

Contact Officer: Nicola Sylvester

Dewsbury Town Board

Thursday 3rd October 2024

Present: Keith Ramsay (Chair)
Councillor Graham Turner
Chief Supt Jim Griffiths
Martin Walsh
Sue Baker
Sam Heaton
Sophie Johnson
Peter Mason
Helen Rose
Palvinder Singh
Christine Fox
Iqbal Mohamad

In attendance: Councillor Cathy Scott (Virtual)
Paul Burnett (Virtual)
Fara Butt (Virtual)
Michelle Illingworth, Kirklees Council
James Blamire, Kirklees Council
Andy Raleigh, Kirklees Council
Helen Jakes, Kirklees Council
David Wildman, Kirklees Council
David Shepherd, Kirklees Council

Observers: Sajid Hussain (MP case worker)
Richard Butterfield, Historic England

Apologies: Anis Dadu
Charlie Dunn
Natalie Liddle
Anum Rehman

Dewsbury Town Board - 3 October 2024

1 **Membership of Dewsbury Town Board**

Apologies were received on behalf of Anis Dadu, Charlie Dunn, Natalie Liddle, and Anum Rehman.

2 **Declaration of Interests**

Sophie Johnson declared an interest due to being appointed to the Board of Kirklees College as an independent member.

3 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25th July 2024 be approved as a correct record.

4 **Admission of the Public**

All items were considered in public.

5 **Public Question Time**

Written question from Gill Young:

Central Government publications emphasise the need to involve local people in local decisions and in the long-term planning for their defined area. Would the recently appointed Town Board consider supporting and encouraging the establishment of a Town Council for Dewsbury with members elected by local residents and responsible to them?

The Chair of the Board advised that a written response would be provided.

Question from Christine Cagna:

“It has been communicated that Dewsbury Sports Centre is deemed to be a matter of metres outside the town centre. Who made this decision and why? Given lines drawn on a map are arbitrary why can't this be changed so that funding can be directed to support the reopening of DSC for the benefit of the people of Dewsbury?”

The Chair responded to the question and advised that the boundaries were set by central government when Town Boards were introduced. While the Board recognised that Dewsbury Sports Centre was a priority for the community, its funding was a matter for Kirklees Council.

A supplementary question was asked, which queried the boundaries on the map showing the geographical area covered by the funding, which was published in the Dewsbury Town Board's terms of reference in March 2024.

The Chair of the Board advised that a written response would be provided to ensure clarity.

Dewsbury Town Board - 3 October 2024

Questions from Bruce Bird:

- 1) "Will the Chair provide the necessary information and resources to the contractor to ensure that the website can become the single online source of credible information telling a comprehensive and honest story of the TIP, the Long-Term Plan and the work of the Town Board?"

The Chair responded to the question and advised that the Board were working towards this, and the content would develop and evolve over time.

A supplementary question was asked: "Given the obligation in the terms of reference to plan ongoing opportunities for community engagement, will the terms include a mechanism on the website for the public to comment and the Board to respond which is visible at all times and can accurately be described as comprehensive and honest?"

The Chair responded to the questions and advised that this would be considered by the Board.

- 2) "More than a year ago the Chair committed to providing information to the public on all nine projects of the Town Investment Plan in the town centre within 3 weeks. Given the numerous opportunities available to do this, will the Chair explain why no part of this simple task has been achieved and will this and other communication failures be included in the Board Effectiveness Review scheduled for this month?"

The Chair undertook to provide a response in writing.

A supplementary question was asked: "Why is there nothing available on the ground in the Town Centre to inform the people of Dewsbury?"

The Chair undertook to provide a response in writing.

6 Deputations/Petitions

No deputations or petitions were received.

7 Chairs Update

The Chair advised that the Long-Term Plan had been delayed due the government requesting a longer period of development. Work with Counter Context had continued throughout August and September which had achieved positive results.

The Chair advised that the production of the plan was still appropriate and necessary and that the purpose of the board was to produce and approve the plan, then monitor and have oversight of its delivery, as well as to oversee the remainder of the projects of the Dewsbury Town Deal Board.

RESOLVED –

That the Chair's update be noted.

8 Board Member Update

There were no updates regarding Dewsbury Town Board Members.

9 Communication Update

Helen Jakes, Senior Communications Officer, advised the Board that there had been a lot of communications recently, including communications around the Market and Town Park. Work had been undertaken on updates on several projects across the board, which had gone to press and received positive publicity.

Ms Jakes informed the Board that the hoardings around the arcade were a visual platform which provided a heavy blueprint presence in the town centre, to make people aware of the ethos and projects within the blueprint. Going forward, the development of the market in the town centre would provide space for significant brand and messaging representation.

Conversations with the arcade group about advertising for traders were ongoing, and this project would be developed over the coming months in preparation for delivery next year.

During discussion of this item, Board Members expressed concern regarding communication messages on social media and engagement with market traders and requested a review of communications by the communications team. Ms Jakes advised that the markets team met regularly with the market traders and trade representatives to explain the plans. The current focus of engagement was around the decant into the temporary market.

The Chair of the Board requested that for any specific issues around individual market traders that they be brought to the attention of David Wildman, Acting Head of Town Centres. It was noted that an invitation to board members regarding onboarding training and induction had been offered, and welcomed take up the offer.

RESOLVED –

That the Communication Update be noted.

10 Long Term Plan Update

The Chair advised the Board that the Long-Term Plan had not yet been submitted to government and would be determined after the autumn budget.

David Wildman, Acting Head of Town Centres, provided a summary of the engagement activities undertaken to inform the Long-Term Plan which included key engagement statistics.

Mr Wildman provided an update and shared data on the engagement survey, it was noted that there was an imbalance in the demographic profile, particularly in relation to engaging with younger people and that most respondents either lived or worked in Dewsbury.

Dewsbury Town Board - 3 October 2024

Mr Wildman informed the Board that the project team was strengthening its understanding by targeting a more diverse range of respondents, businesses and young people. A member of the public had offered to help in reaching local mosques and cultural community centres. The Survey highlighted three words describing Dewsbury, where empty and unsafe were featured highly. Two-thirds of respondents found that the town to be unclean, with many people reporting that a more reliable bus service would make it easier to travel to and from town, along with free or cheaper car parking.

Mr Wildman presented a final slide which quoted individual responses from respondents, including ideas such as celebrating the town's past, introducing a repair café, more restaurants and bars and bringing more homes into the town centre.

In summing up, Mr Wildman concluded that he was confident in the data, and that strong themes had emerged which gave a good insight into what the people of Dewsbury wanted for the town. Five clear priorities were identified which were: buildings, safety and security, activity, supporting businesses, and more events. These priorities would shape where the funding should be allocated in the Long-Term Plan. Mr Wildman reiterated the importance of support from community leaders in promoting the engagement activities.

During discussion the Board commented on the town being advertised as a Leisure Town, when there was no ambition for a leisure centre. Mr Wildman responded that his reading of the data suggested that the leisure activities wanted were cultural and sporting programmes that could be done within the community, whilst working with existing groups and various communities within Kirklees could result in the town becoming a centre for integration. It was noted that the Board would agree the long-term plan at a future meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the Long-Term Plan update be noted.

11 Project Update

The Board received an update on the nine schemes that had been part of the Town Deal.

Andy Raleigh, Town Centre Regeneration Programme Manager, advised that Bond Street/Northgate was a key project to prioritise active travel throughout the town centre and would commence on-site within the next week. There was a new opportunity to improve the Bond Street junction with Northgate to achieve the objective of handing back priority to pedestrians. Corporation Street was to become right turn only and an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order would be in place for at least six months to allow for feedback on how well it works. It was hoped that it would stop “rat running” through the town centre, reduce volume of traffic and improve air quality, while the addition of a zebra crossing further prioritised pedestrians.

Dewsbury Town Board - 3 October 2024

The Arcade was in its fifth month of construction. Roof works were underway and being carried out by a Dewsbury company, and the glazing had been removed. The architectural masonry was taking place, with Kirklees College students gaining experience from the architectural stone masons which was a rare and valuable opportunity. Ducting work for all the services had commenced. Surveys for window restoration had been carried out and deterioration had been found in the timber which was now under further investigation. £616,000 had been secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to fund this work. Kirklees College photography students were monitoring the progress of the scheme and their work could be seen on the hoardings.

Michelle Illingworth, Project Officer, updated the Board on the Better Spaces – Public Realm Works, outside Dewsbury Town Hall. Phase One of the Town Hall Way works had commenced, to configure where the parking bays would be, and would continue until December 2024. Phase Two works on the Town Hall apron were to begin in October 2024 and continue until February 2025, with the Memorial Gardens work beginning in February and running until May 2025.

Palvinder Singh, Kirklees College, updated the Board on the history of the Construction Skills Village, Kirklees Build project and advised that 32 learners were now using the modular unit, which was used on a real building site to provide a true life training programme to the construction students of Kirklees College. Members of the Board were invited to attend a site visit of the Skills Village in order to gain a greater understanding of the project.

Mr Raleigh gave an update on the Market. The Market Planning application had been submitted in August and the determination date was expected to be 16th November 2024. In order to ensure the market continued during the construction, options were being considered by the markets team. Traders had been offered interviews and many of these had taken place in the summer to get their views on what would be required.

During discussions the Board raised concerns around market traders' views and felt that these had not been taken into account. The Chair advised that consultation had been public and ongoing for a variety of stakeholders, including the market traders and suggested that a meeting be set up with the market traders.

RESOLVED -

- 1) That the Project Update be noted.
- 2) That a site visit be arranged for the Construction Skills Village.

12 AOB

RESOLVED –

That there were no other business items.

13 Date of Next Meeting

28th November 2024

Location: Dewsbury Town Hall