

# Rotherham Town Board

## Microsoft Teams

19 June 2024, 8:45 - 10am

<b>Attended By:</b>		<b>Apologies:</b>
Neil Baxter (Chair) – NB		Sarah Champion MP – SC
Steve Morris, Signs Express (Vice-Chair) – StM		Jacque Falvey, Sarah Champion’s office – JF
Phil Batchford, Rotherham Minster – PB		John Healey MP – JHe
Helen Littlewood, Clifton Learning Partnership – HL		Greg Kuczmaida, John Healey’s office – GK
Jamie Noble, RUFC / RUCT – JN		Alexander Stafford – AS
Sarah McLeod, Wentworth Woodhouse – SMC		Sophie Dack, Alexander Stafford’s Office - SD
Chris Hamby, Hamby’s Properties / Gullivers – CH		Ryan Shepherd, SYMCA – RS
David Plumtree, VAR – DP		Kevin Bradley, South Yorkshire Police – KB
Matthew Stephens, BRCC – MS		Sue Wynne, Rotherham Rise – SW
Ray Kinsella, Great Places – RK		Alex Clegg, BIES / CLGU - AC
David Trevis-Smith, WW – DTS		Sam Townsend, BIES / CLGU – ST
Lisa Pogson, Airmaster – LP		David Sutton, Maltby Academy – DS
Kate Davis – KD		Andrew Bramidge, RMBC – AB
Paul Harper, DWP – PH		Catherine Davis, RIDO RMBC – CD
Deborah Bullivant, Grimm and Co – DB		Kevin Tomlinson, Magna – KT
Tracey Mace-Akroyd, RNN – TMA		Nazim Shabir – NS
Simon Moss, RMBC – SMO		Carrie Sudbury, BRCC – CS
Lorna Vertigan, RIDO RMBC – LV		Abi Cobb, RMBC – AC
Megan Hinchliff, RIDO RMBC – MH		Julie Dalton, Gullivers – JD
Andy Boulton, Neighbourhoods, RMBC – ABo		Rachael Ellis, RMBC – RE
Simon Powell, RIDO RMBC – SP		
Joel Hamer, RIDO RMBC – JoH		
<b>Action Points:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any members yet to complete declaration of interest forms were asked to send this through to JoH</li> <li>SP to provide breakdown of forecast for Q1 / 2 / 3 / 4 for 24/25</li> </ul>		
<b>32/24</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence, Declarations of Interest Forms, and Confidentiality Reminder</b>  Apologies listed above.  Any members yet to complete declaration of interest forms were asked to send these through to JoH.	<b>All</b>

	Members were reminded of the confidentiality of the information discussed at these meetings.	
<b>33/24</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising from the Minutes of the last meeting held on 15 May 2024</b></p> <p>The minutes were accepted as a true record, and actions from the previous meeting were accepted as complete.</p>	
<b>34/24</b>	<p><b>Long Term Plan for Towns</b></p> <p>LV stated that the general election is having an impact on the Long-Term Plan for Towns development due to some guidance not being provided. It is uncertain what form the Long-Term Plan might take following the election in July.</p> <p>The engagement with the public and stakeholders is ending and has been a hugely valuable exercise. Around 400 people have responded to the consultation alongside 18 hours of stakeholder discussions and 11 hours of public consultation. This has shown what people think about the town centre.</p> <p>LV went through the 6 areas that ranked lowest on the Place Standard Toolkit as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sense of Identity and Belonging This theme spans across the whole conversation as many people feel the town is scarred from historic experiences and do not feel there is a strong identity in Rotherham and that they belong.</li> <li>2. Feeling Safe This topic spans perceptions of safety as well as the issues of crime that are present in the town centre. It is vital that we work to tackle this alongside the community and the police.</li> <li>3. Social Interaction There is a recognition that when there are events, people will come. But there are concerns that there aren't enough activities, social opportunities, events in Rotherham.</li> </ol> <p>SMo commented that social interaction is a useful term to be thinking about more broadly. Events do come into this but it is vital to look at the smaller spaces and opportunities for social interaction.</p> <p>NB commented that this is a good observation as events are one off but we are looking to create a place that is welcoming and enjoyable for people throughout the year.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Services and Facilities This is related to a lack of key services including health and banks. People have stated that there are high vacancy rates, and that the town centre does not look positive or encourage people to come into town. This relates back to identity and safety as well.</li> </ol>	

5. Moving Around

People raised concerns around transport into the town centre. Some have stated that there needs to be more cycle lanes and improved active travel, others have stated the opposite.

6. Natural Space

This feeds into the moving around theme looking at whether there are barriers to people moving around. Is the environment a pleasant one to be in, is there good maintenance, and does it feel like a good place to be?

DP stated that this theme is slightly difficult given that active travel is often driven by stakeholders rather than by the public. DP stated that he agrees but that there needs to be work to bring the community on board with the idea.

JN stated that he sits on the Moving Rotherham board and questioned whether the right people have been spoken to within the council.

This was answered in the affirmative.

LV went on to look at the approach that should be taken to developing the application to be submitted to government. LV stated that we need to be methodical – this has been difficult due to election periods and the full picture is not yet clear. As such it was suggested that we progress by providing high level plans to government rather than detailed designs. Government have asked for high level areas for what we want to do and why, before then developing the how alongside the board over the next 6 months – 1 year from funding being confirmed.

NB stated that he couldn't be at the last meeting due to being at a meeting in London with all other Long Term Plan board chairs. They stated at this meeting that detail is not required in the initial application, but that boards must ensure that detailed consultation has been carried out to understand the areas that require intervention.

TMA added that another local town board is taking this approach providing high level plans with the intention to work up the detail moving forward. TMA also stated that it might be wise to look at smaller projects initially and work up to bigger projects.

LV also mentioned that the use of the funding needs to be focussed as it would be easy to spread this funding too thin. And that the use of funding needs to be responsive, it is important to reserve the right to change approach if needs be.

LV went on to explain the 6 areas of intervention as follows:

1. Feeling Safe

The objective is to tackle feelings of unsafety and put in place targeted interventions developed alongside the police to tackle specific crimes.

RK stated that this should include something to do with stewardship and maintenance of public spaces.

MS questioned what the revenue / capital split, which LV confirmed is 25% / 75% respectively.

TMA stated that she is unaware of all the different funding streams and questioned whether we need to cross-reference which funds are already in place. LV stated that this is important and that in the application there is a section based on what complementary funding there is. SMO stated that there is a fairly big portfolio of works taking place in transport already so this work needs to align with some of the work already taking place in transport.

SMO commented that there are three areas to safety:

- The visibility of public services – police / council
- The maintenance and stewardship of public realm
- Footfall in an area and how this impacts feelings of safety. The town centre currently closes early, and the evening economy may be a gap that needs to be looked at.

NB stated that given there is money left from the initial £250k given for Long Term Plan, doing a piece of work to understand what is happening privately and in other funding streams is an important piece of work to do.

2. Social Interaction

Looking at how we promote the big events as well as what we do each day. This should make the town feel more alive. It is looking at programmes of events, promotion, and activating the spaces. How can we create better community cohesion, a sense of belonging and welcome. This requires the use of voluntary and community groups to give a reason for people to use the town centre. The board are vital to developing this.

DP stated that it is encouraging to see this in the plan. TMA agreed that this is a vital element to look at. DB stated that when the town is activated by macro and micro events it is positive. MS questioned where the Rotherham brand work fits in with this and whether it needs to be linked in. DTS commented that Wentworth Woodhouse can support regarding the large numbers of visitors that Wentworth

attracts into the area – there needs to be reasons for people to stay in the town centre.

### 3. Services and Facilities

This looks at tackling vacancies, targeting problematic buildings, and bringing services to the high street. This could include grant schemes for refurbishment to properties to increase lettings. Or the council could project manage schemes and then bring in owners for properties, taking an active role in development.

RK stated that it would be worth developing an offer for pop-up galleries and cafes if it is difficult to secure long-term tenants.

LP commented that there needs to be some ambassadors in town signposting. LV stated that this keeps coming up and will be put back into the plan but there needs to be some greater understanding of what this means.

LV stated that there have been conversations looking to bring health onto the high street which would benefit new town centre communities and the businesses and organisations in Rotherham. Health does not need to be the end point of services, but other services could be brought onto the high street that serve people and bring people into town regularly.

DB stated that moving hubs into spaces that are already animating the town could be effective.

StM stated that anything that makes people use the town centre regularly is warmly welcomed. This is what creates community.

JN stated that if we were looking at urban living then we need to be looking at how to support people to be active within the town centre. Could we put basketball courts or tennis courts in? Pop up offers can bring people in and then they will move to use services in the town centre.

### 4. Moving Around

This theme will look at ensuring the town centre is accessible and that people can move around safely.

TMA stated that it would be important to have conversations about cycle sheds to ensure that these places aren't used for anti-social behaviour.

MS stated that while people may cycle in, they may not feel safe leaving their bike in town. MS also questioned whether bus or train companies are represented on the call. SMO stated that it may be important for Matt Reynolds who has previously attended these meetings to attend to bring some of those conversations together.

	<p>5. Natural Space This theme is looking at improving the greenery in the town centre. This also looks at ensuring maintenance is in place and that the town feels safe and welcoming.</p> <p>StM stated that any green space that provides daily reason for people to go into the town centre is important.</p> <p>LV questioned whether there was anything in the plan that has been missed.</p> <p>DP questioned whether the remaining consultations should focus more onto the detail of the plans. LV replied that this would be helpful and agreed to have initial conversations with Sam and Deborah.</p> <p>NB asked what the next steps will be and what feedback to the board will look like. LV stated that the writing will take place over the next couple of weeks to have a first draft by 1<sup>st</sup> July. This draft will be circulated to the board with a request for comment. LV also suggested that a meeting be put in before 31<sup>st</sup> July to discuss. NB suggested that this is a good idea and requested that the first draft be circulated, and a decision made on whether to hold another meeting following the election on 4<sup>th</sup> July.</p> <p>LV stated that as a group, the board needs to look at investment after this.</p>	
<p><b>35/24</b></p>	<p><b>Project Updates Key Issues Only</b></p> <p><b>Eastwood Bridge</b></p> <p>LV stated that there are issues with delivering the whole of this project at this moment. LV suggested that we use towns fund to develop a business case for this project but move other funds to the country parks. It is thought that with the development of the mainline station there will be a better business case for progressing with the Eastwood Bridge. A conversation has taken place with DLUHC about moving the money via pathfinder to Country Parks and they are happy with this.</p> <p><b>Country Parks</b></p> <p>The country parks schemes came in significantly over budget, so it is suggested that Rother Valley is prioritised given that it is more likely to benefit the visitor economy than Thrybergh. Regarding the outputs, Rother Valley is more likely to achieve these. As such, it is suggested that the remaining £2million from the Eastwood Bridge project be moved to support the Country Parks schemes bringing forward the new café at Rother Valley</p>	

and refurbishing the existing offer at Thrybergh. There is a Cabinet paper prepared to go in July to approve the moving of this money and contracting with Kier. The board agreed with this proposal.

#### **Eldon Road Playing Fields**

Contractors have been appointed to start on site in September.

#### **Snail Yard**

Started on site last week with paving slabs being moved and a compound put in place on Wellgate. High Street businesses have been made aware of the works.

#### **30 - 36 Corporation Street**

It was previously agreed to offer for this building, but the offers have been rejected. RIDO will look at some options for how to use this money and bring this back to the next board.

#### **Templeborough**

Legal agreements are currently with Henry Boot and Magna for final sign off. The intention is to have contract in place for 8<sup>th</sup> July with start on site almost immediately. This is now the final push to get this project on site.

#### **RRQ Enabling**

The final contract price has come back and it is within budget. Business cases being pulled together internally to get this to the point where contracts can be signed in July / August and this will be complete by February 2025.

#### **3-7 Corporation Street**

Half of this building has now been demolished. The second part is more complicated due to nesting birds and having to be treated as though it has asbestos as surveys could not be completed due to the poor condition of the building. The remainder of the funding is for the redevelopment of this site and looking at other strategic sites in the town centre.

#### **Town Centre Music Venue**

	<p>Surveys have started on the Alma and design feasibility will take place over summertime. There is uncertainty about what these surveys will show and there may need to be some demolition to the rear of the building. It is now programmed to complete beyond the funding deadline of March 2026. Conversations have begun with DLUHC around this and provided sufficient funds are spent by the deadline this should be acceptable.</p> <p>NB stated that a conversation needs to happen fairly quickly after the election.</p>	
<b>36/24</b>	<p><b>Finance Update</b></p> <p>NB stated that spend target wasn't achieved in Q4 and that we are forecasting a further underspend in Q4 24/25. NB requested that SP provide spend forecast for Q1 / 2 / 3 24/25.</p> <p>SP stated that we almost have a full view of what has been spent and where we stand in terms of financial forecast, but next meeting will look at the detail for the year going forward.</p> <p>SP stated that our overall expenditure of pathfinder funds is around 25.5 million. This is around 30% of the total allocation which puts us ahead of the national picture which is on average 10 – 15%. However, the spend against previous forecast is down roughly 3.6million on where we expected to be. The major shortfall is the Town Deal allocation where there was a 2.3million underspend against forecast for last financial year. Given complexities, DLUHC are aware that different elements happen as they happen for these projects.</p>	
<b>37/24</b>	<p><b>Town Centre Regeneration Promotion</b></p> <p>SMo stated that the slides that would have been presented for this section will be circulated with minutes after the meeting due to the number of people remaining on the call.</p>	JoH
<b>38/24</b>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p>	
	<p><b>Date of next meeting: 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024</b></p>	