

Workington Towns Deal Board Meeting
Friday 14th February 2020
Draft Minutes

Attendance

Board Members

Cllr Alan Barry	Cumbria County Council
Chris Bagshaw	Workington Town Council
Valerie Hallard	Churches Together in Workington
Mark Jenkinson MP	MP for Workington
Bridget Johns	Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service
Cllr Mike Johnson (Acting Chair)	Allerdale Borough Council
Chris Natrass	Lakes College
Cllr Paul Scott	Allerdale Borough Council
Anthony Wareing	Workington Heritage Group
Corrine Watson	Cumbria LEP

Officers

Julie Alexander	Allerdale Borough Council
Hannah Dolan	PA to Mark Jenkinson
Alison Hatcher	Cumbria County Council
Kevin Kerrigan	Allerdale Borough Council

1. Introductions

In the absence of John Coughlan the meeting was chaired by Cllr Mike Johnson. The Chair welcomed all Board Members and their supporting officers to the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Val Ayre	Cumbria County Council
John Coughlan	TSP Engineering
Sami Falou	BEIS
Stuart Farnell	Scoop
Jonny Lowe	Iggesund
Lizzy Shaw	Cumbria County Council

2. Minutes of last meeting and Actions

The board agreed the minutes of the last meeting.

An example of good practice (Grimsby) had been added to the Teams site, but some members had been unable to access it. Documents can be emailed individually if this continues to be a problem.

The lack of date, origin, page numbers and headers on documentation was discussed. It was agreed that referencing guidelines would be circulated prior to the next meeting.

3a. Towns Fund Boundary

The boundary extension proposed by the board has been agreed by the government. The notification letter also confirmed that the government would be issuing further information and guidelines on the type of schemes that could be invested in, timelines, and match funding.

The revised boundary incorporates parts of Winscales parish, and the need for a reporting mechanism to this Parish Council was discussed.

3b. Workington Policy Briefing

Board members discussed the vision for the Towns Fund. It was agreed that it should build on existing strategies, and the vision for Workington set out in the Allerdale Local Plan was examined as a starting point. Whilst all encompassing, it was suggested that the vision needed to be stronger, more distinctive to Workington, and possibly referencing sustainability, inclusive growth, skills, education, productivity and innovation. Social inclusiveness and the third sector were also raised. Board Members are to each consider the vision and send in their thoughts. It was also suggested that a strapline to accompany the vision would be useful.

The data and evidence is a good starting point, and the disparity between the different wards requires further consideration, although the importance of using appropriate terminology to describe the differences between wards was noted.

4a Opportunities and Challenges Paper

The table of opportunities and challenges requires further input from the board members. The consultant team will help refine this, but at this stage the key is to keep the focus wider than the Towns Fund, on what is relevant and the right fit for Workington. Information can be continually reviewed. Again the messages that particular wording sends out is important.

It was agreed that this was a good starting point to build upon, and will assist in the process in selecting priorities and making the case for why particular projects are needed.

Sustainability, green connectivity, deprivation, heritage and tourism issues were discussed. Further promotion of Workington is needed, and an improvement in the standard of public realm and signage. Other towns have Business Improvement Districts, and there is currently no Chamber of Trade. The experience of establishing a cohesive business partner organisation in Maryport could be used to develop something similar in Workington. The input of businesses is essential, and retailers are going to need to change to address competition and issues connected with office space, housing, and other services. Further consideration is required in relation to how the Board engage with business.

4b. Project Ideas

Projects have been put forward by partners and categorised into the three themes. It is important to identify which projects already have funding aligned to them; match funding may be possible, for example the Brow Top underpass scheme and the business incubator units on Reedlands Road.

It was discussed that the totality of ambitions for Workington need to be set out, and which ones will be funded by the Towns Fund; the plan needs to show that all things are complementary. For example the Towns Fund won't pay for railway improvements, but the board needs to support the Department of transport's business case for the west coast railway network. Projects need to weave in and out of each other.

The views of local people need to be reflected too, can't be just top down schemes. At this stage high level priorities are important rather than the detail. The local plan can be a starting point as a spatial framework; some projects can be funded directly and others supported.

It was suggested that focus should not just be on the Town Centre, but consideration could also include projects in Moor Close, Salterbeck and the rest of the town if they demonstrated a good fit with the priorities for the programme.

5. Board Work Programme

Looking ahead for the next two meetings, further guidance is expected. The vision, challenges and opportunities will need to be revisited. The Consultant will join the board for a following meeting, and the project timeline established. The similarities with LEP growth deals, Borderlands, and Future High Streets Fund bids were noted,

and the role that the LEP could play, facilitating getting chairs and project leads together will be helpful.

Priority projects and programmes need to be established early on. Easy to identify themes to address, but spending on precise schemes/detailed work will need to be outlined, that are HMT compliant and meeting government and local government priorities.

6. Community Consultation

The government has established the 'My Town' website in which members of the public can post comments on projects/ issues that they think funds should address in their town. Every one of the 100 towns identified as part of the Town Deals has an individual page. The Board agreed that ABC will start to raise the profile of the 'My Town' website in a press release and via social media to encourage the submission of responses.

There was a general discussion in relation to which existing groups, individuals, and organisations should be contacted as part of a community engagement process? Caution was expressed about raising expectations at this stage, the need to make the public aware of the fund, but also that we have to bid for it and it is not guaranteed.

There is a potential for physical displays and the use of the town council's electronic information boards, and incorporation in housing association newsletters and CVS e-bulletins.

The board agreed to set up a community engagement subgroup led by ABCs Programme Director before the next meeting, and which will include Chris Bagshaw, Bridget Johns, Chris Nattrass, and Valerie Hallard. The sub group will develop an engagement and communications strategy, looking at the key messages to issue, webpage and digital communications, physical boards and drop-in sessions later on in the process.

7. Future Meetings

Next Board meeting – Friday 13th March – 14:30 to be held at The Lakes College, Lillyhall

Meeting closed at 16:05