

Leigh Town Board

10.15 pm, 24 May 2024

Present at the meeting

Karen Cox (Chair) - Spinning Gate Shopping Centre Manager
Councillor Dane Anderton
Derek Beaumont - Owner - Leigh Leopards
Dorothy Bowker - Founder and Trustee - The Bridge
Alex Grundy - Owner - Café Stella
James Grundy MP

Adam Wignall - GMP
David Proctor - Assistant Director - Planning and Regeneration
Alison Rushton - Vice Principal - Wigan and Leigh College
Dr Gen Wong, Leigh Primary Care Network

Observers:

Melanie Lamb – Service Manager, Regeneration
Martin Ledson – Team Leader, Regeneration

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Adele Adjetey, Lloyd Jolley, Councillor Yvonne Klieve and Steve Tomlison.

2 Feedback from LTPT Chair networking event and Downing Street reception

The Chair informed the Board of a recent visit to 10 Downing Street and Parliament for a networking event, along with representatives from 75 other towns who were successful in obtaining Long Term Plan for Towns (LTPT) funding from Government.

At the event, the Chair met with Chairs from other Town Boards and discussed the progress that had been made in respect of the Board's work so far. The Chair, accompanied by James Grundy MP, also had the opportunity to discuss Leigh and the work of the Board with the Prime Minister. This reception provided a great opportunity to put Leigh on the map, and the Chair placed on record her thanks to Board Members and all other stakeholders for the work that had taken place in the background.

3 Minutes and actions from last meeting

The Board considered a verbal update from the Chair, which informed Board Members that since the last meeting, the revised boundary had been agreed by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). An additional £200,000 in capacity funding had now been received, with requirements to report to DLUHC how the funding is spent and to consider increasing community representation.

The Chair advised the Board that the post of Project Manager – Regeneration, that was discussed at the previous meeting, would be advertised imminently.

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The Chair reminded Board Members that have not yet provided a photograph and mini CV, to be uploaded on the Board's webpage on the Wigan Council website, that they will need to do so as soon as possible.

The Chair informed Board Members that the Community Engagement Sub-Group of the Board met on 16th May 2024.

4 Work programme and Community Engagement

The Board considered a verbal update of the Service Manager – Regeneration, Melanie Lamb, which introduced the newly appointed consultants, Graeme Collinge of Genecon and Danny Crump of Layer Studio, who would deliver a presentation for the Board Members in attendance.

The Board then considered the consultants' presentation, which provided a background to their previous work, outlined the role of the Board and the wider community in shaping the outcomes, community engagement and surveys, and work programme that would need to be completed leading up to the submission to DLUHC on 1 August 2024.

During its discussions, the points raised by Board Members included:

- what the implications would be if the documented submitted in August was not considered good enough;
- whether surveys had been undertaken in other towns and what the wider engagement strategy was for Leigh; and
- whether the Board and LTPT funding were wholly focused on the Town Centre or wider area of Leigh.

The Consultant – Genecon, informed Board Members that they are not bidding for funds as they had already been allocated. Instead, it was speculated that if DLUHC did not deem the plan sufficient or acceptable, they may request to see improvements before approving.

The Consultant – Layer Studio, advised that, as a result of the short timeframe, funding would be allocated to projects but there would not be time to provide fine detail.

The Service Manager – Regeneration, informed the Board that DLUHC would consider community engagement, any problems that had been identified and consensus around the plans.

The Consultant – Genecon, advised the Board that Burnley and Rochdale had both launched public consultation exercises, both online and through a number of in-person 'pop-ups'. The Board were in agreement that the survey had to be engaging and simple to answer, to enable as many responses as possible, and that it had to be promoted well, with Board Members with social media presence to share. The Board also reached a consensus in their agreement for the survey to be circulated to the Board for initial comments and prior to publication.

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The Service Manager – Regeneration informed the Board that an engagement session with community group representatives is to take place on 10 June 2024. Any engagement and consultation would not draw to a close on the 1 August 2024, but would continue moving forwards to pick up on any remaining issues.

The Consultant – Genecon advised the Board that it was not yet decided where the funding would be spent, but it would be pragmatically distributed and led by the community both in the Town Centre and surrounding areas.

5 Workshop session – vision and investment plan

The Board considered a verbal update of the Consultant – Genecon and were requested to consider what they would like individuals who visited Leigh to say to their peers after visiting the Town.

These suggestions were then collated and fed back to the Board by the Consultant.

6 Reflections on the meeting

The Chair invited Board Members to feedback any reflections that they had on the meeting and any future meetings, which identified the following themes:-

- having timings on the agenda may help to keep structure within the meetings;
- agreement to the idea of moving the meeting around to different locations within Leigh; and
- the establishment that everyone involved in the meeting had the same overall vision, despite it only being the second meeting of the Board.

7 Any other business

James Grundy MP put forward a proposal to the Board to utilise the LTPT funding, potentially as seed funding alongside TfGM funds, to carry out a scoping exercise for completing the Atherleigh Bypass to relieve congestion in Leigh. The Chair requested more information for consideration, and David Proctor agreed to coordinate with the Mayor's office.

The Service Manager – Regeneration, advised the Board of a letter that had been received from Atmore Group, owner of the Spinning Gate Shopping Centre, to consider funding for refurbishing one of the vacant units. The Board agreed for the Service Manager to write to the Atmore Group, to ask for further information.

Board Member Alex Grundy, Owner – Café Stella, informed the Board of the Leigh Leopards Rugby League Club's Academy having received elite status, with Board Member Derek Beaumont having committed to funding this with £150K per year of his own money. The Board were informed, that the overall cost of this was £400K. With this in mind, Board Member Alex Grundy made a proposal for the LTPT funding to contribute towards this, given its benefit to Leigh.

Agreed:- The Board agrees:-

- (1) to receive further information in relation to the proposals outlined, including financial figures and potential benefits to Leigh; and
- (2) to review the final version of the survey before it is launched.
- (3) for the proforma for project requests to be circulated.

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Chair

The meeting concluded at 1:10 pm