

DEWSBURY LONG-TERM PLAN UPDATE NOTE FOR TOWN BOARD MAY 2024

This note provides the Board with an update regarding the progress made on the development of the Long-term plan since the discussion at the last Board meeting on 28th March 2024.

A programme has been developed, with details and tasks identified to ensure that the requirements are planned for and appropriately resourced. As part of this programme development a number of workstreams have been identified – this note is split in six sections, reflecting the core workstreams as follows:

- Section 1.1: Workstream 1, Community Engagement & Comms
- Section 1.2: Workstream 2, Property / Town Centre Living
- Section 1.3: Workstream 3, Working Groups
- Section 1.4: Workstream 4, Evidence / Baseline
- Section 1.5: Workstream 5, Option Development
- Section 1.6: Workstream 6, Option Refinement

1.1 Community Engagement

Undertaking community engagement is a key requirement in the development of the Long-term plan to ensure it reflects local priorities. It was agreed that specialist support would be commissioned to help the Town Board and Council with this engagement and a brief was issued to a number of companies.

Received submissions were scored on multiple quality questions, including their proposed teams, experience, case studies and programme plans, as well as the competitive price. The submissions were assessed and scored by a panel including Council officers, and a Board member. They were scored individually and then an evaluation panel meeting took place to discuss the strengths and weaknesses, with a collective decision made to agree scoring. The final quality scores were then combined with the price evaluation to identify the best performing submission.

The outcome of the evaluation will be shared with companies that submitted in advance of the Board meeting and a verbal update will be provided at the Board with the intention that work commences as soon as possible.

To help raise awareness of the Long-term Plan, discussions are ongoing within the Council on planned project hoardings, with the College re: their plans and with Peter Mason re: Field House. Further details on this can be provided verbally at the Board meeting.

1.2 Property / Town Centre Living

Delivering new homes and supporting the growth and regeneration of the town through a mix of housing, commercial and community assets is a key ambition of the Council's

Blueprint. This ambition has previously been endorsed by the Town Deal Board, and has emerged as a priority in Long-term plan workshops to date.

To help realise this ambition, support the development of the Long-term Plan, and build on previous & ongoing work in Daisy Hill a brief for development viability support has been prepared. This work will aid the understanding of potential land uses and levels of financial viability within Dewsbury Town Centre to identify short-, medium-, and longer-term priorities to deliver housing and stimulate growth. This will help to identify potential capital-related investment opportunities and priorities that could be included within the Long-term Plan.

A procurement exercise will be undertaken, and it is expected the work will commence in May to ensure it provides the evidence required for the submission of the Long-term Plan. A verbal update will be provided at the Board meeting.

1.3 Working Groups.

Following the initial thematic workshops to discuss the issues and potential opportunities associated with each investment theme it has been agreed that formal working groups will be established to help shape ideas, feed back into Board, and support in shaping the long-term plan.

It was agreed that a Board member will lead each group, and be attended by Board members, Council officers and relevant stakeholders. The working groups and Board member lead for each is summarised below:

- Safety & Security – led by Jim Griffiths
- High Streets, Heritage & Regeneration – led by Sophie Johnson
- Transport & Connectivity – led by Sam Heaton
- Comms, Engagement & Events – led by Helen Rose

Council officers are currently working the relevant leads to agree dates and the format for these sessions, and a further verbal update will be provided at the Board meeting.

1.4 Evidence / Baseline.

The measures and interventions proposed in the Long-term Plan will need to reflect a data-led evidence base, as well as local perspectives. This will identify local priorities and locally relevant outcomes.

Local perspectives will be gathered through the community engagement and the working groups, and to support the evidence base an exercise has been undertaken to review available data. Some of the key findings from the baseline data review are summarised in Appendix A, as further evidence and data is identified (e.g. the outputs from Workstream 3) this will be fed in.

This baseline evidence will be used to help establish a set of aims and objectives, which will be used to assess potential options. A verbal update will be provided at the Board.

1.5 Option Development

Using the outputs of meetings and workshops to date, a 'long-list' of potential interventions for inclusion in the Long-term Plan has been consolidated.

A summary of this list, identifying the potential funding type and investment theme will be shared with members for discussion at the Board meeting.

A multi-criteria analysis of these interventions will then be undertaken to generate a medium-list for initial costing. Discussions within working groups will help to develop implementation plans for the medium list against the funding profile for 0-3, 3-6 and 6-10 years to generate different scenarios and packages.

1.6 Option Refinement

This will utilise the outputs from the other workstreams to shape and refine the interventions into a short-list of preferred options within the available funding profile. In particular, the outputs from the community engagement and financial viability work which will be used to validate and/or amend the interventions and scenarios.

During this workstream implementation plans for the preferred options will be presented to the Town Board, along with a draft of the Long-term Plan for review and comment.

Appendix A – High-level findings from Evidence base

Demographics.

- High unemployment in parts of this ward compared to other areas in Kirklees.
- One of the most deprived areas in Kirklees, including housing and poor air quality.
- Low levels of physical activity.
- Dewsbury has a diverse cultural population which needs to be considered.

Land use.

- High vacant spaces in town centre.
- Low residential use and poor-quality housing in town centre.
- Many heritage buildings, that can be challenging to develop into other uses.
- High proportion of listed properties that are in poor quality condition.

Safety & Security.

- High crime rate in the Town Centre, however the crime rate overall in Huddersfield centre is significantly higher by comparison.
- Reputation of safety, security and crime is poor – not reflective of data, indicating improvements of reputation through communications is needed.
- Traffic collision hotspot at the station, and on key routes through the town.

High Streets, Heritage & Regeneration.

- Footfall significantly decreased over the last 20 years (in line with public transport). and significant decrease and poor recovery following pandemic.
- Highest employment rate is in the retail sector in the town centre, with a lack of other uses and trades.
- Evidence demonstrating vacant outlets in the centre are increasing.
- Daisy Hill having a high proportion of empty spaces, poor quality homes and non-compliant developments.
- Rough sleeping in the town centre is a challenge.

Transport & Connectivity.

- Driving is the dominant method of transport in the area, followed by walking, significant decrease in train usage. Demand and use of free town bus unclear
- High out-commuting to Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield, although high number of people working in the town live near-by.
- Ring road has been highlighted as one of the issues in accessing the centre.
- Car parks are underoccupied and have anti-social behaviour problems.
- Lack of safe and secure parking as well as storage for bikes.
- Transport access is lacking in attractiveness and lacking in green space.
- Non-compliant accessibility routes.
- Lack of wayfinding around the centre.

Other relevant Projects / Schemes.

- Dewsbury Market.

- Arcade.
- Daisy Hill & Field House.
- Sustainable Travel Bond Street.
- Bus Station.
- TransPennine Upgrade.
- Mass Transit
- A652 Dewes – Batley.
- Walsh Building Refurbishment.
- Public Space Protection Order.
- CCTV.