

Contact Officer: Nicola Sylvester

Dewsbury Town Board

Thursday 25th July 2024

Present: Keith Ramsay (Chair)
Councillor Graham Turner
Iqbal Mohammed (MP)
Anis Dadu
Natalie Liddle
Sue Baker
Sam Heaton
Sophie Johnson
Anum Rehman
Palvinder Singh
Christine Fox
Fara Butt (Virtual)
Charlie Dunn (Virtual)

In attendance: Richard Thorpe, Dept for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Eden Clayton, Dept for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Joanne Bartholomew, Kirklees Council
Michelle Illingworth, Kirklees Council
David Wildman, Kirklees Council
James Blamires, Kirklees Council
Andy Raleigh, Kirklees Council
Helen Jakes, Kirklees Council
Jenny Tully, Counter Context
John Prendergast, Counter Context

Apologies: Councillor Cathy Scott
Chief Supt Jim Griffiths
Martin Walsh
Peter Mason
Helen Rose

- 1 Membership of Dewsbury Town Board**
Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Cathy Scott, Martin Walsh, Helen Rose, Peter Mason and Chief Superintendent Jim Griffiths.

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2 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2024 be approved as a correct record.

4 Admission of the Public

All items were considered in public.

5 Public Question Time

No questions were asked.

6 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

7 Chairs Update

The Chair advised the Board that an announcement had been made by the Government around the timing for submission of the Long-Term Plan due to the recent general election. This had now been suspended, and although a specific date for submission had not yet been identified, it was possible the submission deadline would be around six weeks away.

The Chair explained that this now gave the Board an opportunity to extend the consultation, particularly to gather the views of young people once they return to school and college at the beginning of September.

The Chair questioned the representatives from the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government who were in attendance at the meeting, whether the new Government would continue with the schemes of which Dewsbury Town Board was one. Richard Thorpe explained that given it was such a recent change in Government, it would take a little time to set out next steps and timeframes.

Mr Thorpe explained that discussions were being undertaken with the Treasury around spending ability, and this would inform individual decisions on schemes, noting that some had legal implications and some areas were further along in the process than others. It was likely that there would be a shift in terminology and the branding may change.

The Board was advised by Mr Thorpe that the schemes could possibly fall within the wider West Yorkshire ten-year economic plan, but the key message being fed back to the Government was the need for funding flexibility.

The Chair agreed that he would join with the chairs of Castleford and Keighley Town Boards in writing to the Government to seek clarification on the future direction of the schemes. This would be drafted and shared with the Board for approval.

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The Board was reminded by the Chair to ensure that their declaration of interest forms were completed and up to date.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That the Chairs update be noted.
- 2) That a joint letter between Dewsbury, Castleford and Keighley be drafted and circulated to Board Members.

8 Board Member Update

No updates were considered.

9 Communication Update

The Board received a presentation which updated them on the Long-Term Plan Community Engagement, Field House, Taking a Lead and the Arcade. Jenny Tully and John Prendergast from Counter Context attended the meeting to update on the six engagement events that had taken place.

The Board was advised that engagement work to date had been successful in reaching the public and a large number of people spoken to, completed the feedback forms. There were some consistent concerns around communication with a concern that although there is a lot of information available about the work of the Town Board, it was how that information was accessible for the public.

Michelle Illingworth, Project Officer for Kirklees Council advised that in relation to Field House, the banner that had been commissioned would go up on 2 August 2024 which would have a QR code directly to the Town Board website. Ms Jakes advised that she was working with the Council's communication team to promote it via a press release.

Regarding the Arcade, Ms Illingworth explained that the aim was to get as many hoardings up as possible, which would outline the plans so that the public knew what was happening. The hoardings will advertise the space available for businesses inside the arcade and will also advertise the Town Board.

The Taking the Lead programme as part of the Town Deal Creative Events project was a series of events and activities that had run over 18 months with clear indications of outputs and key achievements throughout the programme. A bus campaign will be launched from the 5 Aug – 1 Sept to promote the success of the programme.

The Board was advised by Helen Jakes, Senior Communications Officer, Kirklees Council that the timing of the announcement of a general election had curtailed the ability to promote the events due to pre-election restrictions.

Ms Tully advised that a key message from the public was the communication from the Town Board, particularly the public not being aware that the Town Board meetings were open to the public and that they could attend and ask questions. There had also been feedback regarding the continued closure of the Dewsbury Sports Centre and parking within the town centre.

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In total across the events and online, 476 feedback forms had been received with at least a further 20 still to collect. Over 1000 people were engaged with at the events, and 30,000 people had visited the website page with a total of 300 postcode areas being represented.

Ms Tully explained that the timing of the pre-election period had meant that the voice of young people had not been as strong in the communication, and now that the Long-Term plan deadline had been extended, this provided them with an opportunity to revisit the workshops to ensure the voice of young people in Dewsbury was represented.

The Board agreed that further work needed to be done to communicate with the public around the work of the Town Board, particularly via social media. It was agreed that if official communication was put out by either the Council, Town Board or Counter Context, the Board members would endeavour to promote that via their own social media presence.

The Board commented that one of the Counter Context team didn't live in Dewsbury, but it was confirmed that the team member had very strong connections with Dewsbury.

It was noted that the Chair and officers from the Council would meet with Counter Context to discuss next steps in relation to the continued consultation and would report back to the next meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That officers and Counter Context be thanked for their attendance and that the update be noted.
- 2) That the Chair and officers discuss next steps of extending the consultation with Counter Context.

10 Long Term Plan Update

David Wildman, Strategic Partnership Lead for Town Centres, Kirklees Council reiterated the suspension of the Long-Term Plan submission to the Government.

Mr Wildman commented that whilst the results of the consultation to date were representative, the suspension gave the Town Board the opportunity to engage further, particularly with young people.

Mr Wildman commented that the consultation confirmed that the Board did understand locally what needed to happen in Dewsbury and the engagement so far had highlighted the priorities for the community.

The Long-Term Plan was progressing with some forewords being draft along with a section around what success looked like along with key performance indicators within the document.

RESOLVED –

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- 1) That Mr Wildman be thanked for his attendance and his update on the Long-Term Plan.
- 2) That the draft version of the Long-Term Plan be circulated to the Board once completed.

11 **Project Updates**

The Board received the project updates and significant events were highlighted. In relation to the Market and Town Park, the planning application would be submitted in August with some changes to the loading bays being replaced with planting. The Board was assured that access would still be available for the market and events taking place, although the area would be car free during markets and events.

The Board was asked to consider whether it still felt the water feature was the most appropriate use of the area identified for animation, given the cost to maintain the feature, as this needed to be decided before planning permission was requested. The water feature was at the heart of the scheme and would have low level fountains with a pump and channel for incidental play.

The Board was advised that the consultation identified public support for the water feature as part of a unique offer to Dewsbury, to help activate the space and encourage a mix of visitors including young families. The cost to maintain had been estimated at c£30k per year. Initially this would be paid for through commuted sums from capital funding, but future costs could be sought through donations, grants, and sponsorships.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That officers be thanked for their attendance and updates on the projects.
- 2) That it be agreed the water feature remain part of the Town Park Scheme for the purposes of the planning application.
- 3) That in relation to the ongoing costs for the water feature in the Town Park, an options paper be considered at a future meeting of the Board.

12 **AOB**

No other business was discussed.

13 **Date of Next Meeting**

RESOLVED - The Board agreed to move the date of the next meeting so that the Long-Term Plan could be approved.