

Bridgwater Town Deal Board

28th February 2020

Sedgemoor Room

2:30pm – 4:30pm

MINUTES

1) Welcome and Introductions

DB commenced the meeting at 2.30pm and introduced members as it was the first meeting:

Board Members

- Peter Elliot – PEI
- Paul Moore – PM
- Ruth Lambert – RL
- Heidi Coombe – HC
- David Eccles – DE
- Cllr Gill Slocombe – GS
- Fiona McMillian – FM
- Doug Bamsey – DB
- Ian Liddell-Grainger MP – ILG
- Justin Sargent – JS
- David Hall – DH
- John Lovatt – JL
- Paul Edwards – PEd
- Cllr Mick Lerry – ML

Non-Board Members

- Katherine Schollar – KS
- Nathaniel Lucas – NL
- Paul Hickson - PH

2) Ratifications of Chairperson

- The board discussed and decided FM would chair the meeting.
- HC mentioned that other board committees have a vice chair and it is normally the MP to do so. ILG put across that he would not like to take up this position.
- FM discussed the Vice Chairmanship – it was asked to be set up in her absence.
- If anyone was interested – let Fiona know and would be discussed and decided at a later date.

3) Story So Far: Process and Timetable looking forward

- In September 2019, the Government launched the Town Deal process. Up to £25 million can be awarded to a town in order to improve its surroundings. 101 towns were to be included in this scheme and Bridgwater was one of them.
- In December 2019 – Nathaniel Lucas sent in the checklist to Government.
- **Action:** NL to circulate checklist to distribution group.

- January 2020 capacity funding of £162,000 was received from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to be used to research, consult and present a robust Town Investment Plan.
- A microsite is being developed in order to keep the public aware of the scheme.
- The microsite will allow the public to make comments that board will be able to access.
- The importance of producing the town investment plan was highlighted. There is a choice of 3 cohorts of submission:
 - May
 - August
 - October
- *A town investment plan must be submitted by one of these dates.*
- As it was the first meeting, it was discussed it was too premature to decide the date for submission.
- PH suggested August as this gives the board time to discuss and deliberate on decisions. NL suggested that there must be a high degree of confidence that the submission can be made by August 2020.
- ML suggested October 2020 as it would allow consultation for the Town Investment Plan to be made.
- The next 2-3 weeks, a decision will need to be made on when the board aims the plan to be ready.
- It was expressed that May 2020 maybe too soon in order for the board to get the plan ready.
- August 2020/October 2020 seemed to be the more realistic deadlines to meet for the plan to be in place.
- The scheme can award up to £25 million. The board aim to gain the £25 million if possible.
- ILG made an important note that the board should get the plan in as soon as possible. The government doesn't like surprises.
- ILG wants to aim for May 2020.
- **Action:** *FM and NL to put together a note for the board to make suggestions – ILG to feedback to NL about the info he has found out.*
- Overall, the board is steering more towards August 2020 as the deadline but might consider to aim for May 2020.

4) Government Objectives

- The 3 main objectives for the board to work towards are:
 - Urban Regeneration Planning and Land Use
 - Skills and Enterprise Infrastructure
 - Connectivity
- Overall, the objectives are very broad – The question was asked what areas does the board want to focus on?

5) Intervention Area

- The intervention area was originally prescribed by Government and is was based on the ONS definition of Bridgwater.
- After evaluating the intervention area – North and South of Bridgwater were missed from the area.
- It is an aim for Parishes that sit with in the Intervention area to be included in discussions as part of a Sub board. This will be arranged shortly.

- It was discussed that the board would need to think about the cultural essence of Bridgwater.
- The board could also utilise existing strategies.
- ILG suggested a plan of connectivity for Bridgwater.
- **Action:** *To create a series of overlays on the intervention map in order for the board to show Bridgwater's assets.*
- It was recognised that Bridgwater's Cultural sector is vital.
- There needs to be a set of themes in order for the board to have outcomes.

6) Bridgwater Town Deal Vision

- The question of what are we hoping the town deal will do for Bridgwater was raised.

Success Factors

- Bridgwater has HPC and Gravity. These are two of the biggest construction projects in Europe.
- The level of education and training statistics are through the roof.
- Level of employment statistics are increasing.
- We have a local train station and are near the motorway.
- Bridgwater has two airports within an hour radius of the town.

Challenges

- People avoid Bridgwater as other places have been more successful.
- The board stated they would like to turn the town centre into something sustainable.
- Frome has had a huge transformation – with a monthly Sunday market, which is very successful, and popular shopping destination.
- It was highlighted that Glastonbury have bid too. Since Glastonbury isn't too far from Bridgwater – there must be a plan to set Bridgwater apart from Glastonbury.
- The Town Investment Plan must contribute to components that already exists and is successful in Bridgwater.
- The board will need to evaluate what is already being delivered and how to tackle the gaps in Bridgwater – old buildings etc.
- Where are the significant challenges? E.g. Old Bridgwater hospital...

Opportunities

- There is an opportunity to turn Bridgwater back into destination of choice.
- The board will need to think what it is that will set us apart? It must be different.
- The question was asked of the Board what the board wants Bridgwater to be known for.
- One suggestion was for independent shops for Bridgwater to thrive.
- There are lots of empty buildings in the town centre and across Bridgwater. This could draw investment opportunities away. The improved appearance of the shop front could help with this and perhaps funding could be used to improve shop fronts?
- Northgate is a huge opportunity to encourage people to come to Sedgemoor.
- **Action:** *At the next meeting, there will need to be an update on ongoing or complete projects.*
- Bridgwater has a rich culture and heritage, therefore could focus on things like the carnival and canals.
- One suggestion was for a project that the public can be excited about and get behind.

- Potentially have more events (similar to the Quayside Festival) to bring people into the town.
- Any proposition should include emphasis on shopping, culture and entertainment.
- A shortlist of good ideas should be drawn up for the Board to consider.
- Focus on Cultural dimension, Industrial expertise and Technical expertise.
- **Action:** *To recap on what Bridgwater Town Centre has done previously. E.g. Bridgwater vision, celebration mile etc.*
- A targeted area such as St John Street could be a focus, or Eastover which is an area that needs improvement.

7) Next Steps

Existing Strategic Documents

- **Action:** *NL to provide link to google drive to all the strategic documents making executive summaries.*

Resources to deliver Town Investment Plan

- Need to have a dedicated resource to deliver the Town Investment Plan. Work has begun on the procurement spec and a decision needs to be made on if it is a consultant or an individual who is best suited to carry out the work.

Prepare engagement/consultation plan

- Look at the HPC engagement process.

Publicly and promotion

- The Board and other stakeholders need to own the messaging for the scheme. This could be achieved through working with the Bridgwater Mercury.

Agreement of terms of reference.

- It was discussed that the terms of reference will need to be reviewed by Board Members and discussed at the next board meeting.
- **Action:** *A declaration of interest form still needs to be developed for Board Members to sign up to. NL to produce this.*

8) Date of next meeting

- Board meetings were originally set to take place every 8 weeks. However, it was brought to the boards' attention that Glastonbury has one every 6 weeks and other town boards have it every 4 weeks.
- It was suggested that the board could hold regular meeting more often at the start of the process and then space them out nearer to submission.
- It was agreed the date of the next meeting will be: **3rd April 2:30pm – 4:30pm at BCA**

9) AOB

- The board need to ensure additional external people that are considered of benefit to the process are invited to present, or potentially become members themselves.

Meeting was closed at 4:25pm.