

Contact Officer: Nicola Sylvester

Dewsbury Town Board

Thursday 6th November 2025

Present: Sophie Johnson (Chair)
Councillor Graham Turner
Councillor Nosheen Dad
Chief Supt Jim Griffiths
Martin Walsh
Palvinder Singh
Iqbal Mohamed
Andi Eccles
Jackie Ramsay

In attendance: Joanne Bartholomew, Service Director, Development
David Wildman, Service Director, Skills & Regeneration
Michelle Illingworth, Project Officer
Thomas Fish, Acting Head of Town Centres
Regeneration
Thomas Speed, Ministry of Housing, Communities and
Local Government

Observers: Richard Butterfield, Historic England
Pat Hawkins

Apologies: Paul Burnett
Fara Butt
Anum Rehman
Christine Fox

16 Membership of Dewsbury Neighbourhood Board

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Fara Butt, Anum Rehman, Christine Fox and Paul Burnett.

The Chair announced the resignation of Charlie Dunn from the Board and thanked him for his contributions.

Andi Eccles and Jackie Ramsay were nominated as Board Members.

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RESOLVED-

That Andi Eccles and Jackie Ramsay be appointed as Board Members.

17 Declaration of Interests

RESOLVED –

Sophie Johnson, Andi Eccles and Martin Walsh, declared an interest as shareholders in the agenda item relating to The Arcade (Minute No. 25 refers).

Jackie Ramsay declared an interest as Member and Chair of the Arcade Group in the agenda item relating to The Arcade (Minute No. 25 refers).

Palvinder Singh declared an interest as Principal and Chief Executive of Kirklees College, in the agenda item relating to the Construction Skills Village (Minute No. 25 refers).

18 Minutes and action tracker of Previous Meeting

Michelle Illingworth, Project Officer, advised the Board that government has issued guidance that there was no longer a requirement for project adjustment requests, and therefore the associated action on the tracker was no longer necessary.

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 7th August 2025 be approved as a correct record.

Iqbal Mohammed, Member of Parliament, requested that his vote against the proposal to reallocate £1,299,081 of the unspent Town Fund Grant to the Dewsbury Arcade Scheme (Minute number 12 refers) be changed to an abstention, as he had intended to abstain rather than vote against the proposal.

That the action tracker be noted.

19 Admission of the Public

Agenda Items 1-15 were considered in public session.

20 Public Question Time

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, Gill Young attended the meeting and asked the following question which they had submitted in writing:

“There is little doubt that locally available opportunities to maintain health and fitness are required for the residents of Dewsbury. Previous meetings of the Town Board have raised the issues that the closure of Dewsbury Sports Centre impacts upon the local population. It seems that, after an (expensive?) external survey of the people of Dewsbury, the Council is now aware of the strength of local need and says it will support some provision.

Will the Town Board put its muscle behind actions to reopen Dewsbury Sports Centre since local inhabitants are weary of vague promises of something – tantalisingly perhaps a totally new provision – happening in the uncharted future

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when their needs are currently unmet and when the town has a Sports Centre visibly being left to decay in a similar way to the inhabitants?”

A response was provided by the Chair.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, Bruce Bird attended the meeting and asked the following question which they had submitted in writing:

“At the last meeting I asked a question from the public about community engagement. The version of my question recorded in the minutes has been both censored and corrupted so as to make it unintelligible.

The minutes then record that the Chair undertook to reply in writing. But no reply has been received. This is just the latest in a series of similar incidents that led to the Petition on this subject presented by six residents at the last meeting.

The petition requested that the Terms of Reference be amended to require questions from the public and the Chairs replies to be fully recorded in order to avoid incidents such as this.

The minutes record that the petition received a reply from the Chair. This is not true and we still await a response from the Board regarding our petition.

Will the Chair please bring this recurring irritation to a rapid conclusion in order to fulfil the Board's primary purpose to represent the views of the community and the council's obligation to support the work of the Board.

I am happy to meet with council officers to agree practical implementation methods.”

A response was provided by the Chair.

RESOLVED –

That questions and answers from Dewsbury Neighbourhood Board meetings would be published on the website as a priority.

21 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

22 Chairs Update

The Chair introduced herself to Board Members as the new Chair of Dewsbury Neighbourhood Board and advised that the Strategy Day which took place on 8th October 2025 had been an opportunity for Board Members to meet to discuss, review and interrogate the content of the Regeneration Plan. Thomas Speed from the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government was thanked for his support in developing the plan, visiting Dewsbury and being present to provide an update.

RESOLVED –

That the Chair's Update be noted.

23 Verbal Update from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Thomas Speed, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) provided a verbal update on the renamed “Pride in Place Programme”. The Board were informed that there were several key milestones over the coming months:

- 28th November 2025 – submission of the Regeneration Plan.
- December 2025 /January 2026 – review of submissions by the MHCLG, to include asking of questions for clarification, followed by confirmation and memorandum of understandings.
- Spring 2026 – Funding and the start of delivery.

It was understood by MHCLG that the plan would be indicative rather than final, as it outlined a 10 year vision. Updates on what had been achieved would be required at the end of each year, and funding would not be clawed back where there were valid reasons for change or slippage. It was key that decisions should be grounded in the community, and that engagement work had been carried out. During discussion, Mr Speed was positive about the work submitted so far.

Mr Speed advised the Board that the Pride in Place Programme was being extended to a further 170 smaller geographical locations.

RESOLVED –

That the Verbal Update from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government be noted.

24 Dewsbury Regeneration Plan
Thomas Fish, Acting Head of Town Centres Regeneration, presented a report on the Dewsbury Regeneration Plan.

The Board were advised that:

- The purpose of the report and the associated documents was to seek Board's approval on the Regeneration Plan to be able to submit to MHCLG by the deadline of 28th November 2025.
- Community engagement, workshops and strategy meetings had fed into the vision for the Plan.
- Following submission, there would be further opportunity in January/February 2026 to have further strategy sessions in preparation for the funding.
- Key performance indicators, implementation, evaluation and monitoring would be worked on with the Board, following submission.
- The 10-year Regeneration Plan and 4-year Investment Plan were aligned with Plan for Neighbourhood's three strategic objectives: Thriving Places, Stronger Communities and Taking Back Control.
- The Plan covered six themes of intervention which reflected community engagement priorities:
 1. Improving Safety & Security
 2. Supporting Businesses
 3. Growth Plans
 4. Redevelop Underused Sites
 5. Creative & Cultural Events

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6. Streets for Everyone

During discussion the Board raised the importance of the local context of Dewsbury, particularly in terms of deprivation, which was outlined in the report, and the magnitude of the challenges faced, however the Board recognised that this plan would be a step in the right direction for the town.

The Board suggested that the report be presented in a way that the public could easily digest, and which reflected the level of public engagement that had shaped the priorities.

Mohamed Iqbal, Member of Parliament, asked if the Board would consider funding a survey of the Dewsbury Sport Centre to investigate the possibility of re-opening it as a leisure facility. The Chair responded that the matter had already been brought to a vote by the Board, who would continue to support and recognise the need for sports and leisure facilities in Dewsbury, within the scope available to them.

During discussion over reporting on milestones and progress reporting during the delivery of the plan, it was agreed that the Council, as the accountable body, would keep records of the funding for each of the projects, and report to government 6-12 monthly, as well as feeding back to the Board more regularly and potentially publishing this reporting on the website. The exact nature of the reporting and the metrics would be discussed and agreed in January/February with the Board.

RESOLVED –

That the Board approve the submission of the Regeneration Plan to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the 28th November 2025, subject to the rewording of the report to include the wider context of Dewsbury within the vision for the plan.

25 Town Deal Project Update

Michelle Illingworth, Project Officer, updated the Board on three of the Town Deal Projects, and advised that:

The Arcade

- Supporting columns had been replaced within Moneypenny's unit.
- Steel trusses and Velux windows had been installed in the roof.
- Oak ridges had been approved and installed to the roof trusses.
- Glazing would be carried out week commencing 10th November 2025, by a local company.
- The completion and opening of the Arcade was on track for Spring 2026.

The Market

- Turner and Townsend had been appointed as Project Management and Quality Surveyors for the scheme.
- Planning condition discharge documents had been submitted
- A market container had been installed in Market Place to act as a central communication hub to inform people about the market project, open Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10am until 1pm.

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- There had been limited interest in appointing contractors on a single stage design and build contract, which meant that procurement was moving to a 2 stage contract to ensure value for money. This would extend the programme delivery by two months.

Better Spaces (Public Realm)

- At the beginning of December 2025 the creation of the seating area outside the Walsh Building should begin and be completed in January 2026.
- HVM bollards and boulders had been installed on the Town Hall Apron and the HVM gate installed on Town Hall Way.
- The central steps on Longcauseway had been completed.
- Work had commenced on the paving area within the Memorial Gardens.

The Chair noted that the Board had been provided with finances on a page which had been requested.

Thomas Fish advised the Board that the 2 stage procurement process was the best approach to take despite the delay to the Market project, to ensure better value for money in the long term. During discussion, the timescale and methods of communication about the delay with market traders was discussed, and the Board asked for assurance that this would be a priority. Thomas Fish undertook to provide a report to the Chair giving details of the delay and the communication strategy surrounding it, particularly regarding market traders. The report would be circulated to the Board.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Town Deal Project Update be noted.
- (2) That a report be provided to the Chair regarding the delay of the Market including any associated implications, and a strategy for engagement with market traders.

26

Board Member update

Chief Supt Jim Griffiths, West Yorkshire Police, advised the Board that the new Police Headquarters would be ready to move into in February 2026, and could be used as a meeting space. There was also the opportunity to collaborate with Kirklees College in terms of artwork for the building.

Palvinder Singh, Principal and Chief Executive of Kirklees College, updated the Board on the ongoing collaboration between the college and the Arcade, with students of construction, art, health and social care, along with students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities visiting the Arcade for learning experiences. Mr Singh reported that the food festival, Dewsbury-on-sea events, clothes swaps and workshops were bringing additional footfall into the town.

RESOLVED-

- (1) That the Board Member update be noted.
- (2) That a visit be arranged for Board Members to the Arcade and Market early in 2026, prior to the next Board meeting.

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27 **Future meeting dates**

The following dates were suggested as Board for the Meetings in 2026:

- 26th February
- 18th June
- 10th September
- 3rd December

RESOLVED –

That an alternative date for the meeting of the Board in February 2026 be proposed and circulated to Board Members, along with the other dates to be agreed.

28 **Acquisition of Strategic Property**

Thomas Fish, Acting Head of Town Centres Regeneration, requested that the Board discuss the principle of the Council leading on a negotiation on a strategic property within Dewsbury town centre on behalf of the Board. This would involve the potential use of regeneration funding.

RESOLVED-

That the Acquisition of Strategic Property be noted.

29 **AOB**

There were no other items of business.

30 **Exclusion of the Public**

RESOLVED –

That the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of agenda item 16 (Minute No. 31 refers) on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

31 **Acquisition of Strategic Property**

RESOLVED –

That the Committee approved the exempt information, which was an appendix to Agenda item 13.