

Todmorden Town Deal Board

4th March 2021

Meeting notes

In attendance:

Members

- Cllr Dacre (Co-Chair)
- Tim Benjamin (Co-Chair)
- Cllr Press
- Cllr Skelton
- Craig Whittaker MP
- Tony Lawson
- Stephen Curry
- Pam Warhurst
- Frankie Mullen
- James Duffy
- Andrew Kim
- Barbara Jones
- Rebecca Greenwood (WYCA Representative)

CMBC Officers

- Karen Houghton, Programme Manager
- Sarah Richardson, Assistant Director of Customer Services
- Shelagh O'Neill, Director of Regeneration and Strategy
- Daisy Wilde, Neighbourhood Coordinator

In Attendance

- Cllr Scullion, CMBC Member (Deputy Leader and, Cabinet member and Portfolio holder for Regeneration and Strategy)
- Shannon Jackson
- Billy Demkowicz

Apologies:

- Cllr Fenton-Glynn

Welcome:

Cllr Dacre and Tim Benjamin both chaired the meeting and welcomed all, including Shelagh O'Neill, new Director of Regeneration and Strategy.

Note: No outcome regarding the Towns Fund bid at present. Still awaiting to hear back.

Craig Whittaker MP mentioned that he had received information that due to May elections and purdah, the announcement will be after the elections.

Minutes from the last meeting – 14th January 2021

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

Declaration of Interests (relating to agenda items)

Cllr Dacre reminded members that any pecuniary i.e. financial and/or non-pecuniary i.e. other, need to be announced and noted either at the beginning of the meeting, or during discussions (if any arise that are relevant to the agenda items being discussed).

All Board Members have signed a Code of Conduct and have completed a Register of Interests form. These are filed should a member of the public make a 'Freedom of Information' request.

Interests noted during this meeting:

- Tim Benjamin is a member of TAODS and Todmorden Orchestra
- Cllr Scullion declared a non-pecuniary interest Calder Valley Community Land Trust (CVCLT)
- Barbara Jones is a member of Todmorden Learning Centre (TLC) and CVCLT
- James Duffy is a member of Todmorden Community Bandstand Group and CVCLT
- Stephen Curry is a member of Upper Calder Valley Renaissance (UCVR)
- Andrew Kim declared a pecuniary interest in the Murmuration Workshops and share in TLC
- Cllr Dacre is a member of CVCLT
- Pam Warhurst is a member of CVCLT

In regard to governance, Karen mentioned that consideration does need to be given to making meetings available in the public domain, akin to other Council meetings (these are streamed via Calderdale Councils YouTube channel).

Business case development, and initial plans for commissioning of consultant support

Karen discussed Todmorden TIP delivery programme (document circulated to the Board Members prior to meeting).

Ahead of Gateway 1 – submitted TIP – 6 weeks wait for possible outcome.

Board must consider getting 'ahead of the game'. Consider whether any projects can be fast-tracked to the full business case and consider doing a bit more work on business cases where projects may not have been as strong as other projects submitted – then consider procurement of work. Would the Board support this?

Comments and questions:

Pam – concerned about resource to make this happen – what is the scale of it? I am in theory investing in this idea if we can do it.

Barbara – TLC ready to go, about to take asset transfer (by the end of the month), and we're up and running from 1st April. Already have a business plan – all we need to know is what we need to present.

Cllr Scullion – As part of budget announcement yesterday – Towns Fund, varying amounts awarded. Occurred to me that we may need future iteration if we find ourselves with less than the 25 million – this needs to be considered. Perhaps Karen could endeavour to find out what the reasons were for Towns who received less than 25 million.

Shelagh – What the Government will come back with is a traffic light system of red, amber, green on projects. I will speak with colleagues across West Yorkshire about those Towns who have received an outcome and feedback to Karen.

Stephen – Colchester received 18 million – some of the projects did not look as ambitious as ours – would hope we would reach this level of funding. Riverside want some capacity funding – understood this is about working towards the plan. UCVR holding this on behalf of council – money left – there is some funding there that could be used.

Karen –with regard to capacity funding, we have in the region of £30,000 available – we have been invited to bid for more, and we may hear more about that this week. Two sides to capacity funding – getting projects further along, desire to see Towns Fund as a leverage for other funding and investment programmes. The risk is putting investment into projects that do not go further. In reference to TLC being ready, we think a lot of the projects are ready, but this will not hold with the green book proposal – in terms of what the ministry would say. TLC would need independently assessing.

Rebecca – three West Yorkshire towns were confirmed yesterday – all had a slight bit taken off Towns Fund ask, but this wasn't project specific, it was revenue – apart from that, they received the full ask. No specific projects red flagged. Some have received draft heads of terms; some have conditions on them i.e. working up more detail in order to access the funding. Some other towns have used this time (referring to waiting for the outcome) to set up subgroups to look at getting projects 'business case ready'.

Action: Rebecca to link in with Karen regarding what support WYCA can offer in terms of this.

Cllr Dacre – probably justified to take risk in order to move forward some of the projects. We need to decide which projects we consider.

Stephen – not sure any money spent would be wasted – it would be well used and will assist the projects to move forward.

Cllr Scullion – want to endorse what Stephen said – useful to have a pipeline of other projects as there are other pots of Government money available. It is important to be ready to take advantage of these.

Tim – generally support businesses to develop business cases for existing businesses – can help the business community – could bring in the business and community sector to support this as well as Calderdale Council.

Barbara – planning to do this as part of TLC, run business development courses to support this.

Stephen – hard to do without funding as small businesses may not have funding to do it themselves.

Cllr Scullion – the Council, the Chamber of Commerce and WYCA all do business support.

Pam – elements of continuum – what can we do with projects included in the bid to work up to be ready, spectrum of possibility bringing in expertise for those projects that were not in the bid but that could be facilitated – would be helpful to see those things laid out and then consider what the Board's role may be.

Karen – there is some programme wide mobilization required – recruitment, setting up assurance frameworks, providing support to organisations, investment panel – ought to be moving forward and not just waiting to hear the outcome – important to 'get ready' as timeframe may be tight.

Cllr Dacre – would it be helpful for Karen to do a structure about how to take these things forward for the next meeting?

Karen – I could do this via email – will be partly dependent on scale of capacity funding we receive. I can let project proposals know what the assurance framework is and what support CMBC and WYCA can offer.

Andrew – glad to see the youth engagement strategy – is there any funding available to look at two other areas – addressing diversity and also environmental sustainability – perhaps use funding to commission reports – is there any appetite for this?

Pam – I support these ideas to look at diversity and inclusiveness.

Cllr Dacre – is money available? Perhaps Karen could get back to us regarding capacity funding.

Karen – we do have some available if this is a priority for the board.

Stephen – could be brought into business case development.

Rebecca – just on the capacity funding point – I think the idea of supporting further youth engagement is really positive. I would just be a little cautious of making sure the capacity funding is used to develop robust business cases – the Green Book 5 case business cases generally need supporting by economist through consultancy in particular for developing the economic case inc. cost benefit analyses and financial cases – there are potentially 14 projects in the TIP to work up so would just make sure you consider this and development of those business cases alongside other priorities for using capacity funding.

Action: Once capacity funding outcome received, Karen to come back to the Board about how to take these discussions forward.

Comms Group: youth engagement strategy

Stephen shared an update on behalf of the Comms Group.

- Website update – now have 14 active pages, 6 blog posts, spikes on the website after PR, equal to visits to the documents page and the homepage, most people stay around 3 mins, latest news page to keep people updated, number of email requests coming in and these are directed to Karen if cannot be answered by the Comms subgroup. Would like to consider updating the members profiles so they are more aligned.
- Social Media update – Twitter feed now has 600 followers, the Facebook page has 259 followers and Instagram has 231 followers.
- The Town Hall railings has received the most attention, and then the TIP.
- Lots of questions coming in – Jim watching various Facebook groups and is helping to clarify any misconceptions.
- The website and Social Media presence is working well alongside Frankie's PR.

Youth Engagement Strategy

Shannon and Billy presented the youth engagement work undertaken thus far. PPT shared on screen.

Shannon and Billy are both from Todmorden and have been involved since January in order to develop a strategy to engage young people.

- January – engage and integrate youth of town into projects and broader project governance of the Towns Fund delivery – children, youth, and young adults.
- '1/3 of total population of Todmorden is made up of people under the age of 24'.
- Youth want to be engaged in what is happening – there is a real desire.
- Youth are a 'connector' to link in with local businesses and the wider community.
- Youth in our town are filled with entrepreneurship and skills – there is a real desire to bring those skills into the Towns Fund work.
- Covid-19 will have an impact on young people – CMBC do not have budget to keep up remaining services.
- Older youths suffer a disproportionate impact on loss of job/redundancies and obtaining opportunities.
- Billy shared his story

Positive feedback received from Board members to support Billy's story.

Shannon shared a summary of findings from the Youth Engagement work:

- What is needed – spaces (need to be non-school and non-home spaces available), creative and fun activities, decision making opportunities, networks for communication, resources (funding).
- Since January – resource building (grants submitted) and partnership building (Calderdale Council) – looking to partnership with voluntary and community sector – CMBC want to work with us.
- What is needed to support – capacity building funding (build an initial youth team – to cover expenses) and support with finding space (to host activities).

Comments and questions:

Craig Whittaker MP – the youth engagement strategy was very engaging and interesting read. I have always considered ‘youths’ 0-18 but I had a lightbulb moment reading the report and listening to Billy. There are lots of community organisations in Todmorden for young people. Billy is an entrepreneur – needs a different form of support to someone who may be low skilled and struggling to obtain work – I want to know about young people who may be struggling with vulnerabilities – what are we going to do to engage the hard to reach youth?

Cllr Dacre – this was touched on in Shannon’s report. This conversation is incredibly important – concentrate resources to enable youth strategy to thrive – we may need to take this into another meeting to explore further.

Pam – we have already talked about capacity funding. Is this an area we could resource?

Cllr Scullion – I think this is extremely important – makes the board stand out amongst different Town Boards around the country – communication strategy also really stands out – we need to take some of this offline as a subgroup and look at resources available. Tod Youth Club was one of the best in the borough – CMBC are looking at working in partnership to commission this project. Entrepreneurship – this is niche, and we need to address this.

Stephen – we have already taken on the role of engaging with youth in the Comms Group, we are happy continue that link.

Pam – do need to have a side meeting with a few people – talking about capacity building in town – how we do it – what we have heard from Billy and Shannon – would like to have conversations – explore what this may look like.

Shannon – we need to do a range of things that people can engage in, and build aspirations and skills, both of which require a bit of support. I do agree there is a strand around entrepreneurship but also a desire for older youths to mentor younger youths i.e. peer to peer learning.

Billy – does not end at age 18, the 18-25 group is not properly represented at the moment. A disenfranchised group of people may not want the Scouts or an Orchestra. People from any background may have potential – teaching people how to start their own business. Social medias is a good way of reaching those who may be harder to reach. I would be happy to have more meetings to explore these ideas and have further discussion.

Frankie – which projects and spaces already in the TIP can incorporate young people’s needs as articulated by Billy and Shannon?

Andrew – college, cafe/venue at Murmuration, Social Enterprise?

Cllr Dacre – which Board Members would like to be part of a subgroup to explore this further?

Pam, Stephen, Jim, Frankie, and Tony all volunteered.

Action: Karen and/or Daisy to arrange subgroup meeting with Shannon and Billy involved.

Note: Tim Benjamin left the meeting at 5:45pm.

Update on accelerator projects and communication plans

Karen shared an update on accelerator projects.

- Wheels Park – lease in place, planning in place, design done – delay waiting for Environment Agency. The problems encountered with EA conditions (briefly outlined by Cllr Dacre) have added to cost of Wheels Park project. The Accelerator Subgroup have agreed that a further funds be allotted to this project, taking total contribution to £225K. Town Council have contributed an additional £10K. This leaves £23K of Accelerator funds for spending on Centre Vale Park. The Board accepted this. A number of Board Members wished to be involved in the decisions on how the remaining money was spent-Park shelters mentioned.
- Christmas lights – secured and were put up over the Christmas period. They are currently being stored for next year.
- Hippodrome – received two payments and work has commenced.
- Cargodale – market stall unit – delay due to shipment of bikes from Europe.
- Unitarian Lodge – agreement finalised will be signed next week – received confirmation that they do not need listed building consent – have contractor to start the work.
- Town Hall railings – work ongoing, nearing completion.
- Water Fountains – this project could not go ahead as part of accelerator funding due to the Covid pandemic – this project now sits within the TIP.

Discussion had about PR for these projects. Comms Group to lead. Consideration to be given to Purdah.

Reflection on the development of the TIP

Cllr Dacre suggested this was picked up in a future meeting.

Other

Andrew – we never got back to my question. Can we ask the board: can we commission studies for - diversity and access, and sustainability?

General support amongst the Board Members who were present.

Date of next meeting

Thursday 15th April 4-6pm.