town Deal.

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Prof Chris Rielly declared an interest as the Project Lead for the Healthy and Innovative Loughborough project.

David Pagett-Wright declared an interest as a Director of the Generator Loughborough CIC and a member of Love Loughborough (BID) project.

4. Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair asked for nominations for the position of Vice-chair. He noted that a role profile for Chair had been circulated as a background paper and that the Vice-chair would be expected to step in when he was unable to attend meetings. The occupant of the role would ideally not have any conflicts with Town Deal Projects.

The Board discussed increasing the number of independent Board Members which could also provide additional support to the Delivery Sub-Group. It was noted that joining at this stage could be challenging for a new member to get up to speed and that colleagues known to Board Members who could be suitable were likely to be quite busy with other projects. It was not suggesting that any skills were missing from the current Board, however, new members would be required to have detailed project monitoring and analytical skills.

Agreed:

1. that Andy Reed be appointed as Vice-chair of Loughborough Town Deal Board.
2. that members consider suitable options for candidates and forward suggestions to the Chair.

5. Delivery Sub-Group Update

Maria Curran provided a brief summary of the Delivery Sub-Group meeting in August referencing its full agenda including performance monitoring, DLUHC updated PAR guidance, the risk register and proposed business event. Detail on some of the topics it considered were also part of this agenda for the Board to consider.

Jo Maher provided an update for the Digital Skills Hub Project stating that an innovative turnkey fixed priced contract was an option to try and retain the aesthetic but find a more cost effective build solution. She currently had a high level of confidence that the project could be delivered in line with its original budget. Also, due to rising tender prices for the Sports Hall the Department of Education were funding the gap and different approaches were being taken for tendering. The Chair thanked Jo for a positive update.

Recommendation Agreed: that the Board notes the contents of the report.

6. Terms of Reference and Project Assurance Framework Updates

Maria Curran introduced the report and explained the changes proposed, reflecting the new membership and chairing arrangements, and to incorporate the guidance on Project Adjustment Request (PAR) process recently issued by DLUHC.

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It was noted that the addition of a Vice-chair to the chair arrangements (as agreed in item 4) would be included in the updated Terms of Reference for the Town Deal Board. There were no questions as members considered the information provided to be straight forward.

Recommendations Agreed:

1. that the Board ratifies the amendments to its Terms of Reference.
2. That the Board approves the revisions to the Project Assurance Framework and the associated modifications to the Terms of Reference of its Delivery Sub-group, including those set out in the Board's terms of reference.

7. Programme and Projects Update

Maria Curran introduced the report and highlighted the relevant points, noting that all projects were in the delivery phase and that £4.2million of the Town Deal funding had been received with further funding to be released in October. All projects would start to utilise Town Deal funding in the Financial Year (FY) 2023/24 apart from one project and four were anticipated to be completed within this FY. She stated that there was an emerging pattern of increasing delay due to challenges with the tender market and rising costs, not within the projects control and that this was affecting all Town Deals. She then provided a brief overview of the status of each project.

Summary of discussion:

- Project Leads were working hard within a challenging environment and were investigating financial options that currently did not require additional Town Deal funding.
- joint procurement for the Digital Skills Hub and Institute of Technology was an example of challenges faced by projects when going out to tender. Projects were conscious that if they did not take current tender prices and had to go out tender again, the prices would have risen during that time.
- it was possible that Central Government would soften its approach towards funding due to the current financial climate faced by all sectors of business. It could be beneficial to consider the project overages, include a narrative and liaise with DLUHC to explain how it could impact on the timescale of delivery of projects and see if additional funding was available.
- there was a mechanism to manage risk for projects not being delivered whereby issues would be brought to the Town Deal Board within three months. At present although there was slippage there was no indication that the projects would not be delivered by March 2026. One project was considering its options for using its Town Deal Funding for early enabling works and financing the construction itself, but this would be discussed with DLUHC.
- noted that Central Government had publicly stated it wished to put Towns centre to its levelling up agenda.

The Chair stated that he had reached out to Chairs of other Town Deal Boards and was scheduling a meeting in October and would hopefully be able to report back to the Board at its next meeting.

Recommendation Agreed: that the Board notes the contents of the report.

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8. Town Deal Budget

Maria Curran introduced the report and noted that this report specifically on the revenue budget to support the programme and summarised the outturn position 2022-23 with the forecast budget for 2023-24. She highlighted particular details in the budget including the contingency reserve approved previously by the Delivery Sub-Group.

There were no questions.

Recommendation Agreed: that the Board notes the contents of the report.

9. Communications Update

Mike Roberts introduced the report and highlighted some of the key points which were keeping Loughborough Town Deal in the spotlight. Plans for the two proposed events, (business and public facing) were underway and more detail would be provided to the Board when available.

There were no questions and Board Members thanked the Comms team for their work.

Recommendation Agreed: that the Board notes the communications update and planned next steps.

10. Towns Conference

Maria Curran introduced the report and noted that the key takeaway point was to ensure that Town Deal Boards kept a strategic oversight with local leadership and were prepared to make difficult decisions. Information from the technical sessions she had attended had been shared with Project Leads.

The Chair noted that it was clear other Town Deals were facing similar challenges and thanked Maria for attending.

Recommendation Agreed: that the Board notes the update of the Town Conference.

11. Any Other Business

David Pagett-Wright, as chair of the Community Consultation and Engagement Group (CCEG), noted that the Group had not met recently and that it could be beneficial to align the timing of the next meeting with the proposed Communications events.

It was noted that a date had been arranged for the Member Reference Group to meet in November.

Chris Grace agreed that a meeting of CCEG could be arranged as there was a new focus and projects were into the delivery stage. He would liaise with the Chair of CCEG to arrange a meeting to align with future communications activity. Noted that the Communications Manager attended these meetings.

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Date of next Meeting

5th December 2023, 1pm – to be held as an in-person meeting at GCR. Virtual attendance was possible if required but it was encouraged that members attend in person.

Follow up actions

6	The vice-chair appointment to be included in the Board's Terms of Reference prior to its publication on the Town Deal Website
7	Officers to consider liaising with DLUHC regarding project overages, including a narrative and explaining how it could impact on the timescale of delivery of projects and see if additional funding was available.
7	The Chair to report back to the Board at its next meeting regarding his regional Town Deal Board Chairs meeting.
11	Officers to arrange a meeting of the Community Consultation & Engagement Group.