

# **Bridgwater Town Deal Board**

## **Terms of Reference**

### **1. Introduction**

**1.1** Bridgwater is situated in Somerset, at the heart of Sedgemoor District and has a rich heritage in terms of industry. It is considered as the leading industrial town in the County, benefiting from significant infrastructure projects in its vicinity including the expansion of Hinkley Point Nuclear Power Station and the development of the Gravity Enterprise Zone.

**1.2** Bridgwater's industrial pedigree is further enhanced by its excellent connectivity, in terms of access to J23 and J24 of the M5, the A38 and A39, and rail services. It also has close links to the rapidly expanding economies of Bristol and Exeter, and the airports located near these cities.

**1.3** Bridgwater also benefits from a high quality natural environment. It is the gateway to the Somerset Levels and Exmoor, and is framed by the Bristol Channel and, on either side, by Mendip Hills and Quantock Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**1.4** In November 2019, Bridgwater was officially announced as one of the 101 towns earmarked to benefit from the Government's £3.6bn Towns Fund with the opportunity to secure up to £25 million of investment for the town.

**1.5** Government set up the Towns Fund to address growth constraints and to deliver long term economic and productivity growth through:

- Urban regeneration, planning and land use,
- Skills and enterprise infrastructure,
- Connectivity.

**1.6** The Towns Fund provides Bridgwater with an opportunity to agree a Town Deal with Government (Cities and Local Government Unit (CLGU)) securing significant investment in growth that will ultimately benefit businesses, communities and individuals across the town.

**1.7** It is a requirement of the Town Fund that Sedgemoor District Council (SDC), as lead authority, convenes a Town Deal Board and produces the associated governance practices and procedures associated with the newly formed board.

## **2. Role of the Bridgwater Town Deal Board**

**2.1** The Bridgwater Town Deal Board will be the body that shapes the vision for the town as well as defining the strategy and steps that need to be taken to achieve that vision.

The Board will:

- i. Develop and agree an evidenced based Town Investment Plan by:
  - a. Assessing evidence of the required need for projects (applying due regard in relation to equality and diversity and protected characteristic), taking into consideration background information, context and consultation with local communities and businesses.
  - b. Developing a vision that takes into consideration existing and emerging local socioeconomic strategies.
  - c. Identifying priority areas broken down by a realistic project delivery timeframe categorised as short, medium and long term interventions.
- ii. Develop a clear programme of interventions.
- iii. Coordinate resources and influence stakeholders.

**2.2** The geographical area the Town Deal Board will represent is defined on the map found in appendix A.

**2.3** The Town Deal Board serves as an advisory function to SDC as Lead Council, but ultimately will work with the Lead Council to develop a Town Investment Plan (TIP). The TIP will set out a clear understanding of Bridgwater focusing on its assets, opportunities and challenges backed up by a strong evidence base.

## **3. Board Membership**

**3.1** The Board is made up of 17 members comprising:

- An independent chair from the private sector
- The Member of Parliament for Bridgwater
- The Deputy Leader/Portfolio Holder for Inward Investment and Growth at SDC
- The Strategic Director at SDC
- A representative of Somerset County Council

- A representative of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
- A representative from the FSB
- A representative from a large business in Bridgwater
- A representative from a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) in Bridgwater
- A representative of Bridgwater and Taunton College.
- A representative of the Somerset Community Foundation
- A representative from two national bodies that are relevant to Bridgwater.
- A developer representative
- A representative of Bridgwater Town Council.
- A representative of the YMCA
- A representative of the Bridgwater and Taunton College Trust

Nominations will be invited from the stakeholders detailed above to represent them.

**3.2** The Town Deal Board will have power, at any time, to co-opt additional members if and when an appropriate candidate becomes available.

**3.3** The Town Deal Board can extend invitations to individuals with specialist background knowledge to attend board meetings for the purpose of consultation and evidence and data gathering. For the avoidance of doubt, such individuals will not be members of the Board and will not be entitled to vote at board meetings.

**3.4** A Town Deal Board member shall cease to be a member in the event of:

- Their removal/replacement by the appointing authority/organisation/relevant nominated body.
- Such member giving written notice to the Board of their resignation, to take effect on receipt by the Board of the notice of resignation, or, if later, the date stated in the notice.
- A member's bankruptcy, making of any arrangement or composition with creditors, or liquidation, or in the case of an organisation, winding up,
- liquidation, dissolution or administration or anything analogous to any of the foregoing occurring in relation to a member
- Such member's death or, if a corporation/business, its winding up.

**3.5** SDC will provide administrative support to the Board, through its Economic Development function.

**3.6** Regular meetings will be held by Sedgemoor District Council with the other Parish Councils that include areas within the area defined as Bridgwater. The views of the group will be fed into the Board and it will be kept up to date on

the Board's decisions. Bridgwater Town Council will be invited to be part of this Group.

#### **4. Board Meetings**

- 4.1** The Town Deal Board will hold an Inaugural meeting within 30 days of the agreed commencement date (31<sup>st</sup> January 2020).
- 4.2** Following the Inaugural meeting the Board will meet 6 times in the first year of operation with an expectation of meeting 4 times per year thereafter if there is an ongoing requirement for the Board to convene.
- 4.3** No business shall be performed at any meeting unless a quorum is present. A quorum shall be no less than five board members including representation from the Lead Authority (SDC) and representation from local business.
- 4.4** Wherever possible, the elected and co-opted members of the Town Deal Board shall reach decisions by consensus and shall seek to achieve unanimity.
- 4.5** In exceptional circumstances, where a formal vote is required, the proposal will be carried by a simple majority agreement of the voting members present and voting by a show of hands. Each members vote shall qualify as a single vote. In a situation where a body has two representatives that vote will be counted as a single vote from the body collectively. The Chair shall have a casting vote in the event of a tied vote.
- 4.6** Members of the public will not be able to attend Board meetings, because of the commercially sensitive nature of the discussions that will be taking place.
- 4.7** SDC will provide a minimum of 5 clear working days' notice of all Board meetings by publishing it through a suitable communication channel.
- 4.8** SDC will publish on its website copies of agendas and reports that are open to public inspection a minimum of 5 clear working days before each Board meeting. Copies of minutes of board meetings that are open to public inspection will also be published on SDC's website as soon as practicable once they have been approved by the Board.
- 4.9** SDC will invite CLGU to send a representative to attend Board meetings as an observer.

#### **5. Board Member Conduct**

- 5.1** All members of the Town Deal Board shall observe the "Seven Principles of Public Life" (the 'Nolan' principles as detailed below) and will be bound by their own authority's/organisations code of conduct in their work on the Town Deal Board

## 5.2 Nolan Principles: -

- **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- **Integrity:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity:** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.
- **Honesty:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

**6.1** The role of the **Chair** is to lead the Town Deal Board in shaping the vision for the town as well as defining the strategy and steps that need to be taken to achieve that vision.

**6.2** The key responsibilities of the post are to :

- Provide leadership and direction to ensure the Board achieves its goals.
- Effectively Chair meetings of the Board, guiding it towards decisions that ensure the vision, strategy and key objectives of the Board are delivered.
- Be an effective advocate on behalf of the Town Deal Board, SDC and the people and businesses of Bridgwater.
- Be an effective influencer and ambassador for Bridgwater at local regional and national levels.
- Ensure the Board adheres at all times to high standards of ethics and governance.

- Exert a casting vote in Board Decisions if circumstances so require.

**6.3** The role of the **Board Members** is to support the Chair in shaping the vision of the town and ensuring the correct steps are taken to make that vision a reality.

**6.4** The responsibility of Board Members includes:

- Attending Board meetings.
- Reflecting the agreed view of the Board in discussions with partners and stakeholders.
- Taking account of views of other stakeholders and being mindful to different views and requirements.
- Contribute to the development of a TIP
- Formally represent the Board in meetings with other bodies and partner organisations.

## **7. Conflicts of Interest**

**7.1** Any conflicts of interest should be declared to the Lead Council before officially joining the board. SDC will maintain a register of Board Member interests that will be reviewed annually to ensure it is up to date.

**7.2** The following provisions shall apply to all Board Members should they be faced with conflicts of interest.

- Should a Board Member be faced with a conflict of interest the person shall immediately declare the nature of the conflict/potential conflict and withdraw from any business where the conflict would be relevant.
- Whenever a person has an interest in a matter to be discussed at a meeting the person will not be:
  - Entitled to remain present at the meeting during discussions of the matter.
  - Counted in the quorum in relation to the matter.
  - Entitled to vote on the matter.

The Board may, at any time authorise a person to remain in the meeting whilst a matter in which they have or may have a conflict of interest is discussed, provided that the conflict of interest is declared and the person subject to the conflict of interest shall not be entitled to vote on the matter.