

Leigh Town Board

10.00 am, 21 February 2025

Present at the meeting:

Karen Cox (Chair), Spinning Gate Shopping Centre Manager
Jo Platt, MP for Leigh
Councillor Yvonne Klieve, Lead Member for District Centres & Night Time Economy
Councillor Dane Anderton, Portfolio Holder for Police, Crime and Civil Contingencies
Steven Tomlinson, Director – Nemiah and Leigh Means Business

Apologies:

David Proctor, Assistant Director – Planning and Regeneration
Danny O’Neil – Greater Manchester Police
Dorothy Bowker, Founder and Trustee – The Bridge
Adele Adjetey, Senior Policy and Partnerships Officer
Alex Grundy - Owner - Café Stella
Lloyd Jolley, Director – WJ Structures Ltd
Maxine Mealey, Wigan & Leigh College – Assistant Principal

In Attendance:

Paul Blinkhorn, Constituency Support Officer
Melanie Lamb, Service Manager – Regeneration
Carwyn Evans, Team Leader Regeneration

1. Walk Around Leigh Town Centre

The meeting began with a walk from the MP’s constituency office on Bradshawgate to Leigh Family Welfare which provided Board members with the opportunity to observe and highlight issues that need to be addressed.

Jo Platt MP highlighted the concern from some of the national brands currently trading in Leigh Town Centre regarding anti-social behaviour (ASB). A national brand had approached the MPs office with concern over the escalating ASB issues in the town and advised that they were seeking alternative premises due to safety concerns for their staff members.

A discussion took place around the ASB taking place in the town centre. The chair requested the discussions continue within the board meeting itself.

2. Welcome - attendance and apologies

The Chair opened the meeting, welcoming all Board members and introductions were provided.

3. Minutes and actions from last meeting

The Chair confirmed the minutes from the previous meeting and all actions from the last meeting had been completed except for organising a Board visit to Stockport. The Chair confirmed this is being organised by the Secretariat.

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The Chair advised that one of the previous actions, the town centre litter pick, which took place prior to Christmas had proven successful and recommended that further litter picks should be arranged. [ACTION]

The Chair referenced the concerns Jo Platt MP had highlighted earlier about ASB levels in Leigh town centre. The Chair also highlighted that Greggs are currently in the process of relocating from Bradshawgate to the Spinning Gate Shopping Centre. The Service Manager - Regeneration queried whether ASB was a factor in the relocation decision. The Chair said they would investigate this and revert back.

The Chair recommended organising a separate meeting with Greater Manchester Police; the Neighbourhood Manager for Leigh; and Central Watch to discuss ASB in Leigh.

[ACTION] – The Chair to follow up on the reasons behind the relocation of Greggs.

[ACTION] – Chair requested a meeting to discuss ASB in Leigh town centre with key stakeholders including GMP; the town centre manager for Leigh; and Central Watch.

[ACTION] - Chair requested a meeting to complete business engagement with the town centre businesses

4. LTPT: Update

The Service Manager – Regeneration explained that guidance from Government has not yet been received. MHCLG had promised to provide new guidance in the New Year, but nothing had been issued yet.

Jo Platt MP informed the Board that she had recently attended a meeting about LTPT priorities, which suggested guidance will be issued by March 2025. The Service Manager – Regeneration stated that a holding email had been received from Government that gave more certainty on the funding amount; and the revenue/capital split. The email also recognised the efforts undertaken by places so far, but also aware that the timeframe imposed on places to produce the plans was short and limited scope for engagement. The correspondence suggested that the next financial year i.e. April 25 - March 26 would be used for places to build their plans further (with a further £200,000 revenue funding to be provided), with spend on projects starting April 26-March 27.

The Chair raised a concern that this would result in a slower pace of spending than originally envisaged. However, it was queried whether there would be opportunity to spend some of the £200k revenue money on capital projects. Jo Platt MP said the spending review would be key to understanding all of this.

Jo Platt MP raised the suggestion that High Street Rental Auctions (HSRA) could be used in Leigh. The Service Manager – Regeneration explained that there had already been some discussion with the Associate Director – Planning and Regeneration about this. The Council will consider the scope of the new powers and their applicability to Leigh, but also noted some concerns about resource and capacity implications of the regime.

The Service Manager – Regeneration explained that as noted in previous Board meetings, work on the draft versions of the LTPT vision and investment plan was paused until the new guidance was received in order to avoid any abortive work. The Service Manager –

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Regeneration advised there is currently approximately £15k of unspent committed fees with consultant Genecon.

Cllr Klieve was concerned that Genecon's remaining fee budget should not be used up until further guidance is available from the government, but was happy for them to be involved if not charging/using up fees. The Chair thought it was great idea if Genecon could carry out some pro bono work and suggested they attend a town safari with the Youth Sub-group.

[ACTION] – The Secretariat to explore potential for Genecon to facilitate a town safari and engage with members of the Youth Sub-group.

[ACTION] - Service Manager – Regeneration to investigate the feasibility of pursuing HSRA in Leigh and report to board.

5. Communications Strategy - Approach

The Service Manager – Regeneration summarised two for options for implementing the communications strategy:

- Option 1- Going out to the market and using an external agency.
- Option 2 - Using Council resources via the Council's PR Team.

The Service Manager – Regeneration, explained that Option 2 would provide cost savings, but the scope would be limited by capacity within the Council's PR team. It was agreed Option 1 was preferred in principle, but this will need to be market tested, either through a procurement exercise or soft market testing through existing Board member contacts.

Jo Platt MP expressed a preference for using a local marketing company.

The Director – Nemiah and Leigh Means Business was keen to point out that the money should be spent on marketing the town rather than the Board and highlighted the benefit of a separate website rather than use the Council one.

It was noted that any procurement would be undertaken by the Council on behalf of the Board (as accountable body) and therefore that procurement rules must be adhered to and that this will ensure appropriate level of transparency and accountability.

[ACTION] – Board members to identify if they have any contacts for marketing to outsource the PR & Comms activity in the first instance.

6. Youth Sub-Group

The Service Manager – Regeneration noted that further to previous discussions, a Youth sub-group had been established to ensure that the voices of young people are represented in decisions around the LTPT. The Youth sub-group has met twice (January and February). They have been briefed on the background to LTPT initiative, the role of the Board and progress to date. The Youth sub-group were working to establish their own working arrangements (meeting format, frequency etc). A key concern of the young people was that their views should be taken seriously and on equal basis to those of adults.

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Young people who are involved in Ashton Innovation Board are offering support to the Leigh young people as they establish their group.

The Youth sub-group has proposed that two of their members attend the main Board, and this would be reciprocated by two Town Board members attending the Youth sub-group.

This would mean that the Board might need to occasionally meet in the evening to allow for the youth sub-group representatives to attend.

It was agreed that the Board would cover the cost of the meeting rooms for the Youth Sub-group.

The potential for occasional rewards to recognise the time contributions of young people was raised by Service Manager – Regeneration. Cllr Anderton was unsure whether this would have parity with other similar groups noting that it may attract members for the wrong reasons. It was agreed that the approach adopted across other groups would be reviewed to inform future discussion.

Jo Platt MP stated her support for the establishment of a Youth sub-group and enabling young people to be involved with the Board.

[ACTION] – Wigan & Leigh College – Vice Principal and 1x other Board member to normally attend the Youth sub-group.

[ACTION] - Invite 2 x Youth sub-group members to join either the March or April 2025 Board meetings. This meeting would be scheduled for a suitable evening.

[ACTION] – To review arrangement for similar youth boards with regard to any proposed reward process for Youth Sub-Group members.

7. Future of Composition of the Board

The Chair invited Board members to consider the current Board representation and to consider and propose potential members where current sector gaps or under-representation exists (e.g. health, faith sectors). It was noted that this would not be actioned until the new guidance was available as this may contain advice/direction on Board composition and governance.

[ACTION] - All Board members to consider any gaps or under-representation on the Board and feedback to the secretariat to inform future approach to any amendments to Board.

8. Meeting Notes Process

This item was deferred due to insufficient time.

9. Overview of Constituents' Representations

Jo Platt MP raised concerns that there may be premises within the town centre that do not appear to be in compliance with planning regulations in terms of signage and illumination. The Service Manager – Regeneration noted that some enforcement action is underway in the town centre and agreed to feedback concerns to the Planning Enforcement Team.

[ACTION]

10. Reflections on the meeting

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The Chair asked for any feedback on the meeting and walkabout and suggested that future meetings include town centre walkarounds.

Cllr Klieve asked when the Board will be informed which properties have been selected for the Leigh LUF Building Grant Scheme. The Service Manager – Regeneration explained 27 properties have been selected to proceed to Stage 2. The unsuccessful properties have also been informed.

The Chair asked for it to be noted that the Board was invited to comment on the Leigh Building Grant scheme, but some Board members were unable to attend due to conflicts of interest.

11. Any other business

The Director – Nemiah and Leigh Means Business highlighted the issue of rough sleepers and associated ASB around the Railway Arches. The Constituency Support Officer spoke about the importance of reporting this to the police, who were already aware of the problem. [ACTION] To be discussed further at the multi agency meeting

The Constituency Support Officer also raised the Council's proposal to install extra CCTV at the top of Bradshawgate subject to funding.

The Service Manager - Regeneration on behalf of the secretariat noted that the meeting was not quorate as it did not meet the minimum threshold for representation. No formal decisions were made at the Board; therefore, the meeting remains compliant with the Board's Terms of Reference.

The meeting concluded at 11:55am