

RUNCORN TOWN DEAL BOARD –VISION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

In September 2019, the UK Government identified 101 towns to participate in bidding for up to £25m, to support the delivery of innovative regeneration plans. Those towns selected generally had a proud industrial and economic heritage but had not yet benefitted from recent economic growth. The initiative added £1.325bn to a previously announced towns fund, targeted at stimulating regeneration of towns, town centres and high streets, taking the total fund allocation to £3.6bn. These additional funds are referred to as “Town Deal Funds” and are aligned to “whole town” proposals, not just town centres.

Government set an initial requirement to complete a written “readiness statement” which was completed and submitted by 19th December 2019 and to establish a Town Deal Board which should hold its first meeting no later than January 2020.

Objective of the Fund

The objective of the Town Deal Fund is to drive the economic regeneration of towns to deliver long-term economic and productivity growth via:

- **Urban regeneration, planning and land use** – ensuring towns are thriving places for people to live and work, including by increasing density in town centres; strengthening economic assets including local cultural assets; site acquisition, remediation, preparation, regeneration, making full use of the planning tools to bring strategic direction and change
- **Skills and enterprise infrastructure** - driving private sector investment and ensuring towns have the space to support skills and small business development
- **Connectivity** – developing local transport schemes that complement regional and national networks as well as supporting the delivery of local digital connectivity.
- **Local** - Most importantly, local communities must have a say on how the money is spent.

Government named the Lead Authority as Halton Borough Council and set out the role of the Lead Authority, which is to:

- Convene the Town Deal Board
- Make clear the governance structure and decision-making structures and ways of working of the Town Deal Board which should be made public
- Define the area the Town Deal Board will represent on a map (using boundaries defined by ONS)
- Ensure that the Town Deal Board aligns with the governance standards and policies of the Lead Council including whistle blowing, conflicts of interest and complaints
- Be open by default about Town Deal Boards whilst recognising commercial sensitivity
- Ensure that all evidence and supporting documents will be made publicly available

The administration of these funds will be delivered as a two-stage process:

- **Stage 1:** providing capacity support to places to put the structures and vision in place in order to move to the next stage of agreeing a deal (estimated 6 months)
- **Stage 2:** places to use their locally owned Town Investment Plan to put together a business case to apply for funding for interventions (timeframe as yet unknown)

TOWN CENTRE VISION

Role of the Town Board

The Board will form to analyse the town's current situation, formulate a vision for its future, agree activities and interventions to realise this vision and oversee their delivery.

Key to this work is identifying an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable vision for the town centre as a successful, sustainable and well-liked place (the Town Vision).

The Board's role is advisory. It will:

- *Influence* the submission of the town's Towns Fund submission as well as efforts to attract other funding, be it from the private or public sector
- *Coordinate* plans, contributions and initiatives to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts
- *Promote* the Town Vision and the work to be undertaken together
- *Monitor* progress in activities over their delivery period

Working Principles

The Board can agree the Town Vision by systematically considering:

- How can the town's anchor institutions and main stakeholders contribute to achieving the Town Vision, recognising that this contribution may arise through financial contributions, supporting programmes, volunteering, joint promotion or initiatives or other means? The board should consider what avenues for impact are available
- How to bring together public, private and community partners from across the Borough to support the Council in identifying and supporting efforts to deliver the long term sustainability and vitality of our town centre as the focal points of our community. In particular, there is no merit in establishing competing boards – the Town Board will need to collaborate with existing interest groups
- Diversity – we believe our submissions will benefit from a broad range of backgrounds and interests

Key Activities

In its ***first phase of work***, the Board will need to answer the following questions:

- *What is the town for*, i.e. what should attract people to visit, work and live in the town?
- How should people (locals and visitors) *use* the town, including the homes, shops, business spaces, public spaces and amenities?
- How does this Town Vision fit into the *wider* system, i.e. the network of villages, towns and cities surrounding? What makes this town's offer attractive and different from elsewhere?

- What is it that will make the town's *offer* attractive?

The answers to these questions should of course be both aspirational and founded in financial and social reality.

In its **second phase**, which may follow directly, the Board will need to answer the following questions:

- What are the gaps between this Town Vision and the current situation and what has caused the gaps? We must recognise here that many of the gaps will be beyond the town's direct control, e.g. changes in retail economy, changes in job market, and changes in tourism trends.
- What changes to the current physical environment would help achieve the Town Vision? This includes high streets, transport links, digital connectivity, housing supply and renewal, i.e. the fabric and connectivity of the place.
- How can we support locals to join and contribute to this Town Vision? This refers to how people use and participate in the life of the town. It links to locals' skills, access to employment, wellbeing and the cultural offer. For LCR, culture is the rocket fuel of regeneration.

In its **third phase**, which will take deliberation, outreach and analysis, the Board will need to determine as a collective:

- Interventions and projects
- Partnerships
- Funding
- Communications
- Delivery

There will be funds available to facilitate these phases from the government's capacity resources.

Workstream

Ultimately, the Town Deal Board must all agree on an evidence-based, strategic Town Investment Plan, which must be informed by existing local strategies to develop a clear programme of intervention, coordinating resources regionally and influencing stakeholders to invest.

The Town Investment Plan will include background, context and evidence for the suggested strategic intervention, as well as a Town Vision that complements local economic strategies. If the proposal does not align with the objectives of the Towns Fund or is not completed by summer 2020, it is unlikely a deal will be agreed.

There should also be a consideration for the short, medium and long term plan for the town that will address how:

- Activity can be locally funded.
- How projects can be supported by public investment (such as Towns Fund) with cost estimates.

- How projects can be privately invested.

Additionally, towns must demonstrate their capacity to delivery their investment plan. To be included in the first tranche of funding, towns must ensure they can:

- Begin delivery by 2020/2021.
- Ensure that proposals align with the Towns Fund objectives and address the strategic need identified in the individual Town Plan.
- Provide a total value spend and expected spend for 2020/2021.
- Agree delivery of Towns Fund with relevant partnerships and obtain planning permission for intervention to begin.
- To manage in-house capacity for proposed scale of project and accountability for funding delivery.
- Demonstrate an ability to spend capital monies by 2021/2022.

All Town Investment Plans must be informed by existing local strategies, including those that exist at Liverpool City Region Combined Authority level, as they provide the strategic overview of an area and hold powers that are critical to deliver the aims of the funding.

It is anticipated that members will support the development of a series of strategic and policy recommendations for the town, supported by evidence and analysis. This will form the basis of the Council's final submission to MHCLG. It is essential that the Board's findings help the Council to develop a clear criteria based strategy for future investment and intervention into the town.

Specific areas of consideration:

1. Identify the factors driving the shape, patronage and performance of the town centre;
2. Test the hypothesis that its role as a retail centre will diminish and identify what alternative functions might maintain its sustainability and vitality;
3. Options available to improve services and amenities, and to use them to improve social value in the town centre;
4. How community groups and the third sector can both support town centre vitality and benefit from it;
5. How town centre development can complement wider economic growth and opportunities in the Borough;

LCR/LA Strategic Vision

This is a fantastic opportunity for the Board to:

- influence a key LCR policy area on a topic where the issue exists throughout the UK
- engage with the local authority and CA on a key policy area

- help inform investment plans into the town centre for future years

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and its Local Authority Partners recognise the need for intervention regardless of the central government towns fund. The role and structure of our town centres are changing. Their positions as retail centres are diminishing and there is a need to re-position them to ensure they fully serve the needs of our communities, visitors and businesses.

The Board should note that the LCR Metro Mayor has appointed IPPR North to run an expert led Commission to consider the long-term future of Liverpool City Region town centres, alongside making £6m in immediate funding available to Councils for investment in their existing town centre plans and piloting ideas to influence town centre interventions in possible future funding rounds. This work will support the Board in its policy making.

The LCR Local Industrial Strategy also recognises the importance of the towns' strategy, aligning with the directive that regeneration is not just a property initiative, it's a whole place initiative where people and place take priority of traditional property solutions.

APPENDIX ONE - ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

1.0 Purpose and Objectives of the Board

1.1 The Purpose of the Board is to produce a Town Investment Plan

1.2 The Objectives of the Board are to:

- Define strategy and vision for the town
- Develop and agree an evidenced based Town Investment Plan
- Develop a clear programme of interventions
- Serves as an advisory board to the local Council
- Co-ordinate resources and influence stakeholders

2.0 Board Membership

2.1 The **Chairperson** will be a locally-invested business leader, nominees proposed by the Lead Local Authority, and approved by the Board, having taken into consideration a number of factors including the ability to meet all the essential requirements of a Board Member and in addition, a demonstrable ability to:

- understand the public, private, voluntary and community sectors
- run an effective Board and manage relationships with both shareholders and stakeholders
- ability to influence and persuade and communicate with others towards achieving the purpose and ambition of the Board
- competently manage conflicts that may arise through competing/conflicting interests of the Board members and key stakeholders
- ensure that the business is discussed in line with the agenda and ensure that everyone's views are heard and discussed, clear decisions are reached, accepted and follow-up.

The Chairperson is invited initially for a term of office for 24 months, with options to extend for a further 12 months.

2.2 The Board will be comprised of not more than 20 members.

2.3 Selection and appointment of the **Board Members** will be led by the Lead Local Authority. It is the Council's responsibility to ensure that the Board should include:

- All layers of local government, mayoral Combined Authority, Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Local business and investors
- Community representatives
- Local MP (Member of Parliament)

The Board may also include:

- Local BID (Business Improvement District)
- Job Centre Plus
- Anchor Institutions
- Arms-length bodies and other non-governmental agencies

2.4 Duration of Board Membership will be for a period of 24 months initially, with options for extension with the agreement of the Board and the Lead Authority.

2.5 The selection and appointment process of Board Members will be invitation-led and the following criteria will be taken into consideration:

- Demonstrable passion and commitment to the development of the town's future
- Record of commitment of time and resources into local social and economic infrastructure
- Willingness to engage with the Local Authority and Town Deal Board, abiding by the Terms of Reference of the Town Deal Fund Board and its Code of Conduct and Decision-making processes
- Respected and credible local community leader
- Ability to meet the time commitments of the Board and attend Board meetings regularly
- Domain knowledge or expertise, pertinent to the business of the Board

2.6 Board Members will not substitute with a deputy if unable to attend.

2.7 Board Members will be required to adhere to the governance standards and policies of the Lead Council including whistle blowing, conflicts of interest and complaints as well as the Nolan Principles.

3.0 Meeting

3.1 Meetings will be held monthly for a period of approximately two hours, at an accessible and appropriate venue.

3.2 Secretariat support will be provided by officers of the lead Council, recording the business, decisions and actions of the Board.

The Council will be responsible for ensuring that the Town Deal Board:

- Aligns with the governance standards and policies of the Lead Council including whistle blowing, conflicts of interest and complaints
- The meetings are open by default in terms of how the Board conducts its business whilst recognising commercial sensitivity
- Ensure that all evidence and supporting documents will be made publicly available whilst recognising commercial sensitivity

3.3 The meetings will not be open to attendance by the press and public.

3.4 Agendas, decisions and actions agreed by the Board will be made available to Members of the Public by the Lead Authority.

3.5 Costs of hosting the meeting will be met by the Council. Costs of travel to Board meetings will not be met, but reasonable pre-approved expenses to carry out agreed business of the Board, may be met.

4.0 Decision-making

4.1 All board members have a responsibility to ensure that adequate discussion of issues occurs before recommendations are made.

4.2 The Board has power to make all decisions in respect of the production of the Town Investment Plan. In due course, dependent on government's evaluation of the Investment Plan, further responsibilities of the Board may be defined with respect to the development of specific Business Cases.

4.3 Board Members are expected to attend regularly, and meetings will be diarised to ensure optimal attendance. However, if Board members are not able to attend, they are still required to read the board papers and make their views known to the Chair of the Board in advance of the Board meeting.

4.4 If consensus cannot be agreed by the Board, in the first instance, the Chairperson will mediate towards satisfactory resolution, based on an evidenced-led approach. If the Board still cannot reach consensus, decisions will be made on the basis of voting.

4.5 In the event that a decision needs to be made by casting a vote, each Board member is entitled to one vote. Board Members are not entitled to cast a vote if they are not in attendance at when the decision is formally agreed at a Board Meeting.

5.0 Delegating Tasks and Powers

5.1 Sub-committees may be established by the Board to act as Task and Finish Groups for specific and appropriate elements of the Board's business. The Board should agree what Sub-Committees are required.

5.2 Additional non-Board members may be invited to provide skills, resources, insight and capacity to the task but must abide by the decision-making structures, Code of Conduct and Terms of Reference of the Board.

5.3 Each Sub-Committee should be chaired either by a Board Member or a Board-approved nominated representative.

5.4 Progress on tasks of the Sub-committees should be updated and reported to the Board, to a schedule agreed by the Board as appropriate to its agenda.

5.5 Procurement processes will be governed by the Financial Regulations and Procurement Procedures for any goods or services procured by funds for which the Council is the accountable body.

6.0 Code of Conduct

6.1 One Code of Conduct will cover all Members of the Town Deal Board with respect to its purpose and objectives, its sub-committees and all public sector officers supporting the development and delivery of Runcorn Town Investment Plan. This will also apply to any secondees, consultants and contractors.

- 6.2 Board Members and supporting officers will be made aware of the importance and significance of upholding these standards at their inaugural Board Meeting and through regular training processes if required.
- 6.3 At every board meeting, Board Members will be asked to declare any actual or potential conflict of interest and these will be publicly recorded. Where the board agrees that a conflict is inappropriate, the member should be recused from both the discussion and decision making.
- 6.4 Particular care will be taken where board members have a live, concurrent post which could give rise to conflicts of interest. Any conflict of interest for Board Members will be established at the start of the selection process and actively managed to ensure there are no material factors impeding independence of judgement.
- 6.5 Board Members will demonstrate visible independence which is vital to ensure that there is no bias or favouritism towards or against particular players. This freedom of action is needed to reassure investors, competitors, residents, employees and all tiers of government.
- 6.6 The Lead Authority, Halton Council will publish the list of Board Members.
- 6.7 Members of the Board agree to comply with the Nolan Principles, the 7 principles of public life which apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder.